CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN

Every hour of every day our character is put to test. Now it is our truthfulness that is tried. Next it is our respect for authority. Again it is our generosity. And so on. The result is a growth in virtue or a further development of weakness and failure. Occasionally some supreme test with evident fateful consequences, comes, and it is met, usually, as we, strengthened or debilitated by minor trials, are accustomed to act:

PUT TO THE TEST

Ten years ago or so, a young man, with a very small capital, opened a gentlemen's furnishing store in a small town. Having so little money, and needing funds to give the business a good start, he applied to the local bank for a loan. The directors took time to consider the application, for they knew very little about the young merchant; and one of them, meanwhile, went to the store and bought a pair of not very expensive gloves. He was a prosperous man, but he dressed shabbily, and the young merchant had no idea he was selling to any but a very ordinary customer.

The bank director took the gloves home, wrenched them on so rudely that they tore, and then went back with them next day, and made a complaint. The proprietor instantly and politely gave him a new pair. "I always sell a piece of satisfaction with my goods," he said, "and you just didn't get your satisfaction. Let's hope you will with this pair—although gloves do not always run uniform." That was all, no questions, no hesitation, just a generous and prompt willingness to have the shabby customer satisfied. The director went back to the bank, met the others, and said: "Give that young man whatever loan he wants. He will make a success of it; he's progressive, and he believes in people." The merchant got the loan, and now has a fine business, and is one of the bank's large depositors.

A pair of gloves seems a small test. But it is the small things that are the best test usually, because they take a man off his guard. That shrewd director knew that a small purchase by a shabby customer would be the surest way to find out the real character of the young merchant. If he were distrustful and discourteous, he would show these traits. If he were really anxious to serve and please his customers, no matter how much or little they bought, he would be polite and generous. It was a fair test, and it revealed a man worth helping forward.

Most tests are not as striking as this in their results. But it is none the less true that every young man and every young woman meet small tests along the road of their work and pleasure, whether they know they are being tested or not.

WAS A HIRED MAN

James A. Garfield was a hired chore boy in the house of a western farmer. He had to sit up late of nights polishing the family boots and shoes. On occasions his presence would not be agreeable to the young woman of the house when entertaining company. "Hired servants should keep their places," she would say as she would direct withering glances at the poor youth. In bitterness of soul he one night retorted: "Ah! I'll hire servants myself yet." He did—in the White House. Garfield was waiting for opportunity to come along and he was quite ready when it did come.

DOING YOUR BEST

No better exercise for the mind and soul can be found that exists in taking the simple incidents of an ordinary day, and searching out the challenge they hold for the individual to whom they happen. It has been said by a great psychologist, a strict man of science, that the act of getting up in the morning, cheerfully and on time, especially when one does not want to, is an exercise in strengthening the will which has the greatest of psychological value. The breakfast table may be made a time of family reunion and pleasant beginning of the day, or a place of hurry and ill-temper. The day's work in home, school or office may be attacked punctually and energetically, or with tardiness and fret, and so on. Every hour a test comes along, and the character goes from victory to victory or from defeat to defeat. There is no luck about character. It is made by being and doing one's best by loving God every hour, by serving one's fellows at every turn; and the place where it is made does not matter. All places are the same to the soul that is doing its best, and not stopping to complain.

Such souls always find their road to larger things. The story of the pair of gloves repeats itself in all sorts of forms. The old fairy tales are full of the fairy godmother disguised as a beggar woman by the roadside, of the fairy prince in the garb of a scullion. Opportunity masquerades to-day in the same old fashion, and kindness and honesty and cheerfulness and generosity find their reward where they never looked for any. When the day tests a man and finds him true gold, he will not fail of success and honor and of the real satisfactions of life.—Catholic Columbian.

CIVILITY

There is nothing like being civil, and when we say civil we include in that term the highest forms of politeness. We do not allude to a stiff, meaningless formality, or to those senseless conventionalities that obtain in the domain of fashions. We refer to that spontaneous outburst of generous nature which exhausts itself in brightening the heart of everyone with whom occasion throws us in contact.

Civility finds expression in kind words and in kind looks no less than unkind actions; kindness is the foundation of civility. The cheery "good morning," the touch of the hat, the gent el bow, all bespeak the gentleman; and since civility is, like charity, universal, it confines its manifestations to no particular favored class.

It feels no lowering of its character by the kindly notice which it takes of nature's real noblemen—the hard fisted, weather-browned sons of toil. It rejoices rather, and in its rejoicing it is not alone. The thrill of satisfaction which speeds through our heart when we feel that we have done a kind act, finds response in the soul of him who has experienced our generosity. The heart, truly magnanimous, is the one that feels more pleasure at another's happiness than it does in its own; and the man, truly civil, is the man whose heart goes out in kindness to his fellows.—Casket.

WHICH IS HAPPIER?

"Of two young men," says the Paulist Calendar of Chicago, "one of whom belongs to a Catholic society and goes to the Sacraments once a month, the other of whom has no use for the church, drinks, frequents low theatres, and goes with vicious company, which is happier? Certainly the former.

The young man who practices religion has peace of mind, and an easy conscience, and self-respect, and the esteem of his associates, and the hopeful feeling that comes from the possession of strength.

But the young man who lives in sin, and is a slave to his unruly passion, has a soul dark within him, and is without respect among decent folk, and feels gay only under stimulants. His mirth is forced. His laughter is bitter. His heart is heavy. The blackness of a miserable eternity casts a shadow on his life."

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS

THE WHITTLER

"Forever whittlin' an' neglectin' his books," complained Mrs. Magie dolorously, "that's what Willet is. The other boys ain't so. They're studyin' their books an' goin' right ahead, John to be a doctor an' Tom a farmer an' Sam not yet decided on. But Sam worked all last vacation with a plumber and got 75 cts. a day, so he ain't slack."

"Maybe Willet is meant for a carpenter," suggested her friend, "that's the beginning of big contractors, you know."

Willet's mother shook her head.

"I thought of that," she answered; "an' I got Mr. Hancey to take him on last vacation an' give him a trial. But he only kept him a week. Said he spent too much time whittlin' up good pieces of wood."

"What does he whittle for—just to make shavings and use his knife?"

"No makin' toys, heads an' animals an' every last thing under the sun that you could think of that way. They're good, I must say, an' I can tell his different kinds of hens from each other, an' his Irish an' English an' Dutch an' other faces apart, real easy. He made one o' the new storekeeper that was exact, wart an' little nose an' squint an' tooth gone an' all. I'd like 'a' showed that, but I knowed that 'twould get round an' make Mr. Baker mad. I have to laugh sometimes, but Willet's to old for toys, an' I tell him so, an' he promises to try an' break off. But pshaw! It's like little mites paddlin' in the mud. Turn 'em round toward the house an' slap 'em an' they'll slip right under your arm an' be back in the mud. It's real discouragin' an' I'd intended for Willet to be a professor or inventor or musician, he's got that kind o' high face."

"Oh, well," soothed her friend. "Perhaps Willet will outgrow his whittling. Most boys do."

"Maybe," unbelievingly; "but Willet's going on twelve, an' he's promised time an time again to try, an' I've forbid him to open his knife anywhere round the house, but it only seems to make him worse. There ain't a time but I can see a pocket bulging with something that's just done or bein' worked on. I've most made up my mind to put him into the cotton mill spinnin'. He'd be earnin' $3 a week there, an' the long hours an' hard work would keep him too tired for much whittlin'. I'm real worried lately for he's hardly ever to home since I stopped him usin' his knife round the house. I'll bet he's down somewhere round Mr. Hancey's new job right now, whittlin' under a tree or on top of a pile o' boards."

Willet was at Mr. Hancey's new job, but just now did not happen to be whittling. He was standing in the hall, his head cocked a little on one side, watching something the workmen were putting at the foot of the stairs. Mr. Hancey himself was standing a little way back, talking with a gentleman.

"Say, what do you call that thing, anyhow?" at, last demanded Willet, with open disapproval.

"A newel post."

"I mean the thing on top, the toy head. What's it there for, and who's it meant to be?"

"Why, it's to—to set off the newel post," explained the carpenter, rather doubtfully. "They have them in really fine houses, you know. And it's just a head, and no one in particular."

"No-one-in-particular," repeated Willet, his head still cocked on one side.

"I guess maybe you're right. Look at the nose, and the ears, too! Did you ever see anything like that on a real face? And the eyes—just staring off at nothing. Then the chin's too small. Why don't you have eyes that look right into yours, or at something, and a face that is somebody in particular? Seems to me a house like this ought to have a real thing, right at the foot of the stairs so, where everybody can see."

"Wooden faces have to look sort of wooden, I guess," said the workman good-naturedly; "and seems to me the face is pretty good. I've been considerin' it a fine job."

"Look here, boy," broke in the contractor, "don't criticize unless you can do something better. You're such a whittler, suppose you make a figure for a newel post yourself. As my man says, I think you'll find that wood will stay wood."

Willet shook his head and stepped past the workman upon the first stair, where he examined the carved head critically.

"Made on a stand that must fit square on the post," he said. "Yes, I can make one all right, and I'll have my eyes to see with—or look as if they did. Only I haven't a piece of wood so big. I've always had to work with little sticks and blocks I could pick up round, that were not worth anything. And this would need good, hard wood, like oak or black walnut."

"Pick him out a good block, Cary," said the contractor to his workman; "and, yes, lend him a mallet and a chisel or two. He'd have slow work against a hardwood block, even with his stout knife. Anything to get rid of him for a while. And now, sir," turning again to the gentleman; "as I—" But the boy had drawn close to them, and was waiting. "Well, what now?" irritably.

"Not you, sir." Then to the gentleman, who looked at him inquiringly, "You're the man who owns the house, ain't you?"

"Yes."

"And you're a book writer, who'll have a big library, and who likes such things?"

"Why, yes, I suppose so."

"Which writer do you like best?"

"Why, I—oh, it's about the newel post figure. Well, I like a good many, but I think a poet would be a good man for such a position. I am very fond of Longfellow. I suppose you have seen a picture of him?"

"Yes, sir. There's a fine one hanging up in the public library."

"And you would really undertake such a piece of work, a little fellow like you?"

"Yes, sir," confidently. "I think I could do it."

During the next week little was seen of Willet, either at the new house or his own home. But over under the side of the hill, among the rocks, was a hidden nook where Willet liked to work. Here he was not often disturbed, and here he carried the block of hard wood.

One morning he appeared at the new house with something carried in his arms, wrapped in a newspaper, and apparently quite heavy. But there were only workmen about. The contractor had not yet come. Willet sat down upon a pile of lumber and waited.

An hour or so went by, and at last the contractor appeared, and with him the owner of the house. Willet went to meet them.

"Hello, boy," exclaimed the contractor: "you here again! Thought I'd undermined you sure, that time. But let's see."

He took the bundle from the boy's arms, allowing the wrapping to fall to the ground. As it did so he gave a heavy grunt of approval.

"You have done it, after all, boy," he said. "These eyes can see all right. I didn't think 'twss in you. What do you think of it, sir?"

The gentleman took the carved head and examined it for some time without answering.

"As fine a piece of work as I ever saw," he replied at length. "Is it too late to remove the other head?"

"No, indeed."

"Very well. Do so, and put this in its place. What did that cost?"

"I paid $10 for it, but can send the head back. I can see myself that this is worth a lot more."

The gentleman looked at Willet.

"And you did it all yourself, without help?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"And could do other work that would average as well?"

"Yes, I think so. I've done lots and lots of work, only smaller. But I could n't get large pieces of wood. I think a good many of the things were done as good as that."

"What are you doing, besides carving?"

"Nothing, sir. But mother talks of putting me into the cotton factory, where I can earn 50 cents a day. She says I'm just loafing now."

"U'm! Well, I am planning to do quite a good deal of work in my library, and had thought of sending away for a man to do the carving. Then there will be quite a bit of carving to be done in the dining room, too. You would be right here, convenient for me to go into details about my ideas. Yes, it would be a very good arrangement, and I like your work. Now you run home and tell your mother not to think any more about the cotton mill. Say that you have a permanent engagement that is going to last a long time, at $12 a week. Then come back here and I will start you to work on some pieces for the library. But wait a minute, though. Here are $15 for the Longfellow. Better take that along to your mother, too."—S. H. F. in Sunday Companion.

The life which is beyond, and which the mercy of God will give us, is very desirable indeed; and so we must by no means fall into distrust. Though we are miserable, we are not nearly so much so as God is merciful to those who want to love Him and who have placed their hopes in Him.

I do not understand, in good sooth, how souls which have given themselves to the Divine Goodness are not always joyous, for is there a happiness equal to this? Nor should imperfections which may arise trouble you at all: for we do not wish to entertain them. Remain, then, quite in peace, and live in humility and sweetness of heart.

PURE WHOLESOME
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THE IDEAL MARRIAGE

President Charles F. Thwing, of Western Reserve University, writing in the Hibbert Journal, on the subject of family life, declares that "the value of the American family as a social unit has suffered a great decline," and that its position is lower than it has been in two hundred and fifty years. "The present situation," he says, "is detrimental to the best interests of the human race."

He attributes this decline to the Protestant Reformation, which he assures us was "the greatest movement for individualism the world has ever known." This individualism was emphasized by Puritanism, helped on its way by the Infidel philosophy of the eighteenth century, particularly that of Rousseau, and injected into politics by the American Revolution. The ever increasing individualistic education of the present day is responsible for a share of the havoc, the women's rights movement is sweeping it onward with the velocity of a whirlwind, and finally, says Dr. Thwing, "the decline in the sense of social and conjugal duty"—a euphemism for dissolute living,—enters the field of devastation as one of the most active wreckers of the homes of the American people.

"What we need now," he says, "is a return to old standards, a new and vivid realization of the duty of child bearing, and of the sanctity of the marriage state. The Roman Catholic Church," he notes, "has on the whole accomplished far more for the perpetuity of the marriage rite than has the Protestant."

Let us say in passing that to do a little more for marriage than Protestantism, which is charged with the destruction of marriage, is not crediting Catholicism with a very considerable achievement. The real solution of the difficulty, continues the Doctor, is to be found in John Stuart Mill who, in his book on the "Subjection of Women," tells us how married life can be a source of unbounded felicity, without the slightest danger of its perpetuity being affected.

Evidently Doctor Thwing has read John Stuart Mill only in parts. That ridiculously overestimated writer did not believe in God; his deity was a pagan demi-god. He was, though, possibly he was not aware of it, a Manichæan, and consequently his creed rated all material things evil, including the human body. He was a Utilitarian, which is only another word for a Sensualist, one whose tenets, his friend Carlyle said, were those of the animals that wallow. He was a Malthusian, and therefore did not regard with favor the sanctity of marriage, or esteem as sacred the duty of child bearing. Leslie Stephen, his biographer, tells us that we see in Mill, "no tender dwelling on early days and associations, no affection for mother or brother or sister, no warm expression of personal feeling. In a word, he is a frigid thinker and a worthy prophet of the dismal science which leaves out of account all that is deepest and truly valuable in human nature." This ideally married man lived for years with a Mrs. Turner, the wife of another. He was denounced by his father, shunned by his brothers and sisters and ostracized by the wives of his scientific associates.

"At the feet of this Egeria," says Stephen, "he sat in absolute seclusion from his fellows during the most feverish period of his intellectual life. Of her he spoke in language so extravagant as almost to challenge antagonism. Her qualities, he said, included Carlyle's and his own and infinitely more; her judgment was next to infallible; the highest poetry, philosophy and art seemed trivial by the side of her, and equal only to expressing some part of her mind, and he prophecies that if mankind continue to improve, their spiritual history for all ages to come will be the progressive working out of her thoughts and the realization of her conceptions."

Such is the man we are told to consult if we would know what is an ideal marriage. Has Dr. Thwing forgotten the teachings of Jesus Christ?—America.

JOY OF PENANCE

IT IS WHAT WE SHOULD ALL CRAVE

By Rev. Walter Elliott, C.S.P.

What then is our joy? It is the joy of penance. St. Peter of Alcantara appeared in a vision to St. Teresa after his death, all resplendent with glory, and he said to her: "O Blessed penance, which has won for me so great a joy!" It is our only solid joy. Our joy is a sick man's joy in his medicine. We once heard a soldier of the civil war boast joyfully of his left arm, which had been dreadfully fractured by a gunshot wound, and had been saved by a skillful surgeon extracting a section of the shattered and splintered bones between the wrist and elbow; he was proudly exhibiting and thankfully boasting of a boneless and almost nerveless arm and hand. But it was an arm, nevertheless, a real limb of flesh and blood, and infinitely better than none at all.

A wounded man's joy is in the sharpness of the surgeon's knife, and a Christian's joy is in the sharp knife of sorrow for sin, that pain of contrition which cuts deep and true to his hearts core. "To my bearing," cries the Royal penitent, "Thou shalt give joy and gladness, and the bones that have been humbled shall rejoice" (Ps. l. 10). Believe in that joy; crave that joy of God; accustom yourself to the joy of mending your thoughts by painful efforts; of thinking of sin and of suffering and atonement as unified under the cross; of sympathizing with the Redeemer; of bearing the pain of submission to the divine will as the counter-pain of mental or bodily suffering. Do all this and go on doing it by reasoning and by method and by habit, till at last you can do it by instinct. One must systematically use spiritual means and measures until he becomes simply saturated with this doctrine of the correlation of sin, pain and joy, if he would go on smoothly towards perfection, which is "justice, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom. xiv. 17).—Catholic World Magazine.

THAT PASSWORD

The following story is told by Senator Tillman.

One of his most influential constituents, an elderly farmer name Swate, had come up to Washington on the opening day of the Senate, Senator Tillman had piloted him round the Capitol, and then, having some work to do in the chamber, he led him to a special gallery, found a place for him, and left him there. After a while Swate got tired of listening to the apparently eternal speech of a senator, and rose to go outside for a walk.

"My name is Swate," he said to the gallery doorkeeper. "Senator Tillman brought me here and asked me to wait for him, but I want to go out and look round a bit. I thought I'd better tell you so that I can get back right here when I want to."

"That's all right," said the doorkeeper; "but as I may not be here when you return I'll give you the password so that you can get your seat again."

That old man's eyes rather popped out at this fresh complication.

"What's the word?" he asked.

"Idiosyncrasy," said the doorkeeper.

"What?"

"Idiosyncrasy."

"Spell it."

"I-d-i-o-s-y-n-c-r-a-s-y."

"H'm!" commented the old farmer, returning to his seat, "I guess I'll stay in."

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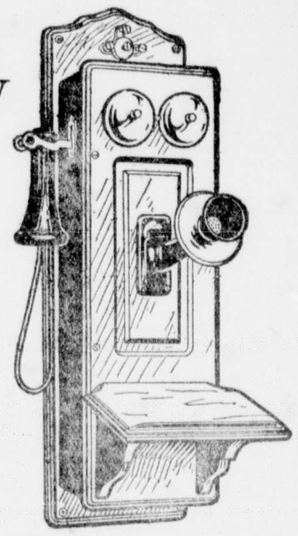

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