

CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN. A JESUIT FATHER'S PRACTICAL ADMONITIONS TO YOUNG MEN.

Rev. Father Wilberding, S. J., recently addressed the young men of St. Francis' parish on "Self-Improvement." He spoke practically and forcefully of the need among Catholic young men of an ambition for culture and intellectual development.

"If you wish to be somebody," he said, "if you wish to rise from a lower to a higher grade of society, if you wish to heap up wealth, if you wish to gain distinction and power and influence, you must cultivate your mind, form your will. You may object in your mind now, thinking, how can we, who are so overburdened with hard, manual labor, devote our energies to the improvement of our mind and will? I believe I am able to show you that you enjoy special advantages to do so, if you make a good use of the opportunities offered to you, of the means at your disposal. Much time is at your disposal during the long winter evenings. Shun dangerous or useless amusements or enjoyments. As to means there are libraries, contact with quick witted, sharp men. But be select in the choice of your books and friends. Read under direction and guidance.

"The intelligent voter. To induce you to give your attention to your intellectual improvement, I may call to mind the manifold advantages of education. Without a considerable degree of culture, it is impossible to move in the higher circles of society. Is it not almost impossible to ascend to a position of honor in city or state without a well disciplined mind? Besides, does not a trained mind feel the highest and noblest enjoyments? How superior are the pleasures of art and literature to those of the senses. Without a considerable amount of education, you cannot, even intellectually, discharge the duties of citizenship. How many vote without knowing for what they cast their ballot? To vote reasonably you must understand the points at issue of the different parties and be able to form a correct judgment in regard to their usefulness and practicability. Finally, who possess influence and power? Power is the prerogative of the educated man."

Father Wilberding also spoke of the necessity of moral culture. "You may be an educated man, a learned man," he said, "and yet you may be a failure. You may be an educated man and yet be a curse to your fellowman. Knowledge is power, but power is useful only when it is under control. This necessary control comes from our moral training. We must keep our passions in check; learn to master them; else they cause our ruin. Our passions are powers stored away in our being to be used at the bidding of reason, but if we let them do as they please, if we let them rule, they will soon drag us down to irreparable misery and ruin. Every boy or man who is ruined, is ruined by his passions. Judas affords an example of avarice; Herod of sensuality; Pilate of human respect.

PRISONS CANNOT DESTROY CRIMINALS. "Religious principles, the voice of conscience, the means of grace, help us in our arduous struggle to conquer whatever is low, mean and base within ourselves; to draw forth whatever is high, noble and virtuous. No other power on earth is strong enough to accomplish this work. Prisons and gallows may frighten, they cannot destroy criminals. There must be a more potent agent. Religion alone is equal to the gigantic task. There is but one institution that possesses the power and influence to uplift the masses and that institution is the Catholic Church. Here I may call to your minds the indispensible fact that wherever civilization has made headway since the coming of the Redeemer the Catholic missionary paved the way. The history of the world testifies to this statement. St. Patrick brought civilization with Catholicity to Ireland, St. Columba to Scotland, St. Austin to England, St. Clotilda to France, St. Paul and James to Spain, St. Boniface to Germany, Father Marquette and De Smet to America."

As the primary means to mental and moral self-improvement, Father Wilberding urged the cultivation of good habits. "Habits once formed, good or bad," he said, "become the ruling powers in our lives. In unforeseen, in unexpected circumstances we act according to the habits we have formed in hours of deliberation. What then is a habit? How is it formed? A habit is a more or less lasting quality that disposes a faculty to act with readiness and ease. A habit is formed by the frequent repetition of the same act. Almost all boys have the same ideas about right and wrong. But one boy is good because he acts in accordance with his ideas of goodness, obedience, holiness, charity; the other is bad because he has accustomed himself to act contrary to his ideas of goodness and has formed the habit of disobedience, rudeness and impiety.

TO BECOME USEFUL AND HAPPY. "Do you wish to be useful, happy men? Do you wish to be a power for good in the circle in which you will move? Why is one family peaceful, happy? Why is the other family, quarrelling, miserable? Good habits make the difference. Your personal interest, your temporal and eternal welfare, your own self-respect, above all, your higher and nobler aspiration—all these depend on good habits. Your aim must ever be to do good—not only to self, but also to the community in which you happen to be. Every boy must desire, not only to make money, to gain honors, and to secure happiness for himself, but also to bestow these advantages upon his family, parish, state and country. From all these you receive benefits—is it not fair and just to make some return? How hateful and mean is a selfish and narrow spirit. How attractive a noble-minded one. I repeat it, the betterment, the improvement of all in our society, morally and mentally, must be our motive-power in our high endeavors. Nobility of soul is no necessary in our material age. Be noble-minded, world-embracing in your views and aims. Be even ready to defend our holy religion; become men,

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS. Worthless Bobby.

"Please, Mr. Harro! Oh, please try me a little longer. A week—just one week. Please, Mr. Harro!"

Mr. Harro looked into the pleading little face before him, and once more the kind heart was touched and softened. "I can't depend upon your Bobby, that's the trouble; you neglect my work. Understand, I appreciate your love for books, I am glad you love them; but your first duty is to attend to the business that I give you to do, and you don't do it, Bobby; you know you don't."

"Oh, Mr. Harro, I will try to be good. Take my books away from me, and try me just once more." "I will not take your books from you, that would be no test; but I shall put you on your merit once more, Bobby, and see what you will do; but if there is no improvement, it is your last chance—you will have to go. You understand now, do you?" said Mr. Harro, as he stepped into the carriage.

Bobby turned away to hide the tears, as Marion Harro, a sweet girl of nineteen years, ran merrily down the path and took the seat beside her father. "Well, Marion, that youngster has gotten the best of me again, and I have taken him another week on probation."

"Dear father, I am so glad"—her face brightening—"I thought you would give him another trial."

"What a tender heart you have, dear; but I love you to be so; the more of your sainted mother I see in your character the more I feel you are developing into the highest type of womanhood. Foster it, my darling; cultivate it; there are always plenty to say the hard, sharp word, and under a cloak of frankness wound even those whom they really love."

They were driving along the beautiful country road to the station, and as they drew up to the platform for Mr. Harro to alight, Marion put her hand tenderly over his face and said, "Dear father, I am trying to be like her."

"Surely, the mantle of the mother has fallen upon the daughter," replied Mr. Harro, with quivering voice, "and you will never know, my darling, what hope and joy you bring into your father's life."

As Marion drove leisurely home her thoughts turned to Bobby. How could she help him? He was one of seven, his father was dead, and his struggling mother trying to keep the family together. They were honest and respectable, but very poor. Bobby was thirteen, John, the eldest, a boy of fifteen, had a position in the village grocery store, which was a great help to his mother. He was an industrious, hard-working boy, but Bobby did not love work, and would shirk everything that he possibly could to pore over his beloved books. History, geology, anatomy, astronomy—anything that fell into his hands—he would read, and think and wonder, though he could not understand. That, in fact, was the fascination. He wanted to know about things, and he knew there were men in the world who did know, or these books would never have been written. Mr. Harro, knowing how the boy yearned for education, offered to take him in his home, allowing him the school privileges, and paying him well for doing chores about the place thereby laying some money aside for his higher education, for it was very plain that Bobby would never earn a living by the sweat of his brow. "Absolutely worthless!" was the opinion nearly everybody had of poor Bobby, and it was through much apparent tribulation on their part that Mr. Harro and Marion were trying to make something out of the boy. He had been with them six months, and Mr. Harro, thoroughly discouraged, had threatened often to send him back to his mother—only to be won over every time either by the stress of the boy or the coaxing of his idolized daughter.

This was a day earlier in November, and the light clouds that had hovered around in the morning thickened and gathered, and by noon rain was falling. A great storm was upon them, that hourly increased in its fury. Trembling hands were held on either side of the anxious face that peered into what was already the darkness of night as faithful John, who acted as coachman and man-of-all-work about the place, drove down the carriage drive and out into the street on his way to meet his master.

Two hours passed and they had not returned. Marion walked restlessly about the house. "Where is Bobby, Hannah," she said, stopping at the kitchen door, where the odor of the savory dinner would have been most appetizing had it not been for the great anxiety for her father's safety.

"Clar to goodness, Miss Marion, I dun know! Seem's if dat boy don't know 'nuff to come in out a' de rain. He tok de lantern and went out to de barn, an' I just 'specks he's scared to come back."

In the meantime John had safely reached the station, and after waiting a long time for the belated train, Mr. Harro finally appeared at the carriage door. The usually sluggish little stream that ran between the home and the station was a river. It had risen until even with the bridge, and the opposite end had loosened from its foundation and was ready to break away; but they

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A BLASPHEMOUS TOUGH.

While standing on the platform of a Fulton street car a few evenings ago I noticed three young men, fellow-passengers, chatting in a seemingly gentlemanly manner. Suddenly the car gave a jolt and one, whose back was turned to me, let an oath that was blood-curdling. His companions, seeing me, tried by winks, nods and facial contortions to inform him that some one was near whose ears were offended by such language. But he was too occupied, too boisterous in his blasphemy to notice anything of the kind. Finally I said to him: "Why do you use the name of our Blessed Lord so foully? I am a priest, and to me as to all gentlemen such profanation is horrible."

The young man's face showed pain, perhaps sorrow. Then quietly ingenuously, he said: "Really, sir, I don't know." From his answer I knew he was not a Catholic, and for this I felt a kind of joy, a negative joy if you will, but all the same a joy. We then exchanged a few kind words and tipping his hat he and his companions left me.

Alone with the conductor, I asked him if such blasphemy was very common on his trips. He answered: "Yes, particularly among young fellows who want to be tough." Was the conductor right? Did that young man want to be tough? He certainly did not. And, like thousands of his kind, he would be indignant if told that his blasphemous expressions proved him the tough. Yet what else is such a one, knowingly or unknowingly, but the worst kind of a tough—a blasphemous tough?

Why will men, young or old, insult the sacred name of Jesus Christ, a name at whose mention the angels in heaven and the demons in hell bow? "God hath exalted Him and hath given Him a name which is above all names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth or under the earth." No man has ever advanced a reason for the blasphemy of His sacred name. For all other sins, reasons, fallacious or otherwise, may be adduced, but for the blasphemy of Christ's name none can be adduced. The liar hopes to gain by deceiving others, the hypocrite simulates or dissimulates to accomplish his ends and the glutton, the drunkard or the impure man wallows in the mire of sensuality to satisfy his animal cravings, but what does it profit or what gratification is derived by the lips that blaspheme the sacred name of Jesus Christ? Does the possessor of such lips feel himself more a man by his blasphemy? Does he think his value to society is enhanced, his word more honored, his voice more

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musical, his breath more sweet? Well has it been said: "Most sinners serve the devil for pay. But swimmers and blasphemers serve him gratis, and these he rewards by dragging them down to hell."—From the Nativity Mentor, Brooklyn.

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