

CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN

A SUMMIT START

How to get a start upward towards success, is what puzzles some young men. Here is a fine suggestion for them:

"All I need is a start in life," said a young man who thought more of himself than other people thought of him, and who complained daily of how little "luck" he had. "Give me that, and I will soon show the world what is in me!"

"Why not take a summit start, tomorrow, then?" said his listener. "Anyone has that in his power, you know."

"A summit start? What's that? Mountain climbing?"

"In a way it is. You furnish your own mountains, though. A summit start means putting into practice the motto of a great order, a motto that has been found to fit all sorts and conditions of men. It is such a valuable motto that it ought always to be written in capitals:

"THE HIGHEST POINT OF ACHIEVEMENT OF YESTERDAY, IS THE STARTING POINT OF TODAY."

"You see, the more you do one day, the better start you can have the next, and no one can hinder you. There's no luck about it—it's as sure and scientific as anything can be. Better try it."

The young man did.

The first day, he discovered—for he was not by any means a fool—that yesterday's summit was almost unobtainable on account of its closeness to sea level. He could hardly tell it from a hole in the ground. That was illuminating, and did him good, though it hurt. He went to work at once to make to-day into a better yesterday when it turned came. Then to-morrow became a better yesterday still to start from. Soon the whole dead level of his days became a varied set of ascents. He was mountain climbing, and nobody could stop him from going up in the world, because, as the other man had truly remarked, he furnished his own mountains as he went along, and was beholden to nobody.

The motto that gave him his start is a good motto for everybody. It belongs to everybody. No one can monopolize it. Everyone's opportunity to make a summit start is bound up in his own place and personality. It cannot be taken away, or even limited except by his own will and action.

There is always some best point of departure in every yesterday. There is some better moment than the rest, some glimpse of possibility, some act of kindness or self-control. That is the thing to pick out and start from—upward and on. Just to look over yesterday, and try to pick out its best and highest summit, is an exercise of real moral value. It may humiliate a man to find that his highest bit of yesterday was only a hairbreadth above failure. Never mind—a hairbreadth will do to begin with. It's the highest thing there, anyhow, and so it is the best thing to start from in sight.

Once started, the nearest possible summit is the one to make for and conquer, and have ready to start from to-morrow. There are no air castles on this practical route; everything is solid and substantial, what there is of it. The smallest hillcock on which one has actually stood yesterday is better than all the cloudland peaks of to-morrow that ever were imagined, as far as actual traveling goes. Air castle summits never lift life's level. They only make it look more dreary and dusty, and set people to complaining and longing baselessly for vague and undeserved happiness. Firm ground half a foot high is better, every time.

"He never does less than his best," was the explanation given of the steady rise and success of a young man, the other day, "and he betters his best most of the time." What had luck to do with such a marcher as that? He outpaced it up the hills. And the lives of earth's great men, indeed, emphasize the summit start.

THE GENTLEMAN BOY

An eminent educator, addressing an assemblage of parents, said in part:

"Let your boy with the first liping of speech be taught to speak accurately on all subjects, be they trivial or important, and when he becomes a man he will scorn to tell a lie."

"Early instill into your boy's mind decision of character. Undecided, purposeless boys make nobby-pamby men, unless to themselves and to every body else."

"Teach your boy to have an object in view, the backbone to go after it, and then stick."

"Teach your boy to disdain revenge. Revenge is a sin that grows with his strength. Teach him to write kindness in marble, injuries in dust."

"There is nothing that improves a boy's character so much as putting him on his honor—trusting to his honor. I have little hope for the boy who is dead to the feeling of honor. The boy who needs to be continually looked after is on the road to ruin. If treating your boy as a gentleman does not make him a gentleman, nothing else will wait upon himself."

"Let your boy wait upon himself as much as possible. The more he has to depend upon himself the more manly a little fellow he will show himself. Self-dependence will call his talents. The wisest charity is to help a boy to help himself."

"Happy is the father who is happy in his boy, and happy is the boy who is happy in his father."—Catholic Columbian.

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS

SAINT FRANCIS BORGIA

You will be attracted toward this holy man when we tell you he was the third general of the Jesuits and the fourth Duke of Gandia. You will be more interested in him as general of the Jesuits than as a great duke.

You remember that the general of the Jesuits, Father Wernz, died a few weeks ago or just after the death of Pope Pius X. You see, from the first founder, Saint Ignatius, down to the present day, there has been an unbroken line of generals of the Order of Jesus. Many of them have been canonized.

Saint Francis Borgia was given the name Francis, after Saint Francis of Assisi. His pious parents had great love for Saint Francis of Assisi, and at an early age the little child was taught to honor him.

He was always a pious child and grew in love of God. As he grew to manhood this love increased. His companions were carefully selected by his pious parents, and when he grew to maturity he had no desire to associate with the vicious. One of his dear friends was Garcias de Vega, a famous poet, who is honored to-day by all who know his writings.

The death of the pious empress, Isabel, was indirectly the cause of making Saint Francis Borgia give up the world. He was one of the friends of the emperor, who was asked to accompany the body to Granada. When they arrived at Granada those who had charge of the body had to vouch that it was really the body of the late empress. When the coffin of lead was opened, instead of the beautiful face they had seen so often, there was before them a face decayed and quite unlike the face of the beautiful, brilliant woman they had known during life. Our good Duke of Borgia could testify that he was sure the coffin before him contained the same body as the one entrusted to his charge.

This proof of the nothingness of this life so affected the Duke of Gandia that he turned his whole attention to preparing for his eternal salvation. His duties towards his people were afterwards performed with more carelessness, his life was moulded more and more after that of Saint Ignatius Loyola. To aid him he placed himself under the instructions of Father Peter Le Fevre, who was at one time associated with Saint Ignatius.

He began making his preparations to leave the world, or to retire to some Order. An account of how he prepared for this new life would be most interesting. He left Gandia in 1549 with a soldier's pay on his lips. He was ordained a priest of God in the year 1551. Ever after when it was possible he chose the most difficult tasks, the most lowly places in the Order. Often he went along the streets ringing a bell and calling the children to study the catechism. What a grand teacher he must have been. Father Laynoz, second general of the Jesuits, died in 1585, and Saint Francis Borgia was elected superior of the Order.—Sunday Companion.

WHAT THE ALTAR BOY SHOULD REMEMBER

Nothing can be small or unimportant which is connected with a dignity the angels covet. The first requisite is punctuality. Who would keep royalty waiting his own convenience?

When one is invited to a dinner-party he dresses, not to gratify his own vanity, but to honor his host. You recall the fate of one who neglected to clothe himself in the wedding garment. There should be no carelessness or untidiness in the person of the King's page.

Every article worn by the priest when saying Mass has a deep religious significance: so too, have the garments of the server a special meaning and are to be treated with the reverence care due to sacred things. Punctuality and proper attire are only the preparation for public worship—which consists of adoring and supplicating words placed upon the lips by Holy Church herself.

All this, the altar boy, in his conspicuous place in the sanctuary, should consider, and remember especially when making the responses in the Mass.

So great is the care of Holy Church to treat the Word, when He becomes flesh and dwells among us, with proper reverence, that she has set apart a language for this purpose. In the House of God our mother-tongue is forgotten, and the noble Latin language is used.

Respect for a superior can be shown in no way so manifestly as in the tone and manner of our address. We strive to speak deliberately, grammatically, distinctly. With an equal one may use contractions and colloquialisms; but when God is publicly addressed in the language He Himself has chosen, each word should be perfectly enunciated, dropping from the lips like beads of gold.

Surely this was one of the ways in which St. John Berchmanns performed his duties perfectly. No unbecoming word, we know, was ever spoken by him. Words have wings, and once they are set free, like wild birds, can never be recalled. "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a door round about my lips," was the prayer of quick tempered King David, and might well be the prayer of each

of us; but most especially of him who serves the priest at the altar and whose lips utter sacred words.—Sacred Heart Review.

MEXICO'S APPEAL

The Catholics of Mexico have appealed to the Catholics of the United States. Down from the caves in the mountains, out from the dismantled and polluted temples, up from the ruins of the desolate convents they are calling for help. There are tears in the voices of their bishops and priests, their religious and nuns. They are homeless and hopeless and hungry. They who chose a single day in the house of the Lord above a thousand years in the dwellings of sinners have been driven forth from the abode of their desires. Mass is not said at many an altar, the light has gone out of their sanctuaries, the door of the tabernacle stands open, and they are exiles from their churches and convents. And all this has come to pass because they have given proof of their faith, they have shown their fidelity in suffering. They have been persecuted for justice's sake. There has been a glorious part, and like the Christians of old they are proud to have been found worthy to suffer something for Christ. So much for them, but what of ourselves?

What of ourselves? What have we done in the matter? Oh, we have expressed our indignation, but indignation is cold comfort to those in sorrow. We have felt undoubted shame that we should even unwittingly have had some share in the wrong, but our shame has affected only ourselves. Sympathy, too, has welled up in our hearts, but with some notable exceptions it has remained in our hearts, it has borne no fruits; and we know that by its fruits it shall be tested. So far we have done little for the Catholics in Mexico, and this although we are certain that they are the suffering members of Christ. "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me." Surely we should be happy to give our Lord to eat and to drink, and to take Him in, if He were a stranger without a place whereon to lay His head. What a mysterious thing it is, that what we do for His friends, He counts as done to Himself, as a personal favor written ten down in the book of life against the dread day of judgment! And the converse is true. If we refuse, in both cases He says, "You did it to me." The appeal of Mexico is not, indeed, so urgent or so intimate that it involves for us the extreme penalty or even the slight displeasure of Christ; but it is a refusal all the same to do it for Him. And if our reason for doing so is mere thoughtlessness or selfishness, ought we not to be ashamed? We have given Christmas presents to our friends. Why not the Christ Child, the present now to the Christ Child, are in bitter need? A blessing will come from need? A blessing will come from need? The Master for all those who put it in His power to say, "You did it for me." Nor is it only the rich who should take this to heart. We know that our Lord rejoiced exceedingly over the widow's mite. Children, too, might do something, for Christ is the children's King, and little babes are dying in Mexico of hunger and pestilence. Some slight act of self denial, a pleasure foregone, a luxury deferred, will mean little to us who have many good things, but much to those wanting the necessities of life.—America.

A WORD ABOUT ST. BLAISE

It is at this season of the year, when "the gripe" is so generally prevalent, that the devout Catholic mother, with a sigh of relief, anticipates the approaching feast of St. Blaise, through whose intercession she trusts her flock of little ones may be preserved, during the coming year, from ailments of the throat.

Yet, notwithstanding the promptness with which the children, at the proper time, are hustled off "to have their throats blessed," it is likely that but few, even of the saint's clients, know anything about him, or the origin of the custom of blessing throats in his honor.

Alban Butler, in his "Lives of the Saints," tells us that St. Blaise lived in Armenia, towards the close of the third century, and in the earlier part of this life and its transient pleasures and while practicing the medical profession, God revealed to him the utter emptiness of this life, inspiring him with the resolution to devote his remaining years to the pursuit of sanctity, and the salvation of souls.

In the course of time he was made a bishop, and won the affection of his people by his shining virtues and the many miracles he performed in the half of the ill.

Persecutions of the Christians being renewed around him, he was finally apprehended and conducted to prison. On his way there he was besought by a poor mother to save her only child, who was at death's door with throat trouble. The saint could not refuse. He offered up prayers to God, and the mother, returning home, found her child all right. Since that time it has been customary to invoke his intercession in similar ailments, which are usually thereby cured.

Shortly after this occurrence the holy bishop, after suffering many



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cruel tortures, died at the hands of his executioners and is honored by the Church as a martyr, his feast being celebrated February 3.

The candles used in the ceremony on that day are specially blessed for the purpose, the formula translated into English being as follows:

"Almighty and most merciful God, Who by a single word didst create all the various things in the world; and Who didst wish that that same Word through which all things were made should become incarnate for the reformation of mankind; Who art great and immense, terrible and deserving of all praise, and the Maker of wonderful things, for the confession of whose faith the glorious martyr and bishop Saint Blaise, despising different kinds of tortures, did happily attain the palm of martyrdom; and Who among other graces, did bestow upon him the special gift of curing by Thy power all ill of the throat, we humbly beseech Thy Majesty that regarding not our guilt, but rather appeased by his merits and prayers, Thou wouldst deign to bless and sanctify this wax candle, imparting to it Thy grace, in order that all whose throats are touched by it in the spirit of faith, may be delivered, by the merits of his sufferings, from all ill of the throat; and restored to health, may with joyful hearts give thanks to Thee in Thy Holy Church and praise Thy glorious Name which is blessed forever and ever. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who livest and reignest with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen."

All who wish to receive the benefit of the blessing assemblage in the church at an appointed hour; when the priest, bearing two of these candles, lighted, and fastened together in the form of a cross, places them under the chin of the child or person to be blessed, pronouncing in Latin the following invocation:

"By the intercession of St. Blaise, bishop and martyr, may God deliver thee from disease of the throat, and from every other ill. In the name of the father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."—Church Progress.

THE AGNOSTIC

The ordinary agnostic has got his facts all wrong. He is a non-believer for a multitude of reasons but they are untrue reasons. He doubts because the Middle Ages were barbaric, but they weren't; because Darwinism is demonstrated, but it isn't; because miracles do not happen, but they do; because the monks were lazy, but they were very industrious; because nuns are unhappy, but they are particularly cheerful; because Christian art was sad and pale, but it was picked out in peculiarly bright colors, gay with gold; because modern science is moving away from the supernatural, but it isn't—it is moving towards the supernatural with the rapidity of a railway train.—Gilbert K. Chesterton.

A CIRCUMSPECT INFORMANT

A gentleman, presumably a German professor, who was traveling on foot from Brussels to Ostend, by way of Ghent, had just left the last mentioned town when he came upon an old roadmender seated, head bent, by the wayside and engaged in breaking stones.

"How long will it take me to get to Bruges, my good fellow?" asked the pedestrian stopping beside the old man.

There was no reply, nor was a second inquiry any more successful; the road-mender answered never a word.

"He's deaf," said the professor to himself. "The administration ought to have more sense than to hire such employees. They can't be one way or another, or help one in any way." And continuing to grumble, he proceeded on his journey.

Scarcely had he walked fifty yards, however, when the old fellow called out to him:

"Sir! I say, sir!"

The surprised traveler turned around, exclaiming, as he walked back: "Oh, ho! So you are no longer deaf! You've recovered your voice perfectly I see. Well, what is it?"

"What do you want of me?"

"Sir, it will take you at least two hours to get to Bruges."

"Indeed! Well, you took your time before answering my question. Couldn't you have given me this information in the first place?"

"No, sir; how could I? I hadn't seen how fast you were walking. Now that I know your pace—"

"True enough," said the other—"true enough. You are the most circumspcct informant I ever met in all my life. Here's a coin for a smoke and a glass of wine, when you're through with your day's work."

And as the learned professor continued his journey he kept repeating to himself: "A most uncommon stamp of mind. I maintain that."—Ave Maria.

MOTHER

Backward, turn backward, O Time in Thy flight:
Make me a child again, just for to-night.

In what has not at some time echoed the haunting refrain of that sweet old song, bringing with it maybe, the half-forgotten accents of a voice long hushed and turning and the light again to the tear-dimmed pictures that have hung so long on the walls of the past. And as the wizard, Memory renews the scenes of the long ago, how we long "for touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice that is still."

Though the fronts of many winters have faded upon our heads and Time's relentless fingers have graven their records upon our faces the burden of the years falls away "as a glance is backward cast o'er the well-remembered forms that lie in the silence of the past." In the center of every picture, the light of every scene, there stands forth one face and one form, that of "Mother." The source of every flood, the center of all the love and consolation and blessing of childhood, the inspiration and of manhood's time of achievement, the tender memory of life's autumn years, the love of mother is born earliest, lives longest and dies last.

It may be that we can thank God that no word of ours ever added to her burdens caused her a heart-ache; "if so, even God Himself could give no greater consolation to declining years. But if we remorse bring back the record of cruel word or unloving act only God's forgiveness can wipe it out.

Though far may be separated the scenes of early years, though our eyes may first have opened upon the sun of the south or the snows of the north, we have in common the love of home and mother. If she has gone before, and is watching and waiting our coming, let us place tenderly where her dead dust lies the garlands of our loving memories, dedicating to her the white flower of pure living.

If her presence still adds its light to our lives let us not keep back the flowers to place upon her tomb, but give them into her living hands that the tender grace of loving deeds may brighten life's afterglow as the shadows of evening fall.—The Casket.

THE IRON CROSS

HISTORY OF GERMAN DISTINCTION FOR VALOR ON THE BATTLEFIELD

Shortly after the opening of hostilities the German Kaiser following the precedent established by William I, reinstituted the famous Order of the Iron Cross. The New Yorker Staats Zeitung furnishes an interesting history of this coveted mark of distinction which is awarded solely for the performance of deeds of the highest valor on the field of battle.

King Frederick William III, of Prussia founded the order on March 10, 1813, as a reward for services rendered to the Fatherland in the Napoleonic wars. The plainness of the iron insignia was intended to remind its wearers of the hard times that had brought it into being. It was a small iron maltese cross inscribed with a narrow silver band just inside the beveled edge. The only other marks upon it were three oak leaves in the center, the royal initials F. W. mounted by a small crown, and the date 1813. As is customary in the case of royal orders, there were two classes and a grand cross, the latter twice the regular size. In 1841 a permanent endowment was added paying fixed annual sums to the wearers of the decoration.

On July 19, 1870, the day that France again declared war on Prussia the order was revived by King William I, on the same conditions as originally instituted. At that time the three oak leaves were dropped, and the letter W, the crown, and the date 1870 were substituted for the original marks, but the leaves were restored by an order of the Imperial Council in 1895. The decoration as revised in 1870 has been bestowed on 48,574 German warriors of all classes, including those coming from German states outside of Prussia.

The Grand Cross is conferred only on commanding officers who have won a decisive battle followed by the forced retirement of an enemy, for the capture of an important fort, or for successfully defending a fort against the enemy's capture. In addition to the soldiers who have won the cross for individual acts of distinguished valor, it has been granted to all the members of regiments that have performed especially meritorious service. There is no decoration for a German military man that carries with it greater glory than the Iron Cross, and it is significant that the thousands of veterans who possess this priceless decoration have always been looked upon with the most profound respect by the entire German public.—St. Paul Bulletin.

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