

CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN.

Week before last we gave the physiological and medical reasons for refraining from the use of intoxicants and we now supplement Dr. Kerr's article by this masterly argument, prepared by Dr. John Bascom, on the Social Reasons for Abstinence. The social reasons for total abstinence may be variously put, but they all involve one principle—the organic relation between men; and turn on one fact, a temptable and feeble social state. Everyone would recognize the wisdom and necessity of total abstinence in many persons whose physical condition is unsound and whose mental condition is weak. Many men have simply not vigorous appetites to contend with, they have very abnormal appetites and exceedingly irritable nervous systems, which give predisposing conditions for the interference of the most dangerous order. Nor are they directly responsible for these most critical and unfortunate tendencies. They come to them by inheritance, and can only be partially reduced by the most protracted and heroic resistance. We may greatly err by saying that such men are not responsible for their actions, and we may equally err by overlooking the very hard circumstances under which that responsibility is met. They are individually responsible, but they do sympathetically call for all the aid that society can give them, cursed as they are with the accumulated entail of convivial sins. This fact of physical, constitutional conditions in every, even the most extreme degree, unfavorable to temperance, scattered broadly through society, and often unsuspected even by those who suffer from them till they are ready to break out—conditions that turn on the transgressions of near and remote ancestors, and involve no direct guilt on the part of those who so unfortunately inherit them, this fact, so general, so subtle and so disastrous, calls for recognition under the social organic law, and for such action as shall be most safe and most helpful for these tempted ones. Society, collectively, is not strong enough and sound enough for temperance; its present appropriate law is abstinence. Men, the masses of men, boys, and young men, are ignorant, foolish, and morally weak on this subject. They cannot be expected to accept the social customs about them otherwise than in a lax, degenerate and indiscriminate way. To require morality of the weak without patience and discipline, is to require wisdom of the ignorant without instruction. Formal temperance on the part of the wise and good, will in its inevitable tendency, passing downward from class to class, become extreme indulgence and vice. We are bound to recognize this fact, unavoidable and necessary, and suit our action not to our own interests only, but to the necessities of others also. It is by this very relation that society is morally organic. The existing facts in society as a whole are such that total abstinence is its only safe law, a fact proved by a long and terrible experience, and every member of society is bound, therefore, to see and accept the limitation. But, it will be said, by this method we allow men to cast their weaknesses and vices upon us in an offensive and arrogant claim. The answer is double. These weaknesses are social, not individual simply, are what society has given and is bound if possible to mitigate; and, secondly, this is not a personal claim put forward by the weak and indolent, but is or should be a free moral concession of the strong and virtuous. The tempted ones feel this concession of abstinence, and are greatly aided by the favorable conditions that arise from it, by the sympathy it implies, and the stern reprobation which is in it—a reprobation which is entirely unmistakable by the most blind of them all. If any one ventures to claim this concession as a personal right, such a claim is only one among many examples of the deceitful way in which we play the moral game of life; it does not express the underlying phase of the facts, nor materially alter them. The best of us can well afford at this point to consult the organic weakness of men. Intoxicants serve no important part in our economy. If we are using them wisely the most we can say is, they furnish some appetitive pleasure and are connected with some contiguity. If the appetitive pleasure is of any material moment to us, then we ourselves are in danger, and should check our indulgence at once. If intoxicants are at all necessary to the conviviality in the moral scale, and should again, for our own sake, alter our habits. To a truly temperate man, the concession which abstinence calls for is slight, secondary, and of no moral moment; precisely such a concession as we may most readily and cheerfully make to society. Let it clearly be seen that we make the demand as a distinctively social demand, a moral demand and not a personal one. It is an application of the law of love by which we bear one another's burdens; by which the intellectually and spiritually strong help forward the weak. This is no secondary law, but the primary law; the ultimate law of society organized under the mind of Christ. What good, temperate men above all things can not, for their own sake, afford to do, is to drink, morning by morning, their single glass of wine, forgetful of its influence on those about them. This is moral damnation; this is isolation in one's own selfish indulgence. When from such a table—and how often is this scene rehearsed—a son, a guest,

goes forth with sleeping and deadly appetites awakened, which many generations of abstinence could alone have finally extinguished, to enter on a career of dissipation, that man or host is just as certainly accountable for the result as if a fatal explosion had followed the careless lighting of a cigar in a powder-magazine. The one thing no man can morally afford to do in society in its existing state is to pursue indulgences, comfortable and creditable in themselves, but unsafe for those about him. The one thing we are most in danger of doing is denying the mind of Christ, and this is that denial. We are to love our neighbors as ourselves. If the danger of society were our personal danger, total abstinence would be our personal duty. It is not less our duty because the pleasures are ours and the dangers another's. We venture to say that there is no more important place and no plainer one for the application of the law of love than this of temperance; and if we can not find and apply the law here, we are morally lost—condemned to eternal selfishness. These are leading social principles which it is not easy to confuse or deny. The moral force of this method is totally different from, and incomparably greater than, that method in which each man solves for himself his own individual problem. The one is expressed by the eager maxim, every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost, the other by the second command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Exceptions are Rare. We hear, at odd times, that the Sons of Temperance, Knights of Pythias, and Odd Fellows are no longer under the ban of the Church, and that nominal membership in them is now permitted to Catholics. This, however, is not a full statement of the facts. In August, 1895, the Apostolic Delegate received instructions from the S. Congregation that affiliation with these societies was to be forbidden to Catholics, and that all who persist in such affiliation, after having been duly warned by ecclesiastical authority, are not to be admitted to the sacraments; "that the condemnation is to be considered absolute, and wherever peculiar circumstances seem to merit official consideration in particular cases, the matter was to be referred by the Ordinary to Rome." This decree, by taking the decision out of the hands of confessor, pastor or Ordinary, shows in what abhorrence any or all of these societies are held by the Church; and yet, recognizing certain claims to temporal advantages which a member might sacrifice severing a connection innocently or ignorantly made with such an order, the S. Congregation holds that there may be rare cases where (1) there exists no active or giving scandal; (2) the person joined the order in good faith, not knowing it was forbidden; (3) loss sustained by withdrawal would be of a serious nature; (4) when the temporal interests involved do not endanger the faith of the member or his family. Where all these conditions are verified in one case a confessor, pastor or Bishop has grounds for referring the case to Rome in order that the person involved may allow his name to remain on the membership list of such a society, and retain legal title to temporary benefits toward the creation of which he has advanced monies. In such cases—and the stipulations are evidence of their necessary rarity—the Apostolic Delegate is empowered to allow nominal membership, for the sole purpose of securing an external title to what really belongs to the member or to shield him from an injury the avoidance of which does not involve him with the doubtful character of the order from a moral point of view. Get the Spirit of It. A little book called "The Successful Merchant," published some thirty years ago, is good reading still for our young men on a winter evening. It is made up of incidents from the life of Samuel Budgett, of Kingswood, England, and a young man who can read it through without catching something of the spirit of energy and perseverance, and desire to do good, which characterized this man, will never be likely to attain his success. The best thing a good book can do for us is to get us into its spirit. Something that sets us to thinking profitably, and thus to doing something that we ought, is good reading for us. A poor, unlearned man could not remember a word of a searching sermon he had heard, but one thing he remembered was to "go home and burn the half bushel." Perhaps this little book, which was once so widely known among young business men, has done much toward starting them in an honorable career, and in keeping them back from crooked paths. It is well deserving a new edition, and a new reading among those just coming on the stage. Methods must, of course, vary with changes of time and place, but the principles upon which this Christian merchant worked can never change. I know it is common for young men to feel that their early years are of but small comparative importance. They are justified in "rubbing along" any way they can, but it is very true, as Cowper says, that "The value of life is commonly determined by the first five years in which young men are their own masters." Indeed, it is often decided by the first year a young man spends away from his father's roof. If you have not the advantage of an intimate acquaintance of the right stamp, choose one in a book, like the one we have mentioned above. Read and re-read until you are thoroughly in the spirit of it. The ways of working out your own life problem to such a successful solution will suggest themselves as you go along. A wide awake mind sees chances in situations which would be all blank to another. There is something to learn in the poorest place, either to do or to avoid, when one sets up for himself; and even a lad who deports himself suitably can be laying up good capital in the way of making friends. It will often serve him where much gold would not.

ENGLAND WILL BE CATHOLIC AGAIN.

There are many indications of the drift of the English people toward the faith of their forefathers—the faith which, it has been well said, England was robbed more than three centuries ago. Scarcely a week goes by that we do not hear of the conversion to Catholicism of one or more distinguished English Protestants. In a year these accessions to the Church reach a surprisingly large number. We are aware, however, that the conversion process is but a slow way to bring about in England the reunion of Christendom. Still the many conversions encourage English Catholics in the hope that one day not very far distant the whole nation will be Catholic. What we desire to call attention to here is the fact that the thoughtful minds of England not of our faith have come to recognize the fact that the Catholic Church in that country is a vigorous and steadily growing institution. There is, too, we are glad to note, a more tolerant spirit among the non-Catholic people. One of the best indications of this spirit is the manner in which was greeted a public religious procession in honor of the Blessed Virgin held at Kensal Town, London, on Sunday, May 17. This procession has been described as undoubtedly one of the most remarkable Catholic demonstrations witnessed in London since the so-called Reformation. It appears that under the auspices of the Guild of Our Lady of Ransom various processions of a similar nature have been held within the last few years in the East End of London. But in organizing the procession at Kensal Town the Guild broke new ground, and broke it, we are informed by a London Catholic paper, with complete and startling success. From the first the clergy and people of Our Lady of the Holy Souls, Bosworth road, took up the project of holding a solemn May procession with the enthusiasm which marks the excellent work they are engaged upon in that somewhat dreary district. Through the indefatigable exertions of Mr. Palmer, the District Ransomer, and Mr. F. Stacy, the co-operation of the neighboring missions and the people of a large number of districts was secured. The result was a spectacle equalling in magnificence many hitherto witnessed in Catholic countries. The Guild of Our Lady of Ransom, headed by crucifix, lanterns and incense, and accompanied by their banners, came first; next followed numberless confraternities, conspicuous among them being a contingent from St. Dominic's, Haverstock Hill, under the leadership of the Rev. Austin Rooke, O. P., with their magnificent banners. Father Bana and his boys from St. Vincent's Home, the local branch of the Social Union, the vicars of St. Augustine from St. Hoxton, and orphans from Miss Boyd's Home at Kilburn all helped to swell the ranks of the procession, which exceeded a mile in length. Last of all, amid countless girls in white, came the statue of the Blessed Mother of God, standing in a veritable garden of white lilies, born on the shoulders of the League of the Cross Guards. Behind the statue came the clergy, Fathers Greene, Baker, and Lord Archibald Douglas, vested in richly embroidered copes, and escorted by a crowd of acolytes and League Guards. The significant point is that as in other parts of London, the demeanor of the crowds of spectators, estimated by the pressmen present at some fifty thousand, was entirely respectful and sympathetic. On every side expressions of admiration and pleasure at the novel and brilliant scene might be heard, and the number of hats removed during the passage of the crucifix and statue would have done credit to Belgium or France. The organizers of the procession have already had the happiness of learning of the conversion of one of the on-lookers, who applied to be instructed on the following day. As an illustration of the way a great London non-Catholic journal treats this important religious event, we quote the following extracts from the Daily Chronicle's appreciative description of the procession: "To describe the Roman Church even as it exists to-day in England as a byway rather than a highway of religious faith would admittedly savor of the guilt of impertinence. Surely if there be any highway of faith known to Christendom at all it is that which leads to Rome. Still no such consideration is due to the society which calls itself the 'Guild of Our Lady of Ransom for the Conversion of England.' Otherwise, scruples notwithstanding, we need have no hesitation in saying that the very remarkable demonstration which took place in the neighborhood of Westbourne park, illustrated with amazing force the recuperative energy of the Church of Rome and the strength of its appeal to the imaginative side of our English nature. The Guild is a secular sodality, 'under the Heavenly Patronage of Our Lady, St. Gregory, and the Blessed English Martyrs—approved and blessed by His Holiness Leo XIII., May 18, 1889.' Its modest mission is (in the words of its Object) 'to ransom souls from the captivity of error in this world, and of Purgatory in the next, by means of Holy Mass, Prayer and Work.' The three special 'intentions' of the Guild are: (1) The conversion of England and individuals; (2) the salvation of apostates and those in danger of apostasy; (3) the forgotten dead, who, owing to the Reformation, or to being converts, or other causes are without Masses and Prayers.' Thus, bluntly put, it will be seen that the Guild of Our Lady of

Ransom has for its object a very definite, specific and arduous task. For the Ransomers individually some encouragements and rewards are set out under its constitution. An indulgence of three hundred days was granted by Pope Pius IX. in May, 1850, 'for every devout prayer said for the conversion of England.' Other indulgences have been granted to Ransomers by His Holiness Leo XIII., namely, by Brief dated June, 1889, Plenary Indulgences, 'on usual conditions, on day of admission, on Second Sunday after Epiphany, on September 24 (feast of Our Lady of Ransom), and on March 12 (feast of St. Gregory). Not without spiritual consideration, therefore, do the Ransomers undertake their uphill task. But they have also more immediate rewards and encouragements. The splendid spectacle of yesterday was one of them. "For the first time since the Reformation a public religious 'May procession' was conducted through the streets of London 'in honor of our Blessed Lady, whose 'dowry' includes our unhappy England. The procession, as in more happy European cities, had as its central feature a statue of Our Lady, borne by four stalwart League Guards, and attended by children in white, bearing baskets of flowers. Some five hundred children, attired for the most part in pretty white frocks, wearing wreaths of flowers, surmounted by long veils of tulle or muslin (such as are worn at First Communions on the Continent), and carrying bouquets of flowers, formed the most picturesque part of the procession; although it must be allowed that they disputed honors with acolytes in white cottas, red and blue capes, skull caps and sashes. "The procession was a mile and a half in length. From altar to altar it occupied nearly two hours. Nothing of the kind had been seen in England since, as we have heard, the period known to Englishmen as the Reformation. Not many, perhaps, but some who witnessed it, might have remembered the 'Surplice riots' of St. George's in the East, or the disorderly scenes at St. James Hatcham, or the threatening at St. Alban's Holborn. How many of these could have supposed that within twenty years a Roman Catholic procession, accompanied by all the paraphernalia of Roman ritual, might pass through crowded London streets on a Sunday afternoon not merely without provoking disturbance but amid undoubted manifestations of respect? Few of the Catholic cities of Europe could be expected to offer it a more decorous welcome. Possibly its origin and intention were barely understood by the crowd, if by anyone else, but we now know that picturesqueness of exposition—as the famous Abbe Martin once observed—is an important part of the teaching faculty of the Church. "Who shall say after reading this that there are not bright prospects for the conversion of England? Maybe that glorious event will not come for many years, but that there is good reason to hope, no sane person can deny. To be sure, all England has not looked upon the procession in honor of Our Lady with a similar spirit to that which prompted the Chronicle writer, or even with the "undoubted manifestations of respect" of the throng that stood by while it passed. Certain bigoted "Christians" could not let the opportunity pass without indulging in all the old talk about "the errors of superstition," "Romish idolatry," etc. On this point it is only necessary to say that so long as there is ignorance there will be intolerance. The effect of the procession upon the intelligent non-Catholics of England is what should be considered by the man who desires to judge how Catholicity stands to-day among the English people.—Catholic News.



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