

less, discreetly national appeal on behalf of the distressed Catholics in the Rhine countries during the winter of 1923-24, and of his delicate tact on the occasion of the Eucharistic Congress at Amsterdam?

I would like to make grateful mention also

of Father Cyril Martindale, S.J., as well as of the Benedictine Abbot of Buckfast.

Let us, I beg of you, strive to understand each other. Either lack of understanding or misunderstanding is the greatest enemy of truth and also of peace among nations.

## Sketches Grave and Gay

(By PEDESTRIAN for N.Z. Tablet.)

### TO SMOKE OR NOT TO SMOKE.

Some of my relatives in Ireland were accustomed to impose upon themselves in Lent a little penance in addition to that prescribed by the Church. When I think of my old uncle, Bernard, I feel inclined reverently to raise my hat. He was devoted to his pipe, loved it, puffed it almost unceasingly, and yet during Lent he went through the agony of not touching it. "May the heavens be your bed, Uncle Bernard," is my fervent prayer.

I was reminded of him last Lent when my friend, Joe Murray, and I had a stroll on the Sunday following Ash Wednesday. How we came together on that particular occasion, it is quite easy for me to remember. I had heard about Joe from a young fellow, named Hobson, who was working under him. Hobson is one of those youths who are quite respectable on Sundays when they walk out neatly dressed and carrying a cane. But on working-days when they are returning in the evening carrying an empty lunch-bag under their arm, their faces mottled with the dust and grit of the factory, they look upon all salaried men—the men who carry the little bag not under their arm, but in their hand—as parasites, as a clog upon the wheel of government. He was coming at a rapid pace towards me one evening, his open shirt-front revealing a large area of grimy chest, his two shoulders projecting themselves forward alternately with great violence, the whole manner of the youth contrasting unfavorably with the demure and restful composure of his Sunday afternoons, when I stopped him and asked, "How is Joe Murray?" "No good," was the laconic reply. The tooting of a motor-horn made it impossible for him to proceed further for several seconds. During that interruption, however, I was consumed with anxiety as to whether the pregnant answer was intended to cast aspersions upon the moral, mental, and physical well-being of my old friend, or whether Hobson simply meant that Joe happened to be indisposed or in bad humor. Hobson, who was hurrying home to his dinner, could scarcely give himself leisure enough to explain his oracular answer. I learned, however, that, on the previous Wednesday, Joe, who was generally neat, had entered the factory with a smudge on his forehead to the amusement of Hobson and his friends. Somebody informed him of the speck in an irreverent manner, and Joe got very indignant and called a couple of the young fellows "giggling gargoyles." The greater the truth, the greater the insult; and the fellows were still very angry with the boss. All day long, it appears, Joe was dull and ill-tempered and the two following days no im-

provement had shown itself. "I hope there is nothing seriously wrong with him," was all I said to Hobson. I knew well, however, what was wrong—Joe had undertaken to spend a smokeless Lent and was making others do as severe a penance as he had imposed upon himself. The speck on his forehead was, of course, blessed ashes, of which the Protestant youths had read nothing in their Shorter Catechism.

I determined to cure Joe of his excesses in austerity and, for that purpose, arranged by 'phone to call for him after lunch on Sunday afternoon. When I saw him, it was impossible for me not to notice his cold demeanor. Had my heart swelled with joy at meeting him, as would have been the case had he been in a cheerful mood, my super-excellent cigars might have got crushed—cigars specially chosen that I might conquer Joe's foolish resolution. When the usual question came up, "Where shall we go?" Joe suggested that we should pay a visit to the Northern Cemetery. "Less depressing than the Southern, anyhow," thought I without saying it. A passage from Shakspeare then occurring to my mind, I said smiling,

"Of comfort no man speak

Let's talk of graves, of worms and epitaphs:  
Make dust our paper and with rainy eyes  
Write sorrow on the bosom of the earth,  
Let's choose executors and talk of wills."

Joe's attempt at a smile satisfied me that his was not quite a hopeless case. During our walk to the cemetery, our chat befitted our destination. It was in a minor key. A musical composer would have given his directions as *maestoso e andante*. Hobson, he informed me, was a lazy, foppish fellow and would never make good. Some of the girl employees were getting the Wrigley twist of countenance through over-indulgence in chewing-gum. Business was brisk enough now, but a great slump was expected shortly. He felt run down through want of exercise. "Why don't you walk to and from your work?" I asked. "I would," he answered, "but I have a nasty corn." "Cut it, man," I said hastily; "have you no razor?" "A safety razor," he answered so gloomily that I had great difficulty in suppressing an outbreak of laughter. "Anyhow," he added, "blood poisoning often follows from cutting a corn." "Oh! sharpen your knife and take the risk. It is better for you to walk home than to cling to the cable tram with a myriad other fellows sticking to it like so many bees." "Wasps," he said, correcting me, as he thought of some occasions when the passengers had acted on the principle, Safety first: Joe Murray afterwards.

What a pleasant Sunday excursion! I said to myself ironically as I reflected on my companion's pessimism. At the cemetery he noted the ages of the dead, reading the statistics for my information only when the deceased were about his own age. He committed to memory the lofty sentiments poetically expressed on a prominent obelisk in a commanding position. I trust I shall do no injury to the poet's meaning in my effort to recall the quatrain:—

Stop, traveller, stop, ere you pass by.

What you are now, that once was I.

What I am now, you soon will be.

Think, traveller, think, you'll follow me.

"That closes the case for the Crown, Joe,"

I said, intimating that a verse of poetry would be a good termination for our little excursion.

During the whole of our pilgrimage, the thought of my costly cigars was not separated for a moment from the lugubrious subjects of our discourse. But "Bide a wee" was my motto, to be discarded when we had reached the zenith of our gloom. "Here's a lovely cigar, Joe," I said in due time, offering him my case, as we stood near the cemetery gate gazing down upon the harbor as restful and calm as the decorous quarters inhabited by the dead beside us. "No, thanks," he answered, "I don't care for it this evening." Not disappointed in the least by his refusal, I lighted mine and found it was as fragrant as my good tobaccoist had stated. The aromatic cloud floated around us, and crept in and out among the shrubs and climbed up to the tops of the trees. The birds seemed to know it was an uncommonly good cigar, for they put more spirit into their songs, and flitted about more gaily, going out of their way to accompany us. Some pretty views of the harbor and the hills that had before escaped me caught my eye now and I pointed them out to Joe but somehow they did not appeal to him so strongly as to me.

The aroma, however, began to make its impression upon him, and I was not surprised when he said, "I believe I will have a smoke." The effect of the two clouds upon the birds and the shrubs and the trees escaped my notice, so pleased was I at the satisfactory working of my ruse. Soon, dear old Joe enthusiastically called my attention to some pretty views that I had previously failed to detect. He became very bright and chatty, and told me of some humorous happenings at the works. I was curious to know whether he had changed his views about Hobson and others. "How nicely that young Hobson dresses of a Sunday," I remarked. "Hobson is a self-respecting young fellow," Joe answered; "he is a clever lad, too. I often think that he will prove a great acquisition to the firm when he has had a few years' more experience. He is full of fun, moreover, and keeps his companions in good working form." "Oh! Joe, Joe," I reflected, "what a *volte-face*," but, then, I could blame my fragrant cigar for his change of front.

As for the girls, they used to eat lollies, but finding them expensive as well as perishable-by-use, they had recourse to chewing-gum which, Joe assured me, is imperishable and cheap. As I never chewed that dainty

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