

Of Course We Don't Mean You

SOME PARABLES OF MODERN LIFE

In the great secular university that boasted of its broad-mindedness and its freedom of academic teaching three professors lectured in adjacent classrooms. And all three drew large and interested classes, for all three were men who threw into their subjects the brilliance of keen minds and the warmth of enthusiasm.

The first professor had strong communistic leanings. He taught economics with a slant that turned the minds of his students favourably toward Russia and its current "glories," toward class warfare as the solution of social injustice and the means toward the advancing of the race, toward Marx as Allah and Lenin as his prophet. And his students left the class with the red flag of communism waving in their hearts.

The second professor used English literature to illustrate atheism. He laughed at God as he laughed at the morality of Dickens' noble heroines, and he piled up for supplementary reading those books which treated God as a worn-out fetish and religion as the fashion of a crude and credulous age. And his students gave up their faith in short order and thought church-going decidedly silly stuff.

The third professor happened to be a convert to the Catholic Faith. He found that history told a pretty interesting story of what the Catholic Church had done for the development of civilization and the arts, and he rehearsed the story as he saw it—simply and honestly—with a real affection for the Church, which he considered the mother of modern Europe and of our entire civilization.

At the end of the year the first two professors were summoned by the president of the university and congratulated on the interest they had evoked from their students.

"I like professors," he said, "who stimulate their groups to intelligent and original thinking."

But to the third professor he spoke first regretfully and then sternly.

"Professor," he said, "I'm afraid I shall have to ask for your resignation. I cannot permit the university classrooms and lecture halls to be used as places for propaganda and proselytism. And I am told that you are constantly trying to influence people—young, impressionable people—in favour of the Catholic Church.

SCANDAL: FIRST-BORN OF DAME GOSSIP

Mrs. Paul Bristow leaned across the little table and signalled to the three who were with her. Her husband and the other couple followed her gesture across the verandah of the country club to the somewhat dim dance floor.

"Doesn't that man with the carnation in his buttonhole look like Will Gary?" she asked.

The three knitted their brows as they studied the man who was dancing with a small blonde young woman and then nodded agreement.

"He's a little tall for Gary," replied her husband, "but there is a slight resemblance."

"Well, that certainly isn't Mrs. Gary," laughed the other woman. "Even at her best she never looked like that cute little blonde."

They laughed a bit cruelly, and the incident passed.

But at her bridge club the following day Mrs. Bristow remarked during a deal: "There was a man at the country club last night who looked exactly like Will Gary. He had a carnation in his buttonhole, and he was dancing with a cute little trick who certainly was not Mrs. Gary."

The dealer, who had heard the remark only above her rather noisy, concentrated shuffle, that evening at her dinner party repeated the story with a slight shift in particulars.

"Mrs. Bristow saw Will Gary dancing at the country club the other evening with a blonde. And you know mighty well that Helen Gary is brunette.

"Are you sure it was Will Gary?" asked a guest who was merely making conversation.

"Sure! He was wearing a carnation in his lapel," she retorted, as if she were giving circumstantial evidence.

The next day in two separate offices, at two separate luncheon tables, and in the midst of three separate bridge hands, different persons used almost identical words:

"Will Gary has certainly been running loose lately. He was at the country club the other night, a carnation adorning his Tux, and cutting corners with a cute little blonde. Poor Helen Gary!"

Eventually a friend brought the story to Helen Gary. For a moment she suffered beyond words. Then she

smiled as she remembered that on that particular weekend her husband had driven to Chicago with her. She recalled, too, that he loathed carnations.

But the story never died. It was immortal, as all ghosts and lies are immortal.

WHILE SHEPHERDS ARGUE, WOLVES RAID THE FOLD

Once upon a time there was a motorist in dire distress. Nearby were located two repair stations fully equipped to save him. His powerful car had stalled across the main line of the railroad. The front and back wheels straddled the track, and the body was in the path of an oncoming train.

To his intense relief the driver learned that the first train, a limited, was not due for half an hour. So he phoned the nearer repair station and asked that a truck be sent out immediately. As time passed and the truck failed to arrive, he phoned the second station, imploring help.

And behold! the trucks and crews from both stations arrived at the same time.

They looked at the beautiful new car standing in peril; they glanced at the nervous owner; finally they looked at each other.

“What are you doing here?” demanded the driver of the first truck.

“He sent for me,” retorted the driver of the second.

“Well, it’s my job. He sent for me first.”

“*You* didn’t come. So it’s mine.

“Beat it!”

“Not on your life! I’m here, and I stay. You beat it.”

The owner of the car looked wildly from one to the other. “I don’t care which one does the job,” he cried, pitifully, “but save my car.

“Then tell the other guy to scram,” they both answered simultaneously.

“Why can’t you both do it? Together you’d have the car off the tracks in a second.”

“Together?” retorted the first. “Give him the credit for the job? I’ll do it alone, or I won’t do it at all.”

“That,” the second replied, “goes for me double. He always wants the glory for every job, but he won’t get it this time.”

“Send him about his business, and I’ll do the job in a jiffy.”

“Get rid of him, and I’ll pull you off at once.”

And while the owner pleaded and the drivers glared at each other, the fast freight swept down the tracks and hurled the beautiful car into a hopeless mass.

UNHEARD BELLS

From the lovely spire of the church came the sound of the tower clock’s striking noon. Then slowly, rhythmically, and with all reverent dignity the bell tolled the Angelus.

Below in the crowded street the trolley motorman unthinkingly drowned out the sound with the wild clangour of his warning bell as a truck stopped across the rails.

The truck driver put his hand on his klaxon and made the air hideous with his protests directed at the woman driver who had brought her brakes to a shriekingly noisy and perilous stop before a scattering crowd of children.

The young man hurrying to keep a date muttered, “It’s after twelve, and she’s late again.” And the young lady hurrying to her date heard the bell and whispered to herself, “This will teach him not to count too much on me.

The dentist slammed his office door, hung up the sign “Out for Lunch; Back at One o’clock,” and in happy release bolted for his favourite restaurant, where he bolted his favourite dish. Next door two businessmen gripped hands across the table, and one said to the other, “Twelve o’clock. He didn’t arrive. His option is gone, and we get the business.” Their weary stenographer grumbled through exasperated lips, “If they don’t get going, I’ll miss Marie. And it was her turn to pay for lunch.”

But along the busy street a hurrying little cashier retired into the garden of her heart and saluted Mary, handmaid of the Lord. And a young college man rushing from class stopped and, removing his hat, said the prayer that honoured God come to earth in human form. And between blasts of his whistle and mechanical gestures with his hands a traffic policeman slipped into a cool little house of Nazareth and watched an angel bring to men the loveliest message ever spoken.

For the rest of the world it was just twelve o'clock noon. For three loving souls it was the hour when God stooped to men and dwelt for our sakes in the bosom of the Virgin Mary.

UNDYING LOVE

Ken looked at the picture of the girl in the green leather frame through a mist that blurred and almost obliterated her lovely features. He walked across his room, glad that his roommate had not returned from the holidays, and collapsed rather than sat on the bed. Picture in hand, he looked into her eyes and his own heart.

Just what emotion predominated, he was not sure: a lonely hunger for the girl he had met and "rushed" over four summer week-ends; despair at the hopelessness of his relatively penniless position and his dependence on his people; fury at her father, whose letter to his father had precipitated the break.

Of course, they planned to marry. They loved each other as they would never love another human being. What if she was young and he just a freshman in college? She knew her own mind, and so did he. She had promised to wait, and he knew that nothing on earth would change his loyalty and deathless love. Now they were sending her to college—in California, he thought, ironically, so that rivers and mountains would lie between them.

He rose, his jaw set, his eyes narrowed in grim determination.

"Dearest," he said, addressing the picture, "they can separate us now; they can't keep us apart for ever. You'll wait for me, as you promised. And when I've made my first money I'll come to carry away the only girl I ever will, even can, love."

And he put the picture tenderly in the bottom drawer of his dressing table....

The two seniors went about the final cleaning of their room with an affected gaiety they were far from feeling. Graduation two days away meant the end of four years' association and a friendship too deep for analysis. About them trunks yawned, suitcases stood open like consumingly hungry jaws, and drawers cataracted their disorderly contents.

"Gosh, what a dressing case!" groaned Bill.

"Dump the drawers out, and we'll sort the stuff," Ken ordered.

Obediently Bill emptied the drawer on to the bed. On top of the mussed ties, holey socks, and forgotten handkerchiefs, programmes, ribbons and scraps of paper lay a picture framed in green leather. Bill picked it up and whistled appreciatively.

"Wow! What a knockout! You've been hiding her from me. Who is she, Ken?"

Over his roommate's shoulder Ken looked at the picture of the lovely girl.

"Oh, a kid I played around with during my freshman vacation. Awfully sweet kid. We were daft about each other."

"What was her name

Ken paused in honest thought.

"I'll think of it in a minute," he said. "Darned if I can remember it offhand."

THE ARGUMENT FADES

In the presence of the recording angel, flung there through the shattered windshield of their Rolls Royce, stood the dignified middle-aged couple. Delightfully enough even in heaven's antechamber they were without self-consciousness or timidity. When one has met presidents and kings and carried the heavy responsibilities of a large corporation and of a distinguished social position, one meets even angels with calm and poise.

The recording angel wrote rapidly in his book the answers to his first questions.

"Sounds like getting a passport," the woman whispered, in a rapid aside.

"Maybe it is," the man answered, ". . . let's hope to the right country."

His business affairs were things he was quite willing to talk over with an angel. He had been honest in his dealings, just to his competitors, and a friend to his employees. She felt she had nicely balanced in life her social pleasures with her charitable work, and she told the angel so.

"Married?" the angel asked, smiling at so obvious a question.

"Over twenty-seven years," he almost bragged.

"How many children?"

For the first time he hesitated slightly. But his wife answered, "Three. Two girls and a boy."

“Only three?”

“Why, yes,” replied the man, his tone a little like the one he used with somewhat duller directors. “When we married, we decided to have three; we felt we were doing full justice to posterity and full justice to the children themselves. .

His voice died out. For the angel was looking off into space in a most disturbing fashion.

“Please don’t think we were always well to do. We had a pretty hard time of it during the first ten years, and we felt that children would handicap us and we would handicap them. . . .”

The angel looked at the two abruptly. From that moment his eyes moved simply from the face of the man to the face of the woman.

“We felt,” she explained, “we could care beautifully for three, give them the best education, leave them well off——”

“——be to them the sort of parents we could not have been to more than three.”

“And I really was not very strong.”

“No. It wasn’t fair to burden her with more children.”

“Most of my friends had only two children. We had three.”

“Small families are quality families. Large families are a little vulgar, common, without the finer instincts.”

“And only the Catholic Church disapproved of our conduct.”

The angel rose and wearily pulled back a curtain.

“He will finish examining you,” he said, stressing the He most significantly.

“Who?” demanded the couple together, sudden terror in their voices.

“The lover of little children,” replied the angel.

TOADS, NOT PEARLS

She was extraordinarily lovely to look at, and he asked to be introduced to her. She smiled when she met him, and his heart missed a beat and then beat three times in almost syncopated fashion. Yes; she was even more beautiful than he had first thought. And what a smile! what a smile!

“May I have this dance?” he asked.

She smiled, revealing perfect teeth, and said, “Sure.”

“Lovely party,” he murmured in her ear.

“You said it,” she answered, with a quick play of dimples.

“And you are quite the loveliest thing about it.”

“Aw, what a line!” Her blush was exquisite.

“And isn’t the music gorgeous?”

“You’re telling me”

He tried her on the movies. What did she think of “David Copperfield”?

“Lousy,” she replied.

He tried books. “Have you read ‘The Forty Days of Musa Dagh?’”

“Gosh, no! Sounds terrible highbrow to me.”

He returned to a certain and “sure-fire” subject. “Your gown is really the most distinctive gown in the room.”

“Whadda ya mean distinctive?”

“Why, it fits you, your mood, your style.”

“Say, ain’t you the kidder though!”

“Not at all. I really mean it.”

“Oh, yeah? You and who else?”

The dance was over, and he took her back to her place. He did not know he could be so exhausted.

“Thank you very much. You dance beautifully.”

“I bet ya tell that to all the girls,” she replied.

As he walked away, he repeated out of some remotely remembered fairy tale: “Once there was a beautiful girl. But because she insulted a fairy, she was doomed. Each time she opened her mouth to speak, out fell, not a pearl, but a toad .”

PARALLEL

He tossed the letter aside and walked to the window. Then he turned, strode back to his desk, picked up the letter and read it once more.

Through clenched teeth he swore. Of course, he had known she was rottenly selfish, but just the same *it* hurt to be thrown over for another chap just because that chap had millions. She had left him, but he was sure she still loved him—as much as she could love anyone.

“Love?” He laughed aloud. “There is no unselfish love.”

It was Holy Thursday night.

Absorption in work carried him successfully through morning. By afternoon he was down to the report that had been haunting his consciousness. Now he considered it carefully. The man who had drawn it up was with a rival firm; he was a trusted secretary who needed money badly, and because of that need had placed this complete statement of his company’s financial position in the hands of a relentless competitor.

On the basis of the information disclosed in this report it would be easy to undersell his rival for a period of about four months. The rival firm could not withstand that pressure.

Yet he hated to crush another man’s business in these days, especially since his informant was a nice chap with a growing family.

“Oh,” he sneered, settling down to assimilate all the treacherous information, “the world moves forward, not on pious platitudes, but through the relentless grasping of opportunities by the strong. A great man can never afford to take time to think of anyone but himself,”

It was three o’clock on Good Friday afternoon.

The morning sun forced its glaring way through the dawn curtain. The man rolled over and buried his head in the pillow, but even that did not blot out the light. He turned and saw his crumpled evening clothes on a chair. His tongue was thick, and with painful twitchings he acknowledged his headache.

“Some party!” he almost moaned. “A great gang of rowdies! a great gang! Well, get what you can out of life. Money and a good time, that’s all that matters. When you’re dead, it’s all over.”

It was the morning of Easter Sunday.

WHY LEADERS ARE LOST

Tom Jackson slipped off the freight train as it drew into the yards. Externally he looked merely one of the negro tramps who by the thousand were moving about the country. Internally he was laughing as one might laugh at a great, precious, and privately owned joke.

For Tom’s negro mother and father, down in Tennessee, were keeping for him in a lower drawer of a rickety dresser the Ph.D. he had won, less, he thought, in classes than while he’d slung dishes in a hash house on Chicago’s lower Madison Street. Only a sympathetic professor knew how much of that thesis was taken out of the hearts of the men who had talked over the beans and pork and liver and bacon served them by an observantly watchful student waiter.

Now, Tom was in the north again, his career before him. With no overweening pride but with a fair estimate of his own abilities he felt he had a mission to his people. He could teach them. With his gift of eloquence he could lead them. He had been trained to think straight, and he could give them truth. If . . . if he was sure of the truth. The days in the hash house and in the university library had taught him that there were two possible truths: the truth that was Catholic; the truth that was communist. And now he had come back to find the real truth before he plunged into a leadership to be gained over his people by patience and skill and labour.

The lovely, restful vesper light filled the parish church. An altar boy was lighting candles that were far enough away to make them seem like little glistening golden stars. Tom, still in his travel-soiled clothes, slipped into a rear pew, regarded the golden glitter as merely a skilful setting, and directed his attention to the young priest who was talking from the pulpit. Keenly perceptive of sincerity, Tom felt what he could not actually know—that the young priest was speaking from his heart things that he believed and cherished, things that he had carefully thought out and now clung to with something like passion. And the heart under the battered old clothes was stirred.

“What hope for any world reformation,” the priest was saying, “until we have filled our hearts with love of our

fellows? What chance to gain converts that we do not love? What right have we to plead for the theory of social justice until we have learned to live justly, giving to all men—however dressed, however shaded—their rights, their opportunities, our sympathetic understanding?”

Here was sincerity, force, conviction rooted in— A heavy hand fell on the shoulder of the negro. He looked up into a surly, unfriendly face above working clothes. “Why don’t you go to your own church?” the man demanded. “This is a white church. Your parish is down the street. We don’t want niggers coming here.”

* * * *

The light from the meeting hall streamed out into the street. Tom could hear a voice talking in a high, excited pitch.

“Until we rise in our might and strike with violence and bloody revolution those who exploit us and oppress us, the hated classes who have ground us down.

Tom swung from the sidewalk through an open doorway. Near the door stood a white Communist, his face twisted with the hatred inspired by the speaker’s eloquence. Tom hated hatred as he had loved the love in the voice of the priest, and yet. .

The Communist near the door turned and smiled.

“Hello”, comrade,” he said, and held out his hand.

BUT IN OTHER DAYS...

The Catholic Associate Press dispatch for May 30, 1942, gives the following synopsis of the television address given last evening over a network that included, besides the earth, Saturn and Mars. The speaker was Dr. Simon Hildebrand, famous lay theologian of Metropolis, United States of Africa.

“The celebration,” said the orator, “of the Feast of Pentecost recalls the glorious miracles of the birthday of the Church and the fact that the age of miracles is sadly over.

“We in the year 1942 hardly realize that in our miracle-less age we differ not only from the early Christians, but from their brothers and sisters of, say, the year 1942. Those two periods were alike in this: Both were ages of miracles.

“With wonder we read of the miracles which during the twentieth century at Lourdes poured forth from the hands of her who was with the Apostles at Pentecost. Miracles like those of apostolic times filled the age one thousand years ago.

“The popular saint of the period was the Little Flower. Dusty volumes recently unearthed by a research student who was digging in the ruins of the Little Flower Shrine in Lisieux hold records, gathered from all parts of the world, of miracles heaped on miracles. A surprising number of saints were canonized during that era: St. Joan of Arc, the famous Cure d’Ars, St. Madeleine Sophie Barat, St. Louise de Marillac, young Gabriel the Passionist. And authentic miracles are recorded for each of these canonisations or beatifications.

“Why, the men of the twentieth century lived in a very atmosphere of miracles. Heaven must have seemed close indeed to those people. From our remoter workaday miracle-less world we regard the twentieth century, that era of miracles and heavenly visitations, as close indeed to the apostolic age.”

MAGIC QUESTION

“Upon your tongue, said the wise old philosopher, I place a magic word. Use it constantly. It will crush your every doubt and frighten away any man who dares attempt to steal your faith.”

The young traveller smiled, accepted the word, and went his way. His bright young college friend met him and bragged:

“I don’t believe in God. Evolution has made God unnecessary.

The magic word tripped from the young traveller’s tongue.

“Why?” he asked.

“Oh, because . . . uh ... well things just evolved, that’s all. My professor proved it to me.”

Gaily the young traveller laughed and continued his journey.

The scoffer met him with a cynical grin.

“Are you still a Catholic?” he demanded. “I gave that up long ago. It insults the intelligence of an educated man.”

This time the magic word came unbidden.

“Why?”

“That’s obvious. It’s perfectly clear. Everyone admits it. I read it in a little blue book.”

The young traveller laughed more gaily than ever and pushed ahead. The girl who met him was sweet to look upon but glib of tongue.

“Religion’s so out of date,” she said. “It doesn’t fit our generation, that’s all.”

But when he uttered the magic “why” she looked puzzled and a bit embarrassed.

“Oh, you see . . . science . . . discovery, modern thought, and all that . . . there’s just no place . . . and the lecturer was so charming when he proved it.”

Gently, for he was gentle of manner, he bowed, smiled, and left her.

So, armed with one magic word, he walked safely among snares aimed at his feet and roses aimed at his heart and sneers aimed at his faith—walked safely through life to God and eternal happiness, which are the only answer to the magic ‘why’.

MAKE WAY FOR THE LADY

The battery of news cameras was trained like rapid-fire guns of the approaching train. Reporters stood with pencils hovering nervously above fresh notebooks. An artist set his pad more firmly into the bend of his arm. A newspaper woman who specialized in heart throbs fluttered about among the porters like a sparrow among red-headed woodpeckers.

Behind the stretched ropes an eager crowd surged forward and back, breaking in waves against the policeman’s tough arms, murmuring louder and louder as the train arrived.

“There she comes!” a voice cried, and those around echoed the cry, knowing very well that she referred, not to the train, but to the famous woman who was passing in flight through their city.

Then out of a day coach stepped a tall, elderly nun. The record of her calm strength of soul was written in every line of her beautiful face. The record of her achievements was carved into the three orphanages, five hospitals, and two social centres that she had built and into the vast educational system which, under her direction, had pushed forward the training of little children. God considered her a most important person.

Cameras clicked; pencils speeded over blank pages with feverish haste; reporters rushed forward, jabbing the air with eager gestures; the lady feature writer swirled down in a cloud of the autumn’s latest advertised perfume; a name passed from lip to lip; and a mighty shout of welcome went up from the crowd.

For, leaning from the platform of the rear carriage, her Hollywood-designed hat and suit striking a perfect chord of colour, was the talking screen’s most famous siren smiling a practised smile as she passed on her way to Reno for her fourth divorce.

ALL IS NOT LOST

Even though the client near his desk was now just another washed-up bankrupt, the vice-president of the famous brokerage house regarded him with more than professional sympathy. One does not soon forget a client whose account ran far into the millions.

“I suppose your accounting department is absolutely accurate?” the client asked, with a wisp of hope in his voice. The vice-president nodded slowly. “Then,” said the client, grimly, “everything is lost. All my investments are gone.

He rose and shrugged his shoulders, wondering in a vague sort of way whether he could start life again at sixty-one.

“Thank you,” he said. “I’m keeping my car and chauffeur for the day. Here’s my address in case—well, just in case.

The vice-president glanced at the pencilled address, clearly in the boarding house district of the city. But before he could comment sympathetically the client was gone.

At the door of his limousine, Peter, chauffeur for many years, stood at attention.

“Just drive . . . anywhere . . . for the rest of the afternoon. Then leave me at my new address. It’s all lost, Peter.”

“It’s all gone.”

“Not all,” protested Peter. But his employer was inside the limousine and the door closed against him.

At the wheel Peter hesitated a moment and then with set jaw turned the car away from the financial district and toward a less familiar section of town. The bankrupt paid no attention until the speed of the car slackened. He looked up to see faintly familiar walls. Quickly he rolled down the window of the car and looked out. Up from a sweeping lawn rose a magnificent building, its windows bright with white curtains. From the playground at the side he heard childish laughter. A group of little boys and girls were at play, with two sisters walking among them. The machine was almost crawling as Peter drove it past the portico over which was graven his master's name.

With a flash of memory the scene recurred: the old priest who had pleaded so eloquently for the orphans; the silent sisters who had sat awaiting the "great man's decision"; his impatience with the whole intrusion upon his busy day; the sudden and inexplicable burst in which he had impatiently called his secretary and signed a tremendous cheque (the market had been at its peak, and the sum had seemed hardly more than a good price for which to be relieved of importunity); the newspaper publicity he had hated; the brief visit to the orphanage that annoyingly bore his name. . . . And now children playing about his gift home, and sisters acting as mothers to the orphans of earth.

"I thought," said Peter, over his shoulder, "you might like to see that it's not all lost, sir."

"No," said the bankrupt, and he suddenly smiled. "That is the one investment the crash has not swept from me."

He squared his shoulders and faced the future with new confidence.

A WORLD WITHOUT CHRISTMAS

He fell asleep that Christmas Eve and dreamed that Christ had never come to earth and that there was no such feast as Christmas. Bleak, dead December laid its cold clutch on the hearts of men; no evergreens blossomed miraculously in shops and homes; no bright little clusters of holly berries appeared like harmless sparks against fur coats; no blazing trees with their incredibly gay fruit compensated for the dead trees that filled the dreary gardens of the world; no holiday bundles passed from hand to hand to waken smiles in many hearts.

He saw with honour that December 24 did not end in the glory of Midnight Mass, for there could be no glad rebirth of a Child who had never been born. No choirs echoed the "Gloria" of angels. No modern feet ran eagerly in the footsteps tracked by shepherds and Wise Men. The joy of children was not found in hearts that had never yearned lovingly over the Child of Mary.

Human hope lay like a dead ember on the hearthstone of the world. Belief in God's love was wrapped in a shroud of black despair. Men looked upon one another with disgust and hatred; they had never joined hands over the crib of Bethlehem.

There was, he dreamed, no Christmas, and the world was a sad and terrible place.

That was his dream, and it passed like a dream. For he woke to the sound of the world's loveliest song, "Adeste Fideles," and he looked up to see lips smiling with mirth, mankind quickened with love of children because of its love of a Child—and the face of the Infant Christ smiling warmly over the world's December.

Into the dead world of winter a Child had come with the fulness of life and its best joys.

IT'S EASY TO FIGHT

Mike looked up sheepishly from the toe he had been polishing with nervous concentration on the back of his trouser leg. Then still more nervously he glanced over his shoulder as an ambulance rushed by, clanged around the corner and disappeared.

"Sure, Father, I'm a Catholic. Sure I've kept the Faith," he said, while he studiously inspected his split knuckles.

"Then why, Mike," the priest asked patiently, "haven't you made your Easter duty? Why do I never see you at Mass? And why does your poor wife come weeping to tell me about your periodic drunkenness?"

Mike's smile was a blend of embarrassment and ingenuousness.

"Sure, Father, I'm a Catholic. Sure I've kept the Faith. But, Father, I'm a hard workin' man, and it's little time enough I have to be comin' to church."

The priest sighed hopelessly; and Mike, relieved of the cold eye that had been holding him impaled, slid past the priest and disappeared down the street with systematic speed. Mike was one of the priest's worst problems:

Catholic-bred, yet never at church, the Faith in his heart but a thirst in his throat that seemed to drown every other consideration.

Unconsciously the priest followed the path of the ambulance round the corner to where it stood backed before a notorious tavern. The hitherto discreetly curtained window had been smashed by a heavy stool that had been hurled through it. One badly beaten figure was reposing in the ambulance, a second was limping into it on the arm of an impatient orderly.

“What happened?” the priest asked of a youngster who ran up smiling and touched his cap.

“Mike did it,” he replied, boastfully. “One of those guys said the Pope was a wop and he hoped Mussolini would put him where he belonged, and Mike cleaned up the whole place.”

The priest walked on with an even heavier heart. It was so easy to fight for the Faith and so hard to live it.

WHO KNOCK ...

About the luncheon table sat three young matrons. All of them had finished a Catholic college course, each in another school; all had worked successfully for a brief space; and all were now happily married. They talked of schools and education.

Said the eldest: “One thing sure, my daughter is going to get a convent education, from kindergarten to college. That is something she is not going to miss.”

The slightly younger, very blonde matron, shook her head.

“I don’t see your point. Personally, I’ve always been sorry that I didn’t go to a State university. The Sisters haven’t the specialized training for college teaching. They are fine in the grammar schools, and I do think their academies are lovely—if slightly impractical—places. But the nuns really are not equipped to teach in college. If I had it to do over again, I’d go to a big school with a big name and big professors.”

The youngest looked at her earnestly.

“Of course, I don’t agree with you,” she said, “but I was just thinking that if the Sisters haven’t all the training they should have (though certainly most of them have the training), it isn’t always their fault. I’ve been told that they are wonderfully generous with girls who can’t afford to pay the tuition fee. I’ve heard that they carry many girls right through college.

“Perhaps, if all the girls in Catholic colleges paid, as girls have to pay when they go to State universities, the Sisters might be able to afford more extensive training and more ample opportunities for themselves.

“We never knew who paid and who didn’t pay tuition in my class; but I’ve always been glad that my tuition was paid in full. It was the least I could give the nuns in return for all they did for me.

The very blonde matron buried herself in her salad. For, like most alumnae who pick defects in their college, criticize their former teachers, and regret that they did not go elsewhere, she was one of the large army carried tuition-free by the gracious charity of the Sisters.

FAILURES ...

He’d been practising law for about three years, and he knew he was a failure. He had no clients. He had no prestige. He hadn’t won a single case. And he figured rightly enough that there was just one thing for him to do—get a job in a grocery store.

So he did. But he knew he was a failure, and he was ashamed that he’d made such a “fist” of his law.

She went out to Hollywood as a beauty prize winner. The home town turned out at the train to see her on her way. There were speeches and flowers, and the mayor kissed her on the cheek, and news cameras cranked as the train pulled out.

Only, she found she lacked one rather unimportant thing. She couldn’t act. She looked heavenly, but before a camera she had all the acting ability of a totem pole.

So she came skulking back to the home town and got a nice job as a waitress. But nobody ever heard her talk about my days in Hollywood.” People don’t listen to failures.

Their’s was a fashionable and very beautiful wedding—flowers, ushers, candles, the proper services, “Lohengrin” played with a tremolo stop, vows, congratulations, honeymoon and all. And everybody said, “They

are made for each other,” and “Aren’t they the lucky young couple?”

Only, she couldn’t cook—or she wouldn’t. He was bad-tempered and didn’t care who knew it. They were no more fitted to be parents than they were to be Arctic explorers. So they went into the divorce courts, and the judge pronounced their marriage a failure and sent them on their separate ways.

The newspapers headlined, and their friends celebrated. And they actually seemed proud of the fact that they were such rotten failures, such complete “flops” in one of life’s really important vocations.

Moral: The only failures that act like successes are the failures that rush into the divorce courts.

THEN THE SUN SHONE

Blue Monday, and a succession of tragedies filling the little study with gloom.

A tearful letter from Jack Carey’s mother stated that Jack was back from the State University and definitely out of the Church.

A newspaper notice on the society page blazoned the fact that little Clare Bowen (it seemed only yesterday that she was dressed in the white of her first Communion) had been fashionably married to her non-Catholic love, a minister officiating.

Carmody, back again and much the worse for wear and tear, had taken another very fragile pledge.

And the new book on the table screamed another fierce attack on the Holy Father.

Then the ‘phone rang insistently. Down near the gas tanks, which distinguished but did not dignify the “other half” of the parish, Mrs. Murphy’s little boy with the fractured kneecap was crying to see his friend the priest.

Gloom in his heart and a feeling that the whole world was going to the dogs enveloped the parish priest as he jammed on his hat and started down for the gas-tank district.

And then...

Two sweet-looking girls, coming out of church after a visit, paused as he passed, smiled, and said, “Good morning, Father.”

The wildest boy in the block shifted his bat to his left shoulder, touched his perforated cap, and grinned a friendly, if sheepish, greeting.

A battered old Ford cut in to the curb with a terrific grinding of brakes, and a clear-faced chap with a freshman college cap cried, “Give you a lift, Father?” and waved a friendly hand when the priest said he needed the walk.

Then two little girls, scientifically rolling up their jump rope, sidled up hopefully and began to trot beside him. “May we walk with you?” one of them proposed, shyly, but confidently.

And there ahead of him, on the battered porch of the Murphy cottage, the little rascal with the fractured kneecap was holding out his arms in wild delight and shouting his welcome to the priest.

Looking around him, the priest suddenly realised that the sun was shining, the sparrows in the gutter were really song birds, the sky was abnormally blue, and God’s good world was filled with grand and lovable people.

DON’T ADD YOUR BILL

The Incident: The waiter in the night club with elaborate unconcern lays the bill face downwards on the table. The youthful host (age about twenty) picks it up, looks at the red-pencilled total at the bottom of the card, smiles in an expansive way to cover the jolt he has received, pulls out some bills and slaps them down on the table. Deftly the waiter scoops them into his hand.

A larger number of people than you might fancy have noticed that the young man did not check over the items or add up the bill. The incident elicits the following mental comments

The Young Host: I hate tightwads who add up a bill. I’d rather be cheated than be cheap. And I’ll bet everyone around here thinks I’m rolling in money.

The Waiter: I thought he was that kind. Anyhow, if he had added it up, I could have claimed that the three bucks added on was a mistake.

The Frivolous Girl in the Party: Isn’t he grand? He’s a real spender. I wish he was interested in me instead of in her. Maybe I can make him like me before I need that spring coat.

The ‘Bus Boy’: Someday I’ll have money to throw away like that; but, believe me, I won’t throw it away on cheap waiters.

The Other Young Man: Grandstander! But I should worry; I'm not paying it.

The Young Man's Father (at home and running through his cheque book stubs): He certainly spends my money pretty easily. Let's hope he'll go a bit easy on his allowance this month. Money's tight. But then money's always tight except when you're spending somebody else's.

The Sensible Girl in the Party: I'm sorry. Mother told me once that a man who was a fool with money before marriage would be tight with it afterwards. Free spender in a night club, stingy about the home kitchen. Well, I won't let myself really like him. He's such a likeable fellow, too—except for that.

The Elderly Gentleman at the next Table: He's the fellow that was in the office today with a letter of introduction from Smith of the Third National. Let a careless spender like that into our firm? Not while I live. I must remember to tell Johnson to write to him that we have no vacancies.

The Night Club Manager: Another sucker.

The Young Man himself: Well, we can go now. I certainly made an impression on this place tonight.

THE BEST OF NATURAL GIFTS

"God and fortune have been good to us," said the eldest of the group that sat near the window of the famous club. "Blessings have been ours in abundance. Sometimes I've wondered what you think is the greatest natural gift God gave you.

"Wealth," cried the first, unhesitatingly. "With that I have bought all other natural blessings."

"Health and strength," answered the second. "Without them nothing keeps its savour.

"Education and travel," came the third answer. "They have unlocked for me the world and its treasures."

"My home," replied the next, "with the lovely family **it** shelters and the peace and safety I have found there."

"Adventure," the answer of the last, "and the thrill of the unknown."

"And you," asked one of them, addressing the man who had asked the question, "what is your greatest natural blessing?"

"The thing that has made success enjoyable and failure endurable, that has made friendship sweet and enmity unimportant, that enriched wealth when it came and softened the blows of poverty, that was with me in health and did not desert me in illness, that filled my home with peace and went with me when I ventured forth—my greatest gift has been a contented mind."

And the rest bowed reverently before the most richly endowed.

A MATTER OF A NAME

A famous leader of Arctic explorations, though he had already made the trip twice, sat down and for hours on end checked over even the least details; what to leave, what to carry, how to go, what to avoid. Men called it planning.

The happy couple facing a holiday pored for hours over railroad folders, computed the safest and most pleasant way to their destination, and carefully measured and calculated their funds against likely expenditures. They called **it** budgeting.

The general knew that the land ahead was tricky and treacherous and beset with foes. So before he moved so much as a company, he and his officers drew up their line of march and decided on the necessary supply bases, the roads to be followed, precautions to be taken against unexpected attacks. The general thought of **it** as campaigning.

The board of directors of the newly organized company sat down together and for days plotted out their business. They measured sales resistances, noted territories to invade and territories that had wrecked other companies, drew up plans for their salesmen, selected points for advertising. They regarded this as executive control.

The young man sat down and looked ahead to the grave and what lay beyond. He chose the road that would carry him most safely through life, selected his leader, planned his safeguards against pitfalls and failures, thoughtfully decided on what he would need for life's way and what would be a hindrance. He called it mental prayer.

THE BUZZING OF INSECTS

It was a grand moon. It splashed over the lawns a green silver. It ran long fingers through the girls' hair and spun from the yellow and brown and black and red threads the loveliest aureolas. The tawdry music of a guitar and the approximate blending of untrained voices became under its magic rich harmonies. Any picnic would be delightful under such a moon. . if it weren't for the insects, drat 'em. Out of the grass rose persistent little pilgrim ants making their devout journeys to the insides of trouser legs and the inner bands of touchily sunburned elbows and through the unsuspected apertures of shirts and sports suits along the belt lines. And loud-voiced mosquitoes came singing and stinging out of the swamp, which had seemed like a beautiful silver platter when first the moon had lighted it up. And gnats, drawn by the lure of the boys' cigarettes, were snuffed up with sudden intakes of breath and got into eyes and buzzed in annoying persistence about ears.

"Damn the insects," growled one of the boys. "They're driving me crazy."

"And me straight home," retorted a girl.

So, though the moon shone so brightly and the grass stretched in pan-velvet sheen and the breeze sighed refreshingly through the maples, the harassed and troubled picnickers left nature to the insects and hastened back where screen doors got between them and the attention of ants and mosquitoes and gnats.

Kneeling that night for his examination of conscience, one of the boys got a light. It hadn't been a roaring lion, he thought, that ramped from the bushes to drive them helter-skelter to safety. No hippo had thrust his ugly snout into their presence. Death would have followed either of these. But lions are relatively rare and most carefully housed behind bars, or they live in unfrequented jungles. And hippos are not ordinary wanderers through city parks.

So, said he to himself, in the burst of that brilliant light, mortal sin, coming as it does with death in its wake, is rare among good people. Terrible, but rare. When **it** comes, it strikes swift and deadly blows.

But the thing that makes life miserable, that drives us away from friends and spoils our days and nights, is the persistent stinging of those insects of the soul, venial sins. Ill-manneredness and uncharity, petty lies and meanness, nagging ways and bitter tongues, envy and spite—insects of the soul that spoil life's picnics.

Lions are deadly but infrequent. Insects are merely annoying, but oh, so exasperatingly insistent. Mortal sin. .venial sin . . . And kneeling beside his bed, he made some resolutions that meant much to the happiness of the world.

IF I HAD A MILLION

The newspaper headline screamed the provoking question:

"What Would You Do If You Had a Million Dollars?" And the brains of uncounted readers clicked rapid answers.

"Nothing," said the lazy man, sick of his job and his routine. "Nothing from then on.

"The things I've always wanted to do and couldn't," said the egoist.

"I'd make things sweet and comfortable and sure for my wife and children," said the young husband, dreamily.

"I'd buy security for my old age," said the man upon whose head streaks of grey had fallen terrifyingly.

"Every cent would go for pleasure—and how sweetly it would flow!" said the sensualist.

"Gratify my hobby," said a score, one of whom thought of golf at the country club, another of first editions, a third of great music, and a fourth of travel to little-known ports.

"Expand my business," said the industrialist.

"Buy power," said the financier.

Pay my way into the blue book," said the young matron, whose eyes were unhappy and whose soul was discontented.

"Make happier my fellow-men," said the humanitarian.

"Purchase heaven," cried the saint. And then forgetting the million, he hurried out to buy heaven with a penny that he dropped into the cup of a beggar.

NO TIME AT ALL

Once upon a time there was a very, very busy man. He had six secretaries, all of whom had sharpened

pencils and yellow pads and files that ten clerks couldn't keep in order. He sat at a polished desk about the size of a boxing ring and pushed buttons that were connected with power plants and machine shops and harnessed waterfalls and vice-presidents' offices. His six telephones were direct lines to his shops and offices and plants out in Tulsa and Chicago and South America.

"By Jove!" he often cried, banging his fist on the desk and making his letter opener and three office boys jump, "I've got my business organized. That's the secret of success, organization. I sit and do the thinking; let the hired help do the work. In that way I can spend my winters in Florida, my summers in Canada, my springs in Switzerland, and my autumns in South Africa."

So while his vice-presidents signed his checks and his secretaries wrote his letters and his managers handled the details of his business and his shop supervisors attended to production, he sailed his yacht, played golf at six different country clubs, took three hours for lunch, saw all the new plays on opening nights, and made so many trips to Europe that he was given a commuter's ticket.

Then one night he fell asleep in his four-poster in his mansion, with its twenty-two servants (this does not include the chauffeurs and the chef who travelled with him) and woke up before the judgement seat.

"As far as I can see," said St. Peter, "you haven't been practising your religion for the past thirty years."

"Oh," he hastened to explain. "I'm a very, very busy man, and I have never had the time."

And one of the younger cherubim was unkind enough to laugh.

I ACCUSE ...

Avoiding the eyes of the accused young man, the foreman of the jury answered the clerk's routine query. After all the prisoner at the bar had stolen a diamond ring from the finger of a wealthy drunk who had fallen asleep in an all-night roadhouse. He deserved jail. "Guilty," said the foreman, and the courtroom stirred its approval.

But suddenly consternation fell on the whole courtroom. At the back of the accused appeared a radiant figure.

"His guardian angel!" gasped the young woman juror, who was a Catholic. The rest of the jurors heard, without hearing, what the glorious apparition, his face terrifyingly stern, was saying.

"And I find this jury guilty of the crime of this young man," said the angel. "He was hungry and out of work, and yet you"—he singled out the Catholic girl juror—"bought a fur coat this winter, which made it impossible for you to contribute to the city's charity fund.

"And you," he continued, singling out another young woman, "who wear those beautiful rings passed him on the street and pulled your escort away when this prisoner approached to ask for a dime.

"You"—he turned to the foreman of the jury—"laid off five young men like him just before Christmas so that on the first of the year your ledgers might show a better profit. One of these men was the elder brother of the accused.

"While you," he said, indicating a well-to-do merchant, "because you wanted a favour from a political grafter, voted for a city candidate who has been grafting on Federal relief funds.

"You"—he pointed to an elderly woman juror—"are almost his next-door neighbour. You live in your comfortable house, while on the same street he and his mother and the other children live in a hovel over a stable. All you knew was that the neighbourhood was running down.

"You"—he fastened on a young man—"were stopped by him on the street. He asked for a match. He wanted to talk. You thought he wanted to make a touch. You shrugged your shoulders and walked off."

"He dropped in one evening about a month ago at his parish's young people's club. But he was poorly dressed, so you two"—he picked out a young couple sitting together in the box—"laughed behind your hands and treated him so unkindly that he didn't have the courage to come back.

"You two believe people should be kept in their place. He was out of luck; but people who are out of luck deserve to be out of luck, you thought. That meant you had no faith in him.

"You"—he levelled his glance at a successful young dentist—"have an excellent practice, a good income. It never occurs to you that you have a responsibility toward the less fortunate of your city.

"And you"—he picked out a fat, complacent businessman—"voted against the Bill that was intended to regulate the kind of tavern where that man with the diamond ring could become drunk and be a temptation to the hungry.

"As for you"—he turned to the intelligent-looking young man in the back of the box—"you had magnificent

education, a sound training in the social sciences. But you are content merely to know; you turn none of your knowledge into practice. You do nothing to see that your Catholic religion, your philosophy, your economics be made helpful for such as he.”

The guardian angel turned to the judge.

“Your honour, I find the jury guilty of the crime of my young charge, and I ask sentence upon them.”

The guardian angel disappeared. The judge cleared his throat. The jury dismissed what they considered as a momentary hallucination. The young man at the bar was duly sentenced.

FAITH IS FOR FOOLS

“Faith,” said the flip young cynic, “is the crutch of lame and lazy minds. Fancy staking one’s ideas of right and wrong, of present and future on the word of anyone, God or man! I believe nothing that I have not tested and proved. I take no one’s word for anything really important. Let the stupid believer act on the say-so of priest or prophet; my own experience and fact knowledge are my sole guides.”

So saying, he went out and made the following interesting acts of faith.

He called a certain man father and a certain woman mother because they told him they were his parents.

He knocked off work and celebrated what he believed was his birthday because he had been told he was born on 11 May.

A doctor advised him to eat plenty of green vegetables because they were good for him. Obediently he ate them, though thus far he had never shaken hands with a vitamin.

The morning paper carried headlines of the Nicaragua earthquake, and he shook a pitying head over the plight of a land he had never visited and a people he had never seen.

That evening he read the biography of Cleopatra and said, enthusiastically, about a woman who died two thousand years ago: “Clever girl. Sorry I wasn’t alive to meet her.”

At luncheon a scientific friend told him some interesting facts about the rings of Saturn. He was much interested and tucked away the information for future use.

Said he to a friend, “Relativity is the greatest scientific theory of the last hundred years.” He neglected to add that he was not one of the seven men in the world who understood it.

His broker assured him that United Yeast was due for a rise. So he bought United Yeast.

That night as he was summing up the day, he said, in self-approval: “Thank the powers I accept nothing on faith. Faith is for fools.”

And, poor idiot, he really believed it.

TERMITES

“The Equitable Trust Building had a bad crash last night,” said the secretary, chattily, as he laid the mail and the day’s appointments on the glossy expanse of the great Catholic architect’s desk.

“So I saw in the paper. Dangerous sag. They’ll have to tear it down.”

“Too bad, sir. A beautiful building. Strange that faulty construction like that got past the inspectors.”

“Oh, the construction was perfectly sound. Termites did the damages. The industrious, destructive, ugly little beggars have been at work. They’re not the size of an average ant, and cleverly they leave the surface smooth and intact. It’s the heart of the piles and wood beams that they eat away. You wouldn’t know there was a thing the matter with your building, till bang! it’s collapsing about your ears. Well, what’s the schedule for the weekend?”

“The committee from the grand lodge of the Masons is calling on you about the new temple. If you weren’t a Catholic, sir, they’d have taken your plan without a second’s hesitation.”

“I know. Inconvenient and expensive sometimes, this being a Catholic.”

“You’ll be conciliatory, sir, if you’re wise. It’s a two million-dollar job. You’re having lunch with—ah—Miss Roberts.”

“Yes. We’re planning to remodel her town house. Have you seen her in ‘Lilacs in Bloom’? Delightful! ‘Phone for a table at Pierre’s.” He smiled in disarming simplicity. “My wife prefers the Plaza.”

“I called the post office at Meadowdale, sir. There is no Catholic church in the town, and none nearer than twenty miles from there.”

“Too bad. Well, a date’s a date. I can’t break up the Oslow’s weekend. Get me a ticket and a seat on the train,

please. Is that all?"

"The complete set of Voltaire you ordered will be delivered this afternoon."

"Thanks. Clever devil, Voltaire, even today. Terribly irreverent, and he does bang the idols about. But brilliant. Thank you. That's all. I'll dictate at ten-thirty."

When some years later the town was startled by the sudden divorce and remarriage of the Catholic architect who had become a brilliant ornament of country clubs, swank weekends, and Masonic dinners, the Catholic groups wondered at the unexplained and altogether unexpected collapse.

Nobody explained to them about moral termites.

HOT AND A HIT

The little knot of "yes-men" gathered round the famous playwright-producer-star and bowed their heads in rhythmical assent.

"It's certainly hot, sir," yessed the first "Hot and a hit," the others caroled.

"Good thing the curtain is asbestos."

"Hot even for asbestos." "A sure-fire success."

"You're smart, sir, and nervy."

Backstage the comedians were still blushing slightly from the skits they had just put through; the chorus girls retired to put on some clothes; the electricians rubbed wrists tired from pulling the switches for black-outs; and everybody discussed in undertones the possibilities of a run, an official closing by the police, a tour of the cities later, or a trip to gaol.

The playwright-producer-star picked up his hat and gloves.

"Well, boys, if you want your play to go over, shock 'em, and shock 'em hard. Goodnight, everybody. I think we've got a hot hit."

The chauffeur of the famous p-p-s had been keeping the good old system warm with a little consoling alcohol. So he failed to notice the ten-ton truck in the road. The body of the p-p-s was removed from the wreckage and given a grand funeral. The show opened two days later, and somebody else made the chief curtain speech.

For the soul of the p-p-s had suddenly found itself the star guest of his Satanic Majesty.

"Front! A room for the gentleman; one with sulphur bath," said his majesty, genially. "It's a little dirty, sir, but you like dirt."

The next morning the little red bellhop transferred the p-p-s and his luggage to a room directly under the sulphur bath. The next morning he was conducted into the furnace room. The next morning he was parked close to the furnace. The next morning the bellhop grinned sardonically.

"You're being moved directly into the heart of the furnace," he said.

Right there the famous p-p-s protested and demanded to see his Satanic host.

"Is this a game?" he roared. "Why the rising temperature? Why all the heat?"

"Oh, that," said his majesty, "is being furnished by your play. It's a hot hit, my friend, a hot hit."
