

THESE TERRIBLE JESUITS.

By Rev. D. A. Lord, S. J.

I LAID aside the book with a feeling of startled chagrin. "My stars!" said I, to nobody in particular. "We're a terrible gang, we Jesuits! Liars and hypocrites and rank cheats! We've no more morality than a coyote, and when we do a good action it's spoiled by some sinister ulterior motive. We're either proud, arrogant fanatics who stop at nothing to attain our ends, or we're poor, broken-spirited cowards afraid to face the world without the shield of a disguise, or we are deceitful villains who, before the public, wear carefully adjusted halos and carry palms, while in our private hearts we hate our Society, quarrel furiously with our superiors, envy and slander one another, and know ourselves for pious frauds.

"And," I concluded, still more or less to the empty air, "the really terrifying and astonishing part of it all is that during the twenty years of my life as a Jesuit, twenty years of interesting work, high ideals, and happy associations, I've never suspected what a gang of cut-throats and hypocrites I'd joined."

I Am Deceived.

So I buried my abashed head in my hands. Wouldn't you, if you were one of these terrible Jesuits against whom everybody has so often been warned?

I've been a Jesuit for almost twenty years—a happy, contented, fairly busy Jesuit, who, for some unexplained reason, has never had a quarrel with his Superiors nor a serious disagreement with his fellow Jesuits, who has stupidly thought it all rather fine, who had the bad sense to take up the life because he felt he'd do good in it, and the bad taste to continue the life because he loved it. Heavens above, what a chump I've been!

All the while I've been wrong! The Jesuits are really not a group of very companionable men working for the greater glory of God, but a band of deluded fools, commanded by unscrupulous rogues. If I had had the slightest grain of sense or an eye in my head, I'd have seen the frightful hypocrisy of the life, felt the killing chill of its formalism, and had the courage to leave the Society and write a book exposing it. I'm worse than wicked; I'm stupid. And even I, deluded fool that I am, don't like to be considered stupid.

Of course the particular book I had read was not really unusual. A great many men have written terrible expositions of the Society of Jesus. In fact the Jesuits have been rather proud of their enemies. It takes a strong man to make a strong enemy, and the Jesuits have had them, strong to the point of violence. Usually they have been men who hated the Church, as Dumas did or Eugene Sue or Joseph McCabe. And I have been inclined to laugh a bit at their books. "Perverted sense of humour," you may say of me.

Jesuits a la Dumas.

There is that famous election of the Jesuit General related by Dumas with Dumas's marvellous gift for narrative—and fiction. It is riotously funny to anyone who ever read the Constitutions of the Society or has even a remote connection with the group of grave priests who meet in a dull, routine sort of meeting and pray God to help them choose the right kind of man.

But Dumas, who has never been accused of being a humourist, did a Mark Twain page or two that time. With great gusto he describes, as I remember it, the dying Franciscan "carried into the inn in the dead of night (the right setting for these desperate conspirators). One by one the distinguished personages gather at his command—a cardinal, a prince, a nobleman, a Highland chief, Aramis. You remember that impressive conclave that springs up like jinn at the rub of a ring.

Each tells the dying man a secret. (As if secrets would do a dying man any particular good!) Then he places the ring upon the finger of Aramis, for Aramis had whispered in the ear of the dying Jesuit General (ah-ha! it was he all the time!) the secret of the Man with the Iron Mask. And with the slipping of the ring upon his finger Aramis rises the new Jesuit General, and all kneel to kiss his hand. His had been the most important secret, and though he had never been a Jesuit, he leaped in a single bound to the post of General of the Society. The Arabian Nights has no tale so weird or utterly improbable.

Or According to Sue.

Or you may remember the Jesuits whose horrible figures haunt the pages (and afterwards, no doubt, the readers) of Eugene Sue's "The Wandering Jew"—the smooth, polished ecclesiastical diplomat, using his cleverness as a weapon, working with oily lies, shameless hypocrisy, cultured charm, and personal attractiveness, to wrest a fortune from its rightful inheritors to the malevolent purposes of the Society; and his "socius" and successor, the brutal, ruthless, murderous priest, who stops at nothing (for, as everyone knows, "the end justifies the means") to gain the fortune which craft and diplomacy have failed to gain; and the lovable, simple beautiful youth tricked into joining the Jesuits, but living to know and hate them for their wickedness, hate them from the depths of his pure and Christ-like heart.

Eugene Sue did some clever work in those characters, but did it on the principle of the famous scientist who, to find out what a giraffe was like, pulled down the blinds and thought up a giraffe out of his own head. If Sue had dropped into any Jesuit church or college (not so inaccessible to a Frenchman of his day), and talked to any priest he had met in the corridors, or sought out a Jesuit confessional or classroom.... But why bind oneself with the stifling bonds of fact when the imagination can do so much better? Surely the creeping, crawling poison-concealed-in-the-ring Jesuit (all Jesuits, as everyone knows, wear several poison-bearing rings) is so much better fiction material than Marquette the explorer, or Bellarmine the philosopher, or Kircher the scientist, or DeSmet the missionary, or Father Jones teaching a class of boys who dog his footsteps like adoring poodles, or Father Smith, whose confessional is the haven from dawn to midnight of the broken men and sad women of a great city.

It's Enemies Speak

Of course Joseph McCabe, to whom facts are trifles, not to disturb the course of his pen, and history an instrument on which to play discords, who hates the Church he deserted as Voltaire hated it, or as Benedict Arnold hated his betrayed country, may be expected to give us a highly doctored picture of the Jesuits and their history. To him they are rogues, plain rogues; but for that matter, to him the Popes are scoundrels, and the saints deluded or deluding fools. Jesuits smile happily when the Joseph McCabes of the world pause to fling mud and stones.

Yet, when a disgruntled, rebellious Jesuit leaves his Order to talk furiously against it, we Jesuits, who love it more with every year of our lives, are vaguely troubled. After reading Dumas or Sue or Joseph McCabe we look into the mirror to see if, like the little boy-playing pirate, we are not so terrible that we're "skeered of ourselves." After an ex-Jesuit writes about us, we feel more like going to the chapel to pray,

It's odd how eager we all are to listen to a man who belabours and abuses anything. We do not bring half the enthusiasm to the man who tells us how fine something is. While criticism sets us all atingle with interest, praise quite frankly bores us. Sharp-tongued women tearing an absent sister to quivering shreds are not the only ones who love to hear characters shattered and institutions called bad names. Some twisted instinct seems so often to make men love the pen that is dipped in hatred and venom, and feel affronted by the pen dipped in kindness and appreciation.

A Happy Jesuit.

Yet I, as a Jesuit, out of a pleasant experience of nearly twenty years, venture to speak of the Society that shelters me. I have been very happy in the Society, and I think it has done and is doing astonishingly fine work. I'm past the first youthful period of enthusiasm, for forty years are about to fall on my graying head, and almost twenty years of life in the Society lie behind me. Each year of my life has made me love the Society a little more, and has bound me just a little closer to my fellow Jesuits. I am uninteresting, for the simple fact that I am content; only the turbulent and rebellious are really interesting, it seems. I am truly and honestly happy in my life, and I can fancy no other life that would give me half the mental contentment I find in the Society. I have been offered opportunities at which men in other professions would jump; I prefer what I have to anything anyone could offer me.

So why should not I who am happy speak my happiness as freely as the discontented speak their discontent? Why should not I speak of the satisfaction I find in the Society, when some few who have left it speak so loudly of their dissatisfaction? Happiness need not be silent because unhappiness is so vocal. If the thousands of happy, contented Jesuits do not speak when a former associate tells of the not surprising causes that led him to take off his cassock, it is perhaps because a "happy country has no history," and a normal Jesuit takes his happiness so much for granted that he

never thinks that it might make interesting news. He is a little afraid that it is not quite decent to parade before the world what he considers to be God's best gift.

Everywhere, if you come to think of it, the discontented man is the one with the loud voice and the strident complaint. The happily married do not find their way into the newspapers, nor does the successful banker protest that he has a good bank. The happy and the successful are usually too busy enjoying their happiness to talk much about it.

Without Orders.

Just to allay the inevitable suspicion, "He was told to do this by clever superiors," let me assure the reader, on my word of honour, that no superior knows that I write these lines. A superior will know it before the lines are published. A very wise rule prevents a Jesuit from rushing into print until his manuscript undergoes a preliminary reading by competent scholars; but that will not be until the manuscript is finished and ready to be published. So, in the background of this booklet, there is no overshadowing black figure saying to me in sibilant whispers, "Write a sweet, happy, Pollyannish story of Jesuit life, one that will allure callow youth and deceive a gullible public." I write because I want to. Though I might, as my train flies across the country, read the detective story I picked up at the station, or write letters to my friends, or look out of the window at this gorgeous Washington scenery (I do that sometimes, even as I write). I prefer to tell those who care to hear of the Society that has mothered me so tenderly, been so stern but skilful a nurse, that left an open door by which I might have left if I chose, but that kept me without violence because of its ideals, its opportunities for interesting work, its spiritual possibilities, its delightful association with congenial men, and because, though it asked me to give up everything for Christ, it then gave me back Christ, and with Him everything I could desire.

I Join the Jesuits.

I entered the Society of Jesus at the age of twenty-one, a college graduate. Certainly I was not a credulous child, and certainly I knew clearly what I was doing. With me were a group of thirty-eight young men, as varied in temperament and antecedents as a group could possibly be. For the first two years it was my privilege, as a novice, to pack my bags and turn my back on my new life at any moment I wished. In fact, had I shown fundamental discontent or dissatisfaction to my novice master, an unfitness for the life, or a dislike for it, he would have promptly handed me my return ticket and advised me to use it. The silly idea that the Jesuit or any other Religious lives in a sort of penitentiary, behind locked doors and barred windows is the most delicious fancy.

After two years I took my simple vows, promised to live the life as I had been taught to lead it, but always with the understanding that if I did not satisfy the Society or the Society did not satisfy me I could be dispensed from my vows and return to the world, freed from my obligations. The Society, of course, could not dismiss me without grave fault on my part, nor could I seek exemption from my vows without honourable, just reasons.

Of the thirty-eight who entered with me, one left before the end of the two years. He did not feel he belonged, and that simply settled the matter. Three left in the course of the next sixteen years, and took up useful and honourable places in Catholic and civil life. Not one of them would say one word against the Society. They simply preferred another life, and left the Society with respect and admiration. That, by the way, is the attitude toward the Society characteristic of the average ex-Jesuit. He does not care to stay, but he recognizes, even when he goes, the value and beauty of the life. The vigorous complainers or the difficult characters are the ones who burst into vituperative print.

Because I Liked Jesuits.

One reason why men, like myself, smile so broadly at the terrifying pictures of Jesuits is because the first thought of entering the Society usually comes to them from the fact that they have seen and much admired Jesuits. I, for example, as a boy at college, vastly admired the intellectual aliveness, the deep calm of soul, the fine, hearty, normal life of one of the professors. I envied him his life, and decided to follow it. When you come to think of it, example is the thing that draws most of mankind into any particular line of work. We admire a surgeon and turn to surgery. We admire a lawyer and think of law.

So if the Jesuit is not attractive, if, on the contrary, he is the violently repellent character sketched in hostile pictures of Jesuits, he has a slim chance of drawing youths to follow his example. Yet in the novitiate I found that most of my

fellow-novices had come, because in history or life they had met and admired some Jesuit, saw that he was as unlike the Jesuit of fiction as sunlight is unlike shadow, and said to themselves, "I'd be lucky if I could be what he is, and as content and happy as he seems to be."

Believe me, eighty boys and men, the number who now yearly become Jesuits in the Middle West alone, are not drawn to a difficult life either by hypocrites or by the crushed, broken-spirited victims of the ruthless system pictured in fiction, even the fiction that calls itself fact.

No Decoys

No one ever spoke to me of being a Jesuit until I had first, of my own accord, approached my Jesuit friend. I found later on that the Jesuit rule forbade any Jesuit's trying to influence anyone to enter the Society. When I came to apply for admission, the official examiners asked me (by force of law, I later discovered). "Has anyone induced or persuaded you to take this step?" Had I answered "yes," I would have been sent away and told to wait.

The Glamour of a Name.

As is true of anyone who ever read even a smattering of history, the Jesuit name had for me something of glamour. History, Protestant as well as Catholic, has thrown romantic associations around the black robe. Here were a group of men who had invaded wildernesses of America and squalid cities of forbidden Tibet; who had been equally at home in the courts of Europe and the tepees of Sioux or Hurons; who had built and then been robbed of spiritual empires like that of Paraguay; who had gone, like Xavier, further and more daringly than any conquistador; whose steps had preceded the steps of pioneers and arid explorers; who had not been held back from the persecuting England of Elizabeth and the Stuarts nor from the blood-soaked Ireland of Cromwell by the rack and gallows that were their certain fate; who had built flourishing Catholic communities in Japan and China, and had stayed to die when the Emperors boiled Christians over the sulphur pits of Nagasaki or imprisoned them, like wild beasts, in open cages, that were carted in savage exhibitions from city to city; who fought with pure lives and high courage the leaders of the Reformation, and were in the forefront of the battle line that stopped Luther on the borders of Austria, and drove Calvin from his strongholds in France; who to-day are found in every civilized country of the world and go to the missions in a large and efficient group of modern missionaries.

If a young man loves a great fighter or a daring explorer, whether the explorations lead him into the wilderness of a new world or into the perilous realms of philosophy and theology, he would be likely to feel, as I certainly felt, the thrill of Jesuit history, crowded by great deeds and punctuated with the approval of the Popes, who have regarded the Jesuits as "the papal bodyguard" and "the free-lances of Christ."

The Compliment of Hatred.

A man is judged quite as much from his enemies as from his friends. Since this is so true, I felt that the Society must be a distinguished organization. Every man who has hated Christ and the Church has hated, from the depths of his soul, the Society of Jesus. The French rationalists of the eighteenth century, bent on driving the Church from France and Christ from the altars, hated and attacked first the Society. Pombal of Portugal, determined to subjugate the Church to the Crown, first drove the Jesuits from every Portuguese boundary. England, hounding its Catholic subjects to extinction, killed seminary priests whenever found, but built the highest and brightest bonfires for the captured Jesuits. And it was just a very few years before I entered the novitiate, that modern French infidels began their war on the Church and religion by the expulsion of the Jesuits. Every sort of literate or illiterate Catholic-hater in America, in the last few years, has shown his hatred for the Society of Jesus, not one member of which, in all likelihood, he has ever seen.

If, I argued, men who hate Christ and hate the Catholic Church so venomously hate the Society of Jesus, Jesuits must have given them good cause; and that cause should be reason enough for the Church to be grateful to the Society and for Christ to regard it with approving eyes. The argument may not appeal to one who is not a Catholic, but it certainly appealed to me.

A Fearful Plunge.

One does not, however, live in history. One lives in a very real and important present. All the ancient glamour in the world will not keep a man satisfied in any organization whose ideals and methods he despises, and whose members he dislikes. No one picks out a deserted castle for his home just because it happens to be haunted by a flock of noble and distinguished ghosts.

Yet, though I had admired the Jesuits I met, and liked Jesuit ideals, in so far as I was acquainted with them, I entered the novitiate fearfully. Such a change that was from the rushing, turbulent city of my birth to quiet, slumbrous old Florissant in Missouri; such a complete re-adjustment was necessary from the care-free life of a very callow, but very active, collegian to the life of a novice, for whom conversation during a feast-day dinner (where silence and reading are the rule) was an event, and a long walk (for one who had loved the Theatre and dancing and gay college life), was a memorable affair.

In that first moment it seemed as if all I had loved and lived for were gone forever. I can remember walking out to stand on the little mound in the graveyard, (symbolic position), and turning regretful, wistful eyes toward the vague lustre against the sky that was the reflected night-light of not distant St. Louis.

Then came the swift plunge into the work of my new life, and everything else took second place. Externally uneventful, my days were filled with the thrill of an inward revolution that was incidentally a wonderful evolution. Cut off from society, I found a delightful companionship that I had never dreamed possible. Though so many of my old standards and ideals were set aside, my mind and soul and heart were filled with the most engrossing and inspiring new realities. While my hand was busy slipping plates on to the long dining-room table, hoeing an unfamiliar row in the garden, or scrubbing pots and pans in the scullery (for there was a routine of work that must have been much like the work of the boy Christ in Nazareth), my mind was opening to a new and limitless vision, a vision of brave men fighting for noble causes, under a banner whose *Ad Majorem Del Gloriam* suddenly had a tremendous significance to me, and with a Captain Who bore aloft the standard of His invincible cross. Call it unreal or fanciful if you wish; but if you do you must apply the same adjectives to the aspirations of every young soul that dreams of serving Christ and his fellow men.

New ideals of loyalty to Christ, purity of soul, disinterested service of one's fellowmen, made the most commonplace day memorable, and one came running to his assigned work with "Here I am, Lord" on his lips.

My Comrades.

And around me were a group of fifty-seven novices, delightful fellows for the most part, who laughed easily, talked high talk, played ball as if a world's championship hung in the balance, and built up the foundations of deep, true, loyal friendships that, thank God, stand the strains of life. All congenial? All angelic in temperament? All thoroughly agreeable? The simple answer to that is the fact that perfectly normal young men, not bands of seraphim, join the Society. But nowhere in the world—of that I am certain—is unpleasantness of character more quickly suppressed, tolerance and consideration more generally shown, a broader sympathy manifested, and deeper friendliness experienced, than in a Jesuit novitiate.

Cast in a Mould.

There is a sort of persistent legend to the effect that the young Jesuits are put into a sort of concrete mould and turned out exactly to the same pattern, like so many spiritual Fords or so many West Point uniforms. Of course any man who believes that legend has never met more than one Jesuit. Fancy the brilliant and popular Father Vaughan beside the shy little spiritual Father in a small community; or William Doyle, the English chaplain, slain at the front, beside the studious, scholarly, but retiring professor of philosophy. Take four Jesuits in any community, and you will have four distinct types of men, with divergent characteristics.

Remember," our novice master insisted from the start, "nature is the foundation of grace. Keep your natural gifts and develop them; God gave you your natural talents and abilities to use. Keep your own individual character and build upon it the character of Jesus Christ." In those phrases are the essentials of the Jesuit's training—nature preserved, but with Christ's characteristics added. No one was, of course, permitted to develop a one-sided character. If a novice was melancholy, he was given the cheerful garden to work in. If he showed a proud streak, out he went where the fresh hash

had been spilled on the floor, and on hands and knees he wiped it up. Was he a frivolous or fastidious soul? Then he dipped his hands in the kitchen sink and scrubbed unromantic dinner dishes. That was simply wise discipline.

But guiding all was the principle "Build upon your nature the character of Christ." That was the work begun in the long retreat that followed so shortly after entrance. For thirty days we prayed, meditated, thought things over in almost unbroken silence, and listened to profound truths from our novice master. The first week we spent in the presence of the great realities of life, life's meaning, death, sin, judgment, heaven, hell, and we worked at the stiff problem of adjusting ourselves to these fundamental truths. Then for one week we studied Christ's life, saw what the Son of God had deliberately chosen for Himself, and said, "What Christ chose for Himself is evidently the best thing for me." Poverty became intelligible after one had looked at Bethlehem; Christ's obedience of the thirty hidden years and His obedience unto death made clear the obedience one might some day vow; we read the beauty of purity in the eyes of the chaste Christ; and as we watched His life of labour, work for our fellowman took on a new meaning. Then for a week we watched the Passion of Christ, learned the terrifying power of sin and the strength Christ had won for those who would meet life bravely and in His company. During the last week we saw Christ risen from the dead and said: "This is the goal of life and death; I shall judge time from eternity, all earth in the light of my immortal soul and risen body."

If there were any truth in the accusation that all Jesuits are cast in the same mould, it would lie in this, that they are taught to model themselves on Christ. And, it must be admitted, a world full of men who were all trying to live like Christ and be like Christ would be a delightful place to dwell in. Besides, men could all try to become very like Christ without fear of monotonous repetition or stale similarity. Christ the carpenter and Christ the teacher; Christ of the humble cottage, and Christ of the rich Pharisee's table; Christ the guest at Bethany, and Christ driving the buyers and sellers from the temple; Christ with His disciples, and Christ with the high priests; Christ the kindly physician, and Christ the prophet of the world's doom—imitation of Christ, while it produces a fundamental similarity of characters, certainly allows for a wide variety, as exemplified by those most perfect imitators of Christ, the saints.

Impossible Ideals.

I have read and heard that the Jesuit ideals are simply impossible, ridiculously misleading. A poor, credulous novice sees held up before him astonishing ideals. He makes a mad effort to reach them, finds with time that they cannot be realized, sees that no older Jesuit attains them, and sinks back into utter disillusionment. Ideals disappear; for as they cannot be attained, they are slowly, one by one, sometimes reluctantly, sometimes impetuously, renounced.

Not if the Jesuit has any sense. As a novice he has the ideals of Christ's perfect life held up before him. Can he ever hope to attain them? Of course not to attain the ideals of Christ is to become Christ. Even the youngest Jesuit knows that he can only approximate those ideals. His life must be a constant striving after a perfection which he can never reach. Need the fact that he cannot attain the ideal discourage him? Of course not. Does it discourage a painter never to paint a picture that fully satisfies himself? Or a physician who, for all his scientific striving, finds that complete knowledge always escapes him? Assuredly not. Striving is hard; striving takes courage; and the man who would have been satisfied to be a third-rate physician or an indifferent artist may, all things being equal, be satisfied to be a mediocre Jesuit. But the fact that he has the ideals of Christ held up to him has nothing to do with his possible discouragement or laxity.

Every man knows that ideals are ideals simply because they cannot be attained. They are the heights we must aim to reach if we are to rise from the common plane. The measure of our ideals and our striving for those ideals is the measure of our rise above the common-place. And if a man is striving to reach the ideals of Christ, he has set himself to scale the highest peaks; his rise will be higher than that of any man with lesser ideals, but his courage must be stronger, and his ambitions more enduring.

Even if he sees that many an older Jesuit has failed to attain anything approaching the ideal, the younger man remembers that Christ, and not any man, is his inspiration. If he has common decency, he judges others kindly, remembering that Christ took long patient, discouraging years to form a few disciples into something approaching his own ideals. And if he is the right sort of Jesuit, he will be too busy with his own work and striving, to see the limitations of others, and too broad and tolerant to let essential human limitations blind him to the heroic lives and real generosity which are commonplaces all about him in the Society.

The Classics.

Even the most casual of us novices knew before he had finished his two years of spiritual training, (the training in prayer, in self-control, in fundamental virtues), that a stiff intellectual training lay ahead. Indeed, we looked forward to it with the keenest anticipation. When our vows were taken, on a singularly happy morning, we passed into the beginning of a carefully planned course that led, not to letters behind our names nor academic degrees, (arbitrary distinctions which may mean real scholarship or may mean conceited pedantry), but toward broad training and thorough culture. For two years we absorbed classics, Latin, Greek, and English, with an enthusiasm that was simply astonishing. Men who had been great football players, for example, showed an almost vehement desire to excel in Latin poetry. We ran back from the baseball field or tennis court at the end of our Thursday holiday to snatch an extra ten minutes with Virgil or Sophocles or Shakespeare. We talked of the Catalinian conspiracy as if it were the latest front-page news; we got a positive thrill out of Demosthenes thundering against Philip. The presentation of "Antigone" in the original Greek, and "The Two Captives" in authentic Latin, the weekly meetings of our voluntary Shakespeare Club, that presented sections of English drama with great earnestness and an Elizabethan disregard of costume and scenery, caused us more excitement than a first night on Broadway. We honestly grew to love the classics, and for two years we lived them as few students ever do.

Science.

Then came three years of hard and exacting, (but to: me, who loved philosophy, absorbing), scientific training. Our group moved to St. Louis University, and with exclusive zeal buckled down to the rigours of philosophy and science. There may be finer trainings in clear reasoning and logical thinking than we got in those three years; if so, I've never heard of them. The stern logic of the Schoolmen, who hated slovenly thinking as they loved incisive debate, made with the exactness of the natural sciences a perfect combination and we felt ourselves developing a sort of instinct for right thinking, an extra sense that cut through to the precise falsity of a badly made argument.

Vacation Thrills.

The first summer after we began our philosophy course, we young men entrained with the Jesuit students of theology for the Wisconsin lakes, where our villa, primitive but comfortable, stood as the centre of a gracious island. There for six weeks we fished and swam and rowed, sang (with great gusto and considerable musical skill out on the lake as evening fell, and varied our athletic meets and baseball leagues with elaborately illuminated boat processions in honour of Our Lady, and with catechetical excursions among the children of the neighbouring villages.

Important as these summers of fresh air and exercise were for our young bodies, I have come with years to know that they meant far more for us than that. They cemented the comradeship between men who must work together through life. Out on the lakes, in the ecstasy of a pickerel strike, around the much-abused villa piano, where we sang popular songs or the world's loveliest hymns, in the off-duty atmosphere of vacation life, we came to know one another as we never could in the class-room or lecture hall. You aver to play with a man to know him; so, during those summers together, in the comradely atmosphere of the villa, we shouted joyous songs, played fiercely contested games, applauded some impromptu vaudeville, and stored up unforgettable memories and firm, lasting friendships.

At Work.

Twenty-eight years old, with the first half of my training as a Jesuit completed, I found myself assigned to my first active work as a member of the English department of St. Louis University.

It is a risky matter, perhaps, to speak of that period; for the five hundred and more students who passed through my classes during the following three years, and the five thousand and more whose activities I directed as faculty moderator are lawyers, doctors, priests, dentists and business men, in various parts of the country, quite competent, should they care to, to check up on what I write. But I feel safe in taking the risk, for, whatever my students may have thought of those years, to me they were the three most valuable, and in many ways the three happiest of my life. The theories I had learned in my study got backbone and vital reality from the contact with young, vigorous human life.

My classroom was, perhaps, not a very orderly place, but at least I never found it dull, and my scholars seldom

showed bored countenances. With the students of the various apartments as co-workers, I ran a university newspaper, edited a year-book, produced plays and comic operas, ran orchestras and debating clubs, kept the student soldiers of the Student Army Training Corps busy and entertained, was faculty member at the students' council and staged our University Centennial Pageant. It was all-pleasant. The students could not possibly have enjoyed me as much as I enjoyed them during those three years without a dull day or an idle one.

And the splendid crowd of fellow Jesuits who gathered in the recreation room in the evening and ticked off the high spots or the funny moments of the day, capped, so to speak, the engrossing life with delightful and sympathetic companionship.

A Priest.

Four hard, grilling years of theology followed, years of much class and difficult study, but made keenly expectant by the approaching day of ordination to the priesthood. It may seem strange to the uninitiated to realize the eagerness with which the young Jesuit looks forward to the morning, when he will bind himself forever as a priest to a life he hopes will be pleasing to God and useful to his fellowmen. I lived those years, as did my fellow-Jesuits, in the light of that approaching morning. And when the morning of ordination came, it brought with it happiness which simply passes the limitations of words.

I can remember so vividly the heaviness of the Archbishop's hands on my head, the solemn presentation of the instruments of the Mass, the words that were so simple yet so venerable and significant. Then in quick succession I seem to see my newly consecrated hands blessing my mother and father, raising the Host in elevation, and making the cross of pardon above the sinner in the confessional. It was happiness so deep, that you must take my word for it. I have neither the power nor the inclination to try to tell what cannot be described.

Back for ten months to the prayer and humble work of the novitiate I went with my comrades for my final training as a Jesuit. Once more, in a long retreat of thirty days, we looked fundamentals and compared our own life to the life of Christ, which we had promised to imitate. And we set ourselves to the direct preparation of the work for souls, which as priests we hoped would be ours. The year ended, we wended our way to our various assignments as professors, pastors, writers or directors, knowing that a life full of opportunity lay ahead.

Now, three years later, I find myself with all that the Society can give me—solemn vows obliging me to be poor in spirit, pure of heart, and obedient in act, an engrossing work in life a sincere friendship for my fellow-Jesuits, a sympathetic consideration from my Superiors, a contented mind—as little, I like to believe, resembling the disgruntled Jesuit of the various exposés or the horrible Jesuits of the novels as I resemble a Uriah Heep or Simon Legree. Forgive me if I write too much about myself. Ultimately we know things through our own experience with them; and it is my own experience, not what anyone else has said or written, that has guided my hand as I write of the Society I have come to appreciate and love.

Shaping Oneself

One is not a Jesuit for very long before he finds that the Society, while it gives him an ample training and a broad education, regards what it gives him as a sort of minimum. Beyond that he is expected to develop himself. The self-examination of the novitiate is supposed to give him a realisation of his possibilities. The years that follow give him ever increasing opportunities to test himself in a variety of things, in literature, science, the handling of men, preaching and the work of the ministry, writing, theology. In one of these or *in* two or three he will find his own aptitudes.

So the young Jesuit early notices how the men about him are beginning to show individual lines of development. They have marked gifts of some sort, and, with the approval of their Superiors, they begin to emphasize and train them. By the time the Society's formal training has ended, the young men, who apparently all started from scratch, and were trained in much the same way, have actually run at various speeds, and eventually, so to speak, in different events.

This man has trained himself with conscious foresight to speak to cultured audiences in scholarly fashion; that man has turned by choice to work among the negroes. One of my best friends drives a motor-cycle at breakneck speed between mission posts in Central India; another took special work at Oxford in Latin and Greek; and a third specialized and got his doctorate in pedagogy. One of them is an amazing success with small boys; another is making a name for

himself as a novelist, and another as a radio lecturer. And so they go, with varied talents and temperaments, finding, with the approval of the Society, varied lines of work.

Blind obedience.

But there is that terrible matter of Jesuit obedience. “An,” says the Jesuit Superior of fiction, towering above his crushed and cringing subordinate, “remember, when I speak you must obey, no matter what I command. Though I should bid you throw yourself under a passing train, or poison an orphanage, you have no choice but to do my bidding. Now, I command you, be off about your deadly work.”

And the subordinate goes out to stick a knife into the heart of the King of France, or wheedle the rich widow out of her wealth.

As the Jesuit reads such stuff, he wonders why people take the trouble to write humorous novels. There’s the stuff of laughter, right enough.

Of course the Jesuit is schooled to obedience, “blind obedience,” if you wish the term, the sort that, for example, sent the Light Brigade rushing to die, even when they felt the command was a mistake. Every true soldier obeys in just that fine, quick, eager way, though for a far less noble reason than the Jesuit; and the Jesuit likes to remember that his founder was a soldier, Ignatius of Loyola, who turned his allegiance from the kings of earth to the King of Heaven, and demanded that his followers give their officers and their Captain, Christ, at least the prompt obedience he had been trained to give to his military chief.

But all this dagger-and-poison stuff is just so much more cheap melodrama. One would think that the Jesuit Constitutions were very difficult to get, a sort of mystic book, permitted only to the initiated. Anybody who cares to make the effort will find, throughout the section of the Constitution on obedience, the recurring phrase, “wherever there appears no sin.” If a Jesuit Superior, in a moment of madness, summoned me and told me to poison the mayor, or seduce the mythical wealthy widow, or rob a bank, or tell a trifling lie, I should be expected, by my rule, to refuse point-blank, and march out and report his order to a higher Superior.

For that matter, if the Superior commanded anything positively harmful, even if it were not sinful, I have recourse to a higher Superior, who will hear me with the same consideration and the same open mind that he gives to the one who issued the order.

Common Sense.

I have lived all these years as a Jesuit, taken plenty of orders (and given none; I have never exercised any authority in the Society), and in all that time I have never been ordered to do anything even remotely wrong, and never, for that matter, anything silly or stupid or harmful. And I have never met a Jesuit who has.

When a young man first enters the Society, the hand of obedience may seem to rest heavily upon him. I rather fancy the young pleb at West Point does not find his first year of taking orders particularly easy.

But if the young Jesuit novice has the right stuff in him, he knows that, though he is free to leave if he does not want to obey, he chose and continues to lead this life of his own free will. Nobody obliged him to enter, and nobody is forcing him to stay. If obedience hopelessly galls him, he has only to pack his bag and take the first out-bound car. More than that, though, he remembers that the Society of Jesus is an organization approved by the Catholic Church, and with authority from it to command. Hence, when its Superiors speak an order, the words of Christ, “He that heareth you heareth me,” applies to them. So the young Jesuit makes his submission, not to any mere man, which would be policy or discretion, but to the representative of Christ, and that is supernatural obedience.

This matter of obedience demands, perhaps, just a word of explanation. The Catholic has always believed that Christ established a Church, and gave it the power to command, and to demand obedience to its commands. When Christ gave the Church the keys and the power of binding and loosing, He was simply making definite His own promise, “He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me.” The obedience of the Catholic in consequence is not obedience to a mere man, but to a man who speaks with the voice of Christ. If Christ cared to share His power with men, men have the right to use, and other men have the right to bow to this power.

A Religious Order like the Jesuits has the approval of the Church, and has been given by the Church the authority to issue commands to its members. In this way the Religious Order comes to share the authority given directly to the Church

by Christ. For the Church formally approves the Constitutions of an order and its method of government, and bids it enlist members and guide them by its commands and its directions.

When, then, a man joins a Religious Order, he promises to obey, not because another man is placed over him, but because the man placed over him is exercising authority given to *him* by an organization which received its authority from the Church, which received its authority from Christ.

In order, further, to make his obedience to this representative of Christ absolute and unswerving, the Jesuit or the member of any other Religious Order takes a vow of obedience, binding himself to obey, and promising not to put his own personal whim before the rule of his Order or the command of his Superior. He may not like nor admire his Superior, he may not think him wise; yet he obeys, not because *his* Superior has been placed over him, but because he recognizes that that Superior has a power derived from Christ Himself. This is religious obedience.

If you do not believe that a man can give commands as the representative of God, you would be a perfect fool to join the Jesuits. If you do so believe, you would be a fool to resent orders given to you by one who, as the Jesuit founder said: "is in the place of Christ and has received authority from Him." This changes the whole aspect of obedience, and makes it a glorious submission to God's representatives.

Army or Mob?

Besides, any man knows that an organization, a unified forward movement, or any successful fighting does not just happen as a sort of happy accident. It results from carefully directed, ordered plans. Men unite themselves to other men, put themselves under leaders and say: "Use us as the good of the organization demands." In a forward movement the rank and file cry, "Point out the way for us to go, and we will obey." The trained soldier asks simply: "When, where, and how do you want me to fight?"

The precise difference between a mob and an army, between a successful business corporation and a bankrupt one, between a movement that advances and one that falters, and is dispersed in hopeless little dusters, is measured in loyalty and obedience. And the Society of Jesus asks and expects of its members just such soldierly obedience, such loyal, devoted service.

We can fancy our army in France as made up of a lot of hotheaded youths, who went over the top when they pleased and went back to the relief billets when the whim moved them. We can picture the Standard Oil Company as made up of energetic young business men, who buy the grade of oil they like at the price they like, determine their own advertising campaign for each oil station, and decide on selling price and methods as the mood of the moment directs them, while they take up chewing gum and grand pianos as side lines. And without much trouble we can fancy what would happen to either of those two groups if this were the case. One joins an organization precisely because he feels he will work better under competent direction and in co-ordination and cooperation with others. A guerrilla or a genius may work better alone, but many of us feel the strength and the need of group action. So, once a man has joined a group, the plainest common-sense tells him either to obey or get out, to move with the group he has joined or go off by himself. To stay in the group and demand that he be allowed to do as he pleases, to be the only one out of step—well, one need not discuss ridiculous suppositions like that. Obedience is not, you see, only a supernatural virtue; it is a matter of common horse sense too.

Hard as it may seem at first, obedience grows less and less heavy with time. I soon discovered that most of the orders given me were pretty right and reasonable. Superiors did not go around issuing orders like some recently commissioned second lieutenant. Orders were really surprisingly rare and surprisingly sane, and they were much more frequently couched in a "Would you be good enough?" or "I should like to have you" than in a "Do this" or "Don't do that."

I found, too, that, with each year of my life as a Jesuit, orders grew less and less frequent. A man was put more on his own responsibility. He was quite as likely to go to his Superior and say, "I was thinking of doing this and that," as to have his Superior come to him with, "I want you to do this and that."

I honestly believe that, aside from the essentials of the fundamental rule, which one accepts open-mindedly after perfectly understanding what he is doing, the average Jesuit has far less of the rub and grind of obedience than the average employee of a big corporation or any officer in any army in the world. Theoretically very stiff and exacting, Jesuit obedience is in practice considerate, quick to make allowance, and positively gentle. You find men rather spontaneous in their obedience; you find Superiors reluctant to impose difficult commands.

And over all the obedience of a Jesuit is the remembrance of the Christ he is bound to imitate, the Christ so obedient during His life with Mary and Joseph, so willing to be “obedient even unto death.” Nor does he forget, nor does he fail to experience the fact that the bondage of Christ is perfect freedom.

Rules

The life of a Jesuit is hemmed round by his rules, none of which, however, except those dealing with his vows or with fundamental right and wrong, binds under sin. They are guide-posts rather than commands; directions for a safer and more rapid approach to Christ rather than stern orders. What critics of the Society never care to remember is the fact that the voice of the Superior is the living rule, making exceptions and exemptions where he thinks proper, and where the need of individuals or conditions demand them.

Of course the Jesuit’s vows are hard. A man becomes a Jesuit just because vows are hard. He wants to do something out of the ordinary for Christ. Every priest binds himself to be pure, in imitation of the pure Christ, and the world accepts this as a commonplace. The Jesuit vows to be poor, as Christ was poor; but St. Francis of Assisi has accustomed everyone to realize that detachment from wealth is as beautiful as it is courageous. The vows are hard, but no man who really understands them thinks them impossible.

The word “wealth” makes me pause for a moment. It recalls all the legends of Jesuit wealth that have been current since the first days of the Society. Just recently the newspapers featured the story of a group of explorers going out to search for buried Jesuit wealth in Paraguay. I wish them luck as I would wish Ponce de Leon luck if he told me he was going to look for the Fountain of Youth. My wishes would be equally effective in either case.

Jesuit Wealth.

Jesuit wealth? Well, I have lived in Jesuit Houses from New York to San Francisco, and I have found no traces of it. I spent the first seven years of my life in the Society without a penny in my pocket. When I wanted to go anywhere, I walked or, infrequently, got the exact streetcar fare from my Superior. I have just made a trip that cost a business friend nine hundred dollars when he made it. I was expected to pay my own way by the lectures I gave *en route*. I have, if it interests you, as it probably does not, two suits of clothes, one for summer and one for winter. While I do not precisely have to go to bed when one of them is being pressed, I do have to manage rather carefully that necessary repairs are made on days when I am at home, wearing a mercifully concealing cassock over an ancient pair of trousers.

Jesuits, it is perfectly true, have beautiful churches, which are of service only to the people who worship in them. They have large colleges and universities—usually with proportionately large debts. But these educational plants are for the training of students of moderate circumstances, and can be operated only because Jesuit professors serve entirely without salary.

I do not know, by the way, of any college or university in the country to day that is regarded as a profitable investment. If, by means of generous endowment, it keeps out of the red ink in its balance sheet, everyone thinks it is doing remarkably well. Jesuit universities are almost entirely without endowment, except the endowment of men, and the astonishing part of it is that economy and human generosity, and the splendid loyalty of professors, lay and Jesuit, keep them from bankruptcy.

Wealth? This is one legend connected with Jesuits that I wish were even partially true. Jesuit ledgers are not inaccessible to the student. They would make for the honest-minded a marvellous study of how magnificent churches and huge educational plants are built and operated with sacrifice and generosity and a minimum income.

Intrigues.

Of course closely connected with the legends of vast wealth are the legends of Jesuit intrigue. You remember, no doubt, Thackeray’s famous Jesuit in “Henry Esmond,” Father Holt or Holz. He bobbed up in a dozen different places in a dozen different disguises, always just about to push somebody off or somebody on to a throne.

I remember, when President Harding died of over-work and crabs, eaten out of season, some solemn ministerial soul announced from the pulpit that the President had been slain by the Jesuits with mental poisoning. The course in mental poisoning was for some reason omitted from my training, so I cannot give you any details of the method employed.

The association of the Jesuit with politics arose in the mind of the Protestant historian from the fact that the Society

was founded in the days of the Reformation, when religion and politics were hopelessly entangled, and each religious political group warred on all others. If Mary was Queen of England, the Catholics walked the streets, and Protestants languished in prison; if Elizabeth came to the throne, the bonfires were lighted for the papists. If the Catholic party was the stronger in France, everything was sunny for the Church; if the Huguenots gained the power, the Catholic sought out dark alleys and kept his weather eye open for waiting swords. If German Princes were pushing the fight, Protestantism swept forward; if the Emperor had a good day on the field, Catholics regained a little more confidence. Mary Stuart was slain because she was the candidate of the Catholic party for the throne of England; Coligny because he was the chief defender of the Calvinists. And so it went. Religion was so connected with politics, that everyone felt that the rise or fall of a King or Prince meant the rise or fall of the new religion or the old in the country he happened to rule.

Naturally, the Pope used the newly established Jesuits as his ambassadors. He sent them to strengthen Kings in their loyalty, to re-establish the wavering faith of countries, and to convert, if they could, lapsing Princes. And naturally the Jesuits felt that the triumph of any Catholic Prince or party was a triumph for the Church, as the triumph of a Protestant Prince must be a terrible catastrophe to Catholicity. When the Prince spoke in those days, the people jumped; and if he spoke Protestantly the people hopped obediently to the churches of the new creed.

We need hardly think it strange, then that the Jesuits were so mightily concerned about politics when everyone in the world was concerned with just who would be the next King or the next party to rule the Empire. We think it quite natural for the dissenting Ministers of Colonial America to look on Washington and the Revolutionists as great patriots, while many of the established Ministers, who felt that revolt against England meant revolt against the mother English Church, regarded them as traitors to their country and their faith. Nobody thinks it surprising that, since Methodism in America regards as vital the triumph of Prohibition, it throws its strength to any candidate or any party that promises to enforce the Eighteenth Amendment, and fights with all its power any man or group whose platform is slightly damp.

And if to-day either political party were to espouse a law abolishing freedom of religion (precisely the issue at stake in Reformation days), the Jesuits would be interested, heart and soul, as every good citizen would be interested, in seeing that that party was thoroughly and soundly whipped.

So the history of the case is simply this, that, when politics and religion were hand in hand, the Jesuits could not be interested in one without being vitally interested in the other. Calvin and John Knox and Martin Luther set the excellent example of playing politics for the triumph of their new faiths; the Jesuits would have been dilatory had they not learned the lesson and played politics for the old. The objection has not really been that they played politics; the objection has been that they played politics for the triumph of the Catholic and not of the Protestant group.

This is, of course, a very different thing from saying that Jesuits went around feeding poison to Kings, knocking little Princes over the head, and plotting the massacre of unsuspecting Protestants. All this sort of thing had no existence, except in the pages of men who hate the Church even more than they hate the Society, and who paint every Pope as a man whose wine is very dangerous stuff for non-Catholic stomachs.

In all the years I've lived in the Society, I have voted when and for whom I wished. No one ever suggested anything else. I have walked to the polls and voted a Republican ticket with a fellow-Jesuit who voted Democratic. Once, in a State election, I voted for a dry candidate, while my best friend voted for a wet. Even local politics is a rarely discussed object in our recreation rooms, and I have never met a Superior, from the Rector of a church to the Provincial of a whole district, who had a real interest in politics. And I never knew one who made the least effort to influence a public officer or sway his community or his Catholic friends in a political question. Anyone in America who is afraid of the Jesuit in politics is probably afraid of ghosts in the village graveyard, and thinks that Catholic churches store a stand of rifles in their basements for each child baptized.

In Disguise.

But didn't Jesuits go about in disguise? Well, if there was a price on your head, if you were being hunted like a mad wolf, if English pursuivants or Japanese soldiers or Cromwellian spies were hot on your trail, if you were a priest for whom it was a capital offence to say Mass, you would probably not go around with signs written all over you announcing your identity to the world. You and I, under conditions like that, might adopt the disguise that would make it possible for us to live a little longer and work a trifle more before we fed ourselves to the bonfire, or handed ourselves over to the public executioner.

I have personally known one Jesuit, just one, who used a disguise. He was sent to Russia with the Papal relief at a time when a priest was shot on sight. He went to bring food to the starving Russians, and wore khaki and “puts,” because in disguise he could continue his work of mercy. Thus far I have worn my Roman collar for the world to see, and have announced with occasional pride to chance acquaintances in trains that I am one of these mysterious Jesuits. None of them to date has fainted in terror.

Why I Fail.

No one knows better than I how far I am from exhibiting in myself the ideal of the Jesuit life. I should not feel quite ready, let me honestly confess, to meet my father, St. Ignatius, much less my leader, Christ. Don't worry though; this is not to be a paragraph of public confession. Even I have my reticences. I just want to say that if I have fallen, and fall short of what a Jesuit ought to be, there is only one person to blame, myself. I am not going about shouting blame at others, explaining how impossible the Jesuit ideal is, how cruel the rule, how brutal the system. I am not pleading my gullible ignorance nor deception practiced on me by sly decoyers of unsuspecting youth. If I have approached but little the beautiful ideal held up to me as a Jesuit, that is because I have been selfish, spiritually cowardly, tolerably lazy—in other words, just a little too human in the weak and miserable sense of the word.

I have, I hope, better sense and more common decency than to pretend that the Society has not given me every opportunity of becoming more Christ like. If there were some of its rules that at first seemed strange to me, time has proved their wisdom. Each year, in order to bring back something of the novitiate ideal, I have been required to set aside eight days in which quietly to look once more at the fundamental of life, prayerfully watch Christ move and act, and humbly try to adjust myself to the requirements of my career. No one but myself was to blame if I came out from those retreats still the selfish spiritual coward.

Certainly I have had all about me the example of upright, generous lives, and, did I care to look for them, I could discover fineness and unselfishness in the most ordinary Jesuit in my community. I have listened to holy men talk and watched holy men live. The Society set aside for me what it considered its most brilliant professors and its most saintly priests, whose sole work was my training and culture. I have had the use of libraries, free and ready access to Christ in the chapel, never more than a few steps away, the fatherly interest of wise old men, and the guidance and watchfulness of Superiors. And when I fell short, there was nothing for me to do except strike my breast and say: “I alone am guilty.”

No organisation is to be blamed when, after the opportunities, inspiration and guidance which it gives, to the full of its power, some of its members prove to be just common clay. The organization does not create courage or unselfishness; it can only hope to develop. And the Society can hardly hope to make a proud man fall in love with the humble Christ, or expect a stubborn, self-willed man to see anything beautiful in voluntary obedience, or a self-sufficient man to accept the guidance of a Superior who is probably his intellectual inferior. The Society deals in men, not in miracles.

Old Jesuits.

But always before me there has been one inspiring group, the group of old Jesuits. They will probably be surprised to read this, if, in their quiet absorption with life's realities, they take the time to read it. The fact remains that for me the old Jesuits have always been the greatest proof of the value of the Society of Jesus to a man who lives his life in it to the end. For life can be measured only when one has lived it fully. Young men may be restless and impatient, critical and clinging to standards all their own; old men see life with true eyes and appraise it by eternal standards. No man facing death lies to himself. No man looking toward eternity has any illusions about what was valuable and what was useless or wasteful in his life. And for just that reason the old Jesuits have made the Jesuit life seem to me so precious a thing.

That group of venerable men whose fight is largely over and won, whose year is drawing toward the quiet of winter! There were the crippled, rheumatic Indian missionary who lay dying when I was a novice; the peaceful, old former master of novices, with his unbroken, motionless hours on his knees before the Blessed Sacrament; the dear old author, who, as he looked back over his years, said to me in almost an awed whisper, “How beautiful it has all been I” the paralytic priest waiting motionless for death, but smiling from the midst of a happy helplessness; the old professor who once said simply, “God has given me so much happiness in this world that sometimes I am afraid I have had my heaven here;” the bent crippled confessor hurrying from his room to his confessional, eager to shrive a few more souls before Christ asked him for his own. I have never seen an old Jesuit, worn and tired, and, perhaps, broken by the rough usage of

life, who did not look up at my questioning face and say: "Life has been very good." And when I went on, "Had you your life to live again, would you choose as you did?" one and all they answered, "Just as I chose; but I would live it so much more perfectly." How many men in how many professions would answer that way?

Advice to a Young Man.

So, were a young man to come to me with doubt in his eyes, as young men have come, and ask me about his joining, the Jesuits, I would ask him, not all at once, but in the course of leisurely conversation, questions like these:

"Have you the courage to obey a man whom you may know to be your intellectual or spiritual inferior? Can you, with the help of God, keep yourself pure? Are you willing to work, work, work, even when you don't like what you are doing? Can you follow Christ and not grow discouraged? Can you forgive men for being human, and Superiors for not being divine? Can you sometimes laugh at yourself, and never at others? Can you, when you have bound yourself by rules, be square enough not to wince or complain if the rules gall a bit?"

And if he answers unhesitatingly "Yes," or if he replies with a brave "I can try," I should tell him of the business man, successful, happily married, a figure in his community, who said to me, "I suppose every man hates his work, doesn't he?" And I should tell him that I answered, "Hate it? Why, I love mine." And I'd bid him take up the life with high courage and the knowledge that his future rests only with two people. Christ and himself. He cannot make himself a successful Jesuit unless he lends a brave, tireless hand.

Then, out of my happy experience, I should promise him happiness. The Jesuit is rather proud of his name, though it has so often on anti-Christian lips a tone of contempt. Jesuit to us means Jesu-ita; and Jesu-ita means "Like to Jesus." If, then, he is misunderstood by the same men who misunderstood Jesus, he counts that a compliment. If his life seems absurd and his obedience silly to men who praise Jesus, but refuse or politely decline to lead His life or follow His example, he reckons that an honour. If he ever became popular with the enemies of the Church or the type of man who accused Christ of every sort of crime, he would feel that perhaps Christ no longer approved him and his work. For Jesus certainly was neither popular nor understood nor spared slander and calumny, nor, in the ordinary sense, was He a success. The Jesuit does not expect to be better off than his Master.

Meet a Jesuit.

And just one last word. If you have never met a Jesuit, meet one. There are Jesuit Houses in almost all the large cities, usually near the centre of the town. Someone will answer when you ring; probably a matter-of-fact, un-romantic, certainly not a frightening, workman. Ask to see a Jesuit Father. If into the little parlour where you wait walks anyone remotely resembling the Jesuit of fiction or of the exposés, come away and tear up this booklet. If you find a man kind and tolerant, a little quiet perhaps, but with a sense of humour, one who has learned the almost forgotten art of listening, if he answers your questions unhesitatingly and makes you feel you are not in the least impertinent, for the very simple reason that he has nothing to conceal, pass this little booklet along.

The best way to know Jesuits is literally to know them. The best way to meet the accusations of their adversaries is to meet the men themselves. Don't stop with books; go to their Houses, their churches, their colleges. Fiction grows simply absurd in the presence of simple facts and quite simple lives.

So, with only a few miles of my journey still before me, I, the happy Jesuit, one of the happy thousands of Jesuits, lay aside for the moment my emptied pen and reach with a sigh for the neglected detective story. I take my fiction; you see, straight.

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