

April 30, 1925.

Building a Solid Character, V.

II. Sensuality.

An old English proverb says: "Passion is a good servant but a bad master."

Our senses and our passions are implanted by God self-preservation and preservation of the race. Through pain and pleasure, through fear and joy, we are urged to repel what is bad for us and seek what is good for us. These faculties are blind and can not tell the difference between good and evil; but by nature they are servants, and subject to the wise guidance of reason. Like other servants, however, they have a tendency to rebel against their master, and unless they are trained to prompt and constant obedience they will overthrow reason and set themselves up to rule the head.

They are in league, one with another, and if one pampered, others seek the same indulgence; little by little reason loses control. Bad temper, fastidiousness in dress, comfortable living, excessive eating and drinking, careless curiosity of the eyes, fondness for unseemly spectacles, ears attuned to the chatter of the world, unrestrained pre-occupation with dancing,---these and many other manifestations of the senses and passions come hand in hand, leagued against reason, to dictate conduct.

Father Bernard Vaughan suggests the cure: "God has given us eyelids, as well as eyes. What are eyelids for? Not to see. Your eyes are to see with. Your eyelids are not to see. Remember there are a great many things in life---bad things---and God has given us eyelids that we may not see them, as well as eyes to look at the good things. Use your eyelids. Do not see the bad things."

12. Cowardice.

Hell is full of cowards, of men who lacked the "intestinal fortitude" to follow the dictates of conscience. Fortitude is a gift of the Holy Ghost, and is one of the four cardinal virtues, without which there is no virtue. To develop fortitude, pray daily to the Holy Ghost, take some form of physical punishment every day, and always do the right thing when you expect to get razzed for it. You will seldom get razzed if the thing you do is really right. Even the razz is instinctive tribute to moral courage: it is the attempt of the coward to depreciate the worth of the act he is not brave enough to do.

13. Overtraining.

This vice is the least common of the enemies to perseverance, but it is found at times even among students. It is the natural result of an immodest attempt to take on too much in the spiritual life, usually by the beginner. It produces as natural distaste for spiritual things, resulting in discouragement and despondency. It is a handmaid of presumption, which naturally leads to despair. If you find yourself growing stale in spiritual matters, consult a spiritual director to see whether you have been attempting too much.

14. Overconfidence.

Prosperity, whether spiritual or temporal, provokes overconfidence. Adversity teaches dependence upon God. Temptation, even sin, may be necessary to keep a soul humble; so may poverty, sickness, failure in class-work, misunderstanding at home and with friends, loss of esteem, disgrace, tragedy. Nothing blinds the heart of man so thoroughly as pride. Pride was the first sin in the world, and it will be the last. Humility comes through humiliations. If God withholds them, seek them out! "Be not without fear for sin forgiven: and add not sin upon sin." "Say not: How mighty am I? And who shall bring me under for my deeds? For God will surely take revenge." ---Ecclesiasticus, Ch. 5.