

What Price the Modern Boy? XVI.7. Sappy Literature.

James Fenimore Cooper may be tedious, but he was no sap. In spite of his long-winded descriptive passages, the fault of his age, he has a rugged Americanism of a wholesome period permeating his books. Bret Harte could tell a good story when he wanted to, and he used to entertain good Christians before sappiness became the vogue. O. Henry still has a reading public. Robert W. Chambers showed in "Coniston" a marvelous gift of story-telling, but he betrayed his talent and for the gold of the editor of the revised Cosmopolitan he wrote the first blase story to appear in what had been a reputable magazine on this side of the Atlantic.

From that day to this, during fourteen years, every decent story has been expected to be insipid, and few authors or publishers have violated the rule. What chance has a fellow to build up ideals, character, or even common sense, if he tries to follow current literature!

8. Adoration of Money.

No other word than adoration adequately describes the service the American people pay Money. Mammon is rendered the supreme service due God alone. Men kill for it; they lie and perjure themselves for it; they betray their wives and mothers for it; they go to hell for it. God gets a lip service from men; Money gets the complete surrender of body and soul.

Perhaps in the democratic spirit that pervades the Notre Dame campus we get away somewhat from the social classification arranged by Dun and Bradstreet, but the chief concern, nevertheless, of the candidates for a degree is the money their services can command when they get out. And now and then an occasion is offered for a vulgar display of wealth.

"What can a man give in exchange for his soul?" "What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world if he suffer the loss of his soul?" "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth where the rust and the moth consume, and where thieves dig through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither the rust nor the moth doth consume, and where thieves do not dig through nor steal. For where thy treasure is there is thy heart also." In these and similar words Our Blessed Lord drove home the lesson that wealth is not the final end of man; and no Christian can make it his final end and remain a Christian. "Amen, He will say, I know you not."

If there is one lesson that a Notre Dame student should take away from this school for the shaping of his life it is the lesson that there is something in life besides money. Money could never have built this school and made it what it is. Burn this fact into your minds: you cannot hire a religious teacher. If there are any persons in the world who have the freedom and courage and independence which Christ demanded of His followers, such must be those who have taken the vows, of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, to cut themselves off from the world and its allurements and serve God in fulness.

A religious is the servant of all, after the example of his Divine Master; but it isn't every servant you can hire. So, too, are the lay professors at Notre Dame who serve you for the love of God rather than for the stipend they could receive at a university endowed with the goods of the world. From them you receive what you cannot receive elsewhere: a service that is not shabby, because it is a work done for the love of God! A priest is free to tell the truth and shame the devil.