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The Devil's Wedge.

Have you ever split rails? If you have, it's no sign you are another Abraham Lincoln; if you haven't, it's no sign that you will never be president. However, if you have ever had the thrill of inserting the thin end of a wedge into a log or a piece of cord wood and then watching the effect of the "tap, tap, tap" of a sledge, you will understand the meaning of the expression, "The Devil's Wedge."

If you want to be a smooth psychologist, with no particular regard for moral quantities, go to the Devil for your methods. From the first temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden, he has presented the rose with the thorn hidden always. It's little he wants - at first - and what he offers is much to your liking.

The Devil inserts the thin end of the wedge. He never works across the grain - always with the grain. He avoids the knot-holes. He avoids haste, but his taps are persistent; he knows that perseverance is of more importance than force in splitting a rail, and that the toughest grain will yield if the wedge is once inserted and kept in place.

That is the way the Devil conducts the battle for your soul. Curiosity is the weak spot with the innocent, lust with the depraved, avarice and love of power with the ambitious; and the Devil knows just where to insert the wedge with all of us. Every yielding to sinful curiosity admits the Devil's wedge, makes easier the final conquest of the soul. Every submission to lust lets the wedge sink deeper into the fiber, splits the soul from God, its last end. Every surrender of the soul to avarice or unlawful ambition dries up its fountains of grace and makes of it tinder for the Devil's flames.

What the Devil does to the individual soul he does to Notre Dame. He hates Our Lady's school, for he hates Our Lady, for whose heel he was doomed to lie in wait. Where grace abounds he is most active. His envy of our lot leads him to use all his intelligence, all his power, all his wiles, to ruin Our Lady's school and Our Lady's boys.

If he can once drive in the wedge, he will be content to keep on tapping. If he can circulate a bad book, if he can gain prestige for a bad magazine or a bad show, if he can plant one of his smooth emissaries on the campus to lead boys through sinful curiosity to sinful indulgences, his wedge is planted and he will be content to tap, tap, tap. What he strives for with night and main is the entering wedge.

knot-holes are the bane of the rail-splitter's life. The knot-holes in your character are the principles which protect you against the Devil's wedge. If you have sound, strong principles, the wedge can never travel far. If your love of God and your self-respect are strong enough to keep you from reading bad books, from seeing bad shows, from associating with evil companions, from listening to evil stories, the things that come your way perforce, the things you cannot avoid if you are to live in the world, will never do you serious harm.

Prayer, the sacraments, tough self-denial, spiritual counsel when you need it - these are the things that strengthen the knot-holes and frustrate the Devil's wedge. And don't ever let anyone fool you with the hoary old sophism that literature is independent of life, that you can read a book without harm if its style is good and its matter rotten. Take the Church's word for it if you can't see it for yourself. But save your soul for God and the good things He has in store for you.

PRAYERS: Fathers Leo and Alan Heiser ask prayers for their aged mother, who has suffered a fractured hip. Deceased: Dr. J. Lewis Browne (former professor of music here); the grandmother of James Dubbs; Archbishop Hombach, of Honduras (once a visitor here); C.M. Procter, '75; a friend (Galesburg); a friend (Arizona); a neighbor; an uncle of Tom Brobson. Ill: Relatives of Bill Ellis and Paul Sohrantz, ex-'31. 5 special intentions: