

April 3, 1924.a

During your twelve years in public school you let the insults to your religion pass unanswered, and you rather regretted at times that you were a Catholic. In spite of your lazy disposition you were a good English student in High School, and you read a great deal that you should never have read. Without Catholic philosophy as an antidote, you have swallowed plenty of poison; your particular weakness in this regard is that you have the "broadmindedness complex", and if you keep on monkeying with other religions you will turn out to be a first-class atheist.

You have never let anyone talk to you like this before, simply because you are intolerant -- of anything strictly Catholic. You have closed your mind to the vast field of Catholic literature that would have opened up a beautiful soul in you. Your one Catholic book -- Tom Playfair -- is a twelve year old book, and as a Catholic your intellect has hardly reached its twelfth year.

You have been honest enough to put down your convictions, although your motive was not entirely pure. The honesty* in it has won for you this thorough wallop. You will blush furiously when you read this; you will interrupt the reading in a rage two or three times; and you will come back and finish it.

When your anger cools go over to the basement chapel and get a copy of the Following of Christ. Open it anywhere: every page will stick a pin in you. Then get Joyce Kilmer's marvelous essay, "Holy Ireland" and learn to be as proud of your religion as was that holy convert. Say your beads every day for a week (you will find a pair waiting for you at the pamphlet rack), and at the end of that time you will be ready to go to confession and start your education all over again.

III.

The third case is a freshman who is also attending a Catholic school for the first time. In answer to the question, "Why did you choose a Catholic university" he says: "Because it is the place for a Catholic to go. Having always attended public schools I appreciated Notre Dame and can clearly see how I had been pumped full of non-Catholic ideas by "broadminded" public school teachers, as they would have people believe.

IV.

From the questionnaire of a non-Catholic student: How do your companions at school compare with those at home?

"They are far better. I have yet to hear a Catholic student tell an immoral story. I cannot pay such a high tribute to my companions at home."

John F. O'Hara, C.S.C.,
Prefect of Religion.