

Note: Students desiring a set of the current Bulletins on character should make application at once, so that a sufficient number of copies may be printed to take care of the demand.

Building a Solid Character. II.

2. Haste.

A miracle is a short-cut in the spiritual life. Don't expect a miracle very time you turn around. The business of saving your soul lasts as long as your breath lasts, and if you attempt to accomplish it in less time than that you are going to find yourself bankrupt. Patience is one of the hardest virtues for a young person to learn. It can be instilled by faithful performance of each day's duties and a meditation on death once a month.

Variety in spiritual exercises is just as essential as routine, because variety breaks the monotony, while routine is establishing patience. Vary your intinction in Holy Communion, vary the subjects of your meditation, use different prayer books, read different authors. Stick to business, but "make haste slowly."

Besides those students who wrecked their Lent, there are plenty of young men in the vicinity who feel (in a practical sense, if not in theory) that Lent has given them enough religion to last until the next Mission. Perhaps it has; but the majority of such young men will find themselves slowly slipping, and as they exhaust they exhaust the grace they gained during Lent without replenishing their store they will find themselves unable to gain a victory in the next moral crisis that presents itself.

3. Procrastination.

The old "thief of time" is too well known to need introduction. Everyone knows that the more free time he has the more he wants, and that too much recreation kills energy. In addition to the enervating influence of dilatoriness in the spiritual life, the vice has a peculiar psychological effect in that it kills the joy of accomplishment. We all know the stimulus to ambition that comes from a task well done. The procrastinator lacks this stimulus. His conscience never says, "Atta boy".

The remedies suggested for haste will cure procrastination, since both of these vices are departures from the main line of prudence, the one by excess, the other by defect.

4. Diversion.

Most of the pikers, or ordinary damned souls, in hell, are there because of misuse of idle time. While there are among the more distinguished citizens of Satan's kingdom, --the nobility, as it were--many who have worked like demons to get there, the garden variety of lost souls have simply slid into hell. The type of diversion followed by the hoi-polloi is well calculated to kill spiritual ambition by keeping the mind at the other pole from it. Study the calendar in the appendix to the Religious Survey and you can write your own commentary on the effect of diversion on devotion. The study belongs to psychology rather than to ascetical theology. For a cure, use your head.

5. Disorder.

The greatest cause of bankruptcy in the United States is bad accounting; and Our Lord warns us that "the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." Have a good accounting system for your merits and demerits and you will have removed a big obstacle to perseverance. Have a system, and strike a trial balance now and then.

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