

9. Recklessness.

A man is responsible for the consequences of his deliberate acts as he sees them. Two kinds of people are reckless, those who don't know, and those who don't care. Courage accepts the foreseen hard consequences of an act; recklessness ignores consequences. Courage implies active intelligence: Courage accepts defeat cheerfully; recklessness yelps.

It doesn't require courage to drink moonshine; it does require recklessness. The daily papers are filled with stories of the consequences of drink and impurity -- death, blindness, insanity, divorce, conspiracy, suicide; gun-play. He who runs may read. The intelligent young man who knows these things and yet goes ahead and exposes himself to temptation does not care. The only time you know he has a mother is when he gets caught and the penalty is applied. The reckless young man does all his thinking afterwards.

There is always a first sin in any series of sins. The first sin is the act of a fool who holds in little esteem his priceless gift of innocence. The first reckless liber that leads to sin is the act of a fool who despises danger signals. The first sin opens the flood-gate, and innocence once lost is never restored. In St. John's description of heaven, in the Apocalypse, they are virgins, not penitents, who follow the spotless Lamb in the company of angels.

The most reckless fool of all is the one who remains in the state of mortal sin when he knows he may be called at any moment. He is the Perfect Fool. Five times this year we have been warned that sudden death may come to our cloistered existence here; twice we have been shown that confession may not be possible when a priest is at hand. Every time we say the Hail Mary we ask for special protection at the hour of death. The way to mean that prayer is always to be ready to die.

10. Selfishness.

One of the oldest stories in the Spanish language tells of a young man who followed out to the best of his juvenile ability his father's instruction to make friends. He spent money lavishly, and was the most talked-of goof in town. In due time his father called him in. "Any friends?" he queried. "The whole town," quoth the lad. "Marvelous!" exclaimed dad; "I've spent my whole life making friends, and all I have is a friend and a half." "So's your old man," replied the young innocent. "I have a dozen at least who would go to the electric chair with a smile for me. They've told me so."

The father was from Missouri, so he concocted a test. Willing to please his checking account, the youngster started out that night carrying on his back a gunny sack filled with the carcass of a hog. Setting it down on the doorstep of his first friend, he rang the bell. "I've just killed a man," he said, when his summons was answered, "and I want you to help me dispose of the remains." "Get the heck out of here and don't be leaving blood on my doorstep," replied the friend; "I've got a big party on tonight and the boys will soon be here." The second told he was quarantined for scarlet fever; the third said he had been up for speeding that day and the judge had told him to keep out of his sight for a month. Through the twelve he made his way; the most he got out of them was the promise of a big funeral if he was caught and got what was coming to him.

"Try my friends now," said his amiable father. "Start with the half a friend." He tried. "For your father's sake I'll bury the body in my garden," he said. "He's a good skate, but you're a son of a gun." Just about then a man disappeared. From twelve sources came the rumor of a man with a sack running about at night. The youth was grabbed and convicted. Then came the whole friend to the rescue. "I killed the man myself," he said, and buried him in a certain garden, which I will point out to you." -- To set your fears at rest, he added that the supposed victim walked in just as the pig was disinterred.