

What Price the Modern Boy? IX.11. Flippancy.

"People don't think nowadays, they crack wise," said a disillusioned graduate. A wise crack is a half-truth, and it is quite likely to be the wrong half. It turns the mind away from the truth, it dazzles, and it turns the laugh on the youth who still believes what his mother taught him. The wise crack is a valuable aid to the coward who is afraid of the truth and to the lazy man who lacks the energy to follow conviction. It half-satisfies the mind (or satisfies the half-mind), and that is no small sop to a mean conscience.

Was Pilate flippant, or was he just a dull coward? Interpreters disagree. Before he passed his vicious sentence of death on Our Saviour, he called Him aside for questioning. When Our Lord spoke of Truth, Pilate asked, "What is Truth?" and turned back to the balcony without waiting for an answer. Voltaire and Renan excelled at flippancy, the heavier British minds of Hume and Gibbon dragged painfully after them in brilliant displays of diabolism. A Voltairean school of flippancy has grown up in this country recently. It is quite natural that its more brilliant disciples should be apostates from Catholicism and Judaism, for one must have a background of religion to be diabolically blasphemous. Our devotees of the art are still dull, however, and since they lack the Latin mind they can never reach the pinnacle. The silly blurb of Sinclair Lewis recently, borrowed from Ingersoll, was positively painful.

Flippancy in the home has destroyed the Fourth Commandment; flippancy regarding modes of dress has destroyed the purity of countless boys and girls; flippancy in professorial chairs has wrecked the faith of myriads. "Saul has destroyed thousands, but David tens of thousands." When sacred things cease to be sacred, vice comes in and sets up a complete establishment. A carnal brute may preserve a sanctuary in his black heart from which a coal may be brought to kindle love again; the flippant rake stamps out the fire and overturns the sanctuary. When reverence goes, hope is lost.

12. Frivolity.

When one finds a modern boy combing his hair in church instead of saying his beads, he is minded to turn for comfort to the Prophet Jeremias who was raised up by God to lament the tragic folly of the Chosen People at their worst. There he reads: "My people have done two evils. They have forsaken Me, the Fountain of Living Waters, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Again he reads: "Thou hast forsaken Me, saith the Lord, thou art gone backward: and I will stretch out my hand against thee, and I will destroy thee: I am weary of entreating thee"

The human mind has many depths; only Our Blessed Lord has sounded them all. The quest for happiness sounds one depth after another, and finds that each succeeding one brings greater joy. Beyond the senses lie the emotions, beyond the emotions the memory and the imagination, beyond these the supreme gifts of the intellect and the will. The modern boy stops with the senses: food, the dance, the exciting spectacle, jazz, shameful pleasures of the flesh, these allure him and close the mind to all pure joy.

No wail is more common at Notre Dame than the complaint about lack of amusement. You must be amused. Life must have a kick. Go ahead. The next generation will be back skinning mules, and your children will be too dumb to pray your souls out of Purgatory.

Don't Be Ashamed of Your Mother.

Not more than eleven hundred students are making the Novena for Mother's Day. Let's hope that the rest of them are not ashamed of their mothers. An hour of adoration of your mother today and Holy Communion on Sunday will be some reparation for nine days of neglect.

--Arthur Kirk's mother is very low. Five other students ask prayers for the sick.