

Library Signpost

Belloc in Motley

By Rev. Benedict Ehmann

CAUTIONARY VERSES, by Hilaire Belloc. No matter to what this excellent craftsman of words turns his hand, he always seems at his ease. Biography? Masterpieces like his Napoleon or his Marie Antoinette. Essays? Dozens of exquisite cameos in an English as pure as has ever been written: witness his Conversation with an Angel, of his Essays of a Catholic. History? An amazing comprehension of its inter-relations and developments, as in Europe and the Faith or in How the Reformation Happened. Fiction? Such rollicking successes as The Emerald or But Soft--We Are Observed. Poetry? Yes, grave, like his wonderful sonnets, and gay, like his Tarantella. In all of these, the versatile Belloc comes off with top honors.

And now, behold, what have we here? A different Belloc, capering in cap and bells--a veritable court jester, wry of face, poking his finger into sacrosanct ribs. Written in the style of moral ditties and alphabet rhymes for children, Cautionary Verses are barbed for adult ears. And the pen sketches by B. T. B. and Nicholas Bentley are their perfect foil.

Here is nonsense verse in the best tradition of Lewis Carroll and of Gilbert and Sullivan--that is to say, nonsense verse which hides a lot of sound sense. There is, for instance the delicious one about Maria, Who Made Faces and a Deplorable Marriage:

Maria loved to pull a face:
And so such commonplace primae
As you or I or anyone
Might make at grandmamma for fun.
But one where nose and mouth and all
Were screwed into a kind of ball,
The which as you may well expect -
Produced a horrible effect
On those it was directed at

One morning she was struck like that
Her features took their final mould
In shapes that made your blood run cold
And wholly lost their former charm.
Etc., Etc.

You will meet Jim, who ran away from his nurse, and was eaten by a lion; Matilda, who told lies, and was burned to death; Henry King, who chewed bits of string, and was early cut off in dreadful agonies; Algernon, who played with a loaded gun, and, on missing his sister, was reprimanded by his father; Rebecca, who slammed doors for fun and perished miserably; John, who lost a fortune by throwing stones.

In this inimitable collection there is also the *Book of Beasts*, of which this on the Y is a typical sample:

As a friend to the children, commend me to you.
You will find it exactly the thing:
It will carry and fetch, you can ride on its back,
Or lead it about with a string.
The Tartar who dwells on the plain of Thibet
(A desolate region of snow)
Has for centuries made it a noisy pet,
And surely the Tartar should show!
Then tell your papa where the Yak can be got,
And if he is awfully grumpy--or else he will 'sot.
He will buy you the creature--or else he will 'sot.
(I cannot be positive which.)

And in the *Morse Alphabet*, the one on R for Reviewer may well serve to bow me out, and how you in to get the best and bore your friends stiff wanting to quote whole chunks of it, for it roars for quotation.

R the Reviewer, reviewing my book,
At which he had barely intended to look;
But the very first lines upon "A" were enough
To convince him the Verses were excellent stuff.
So he wrote without stopping, for several days
In terms of extreme but well-merited praise.
To quote but one passage: "No Person" (says he)
"Will be really content without purchasing three,
"While a Parent will send for a dozen or more,
"and strew them about on the Nursery Floor.
"The Verification might call for some strictures
"Were it not for its singular wit; while the Pictures,
"Tho' the handling of line is a little defective,
"Make up amply in verve what they lack in perspective."

MORAL

The habit of constantly telling the Truth
Will lend an additional lustre to Youth.

Five Years Ago--

—in the files of the CATHOLIC COURIER

From Jan. 7, 1937, Edition
Once more insisting that the struggle against Bolshevism is of little practical value, if it is not coupled with a sincere desire to uphold Christian principles, the German Hierarchy issued a new joint pastoral, pledging their support for Chancellor Hitler's campaign to eradicate Communism, but emphasizing at the same time that "legal and actual freedom" is vital for the Church.

Launching the CATHOLIC COURIER campaign against Communism was an article by the Rev. Dr. Edward Lodge Curran, editor of Light, in which Communism was branded as a foe of democracy.

Distinguished church and lay dignitaries attended the solemn funeral rites for the Rt. Rev. Mgr. William J. Flynn, P.A., director of the Marquette League for Indian Mission at Sacred Heart Church of which parish he was the first boy ordained to the Holy Priesthood.

Parishioners of Blessed Sacrament Church were preparing to mark in a fitting manner the 25th anniversary of the opening of the present church edifice.

Gossip, however you look at it, is an admission of inferiority. —(Fr. Lord)

BARBAROUS BABIES

Right Rev. Mgr. Peter M. H. Wynchoven
Editor-in-Chief, Catholic Action of the South
BOTTLE BABIES

Many a young mother gets big-chested (in the wrong way) from proudly narrating how she handles her baby. "At night, when the clock strikes eight, I put him in his crib, give him his bottle and let him work out his own salvation. If he wants to cry, well, that's his own business." This procedure, adopted as a routine, is a little cold-blooded and unnatural, especially if it is followed regularly at feeding time, even during the day.

Invariably, when we see a picture of "Motherhood," we do not behold a woman standing over a bassinet in which is reposing a baby sucking a nipple. No, the ecstasy and sweetness of motherhood are depicted by a mother protectively and warmly holding her babe to her breast. Imagine the famous "Madonnas" keeping the child at arm's length, or the cherub clutching a bottle in its chubby little hands. The touching, inspiring motive would be entirely lost.

We again stress that one important, unchangeable fact should be kept in mind by parents in raising their children, namely, that no two children are alike. Sometimes a baby differs sharply from the regular concept of how an infant should behave, that a grave mistake is made in a particular case by treating him the same way as others are treated.

Artificial feeding not infrequently substitutes this danger, because children may have different appetites, for various reasons. If the baby is fed naturally, whenever it is hungry, the mother usually knows the amount of milk required to make it feel happy and satisfied. To feed them all by the same method, according to time and ounces, does not always seem to be fair and reasonable in every child's case. Consideration should be given to constitutional differences.

A very young child who cries a great deal is probably not spoiled; it's likely to be a sick baby. Do not wait to have a child-doctor check up. Crying for attention is something which develops ordinarily at about six months. If, after half a year, tantrums begin to be manifested, act firmly, and do not give in, provided the child is physically all right, according to the doctor.

The tendency, the disposition, the character of adulthood have their root in childhood. Never lose sight of this in considering the future welfare of your child. Please believe this, and always act accordingly, notwithstanding the rash opinions of some of your friends.

It is for this reason, then, that the possible plight of bottle-fed babies should be seriously considered. Artificially nourished youngsters frequently get less maternal attention than is desirable. A child's confidence in his mother and his trust in social contacts have their inception in earliest infancy. When the baby is hungry, and is fed and satisfied by a gentle, soft-spoken, smiling mother, character will begin to develop, much more hopefully than when the tiny one is fed to bed mechanically with "cold" warm bottles. By this latter method, something most essential in a child's life is denied: tangible affection and the mothering which all little children crave.

Conditions demand that the baby has to be brought up on the bottle, mother can still satisfy this instinctive, natural craving by holding the babe nestled against her breast and fondling and stroking the soft little head while he is taking his bottle. It is a mistaken notion that the only thing babies need is food, bathing and sleep. The basis of the child's education rests with this necessary routine; hence, personal relationship connected with the routine is most important.

The very young baby who is allowed to cry when hungry, and who is not reassured by at least the presence of the mother who may eventually satisfy his wants, is seriously frustrated. He finds no foundation for faith, trust and confidence in his very existence. He can develop the beginning of great physiological anxiety and fear, which may remain with him and hamper him in the future. Children who may have experienced serious feeding difficulties early, frequently turn up with sharply distorted personalities later on.

Mothers should learn to distinguish between the crying that indicates hunger or pain and the crying which is the expression of temper, springing from the fact that the child cannot have what he should not have. A baby should be treated with much sensible kindness, and not as a piece of machinery which has only to be fueled, cleaned and polished at stated times. The beauty and health of its soul, the formative of its character, should be kept in mind from the start.

EDITORIALS

(Continued from Page 22)

and soul of Christian family life of days gone by must be reintroduced into the home.

For determined faithful who would renew the truly Christian family life, these practices of old are suggested:

- 1.—Bestowal of the parental blessing.
2.—Family prayers and other devotions in common.
3.—Keeping religious articles—crucifix, holy water, blessed candles in the home.
4.—Having the home blessed, and keeping a copy of the blessing in a conspicuous place in the home.
5.—Observance of the prime parental duty of teaching the children the truths of their religion in the home.
6.—Provision of suitable reading material for the family members, and exclusion from the home of such as is harmful.

CALLING CATHOLIC MEN

A rally call to staunch Catholic men to make public a demonstration of the Faith that is theirs comes in the announcement of the Rochester Diocesan Holy Name Union's observance of the Feast of the Holy Name.

This Feast Day on which due honor is paid to the Holy Name of Jesus comes by a coincidence on the same day, Sunday, January 11, as does the Feast of the Holy Family.

Fortified by their reception of Holy Communion in the morning with their families, men of the Holy Name Society will go to the designated churches for a planned "Candle Light Ceremony" at 4 P. M. Edifying to their communities will be these men foregoing their Sunday afternoon to pledge anew their loyalty to Jesus Christ and their determination that His Name will be held in respect by all men at all times.

It was on a Sunday afternoon that men of evil intent swept from out the skies to let loose a bombardment, dastardly and destructive. It can be on a Sunday afternoon that men of good intent can make reparation for the evil of invaders and others in paying honor to the Prince of Peace and in extolling His Name in which lies the hope of the world.

Music En Famille; The Trapp Singers

By Rev. James M. Quinn, C.S.P.

I hope I may present this piece without being accused of log-rolling or of advertising. Perhaps I am too enthusiastic at the moment to deliberate cautiously about the matter, but I must ask readers of this column to trust my judgment as well as my conscience.

I listened to the Trapp Singers in their annual Christmas program. I had heard them before and had been deeply touched by the simplicity and sincerity of their performance as well as charmed by its artistry. If I had any fear of being less well pleased on a second hearing, my apprehension of disappointment was quickly dispelled.

Their is not so much a performance of music as an impulse to the spiritual life of those who hear them. A concert by the Trapp family is something quite different from the conventional entertainment to be had from the usual program of music, no matter how well rendered. For that reason I hope I may praise them without being suspected of any ulterior motive.

This unique group, the family of Baron and Baroness Trapp, ten children ranging from three to perhaps thirty years of age, take possession of a stage in the heart of an American city, invite some two thousand people to be--as it were--their house guests, and with no other means but the singing of Christmas carols and centuries-old chorals, with no other stage properties but a Christmas tree, a table, chairs, in one scene lanterns and now and again some mechanical musical instruments, they manage by some magic to convey to their hearers the atmosphere, the spirit, and the sweet simple piety of family life in Salzburg, as it was for a thousand years and will be again when the Nazi scourge has passed.

There is a rare simplicity and a delightful informality about all that they do--their exits and their entrances, the unaffected tone and manner of the mother of that miraculous brood, as she explains the Christmas customs of their native Austria. But not all their naivete can conceal the fact that they are exquisitely trained and that their director, Dr. Franz Wanner, a priest, is a great master of the art of eliciting sweet music from the human voice and from the quaint old recorder, the viola da gamba and the spinet.

The music, I imagine, could be enjoyed for its own sake by even the most exacting critics. But what the audience experiences is something more satisfying than the sweetest music. We are given a revelation of what Catholic faith and piety can do to sanctify the home. And Oh how we need it! We have been fed up to the point of nausea with affectation and pretense, artificiality and superficiality in the amusement world; and these deplorable features of a too-sophisticated civilization have seeped into the life even of Catholic families. But to sit in at a Trapp concert is to get a glimpse--much more than a glimpse, a two hours' revelation--of what Christian art and culture can do to make home life beautiful.

I never knew the real Austria--alax--having only passed swiftly through Salzburg and having been in Vienna, sad, desolate after the Anschluss, Vienna, for a few days. But I have a clear recollection of the almost ecstatic enthusiasm of priests who made their studies at Innsbruck and who, in their summer vacations, roamed over the Tyrolean Alps, to come back to America after ordination with glowing descriptions of the sweet simplicity of the Austrian Catholic people. In my early teens I heard Father Gannon, S.J., lecture on that subject, and time and again in his sermons throw in some anecdote or incident or description of a land in which Catholicity had taken deep root, had flourished for a thousand years, and had brought forth the kind of fruit that can be expected when in the soil and atmosphere there is none of the poison of paganism or, still worse, of a corrupted or diluted Christianity.

It all came back to me while looking at and listening to that group of Catholic singers. And somehow there ran in my mind--in reverse--that old saying of the shrewd hearer who detected vanity and untruthfulness in the speech of an orator--"What you are shouting so loud that I cannot hear what you say." I will not say that I didn't hear that family singing, but above and beneath and behind and beyond what they sang I could see what they were--a family with Catholic culture and Catholic religion bred in the home and blood for hundreds of years, manifesting itself in its simple beauty while mother and sons and daughters remained sweetly innocent of the fact that they were conveying more than the message of music.

In one of her delicate little introductions to the music, the Baroness said with quiet conviction that although the habit of making music in the home had "gone out" it was coming back. Let us hope so. Also she said that in spite of the tragedy that has taken place in Austria, the old Catholic customs survive amongst the people in the mountains. These delightful people from the home of Mozart, the old Austria, give us more hope of a Catholic renaissance in that afflicted land than any of the assurances of statesmen and of generals that Nazism will be swept away.

Be that as it may, one thing is certain; they give us American Catholics an insight into the loveliness of a home of Catholic culture and religion. (Copyright, 1942, N.C.W.C.)

Feast Days

- Sunday, Jan. 11--HOLY FAMILY.
Monday, Jan. 12--ST. ARCADIA.
Tuesday, Jan. 13--ST. VERONICA.
Wednesday, Jan. 14--ST. HILARY OF POTENZA.
Thursday, Jan. 15--ST. PAUL, THE FIRST HERMIT.
Friday, Jan. 16--ST. MARCELLUS.
Saturday, Jan. 17--ST. ANTHONY, PATRIARCH OF MONKS.

If man can reason, and birds can't, why do birds move instead of complaining about the weather? Pontiac Press.