

ON NOTHING

Ronan Macdonald, '43

It has been said many times that there is not one being in the universe that is unimportant and uninteresting. In other words, nothing is boring, monotonous, and uninteresting. It is in opposition to this statement that I write; for I maintain that nothing is interesting, nothing is capable of giving great enjoyment to anyone who looks at it in the proper light. A consideration of nothing will give to the true philosopher a broader perspective, a clearer vision and a more complete concept of this life of ours. This is an *apologia pro nihil*.

Not long ago a little child presented to his parents the result of his first venture into the field of art. It was a clean sheet of paper covered with black paint. On being asked the subject of his masterpiece, he replied, "That's a picture of three negroes playing dominoes during a blackout in a coal-mine at midnight."

Here was one person, a mere child, who could really appreciate nothing. To his uninitiated parents, there was nothing to be seen, and immediately the picture lost interest. Only the little child could look beyond the inky surface and see nothing — and everything. For that is what nothing is — everything.

The other evening I entered my room in anticipation of a good night's work. My roommate was lounging on the bed, a blissful smile on his face, his eyes looking at me and beyond me, at nothing. To my casual question of, "What's doing," he replied in a dreamy voice, "Nothing." Here he was his reason for looking happy. He was doing nothing, thinking of nothing, and looking at nothing. He was completely and ecstatically immersed in nothing. He is indeed one of the true philosophers, one of those who love, not knowledge, but nothing.

Perhaps the greatest of fools was the student who, after working at an algebra problem for four hours, and having arrived at the solution " $x=0$," said "Gee! All that work for nothing." What more could he want? He had attained " x " which equalled nothing, and he was too blind, too shortsighted to see it. O unhappy man, who has such happiness in his grasp and fails to realize it!

Let us consider for a moment the symbol "O." Such a small, solid, little symbol, conveying to us the idea of completeness, of isolation, of independence and security. It signifies exactly nothing, yet how much it means to us, who are able to look beyond the printed page, beyond the prosaic bounds of earth and sky, straight into nothing. How true were the words of the prophet who, in a voice filled with exaltation and glory, said "Nothing would give me more pleasure than to get to heaven."

Nothing really matters, to us who are true followers. We believe in nothing, we do nothing and, at times, we fear nothing. To him who really tries to see nothing, nothing will come. Some great philosopher has said, "To those who seek nothing, nothing will be given." And we may depend on that promise. That is why, since I have received nothing, I try to avail others of the opportunity to receive as I did. And so this is written all for nothing, and with the hope of receiving nothing for it.



Sow an act and reap a habit;
Sow a habit and reap a character;
Sow a character and reap a destiny.

—(*Boardman*)—

Be good, dear child, and let who will be clever;
Do noble deeds, not dream them, all day long,
And so make life, death, and that vast forever
One grand sweet song.

—(*Chas. Kingsley*)—

Learning is an ornament in prosperity, a refuge in adversity, and a provision in old age.

—(*Aristotle*)—