

NO WONDER

"Gee dad, That's super! Where'd you get it?", remarked a little lad, I noticed the other day, when his father came home with a second-hand bob-sled he had bought.

Now "super" is hardly the word to use to describe a mere bob-sled; but why question the child's excitement, which thus caused him to blurt out this attempt at a superlative, when he already anticipates those long wonderful afternoons on the hill with his sled.

Have you ever analyzed the charm of childhood? Well, it doesn't take too much reflection to find that half the secret is that children can still wonder. Indeed, many of our greatest individuals and leaders have had this great faculty of wonder, which so blossoms forth into curiosity and even into the flower of creative imagination.

The scientific research, which we revere so much today and hold up as the key to modern civilization, flourishes in this spirit. Curiosity is still its greatest dynamic. Einstein once said, "The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true science."

It seems funny to find so many people today who are indulgently eager to travel and see wonders which are far away. It is probably their feeling of unrepose which causes them to make the letters "A" and "O" congruous, and thus identify "wonder" with "wandering". Yet it is rather paradoxical that these people are oftentimes blind to wonders right at their doorstep. In the common events of the familiar world about me, which for my part I dismiss as utterly trifling, Shakespeare would probably find the material for a play.

How can one keep alive the faculty of wonder in life? There are indeed various ways, but G.K. Chesterton in his own paradoxical way brings out a very different approach to it when he relates how when packing for a holiday from his native district of Battersea in London, he told his friend, "I'm going to Battersea".

"The wit of your remark escapes me", said his friend.

"I am going to Battersea", Chesterton retorted, "via Paris, Heidelberg, Frankfurt. I am going to wander all over the world until once more I find Battersea. I cannot see any Battersea here, because a cloud of sleep and custom has come across my eyes. The only way to go to Battersea is to go away from it."

No one will miss the deep wisdom behind this show of nonsense and paradox. A change meets its purpose when it restores one's outlook, and permits him to see all familiar things with added mystery and the morning dew upon them.

One way to measure one's degree of wonderment is through the awareness and response of our senses. While eating with me, a friend once remarked, "You know, I've practically no sense of taste." Ever since, I've been tasting better.

We are today a people intolerant to even the thought of old age, but we look in revolt at it from the wrong end. We try to "age gracefully" by artifice physical appearance instead of becoming "young at heart". We are old, then, when we cease to wonder. Those who wonder are always asking, "What next?"

I know a sadistic young lad who, after he was stung by a "bumble bee", proclaimed war against all bees and threatened to "burn 'em out of house and home. The fact that it was the last sting that bee could give was not consoling enough for him, so he was going to watch for all bees and determine his chance for revenge. This vigil, however, took the form of merely observing them; soon his curiosity at delving into the strange things he had seen became an obsession with him. Hitherto, he thought of the bee as an admirable and industrious insect, a member of a model community which worked day and night to devote themselves to but one end—the good of the race. An admirable community, the moralists tell us. Poor moralists. To miss so much of the joy of life. This young lad was not going to deny himself the pleasure of lying back and observing these artists of nature's beauty. Indeed he was soon fascinated with his own hive of bees. To him, watching bees store their cones of bee-bread was so much more fun than chasing them around with a sprayer. Too bad a few of us wouldn't (in our haphazard manner of connecting light bulbs) get a good stiff shock! Such revenge might take us into a new Electronic age. Socrates' words that all philosophy began in wonder has echoed all through the centuries.

We often hear grown-up people complaining of having to hang around a railway station and wait for a train. But did you ever hear a small boy complain about having to hang around the station and wait for a train? Of course not. For him, to be inside a railway station is like a young urchin entering a garden of wonder, the stretch of tracks reach as the endless stretch of a flowery pathway, and the glittering warning-lights of an incoming train like the blossoming petals in spring. For to adapt a mighty Miltonic line, they also serve (themselves) who only stand and wait, for the two-thirty Pullman. I hope I am of little boys' turn of mind in this matter.

—R. ST. JOHN '58,

ABBE PIERRE SPEAKS (A Book Review)

Those who read with interest the extraordinary story, *The Rag Pickers of Emmaus*, will welcome this more extensive account of Abbe Pierre's career. The book, *Abbe Pierre Speaks*, contains a short autobiographical account of the Abbe's vocation, the story of his first contacts with the destitute of Paris and some of his interesting addresses over the French radio.

In the thinking of Abbe Pierre, the general principles of Catholic morality crystallize into plans for immediate and decisive action. He says,

We make such efforts to hide misery rather than to abolish it. World starvation is something that most of us refuse to think about or even to hear about. More than one-half of the world is homeless. More than three-fourths cannot eat enough to reach normal adulthood.

It is Abbe Pierre's mission to drag these things out into the light, and make us recognize them as personal responsibilities. His contacts with the utterly destitute, for example, the eighteen year old girl who had been fished out of the Seine, after she had despaired of trying to live with eleven other people in a mudhole which had been dug for the foundation of a house that had never been finished,

stirred this man of compassion, this priest of great heart, to hold out his arms to all suffering ones. Such instances in this book are at once terrifying and inspiring—terrifying, for they show how far human stupidity can go towards defacing the image of God in man; inspiring, for they show how other compassionate men can restore it.

There are several things that separate Abbe Pierre from the enormous army of "do-gooders". He has a spiritual motivation as well as a kind heart. His social teaching is based firmly on Christian charity and Christian duty. Perhaps the most unusual thing about Abbe Pierre is that he himself was as poor as the poorest, yet his is an astonishing record of human achievement.

How he bought and re-erected old huts for more than one hundred and forty families, bought land and material, and finally urged the Minister of Reconstruction to help provide for homeless French families and remedy their inhuman living conditions, is the basis of his extraordinary story. What it means for men and women abandoned and alone to possess homes of their own is impossible to convey tellingly in so many words. The Abbe himself is nauseated by the praise he has received for doing what seems to him a work, not of charity, but of plain justice.

This book is more than an edifying record and an unadorned account of the mending of broken lives. It is also an unmistakable call to action, an appeal to every Christian not to leave unanswered the cries of the needy members of God's human family.

—SISTER MARGARET MARIE, '58

MEMORIES ARE MADE OF THIS

As we steamed slowly towards Plymouth harbour, the early morning mist that shrouded the coast of Devon lifted almost imperceptibly until we could see the shore line quite distinctly. The gently rolling hills on the horizon moved towards the sea's edge in a gradual descent, coming to an abrupt halt some one hundred feet above the beach. It left a rich brown embankment that seemingly shelved in the bordering countryside from the lapping tongue of the sea. Scattered close to the cliff edge were large, elegant trees that flourished coats of deep green leaves. The trees increased in number, moving inland, until they merged on the hills of the horizon into the smoky blue haze of early morning. To east and west the interspersed fields changed from a lustreless yellow to gleaming gold as the sun rose higher.

Southern England, particularly Cornwall and Devon, is considered by many to have the most beautiful and picturesque landscape in England, so it is easily understood why a person should enjoy reliving the memories of a visit there.

Some say that the passing of time dulls and clouds memories of the past but it seems to me time, if anything, tints with more vivid colours old memories. Things you enjoy recalling in memory seem far closer to you in memory than they did in reality. How many of us have pleasant recollections of some particular place and event in the past and have wanted to return to this particular place and if at all possible relive the event? You can return to the place and you can simulate the event but it can never be the same. If anything an attempt to recreate the past only destroys what was once precious as a memory. Why this is I don't know. I suppose that a memory is the only

thing that remains unchanged through the years. We change with the passing years. Our outlook towards life is constantly in a state of transition. The curiosity and wonderment of younger days gradually fades as the years are added. We never see anything through the same eyes twice, so it seems. And as we change so other people change and so do places. What was once a sapling is now a mature tree. What was once a winding river is now a narrow stream and what was once a shy, friendly girl is now a cordial woman of the world. And that brings me back to southern England and Plymouth.

Our ship moved slowly through the channel between Plymouth Hoe and Drake's Island. The island, of our port side, was perhaps a half mile from the Hoe and the Royal Navy installation on the mainland. It was small, not more than a quarter of a mile in diameter and with its towering craggy cliffs it rose perhaps one hundred feet above the sea. It was densely blanketed with large trees except at its centre where there stood on a slight rise of land what appeared to be a castle. Looking down from the Hoe, Drake's Island appeared like a sentinel guarding the harbour, a couched lion I heard someone call it.

We slipped past the island and Naval installation leaving Plymouth and the Hoe perhaps a mile behind. We were now coming into a basin whose northern perimeter was surrounded by the town of Devonport which is actually part of Plymouth. It was here we dropped anchor. On our starboard side were the usual buildings and machinery found around any large naval yard. The office buildings, warehouses, cranes, derricks and railway sidings were all close to the water's edge and lined perhaps a mile or more of the basin; rising above this was Devonport and further to the right Plymouth itself.

It was about one o'clock when the liberty boat dropped us on the jetty. From the jetty we followed a narrow road lined on both sides with barbed wire fencing which enclosed long, low, few windowed buildings. The road steepened when we had passed the naval barracks. To our right and left were large, extremely modern apartment buildings, built on an angle to the steeply rising street. We made a few right and left turns in a haphazard manner and finally found ourselves on a wide road. Dropping off to the right was a perfect view of the harbour, on the left a cement wall. The wall was some four feet high and topped by a privet hedge which rose another three or four feet. We followed the wall for about a hundred yards finally coming to an ornamental gate of wrought iron, bordered on either side by two large pillars. This was the entrance to a park. We passed through the gate on to a walk shaded by overhanging trees. The trees formed a solid arch overhead except for the scattered spots where the leaves were apart, through these skylights glinting beams of sunlight angled down, scattering a patchwork of moving blotches on the walk. The side of the park opposite to the entrance was lined with large oaks marking the park's end. A few feet beyond the trees the ground fell away quite suddenly, sloping downward to the basin. We could see our ship quite plainly from here, her stern moving in a slow swing with the ebbing tide. At the far end of the basin were a number of large battleships, a couple of cruisers and two large air-craft carriers. It was when I turned towards the end of the basin to look at the battleships that I first noticed the young girl, leaning against the wide knarled trunk of one of the oaks. She was gazing down at our small frigate almost absent mindedly. Before I realized what I was