

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,