

ALEMBIC

PROVIDENCE COLLEGE



VOLUME XXIII

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DECEMBER, 1940

"THE SOUL'S LASTING ARMISTICE
WITH CHRIST"

REV. PAUL C. PERROTTA, O.P.

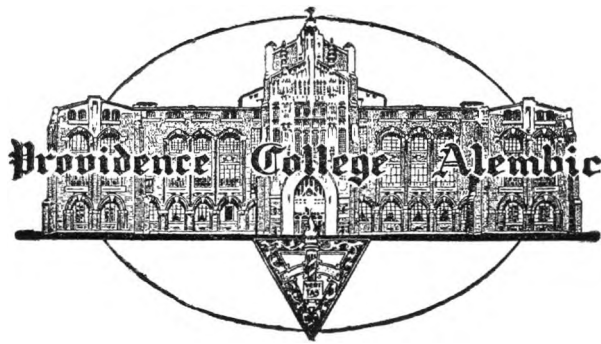
JIM SCARES ME NO LONGER

FRANK J. WHALEN, '42

THE HUNT

J. SHARKEY, '43

THE ALEMBIC



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"MAL"

THE HOLY NAME MAN OF THE MONTH

For November, 1940

It is appropriate that as this Christmas Season approaches we remind ourselves of the particular honor that was paid our beloved alumnus by The Holy Name Journal, last month.

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“The Soul’s Lasting Armistice With Christ”*

By REV. PAUL C. PERROTTA, O.P., S.T.L., Ph.D.

Professor of Philosophy. Providence College

LAST November eleventh, this nation paused for the twenty-second time in yearly commemoration of that armistice which brought peace to the world after the most sanguinary war in human history.

In each of the previous celebrations of so memorable a day, a vow was made in the heart of America, ever confirmed and increasingly rendered solemn, that never again would we pour out the blood of our youth on an altar as stupid and satanic as that of war. We had had our fill of carnage; our conscience revolted against a repetition of a senseless slaughter; and every time we gazed on, saluted, and wreathed the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the vow would come more fresh and sincere from our lips that he never again would have a brother. We were through with war; we signed lofty treaties with sister nations rejecting it as an instrument of national policy, and we directed our steps firmly along the sweeter paths of peace. We became more neighborly, friendly, fraternal, wherefore we have been tasting these many happy years the joys of the fruits of charity among nations, among which are security, concord, expanding opportunities of trade, an enrichment of culture, and a chance to foster the things of the spirit.

*Address given over the CBS “Church of the Air,” Sunday, November 10, 1940. Slight changes in the first paragraph were authorized by Father Perrotta.

The Alembic

As this day's sun now starts to descend to its vespers before the dawn of a new Armistice Day, we may well consider what our thoughts shall be when we gaze tomorrow on him who died nameless for his country; on whose bones we swore that vow; whose crumbled dust we made the symbol of a new exalted patriotism; and whose sad memory kept nurturing in us a tenderness towards the dead akin to the fervor even of a religious belief in a life beyond the grave.

Alas, the vow that sprang so spontaneously and consistently from our lips for the past twenty-one years will find itself stifled tomorrow in the face of the events that have been transpiring since November last. America still yearns for peace, but the will to maintain it is adamant no longer. Subtly, slowly, yet surely, in our national council and conscience there has come a change in our attitude towards war. We entertain the dread that we shall have to battle again. Indeed, it has been said that we are already in the field, and it does not terrify us, nor does it force from our lips an arresting protest. Where are the vociferous peace societies of ten years ago? Numerous leagues throughout the country had it as their high resolve to keep us out of war at all cost, yet today "peace at any price" is no longer a popular or intellectual slogan. It is smart now to convince the community that you are a good American, glad for conscription, complacent about war if it must come, and ready even for the supreme sacrifice. Our ears are thrilling again to martial music, our eyes are feasting again on soldiers' uniforms, and our hearts beat wilder now when Old Glory passes by.

This transformation over-night from a people vowed to an eternal armistice to a nation deliberately arming itself in full panoply of war has its human explanation in the amazing events in Europe since last spring, which witnessed the lightning loss of peace to so many countries that had not desired war, and

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which bring to us the threat of the destruction of all those things which we consider sacred: our freedom, our open commerce, our unfortified borders, our high standards of living, and our democratic institutions. There are explanations without number for the transformation, from those patently in accord with the obvious situation, to those which whisper that we are again being deluded by lying propaganda, and that our leaders are foolishly and unnecessarily allowing themselves to be jockeyed into the horns of the cruel dilemma which condemns us either to go to war now when the enemy is beatable, or to lose our liberty later when he becomes the master of the world.

Whatever explanation is the true one, I would like to take the fact of our transformation in sentiment, first, as an age-old manifestation of the fickleness of human nature, and, secondly, as a warning not to rely on our own strength. David, the Psalmist, himself a Prince, inspired by the Holy Ghost, in his one hundred and forty-fifth psalm, second verse, spoke this truth so well when he said: “Put not your trust in princes; in the children of men; in whom there is no salvation.”

The men of Germany have put their trust in one man; likewise the men of Italy, the men of England, the men of Russia, the men of Spain, the men of France—and we here in the United States, for last Tuesday we gave an overwhelming mandate to one man to be our leader.

Oh, I am not arguing against loyalty to any chief of state; to Caesar render the things of Caesar, but I would like on this solemn occasion to point out the tragic blunder on the part of men in looking to human leaders as their only hope in the maintenance of peace and in the solution of life’s problems. For human leaders, even the best intentioned among them, are liable ever to passions and frailties which import so many tragedies among the people. One blunder, and a nation is plunged into

woe. Leaders proverbially choose a good sufficient indeed for their own immediate and materialistic needs, yet which in the light of more important values of life, or with respect to the future welfare of men and nations, proves to be a miserable lesser good, in fact, a terrible evil.

Wars invariably have had their genesis in the desire of man in high places either to grab unjustly, or to retain against moral justice, the pitiful goods of earth: the lands, the seas, the gold, the oil, the iron, the tin, the nitrates, the silk, the rubber, the wheat, to gain or retain which, they have poured out the blood of youth, they have driven men insane, they have shattered the nerves of a nation, they have bruised and maimed and starved the bodies of innocent women and children, and they have caused men to lose their immortal souls, for in the madness of war so many die in the act of sin or state of unrepented wrongs. "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?" Are some or all of the goods of earth worth one human life, one immortal soul? Many leaders think so, and for this is their leadership a snare and a delusion, for man's true destiny lies not in furthering the glory or position of his country, but in the enrichment of his own spirit through a virtuous life, which having its regard the gaining of God, the Infinite Good, surpasses the worth of all worldly benefits.

It is vain to hope for an enduring armistice among men. There will never be a lasting peace on earth as long as man permits greed to lure him to acts of violence against a neighbor. For that neighbor, innocent as he may be, pacific as he might want to remain, in the face of that unjust aggression against his goods, his liberties, his life, and his honor, will be forced to resort to armed conflict in self defense. And so there will be wars, and rumors of wars, men withering away in fear and expectation of what shall befall their earthly goods.

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Ah, it is nice to want and to seek international peace, but the world cannot give it. It is good to erect a tomb to an Unknown Soldier, to strew his stone with flowers, and to bedew his dust with a self-consoling promise nevermore to enact the tragedy that brings him to an untimely grave, but we must not deceive ourselves that merely with these words and flowers is the armistice achieved.

Peace is for men of good will. There is first a higher, a better, and a more necessary armistice for the human soul to seek.

That armistice is with Christ, the Savior and the Judge of men.

A human soul must not put its trust in princes. If men and nations want peace, they should sincerely pray for it as the Holy Father, earth’s only trustworthy leader, directs, and if they want to achieve in their lives the true high destiny to which they have been called as sons of God and heirs of heaven in that sweet brotherhood with Christ, they will first of all make their peace with the Prince of Peace, they will seek Him before any good this world can offer, and in thus finding Him, they will have life in His Name, the real abundant life of the spirit, sustained by an inner peace which is beyond all price and which surpasseth all understanding. This is the peace which the virtuous, the men of good will, possess, and which they retain no matter what storms of life assail them. Saint Paul spoke of the unshakeableness of this peace in the love of Christ, when writing to the Romans he said:

“Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword? . . . For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other

creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.”

Oh, man is more than his flesh. If he were but animal, the law of the tooth and the claw, of passions and of war, might well prevail. But he is more than flesh: he has a soul, a substance immortal, spiritual, made in the image of God's own infinite substance, and whose faculties of intellect and will were ordained preeminently to the rational seeking of God and of willful adherence to His holy law. This soul of man, lost once by the original fault, was redeemed by the Blood of Christ generously poured from the Cross. The soul's supernatural life is due to Him, its salvation is possible only through Him.

This, then, is the true task of man, to save that immortal soul of his, nothing else mattering. Men will be judged by Christ, privately after their individual death, and publicly at the end of the world, not for what they have acquired of earthly goods, but simply in the light of whether they deserve an eternal participation in His glory by a virtuous correspondence in life to His impulses and graces. This is an old doctrine, it is fundamental religion, and woe to the world when it loses sight of this truth. It can have no peace as long as men refuse to make in heart and keep in conscience an armistice with the King of Kings, the Prince in whom alone there is salvation.

We, who are listening to the Church of the Air, and subscribe to its lofty ideals—the Catholic, the Protestant, the Jew, or the adherent of no religion—all have this one paramount duty of saving that soul of ours, and if we conscientiously go about this duty in the one and proper way, well, we may not thereby abolish war from this planet, but at least we shall have contributed to the peace of the world, for war will never come from us; and we may not become rich in earthly goods, but assuredly we shall have the vaster wealth of grace, for we shall have con-

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tracted in our souls an eternal armistice with Christ, the Lord, which sweet covenant with Him will bring to us now a surcease of war in our nature, and later that blessed salvation in the kiss of His abiding peace.



Queen at the Crib

By JAMES J. MURPHY, '42

FATHER CASEY stood admiring his Christmas Crib. "That really is a masterpiece," he mused. "The Child looks almost alive—such an expression of tenderness and innocence. What a joy it must have been for the three Wise Men to bring gifts to such a King. Somehow or other people seem to forget the real gifts these days. The gifts that come from the heart. The kind that Christ desires, the little acts of self-sacrifice and the ordinary manifestations of love. If only we had some of the spirit of the Wise Men, or of the shepherds, or . . ."

But here Father's straying thoughts were interrupted by a slight tug at his cassock. He turned and there at his side he saw the little tot. She couldn't have been over seven.

"Father," she whispered, "may I ask you a question?"

The priest's face brightened. Anxiety, as only a child can express it, was clearly shown on her countenance.

"Certainly, my child." The interested and slightly amused cleric replied. "What is it?"

He bent over to hear more easily. Looking about to make sure that nobody else was around, she began to take something from under her coat and, in a barely audible voice, said, "Father, do you think that the Infant Jesus would like to play with my new doll?"

A Bow-legged Saint

By MATTHEW P. GALLAGHER, '41

TWO men sat one winter night in a lonely line camp of a great northern cattle company; one spending the short evening in that heaven which is the product of a tired body, a fire, and a pipe; the other lost in the art of his pencil. The one with the pipe was old and lean and his face had borne the fury of many blizzards and of desert suns. The other, the artist, was fuzzy and freckled and had not yet reached his maturity. From far out in the foothills came the dismal wail of a wolf. A horse snorted nervously in the corral beside the cabin. Two days ago the blizzard had petered out and since then the country had been held in frozen stillness. The winter had been hard and the snow deep, and every day the men worked from sun-up to darkness, pushing the cattle up on the ridges where the wind had blown the ground clean, or, in some cases, milling a bunch around and around until the drifts had broken sufficiently to allow the cattle to reach the grass.

"Kid," drawled the old-timer, shaken from his reverie by the demise of his pipe, "I'm afraid we're goin' to have trouble soon." That day the "Young 'Un" had brought in three early calves and had put them in the stock corral with the other "weak stuff" to be fed hay for the rest of the winter. Old Tom, when he discovered the new arrivals, cursed his young companion for his sentimentality and promised him the "privilege" of riding the mule if they ran out of hay. These were the first words that he had spoken since his outburst of simulated anger. The "Young 'Un" looked up questioningly.

“What kind of trouble?”

“This stillness; I don’t like it,” answered Tom, shaking the ashes from his pipe. “I think the warm chinook is fixing to blow. I know!” he added with a convincing nod of his head. “And when the chinook blows at this time of year it’s bounden sure to be followed by snow. You know what that means.”

When the men awoke the next morning they heard the drip, drip, drip of water as the icicles on the roof melted. Old Tom had proved to be a real prophet, for the chinook was indeed blowing and the warm blast from the south brought the promise of summer to the frozen north. When they went out that morning their feet broke through the snow crust in several places, and when they arrived back at night there was no crust left. Soon large spots of bare ground became visible and by the end of the week the ice on the river had melted. The cattle, rendered weak and listless by the warm wind, started to shed their warm winter hair. Feed was in plain sight now and they no longer had to muzzle into a snow bank for nourishment. No more did Tom sit contentedly before the fire at night but now he often paced the floor puffing nervously on a cigarette.

Ten days after the chinook started blowing, the “Young ‘Un” opened the door one morning and was startled by the color of the sky. It was slate gray and along the horizon was a suggestion of yellow. “Tom,” he called, “come here.” The old-timer hurried to the door and looked out. At the sight, his face hardened and his frown grew deeper.

“This is what I feared,” he sighed. “It looks like a blizzard is coming. And with the cattle in the condition that they are in now . . .” He left his conjecture unfinished. Anxiously he glanced at the boy.

A Bow-legged Saint

They hurried thru breakfast and, slinging their saddles over their shoulders, went out to the barn. Tom threw his saddle on an old buckskin cowpony, a horse which had seen service in many cow-camps all over that northern range, and in every kind of weather. When Tom's cold blanket slipped over the old pony's withers, the horse assumed many menacing and fearsome attitudes but Tom paid not one bit of attention to him until he was through saddling and then he walloped him on the rump with a saddle strap and yelled, "Red, you old reprobate, someday I'm going to slap your ears all over your face." Whereupon, Red gave the cowboy the "evil eye" and awaited his chance to get even.

Tom, glancing over his shoulder saw his young partner saddling a half broken mustang. "I wouldn't ride that young bronc today, kid," he cautioned. "Why don't you use that old paint of yours. You'll have plenty of chance to straighten out that young colt without taking him out in a blizzard."

"Oh, I can handle him all right," boasted the "Young 'Un." "I've been out in blizzards before."

"Now do like I say, son. Saddle up that old horse."

"I'm telling you, Tom, I can handle this guy all right. Besides, I don't think there is going to be any blizzard."

"I think you'd be wiser to ride that old fellow," persisted Tom.

"Don't worry cowboy. I'll be okay."

The old-timer swallowed an impulsive retort and shrugging his shoulders he led his horse out of the barn. At the far side of the corral he pulled up to wait for the "Young 'Un." The chinook had long since ceased and the air was now very still. The cattle in the corral acted as they always do when a storm is imminent. Many times before had old Tom seen similar signs and his experience made him fear the storm which

he knew was coming. Much of the thick winter coat had been shed from the hides of the cattle and their systems, keyed up by nature to meet the rigors of winter, had not been able to change quickly enough to harmonize with the unnatural warmth. A blizzard at this time would bring dire results to the weak and lazy range cattle.

The "Young 'Un" came out of the barn with a wild-eyed, kinky-tailed bay, and grinned boyishly at his "pard." "The next thing you know you'll be tying a rocking chair up on that old horse instead of a saddle," he called derisively. And he laughed as he climbed into his saddle. "No matter how tough and wild they are when they're kids, they all soften up with age," said he to himself.

They rode together to the river and there they separated, one riding to the east and the other to the west, to make their daily circle. Tom turned to the west climbing slowly into the foothills; the "Young 'Un" followed the river and jogged eastward. His horse was a half trained colt which should have been turned loose with the other range ponies after the fall roundup. But the youngster liked to show off and he knew he could do it well on this beautiful crazy animal. The bay cavorted and shied, and the boy sat up there as proud as a high school scrub with his first black eye.

He had ridden along for about an hour at a dog-trot when he came upon a cow bogged down at the river's edge. She had managed to get her head and shoulders up on the bank but her hindquarters were still almost completely covered. A calf, terror-stricken at the plight of its mother, bawled weakly on the bank. There was work to be done, that was plain to see. The kid shook out a quick loop and dropped it around the cow's horns. "Let's go, Jughead," he called to his horse, as he spurred him around and started to pull the cow out.

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Jughead pulled but the cow wouldn't cooperate. Soon the saddle started to slip so the boy got off to tighten the cinch. Even after that, they worked to no avail, so once again he got off, this time to go out into the river to tail the cow up. The poorly trained horse danced around nervously at the other end of the rope and helped the cowboy very little in the arduous labor. The cold water ran into his boots and he soon became completely covered with mud. "It's all in the life of a cowboy," he had often soliloquized, but at times like this—with eight hours riding still ahead of him and probably more toil of the same kind—he wondered what caused him to pursue this work that his father had done for thirty a month and his grandfather had done for tobacco.

The youth was so engrossed in his labor that he didn't realize that the sky had suddenly grown darker. Along the horizon that suggestion of yellow had become insistent. He became aware that breathing was difficult. It was as though the prairie had become a great void, still, dead, and yet with a rushing sound above and all around, like the sobbing of gale swept pines. The horizon was sucked toward him when he breathed and retreated when he exhaled. Nausea filled him. Then in an instant the storm was upon him. Vaguely, he saw his horse lunge against the rope—and then he could see no more, for everything was blotted out by the snow and he could scarcely see the ground. He heard the cow grunt once and then felt her lunge up the bank.

That was the last he saw of the cow or the horse. For an hour after that he searched vainly for his horse and rope and was finally forced to the conclusion that the horse had either pulled the cow out and dragged her away or else had broken the rope. When the realization of his plight fully struck him, he felt a great loneliness—the wind and the snow

beat on him. A deadly cold chilled him and he had difficulty in moving away from the river. Dumbly he let the wind steer him not knowing or caring where he was going. Dumbly, blinded and buffeted, he drifted along with the blizzard.

There was no need to care whither he went. What was the good? His labor in the river and his subsequent search for horse and rope had tired and chilled him. So much so that that fierce human instinct which induces man to defy the elements was dulled in him if not already extinguished. He was no longer a master but now a slave of nature. He had no more directive power than a stupid animal. His mind, crippled in a frozen body, had no more similarity to a normal mind than ice has to water. A long time had passed. He moved painfully looking neither forward nor behind, letting the wind guide him.

“Why did you not listen to experience,” screeched the wind as it tore at his clothes?

“Why, Why?” he repeated with a sob.

Many times he stumbled and fell and always he pulled himself up to struggle on. His mind was benumbed; his body no longer felt the cold. “I am dying,” he whispered to himself. And strangely enough he chuckled. He no longer cared to live. Or, rather, he no longer *cared*—either to live or to die. Hours passed and he moved mechanically onward without thought or sensation. He felt a bump once and then—nothingness.

His next sensation was of warmth and a permeating odor of whiskey. He vaguely felt himself being put into bed and he heard many voices. “I must ask them what happened,” he thought, “just as soon as I turn over.” But he didn’t get around to asking that question that day or the next either. For not

A Bow-legged Saint

until the following night did he awaken. Then his first words were, "I'm hungry."

His recuperation was slow and he stayed in bed for many weeks. One of his first questions was for old Tom. "Is Tom all right?" he had asked. And they told him that Tom was busy at the camp. He observed that they were evasive about answering his questions and they varied somewhat in the details of their answers. At first he passed it off with little thought but as he grew stronger he became more curious about his rescue. After several weeks he became accustomed to walk about the place and, now and then, to take little rides. One bright spring afternoon he decided to ride out to the river camp to see Tom and find out from him just what happened the day of the blizzard. Without telling anyone of his purpose he lined out for the river at an easy trot.

The sun was just setting as he came in sight of the cabin and long shadows moved over the flats. The last rays of light were radiating from the glistening peaks of the Grand Tetons, a hundred miles away, and were reflected in gentler hue from the red rocks and the river. A stranger stood in the doorway as the "Young 'Un" rode up and he nodded a solemn greeting to the youngster. "Is Tom here?" asked the youth after a brief formality.

The stranger paused long before giving his answer, and he looked at the youth with a piercing eye. At last he answered the anxious question with a bitter and brief, "He is." And he motioned the youth to get off his horse. "Come, follow me," he said. "He's up on the hill." The "Young 'Un" followed the cowboy without bothering to ask what Tom was doing up on the hill, so anxious was he to see his old friend once again. Forgotten now was the disappointment he had known when his "pardner" had failed to visit him in his sickness. All was

forgiven in the joy of expected reunion. There had been days when he had called him a "fair weather friend," but he realized now that Tom had been too busy to see him. The sky in the west was a deep rose now and the shadows grew purple and mysterious. When they reached the pinnacle of the hill the stranger turned and said, "There's where Tom is." And the youth looked down and saw a mound of earth and board crudely fashioned into a cross. "We found you two together," the stranger continued. "Tom was just an icicle. You were underneath, protected by his body and his coat which he had wrapped around you."

The "Young 'Un" looked down and through his tears read the blurred inscription on the cross:

HERE LIES TOM SUNDOWN

HE GAVE HIS LIFE FOR A FRIEND

The Hunt

By J. SHARKEY, '43

"A bas chevaux!"²¹

—*Prince of Wales*

IT was with seeming good luck that I chanced to be at Notfarin-Kent, the country seat of Duchess Henrietta, during the first fox-hunt which takes place—weather permitting—on the last day of summer. Her Ladyship had invited me down for a week-end some three months previously and, having neither the money nor desire to return to London, I remained in Kent. Henrietta had inherited the estate and the title. She had never married or as the country idiom had it, she stood neuter.²²

As I left the manor for my usual morning stroll to the "George and Decanter," a local coffee-shop, I was struck with awe at the scene on the lawn before me. It was colourful, indeed. The gray of the morning, the green of the Kentish landscape, the red of the hunter's coats and noses, and over all the scent of the juniper berry from bush and glass. The country hunt was a subject on which I had always stood neuter²³ since father had connected it with his escape from Tyburn.²⁴ Therefore, to be present at such an affair offered me an unusual opportunity to see if the escape was as dramatic as he was wont to mention. Then, too, I was minded of some merry tales of the hunt which came from common people I had met; which tales were very derogatory to all concerned with the possible excep-

²¹ "Hold that horse!"

²² !

²³ didn't give a damn.

²⁴ place of public execution.

tion of the fox. My musing was cut short by the appearance of the Duchess, mounted on her Percheron,²⁵ and closely followed by the vicar who muttered strange Latin phrases as is the custom of churchmen. This good man blessed the hunt, then the hounds were given the scent. With crys of

“Yoicks!”

“Tally-ho!”

“Who started this?” and

“Where the hell is that groom?” they were away!

The country folk who had gathered to see the start were now preparing to return to their respective callings. As they left, their merry laughter and agrestial remarks about both the hunt and the hunters set me again to musing. Why is it that the common people can see nothing of magnificence even in such a scene as these had witnessed? While mulling over the thought and construction of this last sentence, I noticed that my steps had taken me to the “George and Decanter.”²⁶ This charming coffee-shop, noted for its murals of sylph-like country girls, standing neuter,²⁷ was also popular for its ale and coffee; so I entered. After admiring the murals and ordering a coffee and chaser, I was surprised to see many of the people who had been, but recently, at the hunt’s start. The same air of levity prevailed and the conversation was, indeed, that of the morning. Now and again a post rushed in to give the longitude, latitude, and condition of the riders which reports caused much off-side betting. The fact that Admiral Weathering, R. N., had been left “amid the bilge”²⁸ at a ford caused much mirth. This rural humor made me proud of my class—to think we could bring so much happiness to so many people! However, as the day

²⁵ horse of noble breed and breath.

²⁶ I.q. pl

²⁷ not having much on.

²⁸ afloat.

The Hunt

progressed the countrymen showed little sign of making hay while the sun shone; in fact, at one interval, there was much ado when a small red animal resembling a dog entered the inn. He seemed quite tame and accepted the tidbits of the farmers who called him Reynard and seemed not displeased at his visit. By the time I had finished my eighth coffee, Reynard had curled himself up by the fireplace and the post had informed us that the hunt was heading for Dorset. It was an opportune moment to pick up some silver which I had seen lying around the manor. Through the dusk, I noticed that the bushes along my way were arrayed with bits of red cloth bespeaking the hunt which, not having seen, still leaves me standing neuter.²⁹

²⁹ not giving a damn.

The Hill *

By LEO MURPHY, '42

Doesn't take very long for them to die.
An hour, maybe two, depends.
Put a little vinegar on the sponge,
Choke on his tongue, arm-flesh rends,
Either that or the hand rips
Blood curls over the wrist
Like a snake. Can't hold his head up.
Pretty white where the lash missed,
Lighter skin than the other two,
Lots more power too, and lung,
Damned hard language, y'know,
Almost like every word was sung.
Three and four, that's a seven,
Hand me the rag. Probably lice,
That's the hell of this damn province,
Sand and crosses, bad wine and dice.
Well, that's all, men. No time to waste.
Use a spear on the middle one,
Move them all out. We need this hill
For a gun turret. We need this hill
For a gun.

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On Not Having Seen the World's Fair

By J. A. CONWAY, '43

A PART from their generic description as a race dedicated to life, liberty and the pursuit of greenbacks, Americans may be divided into two classes: those who have, and those who have not, seen Grover Whalen's "World of Tomorrow" in New York. Now, the "World of Tomorrow" interests me not even tepidly; I have spent thirteen years at various schools in trying to dissect the gas-lit world of yesterday; at present I am struggling manfully to keep my footing in the shifting sands of the world of today, and I won't be alive, *Gott sei dank*, to lead with my chops in the ethereal world of tomorrow. But people have jammed the transportation systems to see the Fair, and have returned to brag about the thing to their supposedly less fortunate friends. When people pop me the inevitable, "Have you seen it?" my blissful "no" leaves them gasping in horror. Plainly, my omission makes of me a vague and undesirable cross between Public Enemy Number One and a zealot among pseudo-patriots. I am a cultural zero, a vacuous, minus quantity, an horrible example to be held up to naughty children—a pariah.

My only possible comeback is to give vent to my best Parisian shrug, fix a fishy eye upon my tight-lipped tormentor, and ask wearily whether he liked Billy Rose's Aquacade. They can't fool me; I read the papers occasionally, and I happen to know that the cagey Rose fared better than did Oppen-

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heimer's Cereal Products. Too, I know a little about human nature, and I cannot be shaken in my conviction that the customers had much rather gaze upon a length of feminine limb than hear the pride and joy of Iowa "Aggie" demonstrate the process of popping a molecule of Vitamin F-1 into each and every crumb of Mamma Oppenheimer's Home Made Bread (home-made at the rate of 1,000 loaves per hour before your eyes). And since they spent their time watching the lovelies being thrown into pools or swung out of bed ("Knock the young lady out of bed, boys; you can't miss, three balls for ten cents, sex appeal with every knuckle ball."), what did I miss? There are beaches in this state where the ultimate in undress is attained; I don't particularly care how a young lady looks upon being de-bunked. People insist they spent their time at the General Motors Exhibit, but it wasn't the Highway of Tomorrow that made them brave the congested highway of today for a second year.

The whole Fair was built around the American axiom that what is bigger, is necessarily somehow better. People went to gawk at the trylon-and-perisphere, to walk wearily through the Kontented-Kow-Kanned-Milk Exhibit (take your first left at the Squeejee Sponge Building and ask for Eddie), to stand at a bar, that would give a maharajah an inferiority complex, and quaff an ale, while thirty seven uniformed attendants came up and politely dusted off their coats, straightened their ties or slips, quoted statistics on the Fair and measured them for a winter coat. Then inevitably all paths climaxed with one of the girlie shows. Something genuine there for the Tired Businessman; incredible inches of unadorned young womanhood, spine tingling seductiveness in every movement of the derniere beautiful—and the same thing free at the nearest seaside resort. The French have a phrase for everything;

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c'est rire, it is to laugh: silken *robes de nuit* are evidently more exciting than the microscopic feminine bathing suits, and a lot more potent at the box office. So America went to the Fair to see the Railroad Exhibit? I submit Billy Rose's gate receipts in answer to that hypocritical bromide.

The strangest thing is, I don't feel that I've missed the Fair at all. For two years I haven't been able to read a Page One story on the war without colliding painfully with a World's Fair plug somewhere on the page. Advertisers have bled the thing white; the little trylon-and-perisphere device winked out at me from every corner: Visit the Fritzenhoffer Frankfort Exhibit at the Fair . . . See Swiller's Ale Brewed Before Your Appreciative Eyes . . . trylon, perisphere—it's in every street-car, restaurant, newspaper, magazine, barroom; the whole world seems to have resolved into the design of the thing; it spins gaily around before my eyes; I wake up at night in a cold sweat dreaming I'm slipping off the top of the perisphere and Cecil B. DeMille is making a mob scene with 100,000 extras prodding me off with the trylon.

Not for me, no, sir. I'll leave the World's Fair to the wreckers, God bless 'em. Twelve Panzer divisions couldn't force me inside the gates of the World of Tomorrow; I have no concern with the Lagoon of Nations; to me the Goon of Nations is the benighted bloke who would spend a month's wages to trot like a driven lamb from Exhibit to Exhibit, and come home with no souvenir save the free package of cookies from the General Baking Building, a trylon-and-perisphere pin, and a pair of irretrievably drooped arches. I have made my niche in the Hall of Fame; I am the Man of 1940; I have remained an individualist and not followed the lowing herd that winds slowly o'er the City of Tomorrow. I have dared to think that the Fair was merely a lucrative monument to wishful

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thinking. I have dared to believe that to miss the Fair was not to sacrifice *savoir faire* attained in a week, and I have dared to hope against hope that the well-being of the species has not been impaled upon the needled tip of Mr. Whalen's Trylon-and-Perisphere.

No. I didn't see the damned thing.



A Child's Christmas

By RAYMOND C. SMITH, '41

THE story of Christmas will never grow old, because the Child of that first Christmas is eternal and His loving parents are immortal. No matter how far the world may be from the spirit of Bethlehem, it manages, at least once a year, not only to unwrap gifts but also to forget its own materiality. Old hatreds and old sores seem to be forgotten and the peace of the first Christmas descends upon the world.

Once more Mary and Joseph knock on doors; but this time it is the door of the human heart. In fancy one sees them yet. There is Joseph seeking room in an inn. He knocks. The door opens and discloses a husky innkeeper. He tells the gentle Joseph there is no room. Meanwhile the proprietor's wife peeps out into the street. She is stunned by the beauty of Mary and the simplicity of Joseph. But the door closes.

"Somehow," she tells her husband, "I feel as though we have turned a king from our door."

Her husband laughs and she blushes at the thought. Hardly would a king come in such poverty!

Since then a myriad of Christmas tales have come to life. Each year sees its new brood. Somehow or other, the ones dealing with children linger longest in our memory. We re-live Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* and find our greatest joy in the happiness of Tiny Tim. We read the famous letter of

Theresa O'Hanlon in our newspapers and involuntarily we shake our heads in the affirmative to her childish question: "Is there a Santa Claus?" For in children we find the innocence of Christmas—only the most naive would look for a King in a stable.

As the toys are unwrapped and the shouts of children's laughter falls upon our ears, we sit back and dream—dream we are children again. There is something quiet about this dream. It is a dream of the first Christmas. It unfolds itself gradually and in the beginning all is hazy. As the cares of the world slowly leave us, the scene becomes clearer and we are in Bethlehem.

Our view of the little town is from a rare vantage point. We see the surrounding hills and the inns which lie in the town proper. There is something missing. We look more closely. Yes, there it is. At the foot of a hill is the stable which is soon to become a tabernacle. All is calm and serene. The busy day of Bethlehem's visiting throngs has passed into a quiet night. The decree of Caesar Augustus has been obeyed and now innkeepers dream of the money gained; tired travelers dream of renewed friendships; but no one dreams of what is to take place.

On the hillside we see shepherds keeping the night-watches over their flock. They can be heard remarking on the brilliance of the stars. It would seem as though all the stars have come out to behold some unusual event. Everything is so peaceful that these shepherds fear something unexpected may happen. We wish we could be with them, for we know what is soon to occur. And why not join them? This is a dream and we can be shepherds just this once.

Now we are in their midst but they are not aware of our presence. Listening to their conversation, we find them

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very simple and holy people, almost childlike. It is their innocence that attracts us. Little wonder, we feel, that angels will soon greet them. We are overjoyed at being with them. But moments pass and soon we wonder if we have been deceived and that nothing is to take place.

Then suddenly, night becomes day. The darkness is gone; the Light of the World has been born. We fall on our knees. An angel of the Lord stands before us and we, with the shepherds, are filled with a great fear.

"Fear not," the angel says, "for behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people. For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger."

How familiar are these words! They gain new sweetness as we hear them on the hillside. Now descends a multitude of angels in heavenly array and they sing praises to God:

"Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will."

The angels soon depart and once again the shepherds have been left to themselves. One says to another:

"Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath shown to us."

Thus, they leave their lambs in the pastures to behold the lamb of God.

Although great haste is made, the journey to the stable seems long—we are so anxious to arrive there. Now we have come. Unconsciously we fall to our knees on seeing the Holy Family. The Infant Jesus has His little hand raised as if in a blessing. Mary is truly "as flourishing as the rose and as fragrant as the lily." Joseph is humble and gentle. As we

watch, once more we hear music. At first it is soft but gradually it becomes stronger.

We awaken from our dream to hear a chorus of young boys and girls singing hymns over the radio. The children have finished with their toys and all is quiet save for the singing. Our eyes search for something. It is not the tree or holly or mistletoe, but for something else—the crib.

“Next year,” we say to ourselves, “next year we will give the crib a more prominent place.”

As we shake ourselves to a complete awakening, we wonder if there are not some who got to the stable of Bethlehem just for a visit, but decided to remain forever in the loving embrace of a Child’s Christmas.



Jim Scares Me No Longer

By FRANK J. WHALEN, '42

THIS town of Walsham is a closely held corporation. Everyone knows everyone else, and everyone else's business. We all know what's going on between Joe Biddington's widow and that retired lawyer fellow from New York, and about Irving Nickerson's secret drinking, and why young Shirley Eaton left town so suddenly. And everybody knows that Jim Sanford isn't any good.

I know Jim better than anyone else and I guess, like folks say, he isn't any good. He's lazy and he swears and he cheats at cards and he gets drunk at parties and he doesn't go to church. Yes, like folks say, he isn't any good. Jim and I get along pretty well, always have. For almost fourteen years now we've been tending this bridge together night after night.

Walsham, you know, is a kind of mixed place. There's the ordinary people—people that belong here—and there's those that don't belong, that came from outside. They aren't many and they never get to *belong*, as I said, but they stay and maybe their children get to be real Walshamites, as they say in the paper. And then there's the people over on the point. They don't belong, but they come and live here and trade with the folks that do belong, but they never get to belong, nor do their children. The folks over on the point are rich—they drive big cars, and live in big houses, and they keep their boats in the harbor back of the point, just like

the shell-fishers do. A drawbridge across from the village to the point shuts off the harbor and it's this bridge that Jim Sanford and I tend, like I said.

Now, maybe you didn't notice, but I don't like these people on the point; they're too high and mighty and they look down their noses at us Walsham folks. Anyway I don't like them and neither does Jim. Plenty of times when we get tired of playing cards or dominoes up in the bridge house, or maybe if I've caught Jim cheating at cards and won't play more, we kill time by just sitting and cursing at those point folks and maybe running the bridge up just to stop one of their high-powered cars, even if a boat isn't coming. Jim and I don't agree on many things but we do on that and maybe that's why I get along with him better than most folks.

Well, like folks say, Jim isn't any good. And he's always kind of scared me—me always being God-fearing and church-going—until about a year ago.

Anyway, one day we started work (that's what they call bridge tending) early. The two fellows that are on days wanted to get through early so we swapped time with them. Jim and I sat up in the bridge house playing pinochle. It was kind of late—maybe four o'clock—and we had to open up only three or four times for some fishing boats. None of the yachts belonging to the point people were around; it was late October. It was kind of a breezy day. The chop was building up and the wind was tossing the spray up over the wall on the sea side and it was soaking the road all along the causeway. But it wasn't what you'd call bad.

Well, Jim and I kept playing cards and smoking. We didn't pay much attention outside. When we got tired of pinochle, we switched to dominoes and then to cribbage. Jim was feeling frisky. I thought that maybe he was cheating and

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finally I caught him at it. He was shuffling the cards, but they weren't being mixed up. I quit right then.

Well, Jim got up and went to look down the road to see if any of those cars from the point were coming so that he could run the bridge up on them. All of a sudden he turned around.

“Hey, Bill, take a look.”

I stepped to the window, looked down on the bridge. The waves were breaking over the wall.

“Boy, she's sure coming hard and fast.” Jim mopped his brow and whistled.

“Yeh, and it won't be high tide until seven.”

I went to the switchboard and tried the lights and the power to see if the wires were wet. Lights flashed on and the motors began to hum. I shut them off, but left the lights on.

“Well, that's good.”

We were both leaning on the window sills, our eyes glued on the swirling water.

“Well, there's nothing we can do about it.” Jim was unmoved.

We pulled chairs over to the windows and sat watching the water rush through the bridge opening and the waves break over the wall. Gradually they grew higher, and, with the rise in tide, the level of the water rose above the bridge floor. The waves tore at the fence and caught the gates and carried them away.

As it began to grow dark, we started to talk about how high the water would be when the tide was full. We couldn't see how deep it was down on the bridge but we could tell from the roar that it must be sweeping over the bridge. Then we heard a wrenching sound, a loud, prolonged scraping. Suddenly

it stopped; the silence was almost as loud as the noise itself. The lights went out.

“What the hell’s that, Jim?”

“I don’t know. Let’s go see.”

We put on boots and heavy rubber coats from the locker and, carrying two battery lights, stepped out on the platform at the head of the stairs which led down to the bridge. The spray drove sharply into our faces. We picked our way, step by step, down the stairs. When we neared the bottom, we could hear the rush of water and feel its pressure against the stairway. The battery lights, soaked with spray, went out. We didn’t dare go below the fifth step. As we stood there, searching in the darkness for the cause of that scraping sound, we could feel the bridge shiver. The sound of rolling stones told us that the wall along the causeway had broken down.

Then out of the darkness loomed a huge black bulk. It hit the railing of the bridge on the seaward side, smashed through, scraped over the bridge, shattered the fence on the shore side, and then disappeared. It had come and gone before we realized that it was a boat.

At the same moment Jim and I thundered at each other. “Let’s get going.” If boats were going right over the bridge, we had to get out of the way before one of them smashed the underpinning of the bridge house.

Jim, cursing the weather and its Maker, crept up the stairs to the bridge house and came back with a coil of rope and another light. When he got down to where I was standing, he tried the light. It wouldn’t work. We had to make the best of it.

We tied the end of the rope to the railing of the stairway. Then, inch by inch, we worked our way down into the water to the floor of the bridge. The water was up to our

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chests. Paying out the line hand over hand, we allowed ourselves to be pushed in the direction of the bridge railing. We were nearly washed off the edge, where the water had torn away the fencing. Once we found the rail we moved slowly along it toward the Walsham end.

We had gone, as I figured it, about halfway, when we came to the end of the rope. We were on our own now. We walked carefully along the rail, feeling ahead at every step to make sure of the footing, and clinging tensely to the railing. We had to work the rest of the way to dry land without any guide or support. Leaning into the rush of water, we pressed forward, walking both against the current and toward land. But it was useless. Despite our efforts, the current swept us along with it. Suddenly we saw a huge, formless bulk before us. The force of the current pushed us swiftly toward it, against it. It was a building.

I caught hold of a window frame and called to Jim. When he came within reach I grasped him and pulled him close enough so that he too could take hold. Between the two of us we figured out that it was Davidson's fish market—a little two-story wooden building. We decided to work along the windows on the right as far as the door. It took maybe ten minutes and when we got to the door, there wasn't any—just a big opening; the water had torn the door and a part of the frame off. The building was shaking as though it was tied together with store string.

Inside, the water was about four feet deep. We felt along the walls until we found the stairway to the second floor. From the smell and from the feel of the stuff on the floor up there, we knew that the room was used as a storage space for fishing gear—nets, and dredges, and lobster pots. We settled down on a pile of seines to get some rest. We were tired. We

were there maybe five minutes when Jim said to me, “Hey, Bill, open a window, will you?”

I went to the window on the lee side and opened it. With it open, it seemed even more stifling in there. The rush of the wind seemed to suck the air right out of the room.

“Hell, that doesn’t do any good, Jim. Open the other one.”

I climbed over a pile of nets to the other window and pulled it open. Immediately a gust of wind rushed into the room and out the other side. The window sashes rattled momentarily and then fell right into the room, glass clattering all over the floor. The force of the wind shook the whole building. The roof rose up above us and the house rocked on its foundation. The floor tilted up beneath us and then, like a capsizing sailing skiff, the whole business rolled over. Jim and I slid along the floor until we hit the wall. Suddenly we realized that there was water in the room. Out of its reach we scrambled, up the slanting floor as far as the window that had been on the windward side. We knew from the lapping of the water and from the irregular tossing of the slanting floor that the building had been blown over and washed off its foundation and that we were floating across the harbor. Jim and I settled down, straddling the window sill, clinging to anything we could. The building was pitching uncertainly. We were only about four feet out of water. Jim looked down at the water first outside the window then down inside the house.

“We ain’t gonna’ get drown are we, Bill?”

“Hang on and maybe we’ll be all right.”

Well, we sat there for maybe five minutes. We had to keep changing our position to suit the turning of the house. We were going pretty fast. Then, all of a sudden, we felt a

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jolt, and the house lurched over—I guess we hit a boat or something—and Jim was jolted right off his perch. He fell through the window and down inside the house. I had to let myself down, hanging onto the window sill, and grab him with my legs and pull him up. When he got back to the window sill I knew he was scared. Before he was just mad; he kept swearing and joking a little, but now he was shaking all over. Maybe he shook because he was cold too, but I knew when he didn't come up fighting mad that he was scared. Anyway, I held him there until he got his breath back and found a place to sit.

We no sooner got settled than the house was hit by something else and we had to climb around to keep from drowning. After that, the same thing happened several times. We'd be up on the roof one minute and sitting on the threshold the next. We sure had to hop around.

I hadn't thought much about where we were going or about the weather, but I noticed that the wind was getting higher and sometimes the waves broke right over the house. Jim was afraid and he kept getting worse. He moved around as the house turned, but all the time he was sort of crying and kept telling me, "We're gonna' get drown, Bill. We're gonna' get drown." And then he'd start to shake. I didn't think much of our chances but I wasn't really scared. I just kept trying to do the best I could.

From the way the waves were getting higher, I knew we were getting near the shore. And Jim knew it too. That damned house was going like a speedboat and kept tossing about this way and that all the time. We both knew that when we landed that house was going to be smashed to pieces.

"Damn it, Bill. We're gonna' get killed."

Jim's voice was high-pitched and uneven and kind of tearful.

"Ain't ya gonna' pray, or anything? We're done for sure."

I knew we didn't have much chance but I knew, too, my job was to try to keep from drowning—not just praying, like Jim expected.

"I'm scared, Bill."

He grasped me and clung, shaking with fear.

"Can't you do nothing, Bill?"

I shook him off and told him to keep quiet and watch that water and where he was sitting and try to figure out what to do when we hit. He kept up that kind of crying and moaning but he didn't say anything to me nor try to grab me any more. He just kept mumbling, "O, My God!", over and over.

We sat up there on the roof for maybe three, four minutes and then the house grounded. I was tossed off into the water. What happened to Jim I don't know, and he doesn't either—he must have been knocked out by a floating plank or something. Once I was in the water, I didn't have to bother trying to swim toward shore. The rush of the water carried me right in toward land. All I had to do was try to keep my head above water, and get enough air to keep from drowning. Once I got close enough so that I could touch bottom, the only trouble was to wade amongst all the floating planks, boats, furniture, houses and parts of them, which were pushed up on the shore. I staggered up the beach, looking for Jim, but more anxious to find some shelter.

In a couple of minutes I came to a boat—a yacht belonging to some of the point people. It had been put up for the winter, but I got a plank off the beach and broke the padlock off the cabin door. I felt my way through the dark cabin to one of the bunks and fell down to sleep.

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I guess it was about ten the next day when I woke up. I was aching all over. My clothes were still wet, my joints were stiff, and I was hungry. I climbed up through the hatch, jumped over the side to the beach, and started along the shore for the town. I expected, I suppose, to find Jim's body somewhere along there. Along the shore all kinds of stuff had been washed up—buildings and clothes and furniture. Some of it was sixty, seventy feet above the high-water mark. Finally I met some people, three or four groups of them, looking for things they had lost.

“Seen Jim Sanford?” I asked them all. No one had.

When I got to town I went into the first eating place I came to. It was Monaco's bar-room. I got a beer at the bar and ordered a beef-stew (Monaco serves good beef stews) and sat down at a table. Then it occurred to me that maybe they might know something there about Jim. I asked the bar-tender. “Have your heard anything about Jim Sanford?”

He tipped his head to the side. “Take a look in the back room.”

Jim was in the back room all right. He was drunk as I've ever seen him. He had two or three of the regular hangers-on sitting at a table with him, and he was telling them about his trip across the harbor.

“Yessir, I'm up there on the roof of Mishass Davi'son's fish shop with the waves breaking over my head, but it was nothin', nothin' at all.—I've been here since eight this morning.”

I slipped out the door and went home to get some sleep.

Jim Sanford and I still tend this bridge here and Jim still drinks and swears and cheats at cards but he doesn't scare me like he used to.

“Go to the Office”

By THOMAS A. MULLIGAN, '42

THE leaves were falling from the old elm tree that stood across the street. There were still a great number of leaves left on the tree. They fluttered to the ground in a continuous parade. Some leaves came down swiftly, driven by the wind; others floated down gracefully. Soon the snow would be coming. There would be skating on the lake. Pretty leaves, some yellow or brown; others still quite green.

Although his mind was concerned with the falling leaves, he sensed a stillness in the room. It was unnaturally quiet. Someone spoke and shattered the silence. “Robert, Robert Stone,” the voice was saying. The voice was directed at him.

He suddenly snapped his head from the view at the window. It was his name. Oh, what had he been doing? The teacher was asking him a question. He felt foolish and lost. He tried desperately to remember what the question was. He couldn't even guess. “What?” he humbly asked.

The teacher, a young woman, looked at the boy with exasperation. Nine-year old Robert Stone wilted under her gaze. He swallowed hard.

“Robert,” she said, “you were not paying attention. You heard absolutely nothing that I said. Since you seem wrapped in your own thoughts I'll send you down to Mr. Brux's office where you can think in peace. You may go to the principal's office now.”

"Go to the Office"

Robert arose from his desk. He kept his eyes on the floor as he walked toward the door. He knew that every eye in the room was on him. He walked up the corridor to the principal's office feeling like a lost soul just departed from the earth and floating through space toward his judgment. He entered Mr. Brux's office. The principal was sitting in a swivel chair in back of a rectangular desk which was littered with important looking papers. A wooden railing separated the boy from the desk. He stood at the railing like a criminal before the judge.

"Well, sir," barked the principal, looking up at Robert. Mr. Brux had been principal of the school for the past twelve years. It was his domain. Power feeds on itself. Mr. Brux was well-fed.

"Miss Bates sent me down here, Mr. Brux."

"Why?"

"I wasn't paying attention."

"H'mm, yes," nodded Mr. Brux, "you probably were not." He waved his hand toward a bench which was against the wall. "Sit down there."

The offender sat down. Mr. Brux went back to peering at his papers. Robert sat and looked at the principal. Mr. Brux made marks on the papers as he read them. From the mass of papers on his desk he selected a single paper, read and marked it, and then put it on a pile of papers on the edge of his desk. A girl messenger came in and spoke to Mr. Brux. She glanced at the boy on the bench. He sat and stared back. She went out. Mr. Brux was telephoning someone now. Robert sat and watched him. The principal hunched over his desk as he talked. He spoke in a louder voice than usual when on the phone. He clapped the receiver back on the phone, got

up from his desk, and left the office without looking at the boy.

Robert sat and looked at the clock. It was a large, very white clock. He could see the minute hand jump as it moved along. He sat and watched it until a quarter of an hour had passed. Then he looked out into the corridor. Every so often a pupil would go by. They seemed to be in a different world. He felt like an outcast. He sat and looked at the room. It had a high ceiling. A white globe descended from the middle of the room on a brass rod. There were four windows of four panes each in the room. He studied the bookcase situated on his right. The books were either big thick books or neat little ones. He sat.

Mr. Brux finally returned. He picked up a paper and began to read it. Then he looked at the forlorn figure on the bench.

“Robert, come here,” he snapped.

Robert came and stood at the railing before the principal’s desk. The principal glared at him. Robert looked intently at the floor.

“Robert,” began the principal, “this is the second time this month that you’ve been sent to my office. Your lack of attention in class seems to be the main cause of your trips. Just why can’t you pay attention to your teacher?”

The boy shook his head. “I don’t know.”

“You don’t know?” echoed Mr. Brux. “If you don’t know, who does? Just what do you know? Your marks are showing your indifferent attitude in class.”

Mr. Brux allowed his remarks to sink in. He continued, “What do your parents think of you? They certainly don’t send you here to dream. What do you hope to be? At the rate

“Go to the Office”

you’re going now you’ll end up on a street corner. Do you want to be a failure?”

“No sir,” answered Robert. He didn’t care what happened to him at the present moment.

“You just can’t be a social parasite all your life, Robert,” barked the principal.

“No sir,” replied the boy. He didn’t know what that meant but it sounded bad. Everything looked bigger than it should. The floor seemed to roll under his feet. Mr. Brux continued his harangue. Robert heard only words, not meanings—“Failure . . . flunk . . . stupid . . . success . . . lack of ambition . . . brains . . . initiative . . . study.”

A bell was competing with the strident words of the principal. It was the closing signal. The words stopped. “All right you may go now,” said Mr. Brux. Robert stumbled out of the office. He walked down the corridor to his locker. His class was tumbling out of the room to their lockers. Girls whispered behind his back. He got his coat and walked out into the schoolyard. He started home. A gang of boys caught up with him.

“Hey Bob,” yelled one of the boys, “what did Brux do to you?”

“Aw, nothing,” replied Robert.

Another said, “We had a lot of fun in class. We had a spelling bee. Roberta Linnes won it like she always does, but it was a lot of fun. You should have been there.”

“I had a good time too,” said Robert. “I just sat around the office and no one bothered me. It was fun watching things go on in old Brux’s office.”

“Gee,” wailed a small admirer, “didn’t Mr. Brux say anything to you for not paying attention to Miss Bates?”

"Naw, we get along swell now. He knows I don't listen to him anyway so he leaves me alone. You should have seen him reading."

Robert went into an exaggerated imitation of Mr. Brux hunched over his desk peering at a paper. Gales of laughter applauded his mimicry. The boys walked on, laughing and pushing each other. The group dwindled as each went to his home. Robert and his next-door neighbor Jimmy Hale were left alone. Jimmy looked upon Robert as his physical better and therefore idolized him. He questioned Robert as they walked.

"Did Mr. Brux get mad at you, huh Bobby?"

"Mad?" said Robert as though it were a strange new word. "He knows Miss Bates picks on me and, besides, he knows my father would be mad at him if he did anything to me."

"Didn't he say anything?"

"Hello Mr. Myers," they chorused together as their mailman passed them.

"Well," said Robert, "yes, he had a few words to say. Brux says to me that if Miss Bates wasn't treating me right, you just let me know. So I says that that's all right 'cause she don't mean any harm. He says anytime you get sick of her you can come down to my office and help me."

"Gee," gasped Jimmy, "he said that?"

"Sure. Well of course he didn't say it just like that. You know how he talks. But that's what he meant."

Jimmy could only stare at Robert in awe. They were at Jimmy's house now. Robert turned to his small friend. "Did Miss Bates say anything about me when I was gone, Jimmy?"

"No, she didn't say anything about you."

"What did you do all the time I was gone?"

“Go to the Office”

“We had a spelling bee like Johnny was telling you.”

“Oh, well, so long.”

“I’ll see you, Bobby.”

Robert walked to his house and opened the door. Inside his mother was cooking something in the kitchen. It had a nice smell. Robert went into the kitchen and kissed his mother.

“Do you want some milk and cookies, Bobby?”

“No mum.”

“Well, you must be getting sick.”

“I’m all right.”

Robert trudged up to his room. He opened the door. He closed it slowly and locked it. Then he went and lay face down on his bed. It was supper time before he managed to stop crying.

A Footnote to History

By CHARLES MCGOVERN, '41

THE small sloop came about sharply and, tacking into the wind, headed towards Namquit Point. The shot from the bow gun of the revenue cutter fell harmlessly across the Hannah's bow. Captain Lindsay stood on the Hannah's deck, and, seeing the revenue cutter come about to follow him, he turned to the helmsman.

"Take her across the point."

The helmsman grinned, and with a brief, "Aye, aye, sir," held the Hannah on her course, with the bow headed for Namquit Point.

Water spurted up on the port side as another shot from the cutter missed its mark. Then white water boiled beneath the bows of the Hannah, as she raced across the sand bar that was Namquit Point, with but inches between her keel and the sandy bottom. With all sails spread the sloop raced on up the bay. Astern, the revenue cutter was coming across the point. Then suddenly the cutter stopped—aground on the bar. On her decks men shouted and ran as she slowly keeled over in the bright sunlight. On board the sloop, men laughed and made coarse jokes about the fate of the cutter. The waters of the ebb tide slowly left the cutter beached high and dry.

The hot dusty street of the colonial town lay somnolent in the sunlight. In the tavern on Main Street Jonathan Townsend jeered while his big brother James avowed that the colo-

A Footnote to History

nists would not longer tolerate the outrages committed against colonial shipping by the king's officers.

"But Jonathan, we can't stand it much longer. Every ship that travels the bay is in danger of seizure."

Jonathan leaned back in his chair. "And just how will you prevent it?"

"We'll find a way. We stopped the Liberty in '69, didn't we?"

The long roll of a drum sounding at the upper end of the street broke in on their conversation. They hastened to the doorway of the tavern to hear a man call out: "The king's revenue cutter has run aground on Namquit Point, and cannot float before three o'clock tomorrow morning. Those persons who feel disposed to go and destroy that troublesome vessel are invited to repair to Mr. James Sabin's house this evening."

James turned to his brother, a grin on his face. "There is your 'how?' "

Smoke hung thick in the room in Sabin's Tavern. The men drank grog as they poured molten lead into bullet moulds. At a table at the end of the room Captain Whipple explained his plans to the men gathered around him.

Jonathan leaned against the wall, contemplating the activity in the room. The fools! he thought, to think that they even had a chance of capturing an armed vessel of the King's Navy. And with nothing larger than long-boats. Of course they had driven the Liberty from the bay three years ago, but that was lucky. You couldn't beat the king twice. Well, he'd have no part in this madness.

"Are you coming, Jon, we're ready to go?"

He turned to find James at his side. "No, I think not." James flushed. "Is my brother a coward?"

"But Jim, this is madness. We can't possibly—"

The Alembic

The sound of the muffled oars on the eight long-boats made small noises in the night as the oar blades bit into the smooth gelatine-like surface of the bay, sending ripples across the water. Jonathan leaned on his oar as the look-out in the bow cautioned silence. He leaned over the side to wet his hands then, straightening up, he glanced at his brother in the stern. What a fool he was to have come he reflected as he examined his gun. They'd probably all hang for this business.

The bulk of the cutter loomed ahead in the gloom. The men looked to their guns, and as they resumed rowing, a shout rang out from the deck of the stranded vessel: "Who goes there?"

The shout died in the stillness, as the boats glided on. The commander of the vessel had come on deck, and added his cries to those of the watch.

At length Captain Whipple made a reply, "I want to come aboard."

"Stand off! You can't come aboard."

Whipple roared an oath. "I am the sheriff of Kent County, and I mean to have the commander of this vessel, dead or alive. Men, to your oars!"

The man in front of Jon turned to him. "Hand me your gun, son. I can kill that fellow."

Jon extended the gun to him. Bracing himself against the thwarts the man fired. Lieutenant Dudingston clasped his stomach, and fell to the deck of the cruiser, badly wounded.

In a moment the longboats were alongside the cutter. Jon swarmed over the sides with the others, firing into the crowd of British sailors. A brief skirmish, a surrender, and the battle was over. The vessel was in the hands of the colonists. Swiftly the prisoners were placed in the boats and rowed to the Warwick shore. A swift pull back to the captured vessel. Lighted torches appeared and men dropped from the deck of the cutter to the

A Footnote to History

waiting boats. A few strokes on the oars and then the men rested to see the flames do their work. Smoke began to rise from the cutter. Flames ate their way across the deck, then up into the rigging.

Jon sat in the long-boat, as the flames lit up the bay. A fierce pride filled him. By God, they had done it. They'd show the king. This was only the beginning. Exultation filled him as the flames lit up the lettering on the vessel's stern—H. M. S. GASPEE.

An explosion shook the boats as the powder magazines of the GASPEE exploded, showering them with bits of burning wood. The GASPEE's rigging shot high in the air.

The men in the long-boats slowly rowed back to Providence, their night's work done. There they separated to return to their homes. Jon glowed as he walked home. He felt a sense of kinship for his fellow colonists, and an animosity for the king. We accomplished what we set out to do, he thought proudly. The future would hold great things. The spark of rebellion against the king had been kindled that night. Rhode Island had kindled the spark and it would not die.

“The Still of the Night”

By IRA T. WILLIAMS, JR., '41

THE monotonous tick-tock of the clock as it beat its cacophony of time alone disturbed the noisy silence that pervaded the hospital corridor at 2 A. M.

It was so quiet, it was deafening—one could actually hear it.

At the desk, busy scribbling on charts, sat “Burkie”—Miss Burke, to you—pretty in spite of the stiffly-starched, tombstone, white tunic that served as a uniform, and wide-awake, in spite of the ungodly hour. If anyone could look pretty in one of those dreadful frozen kimonos it is taken for granted that beauty is there. And “Burkie” oh, podden me—Miss Burke—did look pretty.

Just tall enough to reach—well—she was tall enough. At least the indefinite “he” thought so—and as far as “Burkie”—oh, there I go again—Miss Burke—was concerned, that was all that mattered. Her dark hair shone in contrast to the spectre-like cap perched jauntily upon her cocky head.

Different from most nurses, Miss Burke looked as if she had been poured into her uniform and remembered to say when. It seemed as if she were perpetually erect, for not the slightest semblance of a wrinkle marred her dress. And that is as far as the good points go.

It was easy to appreciate Miss Burke as far as looks went, but as for anything else—

"The Still of the Night"

Not that she was not a good nurse—now don't get me wrong—she was—one of the best—but that's not saying much 'cause the best is none too good. Anyway Miss Burke was a good nurse—mechanically. And that's just how she functioned—mechanically.

For a heart she had an eight day clock. You know—it softens up every eighth day and seeing as how there are only seven days in a week Miss Burke's heart was never soft— or was that necessary?

The patients called her Nurse but would much rather—and more truthfully—have called her Hearse, so cheery was her nature.

One more patient—dead or alive—though preferably dead—made no difference to "Burkie." Except that a dead one was less bother. And for that matter she'd rather have all dead ones. By the treatment she gave she usually had—eventually. Ah, yes, she was mechanical all right. To Miss Burke a patient was a potential corpse—and that's all. If any got well—don't blame her—'cause she did her best. Now don't get me wrong! She gave them their medicine as scheduled and waited upon them as they required—but patients need more than medicines to get well, don't they? They need a kind word—a helping word and above all an encouraging word. They all add up to a successful convalescence—providing the doctor didn't get his degree at Sears Roebuck or some correspondence school.

As for the kind words—Miss Burke never knew they existed. And at this particular hospital most of the doctors admitted some correspondence school as their Alma Mater—if not by words—at least by practice.

As the 2:30 chimes echoed and reëchoed down the empty corridor Miss Burke glanced quizzically at the clock. Her expression seemed to say, "Is that all it is?" "Burkie"—oh heck—

The Alembic

I forgot—Miss Burke was going off duty at three o'clock, and once three arrived, nothing could keep her there. But it seemed as if time itself were mocking her.

Yes, three was a funny time to go off duty—but then this is a funny hospital—no foolin'.

The red-coated emergency light winked annoyingly and Miss Burke noted mentally that an accident victim was on his way to the slicing department—you know—the operating room.

As the minutes dragged on, Miss Burke thought of the day ahead. It was her off-day and she had planned a day with that indefinite "he", only in her case "he" was definite—and decidedly so. "He" was Trooper Thomas Gorman of the State Police. Miss Burke and the trooper had been "that way" for some time and as soon as things straightened out they'd get married and have some little troopers around. But that was too far distant to think about now.

2:55—Impatiently Miss Burke scanned the gloom of the corridor for sign of her relief. "For goodness sake where's that dope Charbonneau?" she thought half aloud. "Why doesn't she get down here?"

The buzz of the telephone interrupted her thoughts abruptly. "Miss Charbonneau is detained in the operating room on an emergency case and will be a little late," a voice on the other end droned.

"Well that's nice," babbled Miss Burke to herself, "just the right time for somebody to get hurt. And me with a date at 10. I need some sleep before I go out. Why don't whoever it is kick off so Charby can get down here?" These and other uncomfortable thoughts rambled around Miss Burke's befuddled brain.

“The Still of the Night”

Even the seconds seemed to drag. The tick-tock of the clock changed to ha-ha—mocking the impatient girl in white.

3:20 was like two hours instead of 20 minutes.

The castanet-like clicking of heels on the marble hall revived Miss Burke from her self-pitying expedition and brought Charby on for relief.

“Well, it’s about time,” “Burkie” chirped. “What happened?”

“Oh some poor fellow got shot,” answered Charby sympathetically, “and he just went out.”

“Well, thank God he died or I might have been stuck here all night. Anybody dumb enough to get shot ought to die. That’s all I can say. Well, see you later, honey.”

And with that Miss Burke was gone into the eerie gloom.

As Miss Charbonneau took her post to keep the vigil in the night, she wondered if the morning papers would give the true heroic story of the death of Trooper Thomas Gorman.

BY THE WAY

WE'VE got a grudge against the ordinary, decent sort of fellow. He irritates us to the extreme. Whenever we think of him we inevitably conjure up a picture of an individual with jello for a backbone and an outworn slide-rule for a brain.

Sounds fairly drastic, doesn't it? Most people have peeves of an altogether different sort, Hitler and loud wallpaper; Mussolini and weight-lifters; asparagus and sweet potatoes. Personally we recoil at the sight of a sycophant; we don't like to play cards; we abhor wedgies, and dislike pitchers' duels in baseball games. But our grand passion on the peeve side of life is against the ordinary average, dull, stupid individual who really isn't an individual but is merely, to our mind, an excuse for some solid boredom.

All of which is merely a build-up for something which has been gnawing at our innards for a long time. The ordinary people, men of good will, usually form the base of society's triangle. The good blokes are born, get married, work, have children and die off. They support a gradually narrowing superstructure which includes many egocentrics who have more nerve than talent. Some people, in other words, seem born to take it on the chin; but the thing which disgusts us at present writing is that they seem content to keep right on taking it on the chin.

By the Way

We think, regarding the arts, that the ordinary bloke is not much more than a fool. The upper crust dictates the fashions in all things and the ordinary bloke either follows the leaders in extremely blind fashion, or, if he feels disinclined, he doesn't pay any attention. This is true especially with regard to the arts.

Take the Irish-American Catholics, most of whom are pretty good ordinary blokes. The English and a plague on the land brought them to this country with empty bellies and heads full of the faith. When in that condition they couldn't be blamed on any score. They were all right; they were themselves. But the mick is a perfect weathervane. He changes with the times; he's mercurial, not solid. The Irish had a tough time at first; they built railroads, worked in mines, mills, sweatshops, and kept traffic moving. But gradually, driven by worthy ambition, they grew into that great, nebulous, innocuous mass known as the American middle class. They began to build homes and to raise families which were, at first, decently large. But they declined with prosperity. The faith began to take on the aspect of an un-welcome effort to get up every Sunday for Church. The Italians, Poles, Russian Jews, and masses of other peoples, followed. The Irish, ergo, gradually assumed positions of relative importance in the community. They became ladies in waiting to the Anglo-Saxons who got here first, disenfranchised the Indians, and started the fad for genealogy.

In the matter of the Arts, the Irish-Americans, along with a great many other persons of good-will, are a total loss. As far as our consciousness is concerned, this group has produced very little in the way of anything artistic. But they patronize the arts, those particular arts which form the centre of the smart set's interest. They haven't a voice to raise when it

By the Way

And the poor ordinary blokes follow the crowd, not half knowing why except that "this is what everybody does, and anyway, when the author described those people who lived, loved, hated and laughed in the Chicago psychiatric ward, I just knew that it was real because every once in a while I feel that way myself."

And when all the sound and fury has abated, when the greatest book of the decade has been forgotten (remember *Anthony Adverse?*) the author either gets himself married again or goes up to the North Pole to make a clinical study on how the loves, hates and passions of the Eskimos triumph over the depressing and chilling effects of icebergs.

The trouble with the American reading public, decent, sucker-like, ordinary blokes, is that they forget that they themselves constitute reality and that most of the other people on earth are more or less like them with a few concessions to race and climate.

Thus the average sucker continues to fall for the fads—fifty million book experts can't be wrong—and the people who want to write something in the way of literature are shucked away from the publishers' offices like five-year olds ordering Scotch and Sodas at the Baccante Room. The ordinary people who should know better, contribute to literary avalanches which, according to what has happened within the last few years, are merely monuments to artistic frustrations.

Then of course, there's the theatre. And here's where we can discuss an astonishing situation existing here in Rhode Island. Here's where Kelly green fades to an anemic yellow.

As you know, of course, there are amateur theatres going full blast all over the state. Some are good, some bad, some mediocre and some varying. Groups sponsor these theatres; sugardaddies are lined up behind them. Religious groups, cultural clubs, support them and for the most part they are

rather successful. Did you, by any chance, ever hear that there is a Catholic amateur group* in Rhode Island, which, given any kind of decent support, could certainly hold its own with the others? Maybe, at one time or another, you have heard. But you were not too interested. Why? Because the *so-called* right people don't bother with this type of theatre. So you put down a good slice of change for a subscription to another amateur group and let your own struggle along on bread and water.

We don't say that the Catholic group tops them all. We don't say that by any means. Without support you can't top anything. But we do say that this group, throughout five years of effort, just hasn't been given a break either by Rhode Island Catholics or even by the Catholic press of Rhode Island, the *Providence Visitor*, which purports to carry Catholic news. About a half-hour's walk from the office of the *Providence Visitor* there exists a struggling Catholic theatre attempting to do for the theatre what the *Visitor* is struggling to do for the Catholic press. This Catholic theatre group, which has not been at all guilty of religious chauvinism but which for the most part merely contents itself with putting on good plays, has gotten about as much space and encouragement in the *Visitor* as the anarchists get in the *Providence Journal*. In this situation there is no logic at all. The indifference, lack of interest, the positive non-support of this group, is appalling. It just isn't fashionable to support what you believe in, or what you're supposed to believe in, so you cut your own throat.

Catholics do form the basis of the social triangle, also the artistic triangle. But they lack mental and moral initiative and they have the stupid habit of being ashamed of themselves.

*ED NOTE: The reference here is to the Black Friars' Guild, of Providence.

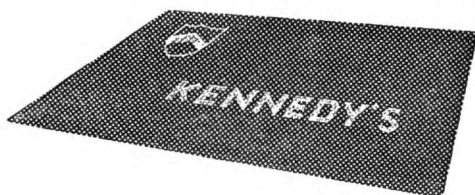
By the Way

We're not by any means plumping for any narrowness whatsoever on the part of Catholics. We're merely asking them to be objective; to have some sense of discrimination and independence. We heartily condemn that branch of Catholicism, the "thick mick" element, which condemns others because they're "agin the fayeth." But we think that the "agin the fayeth" group is not half so large as that group which acts like a sedative on the body artistic. Indifference toward what is good is the most effective way to support that which is the fad of the moment. When the Catholics have a chance to show what they have, to consolidate themselves, they take a box seat behind the eight ball and starve themselves to death on tommyrot.



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