

THE ALEMBIC

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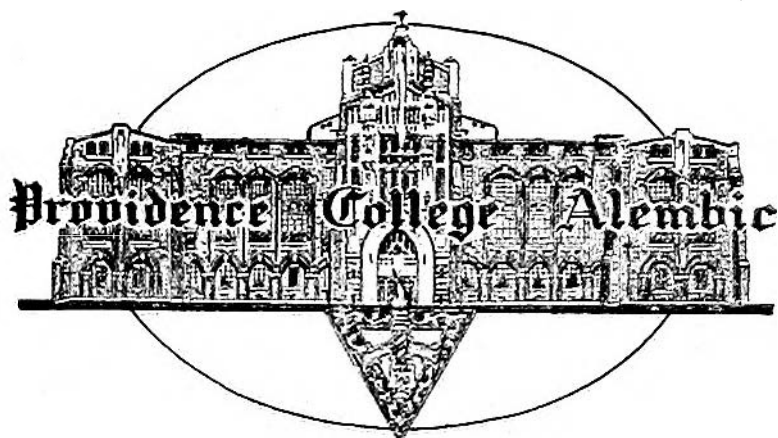
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FEBRUARY 1949

THE ALEMBIC



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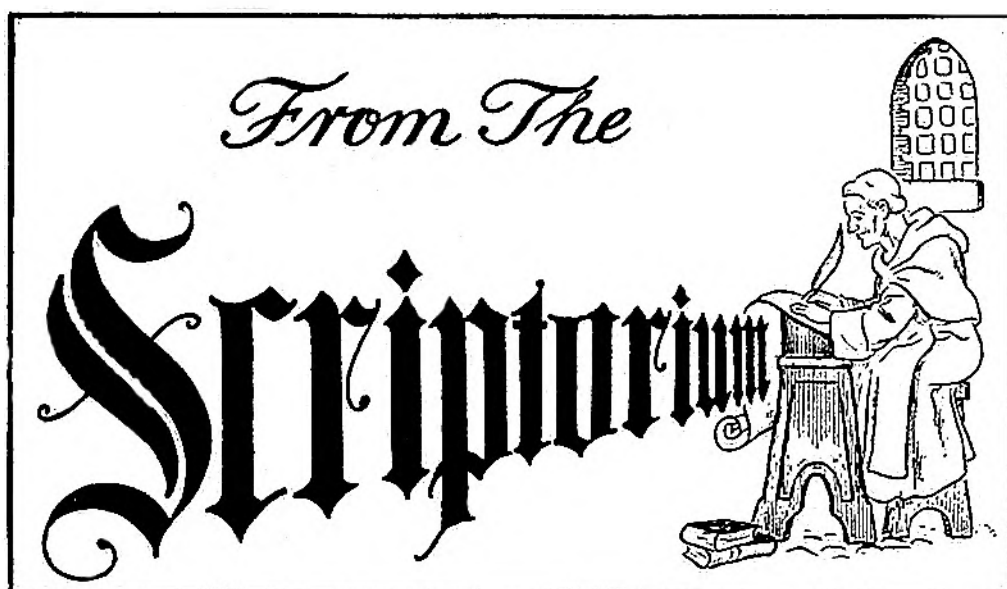
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FORTUNATELY, the ALEMBIC has but one goal and that can be attained by striving for true literary perfection. Critical evaluation of contemporary works and an analytical study of the numerous *critiques* promulgated by time-honored literary critics provide us with the gauge by which we can determine the worth of the offerings of our student writers. Thus, we have our goal and the means whereby to attain it. Therefore, a change at the helm of our literary ship should in no way affect the course we have charted for our voyage on the far-reaching sea of words.

To the Editor who preceded me, I wish to express my sincere appreciation for the invaluable aid and advice he has rendered to me in the past. It is largely to his adept management and to his perspicacity in discerning works of literary merit, that our literary quarterly has been able to ascribe much of the merit it has achieved.

I beg the indulgence of my associates on the staff and request that they manifest in the future the same high degree of co-operation that has marked their efforts so auspiciously in the past. Unity of purpose augmented by staff dependability are the indispensable prerequisites required to publish a college literary periodical of high caliber.

The ALEMBIC is fortunate in having a willing and talented nucleus of contributors. However, it is not to be assumed by the student body that the manuscripts of a select few are printed to the exclusion of any work of merit submitted by an author not previously published. We request manuscripts from the *entire* student body. Let it be understood that the main interest of the Editors of the ALEMBIC is in seeing student contributions in print — not in the rejection of material.

WBH

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Miller's Reputation

By JAMES T. DALEY, JR., '50

THE last of the snow was gone from Bruck. Spring came to the little Austrian village, bringing days of sunshine eager to atone for the winter's fury. And the winter had been especially terrible, even for this region accustomed to severe winters. Bruck's octogenarians (the village boasted three) had put their ancient heads together in solemn conclave, and then, with many *achs* and *Gott im Himmels*, pronounced it the worst winter in their long experience, probably the worst in village history. They may have exaggerated, and exaggeration would have been quite understandable, because the war, the eternal war, had accentuated and multiplied the distress occasioned by winter. It was this combination of wars, against nature and against man, that had beaten down the villager's resistance to both, had soured them, turning the village into a cauldron of misery and making everyone long for spring and for peace. Now spring had come, and it was welcomed by the villagers as a long awaited deliverer. But the new season brought more than relief from winter's rigors. It also brought the first of the conquerors.

The arrival of the invaders was a mechanized flood that swirled down Bruck's one main street and engulfed the village in a tumult of bellowed commands and roaring motors. As if in obedience to the commands, the column of mud-splattered trucks disgorged cargoes of hostile-eyed men wearing the field green of the American army. Gradually the din subsided. The roar of the motors died away, commands

ceased, and in the lull that followed, attention centered on a command car drawing up before a towered building that served as Bruck's town hall. The door of the building opened and the sober-faced man who appeared waited silently for the occupants of the command car to dismount and ascend the steps. The group formed a momentary tableau and passed through the door.

The incident seemed soon dismissed by the soldiers lining the street; here was a story learned by heart in the past few weeks, and inevitably, in each repetition of it there was this meeting between the brass and the leading figure of a newly-occupied town. Its steady recurrence had dulled whatever sense of drama it first excited. Yet, for one of the men, leaning his slim frame against a battered fender, the plot apparently had lost none of its appeal. His abstract gaze remained on the door thru which the brass and the sober-faced man had disappeared, as though by sheer persistence his vision might penetrate the barrier to the group beyond. The slim man was Eddie Keller, and there was little to distinguish him from the surrounding soldiers except his absorbed look, which was habitual with him, and the chevrons that marked him as a corporal. Eddie wondered what was happening behind the closed door. He visualized the colonel talking, issuing orders that only God or a full-fledged general might safely disobey, and saw him firing rapid questions at the sober-faced man, whose counterpart had appeared in each of the dozen towns and villages that lay along the road from Munich. Grave men they had been, concealing their nervousness, but unable to conceal their shock. The corporal's reverie was interrupted by a sharp nudge from a good-looking youth at his right, the possessor of classic features spoiled only by a too-large nose.

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"Hey dreamy," said the youth, "suppose we might stay here for awhile?"

"Maybe, Sam," the corporal replied, "but don't bank on it. They'll come out pretty soon now. Most likely they'll say we got to keep moving, like we been doing for the past month."

Sam sighed. "I guess colonels don't get tired."

Eddie turned from the youth and looked around the street. It was evident that the arrival of the invaders had been expected, for the shutters on the Alpine houses were tightly drawn, and here and there a white bed sheet fluttered conspicuously in the morning breeze, offering adequate testimony of the town's submission. Unobserved by the corporal, one of the officers who had entered the town hall reappeared, to confer with a little cluster of officers gathered before the steps of the hall. The result was a series of orders which passed down the length of the column, and Eddie found himself among a group of men hauling their gear toward one of the little houses. Sammy was at his heels.

"I'll take back all those things I've thought about the Colonel," Eddie told him. Sammy's answer was cut short by the leader of the group, platoon sergeant Hobart, who called for Eddie and the other non-coms to accompany him into the house ahead of the others. There was no indication that the house was inhabited.

Hobart gestured: "Lieutenant Byrnes says if anybody's in this hole we gotta make 'em move into one room. Those are the orders."

Eddie's face took on its absorbed look again. He was glad he wasn't platoon sergeant.

There was no one in the hall, nor in any of the four rooms which opened from it.

"The bed's been slept in, Bill," Eddie told the sergeant.

"Maybe they've all took to the hills," Hobart replied, but halting footsteps on the stairs leading from the second floor collected the men in a curious huddle at the foot of the stairs. They waited silently, and a scrawny, middle-aged woman appeared, looking very frightened. Behind her, and seemingly even more frightened, were two young girls. Courage deserted them half-way down the stairs, and they stood trembling, looking at the soldiers through great eyes that reflected woman's age old dread of the conquerer.

"For cripes sake," Hobart said, and motioned to a huge man wearing buck sergeant's stripes. This was Hauff, platoon interpreter, a slow moving, amiable colossus with the accent of a Minnesota German.

"Give 'em the dope, Hauff," instructed Hobart. "Tell 'em we're moving in and they gotta live in one room from now on." The interpreter edged forward until he stood directly in front of the Austrians. Then he addressed them in a voice peculiarly soft. He asked how many were in the family, and the woman replied in a quavering voice that the two girls were her daughters. A boy of eight and a crippled husband remained upstairs. Hauff relayed the information to the platoon sergeant, who ordered everyone to the second floor. In one of the bedrooms at the rear of the house they found a shrunken, almost misshapen old man, with his arm around a pale-faced boy. The woman hurried to her husband and told him hastily of the conversation on the stairs, and as she talked fright gave way to tears.

"For cripes sake," said Hobart, and stood rubbing his jaw. "Tell 'em we ain't gonna hurt 'em any, Hauff. Tell 'em they can drag some bunks into the kitchen downstairs. They better hurry. Twenty one men wanta move in here."

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He turned on his heel and was followed out of the room by the other non-coms.

Eddie Keller had remained in the rear of the group during the exchange between the soldiers and their unwilling hosts. Now he sighed heavily and went downstairs. In one of the rooms he discarded his pack and rifle, and so accustomed to them had he become that parting with them was as if he were dismantling himself. He heard the family going about its work of moving essentials into the cramped kitchen. The woman was no longer crying, and the Austrians spoke to one another in whispers. Eddie stretched out on a bed and tried not to think. In the street there was still activity. Men called to one another and occasionally a truck was heard grumbling loudly over its labors. There were, in fact, all the sounds that troops make who are settling themselves in barracks, and the white sheets, which had served as Bruck's tokens of submission, were taken down now, to provide the invaders with almost forgotten luxury.

He awoke to a conflict of voices, sharp and discordant, and for a moment his surroundings were completely strange to him. Then came recollection. The female voice—that would belong to the woman of this alien house. A man was talking now, angrily. Corporal Miller, alias "Alabama" Miller. He identified a third voice as that of Hauff. Eddie swung his feet to the floor and walked to the door. The voices were in the room across the hall.

"Tell her to get out, Hauff. The chair stays here and she can whistle up a tree."

The words were Miller's, and Hauff was translating in his slow, rumbling tones. Miller laughed when Eddie walked in.

"The old bag wants this chair, Ed. She's already got

the kitchen loaded with junk. She'll move the whole damn house in there before she's through." The woman abandoned hope of influencing the two men, and turning to Ed, again launched her pleas.

Hauff answered the question in Eddie's eyes, and the big man seemed not to relish the situation.

"Her husband's a cripple, Eddie, and she wants the chair because it's his. She says he always uses it. Rests his leg better."

"To hell with her," Miller growled. "She ain't supposed to take everything she can lay her hands on. Besides," he laughed, "I got a sore leg too, and an achin' back to boot."

You also have a thick head, thought Eddie. But arguing with Miller would avail nothing. The man had a reputation. Almost without hesitation, he said: "Send her away, Hauff. Miller wants the chair," but inwardly he told himself: Sometimes I wish I had Miller's hide. It would come in handy on occasions like this. He turned and left the room. He wanted to get outside and walk until there were no more Millers and no more pleading women, but, he reflected bitterly, wasn't that what he had been trying to do for the past two years? And he had never escaped them. The Millers and the pleading women were everywhere, because the war was everywhere.

Outside, the air was sweet and clean and the ground soft. Sammy was standing at the end of the walk, a jaunty Sammy whistling a merry, nameless tune. Seeing Eddie, he bowed elaborately and said:

"Corporal Melancholy, I presume? You look like a dog that just lost its favorite bone."

"Then come and help me look for it," Eddie replied, and his friend fell in beside him.

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They veered right and started along the road that led under the railroad arch and hid itself in the hills ahead. Dusk was gathering around them now, gaining impetus as it rolled down from the encircling mountains. It softened the corporal's mood as it softened their white crowns, turning them grey or obscuring them altogether. When enough of the bitterness had seeped out of him, Eddie pointed to the mountains and said:

"Have you ever seen edelweiss growing up there, Sammy?"

"No," Sammy replied, "but I've heard of it. It's a kind of flower, isn't it?"

"It's a flower. The name means noble white, and you have to climb way up to find it. I remember a saying that went something like — 'Wherever the edelweiss grows, peace grows too.' "

They trudged in silence again, until Eddie motioned to a log lying beside a swollen stream. The two men seated themselves, and Sammy asked:

"What happened to you back there, Eddie?"

"It's not what happened to me," the corporal replied. "It's what happened to the whole damn world." Somberly he told of the incident in the room. "But it isn't just Miller," he continued, "Miller is only a symbol, and maybe that's why I got sick back there in the room. The Millers are lousing up everything."

With great care Sammy directed some tobacco into a well-worn pipe. Then he said slowly: "You've got it bad, Eddie. Take it easy. I know how it seems. You put out the big fire and a thousand little ones take its place, and then the fire department has to go to work again. But maybe you're being a little hard on Miller. Don't forget, it hasn't

been any picnic for him, either. He's human, though sometimes you can't be sure. He's crude, too, so he fights back the only way he knows how. Right now he occupies his time being mad at krauts, and he's not playing any favorites. He's mad at krauts in general."

"You're not mad at them, Sam? You have a right to be."

Sammy drew thoughtfully on his pipe, and watched the smoke twist and weave and disappear.

"No," he said finally. "I'm not mad at them. I guess I've told you about the Rabbi."

"Your uncle?"

"Yes. He's quite a guy," Sammy said softly. "He hasn't been over here, you know, but I think he feels worse about all of it than you or I do. We talked a long time on my last furlough. Maybe some of the things he said wouldn't make sense to Miller, but they make sense to me. He told me, 'Sam, this war will bring a lot of changes, so many you won't recognize the world when it's all over. It will make some bad men good, and that's all right, but it will also make some good men bad, and that's not all right. Don't let it change you, Sam.' Well, I'm trying not to let it. It isn't so difficult, because I figure that for every guy like Miller there's one like the Rabbi. That's the difference between you and me, pal. You turn it around and figure that for everyone like the Rabbi, there's a Miller."

Eddie grinned. "Let's go back, Sammy," he said. "If I talk to you too long, I might become an optimist."

But the corporal did not forget about the chair. The incident rankled in his heart throughout the next day, and in the evening, when the house was empty of soldiers, he returned to Miller's room. Then he picked up the sprawling

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chair, which seemed more like a bed, and deposited it at the door of the kitchen. The murmur of voices within stopped at his knock, and fully half a minute elapsed before he heard the creak of footsteps moving toward him. The door was opened by the older of the two daughters, and she seemed, through the narrow space, to consist entirely of pale cheeks and wide eyes. They were pretty eyes, the corporal observed, blue and deep, yet harboring in their depths something nameless and disturbing. In their previous meeting he had noticed that the girl's coloring was traditionally nordic, in sharp contrast with her darker sister.

"The chair," Eddie said softly, "I brought the chair." His words meant nothing to her, but his smile was eloquent, and she threw open the door to allow him a full view of the kitchen. The corporal looked into a room too crowded to permit the possibility of order — a grotesque room that mirrored the deformity of its occupant's lives. Uninvited, he carried his gift into the crowded room. The mother thanked him in rapid German, and Eddie was aware that she was close to tears again.

He felt uncomfortable and would have left, but the mother placed a restraining hand on his arm and addressed her younger daughter, who was hardly more than a child. Eddie waited.

"I speak your language," the girl said, in faltering English. "I have learned in the school, before it closed. My mother wants to thank you for the chair." She wavered, then added uncertainty: "She hopes we will be friends." The Austrians were watching him with intent, anxious expressions. Then, suddenly, they began to laugh, and their pride in the girl's accomplishment was a match for the corporal's surprise.

"I think we will be," he said, and turned to leave. As an after-thought, he added wryly, "Tell your mother none of the soldiers must know I brought the chair." After all, Miller had a reputation.

As the days that followed grew into weeks, and weeks into months, it became evident that the corporal's kindness, in returning the chair, had driven a wedge into the family's confidence. The Austrians adopted him, and he them. Some of the cynical expressed their lack of sympathy with this development in words distinguished more for frankness than beauty, but the friendship proved stronger than the criticism. The family filled a gap in Eddie's life; their small room was an oasis in a desert of military routine, well worth the price he paid for it as the object of Miller's coarse criticism.

Gradually he extended the number of his acquaintances among the villagers, and in this accomplishment the older of the two sisters was instrumental. It became his custom to accompany the girl on her daily trip to a near-by farm. Their route brought them through the center of the village, past the lumberyard that contained Bruck's only industry, to the path that zig-zagged up the steep mountain-side and ended at a precise little farm just below the timberland. On these excursions he plied the girl with questions, questions of every conceivable nature, questions concerned with herself and her family, and with the village and its reaction to the *Götterdämmerung*. She had misgivings at first, and was reluctant to answer, but in time her doubts were dispelled and she became an eager informant.

In the beginning the villagers they encountered met them with inscrutable glances, or greetings that did not include the corporal, but as the two became a familiar sight he began to share in the nods and smiles, and finally to call

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to them by name. He would chuckle when the rugged old farmer they visited every day said that the "city life in Bruck was too fast" for him, and laugh when a Munich refugee grumbled that trains didn't stop at Bruck — they only hesitated. In short, he became an accepted member of the community, trusted because he in turn trusted, and because he fit into the village pattern of frankness and simplicity. It was, therefore, a mood closer to contentment than the corporal had experienced in two years of campaigning that was shattered by the news of Sammy's shooting.

The news was carried to him by Sergeant Hauff, a new Sergeant Hauff shocked out of his customary lethargy. The hugh interpreter came pounding into Eddie's quarters, sweat streaming from him.

"Eddie, for God's sake, Eddie." The dismay stamped on his red face sent an alarm racing through the corporal's veins. "It's Sammy," he gasped, "Sammy's been shot. They're bringing him into the orderly room." He caught his breath. "Sammy's dying, Eddie."

The orderly room was an island in a mass of khaki when Eddie arrived. News of the shooting had collected the entire company and the men were standing in restless groups. Eddie received the details of the shooting in piecemeal fashion. "Sammy was doing his guard tour when it happened." "Shot in the head." An Austrian had done it. He heard the word *kraut* passing through the gathering with a sinister inflection.

There was an abrupt shout from the outskirts of the assembly. "Here comes Miller." And Miller was coming, hurriedly, from the direction of the shooting. There was a perceptible change in the temper of the waiting men as they sensed a reason behind Miller's haste. He came nearer and Eddie saw that anger was distorting the man's unhandsome

face. Miller halted on the fringe of the gathering, waited for the murmur to subside, and when the hush was complete, he said slowly:

"I found out who shot Sammy."

He looked directly at Eddie with eyes that were burning and bitter.

"It was the kid of that family Keller is so friendly with."

For the second time within a half hour, Eddie was stunned. He heard himself say: "It can't be. The kid's only eight years old," but he felt the futility of the protest as Miller's anger overflowed in a burst of invective. The man's face was terrible.

"He was seen to do it, Keller. There ain't any doubt. He's down at Battalion Headquarters right now." His words leaped at Eddie. "If Sammy dies, Keller, I'll fix your kraut friends."

The men swarmed around the infuriated Miller. He dominated them, injecting a little of his own anger into some, and driving a spike of fear into the hearts of those who would advise caution. Eddie's own thoughts were confused and he felt an immense need for clear thinking. Miller's attitude was terrifying. The shooting had worked some violence in the man, and reckless and truculent by nature, his reason would prove too slight a vessel to contain such a towering fury. Desperately Eddie probed his memories of the past two years, groping for something that would explain Miller's awful wrath, and then it broke upon him. His thoughts returned to one black day in Holland and a snatch of conversation overheard at the end of it. For the moment the old scene lived again in the corporal's mind, as sharp and powerful as it originally had been. He saw a file of men,

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begrimed and haggard, struggling to keep their footing as they moved along through an icy, deep-rutted ditch, and he heard anew the rolling sound akin to thunder that receded with each weary yard. Miller, worn and limping then, had said something to Sammy—

“That was me you saved back there, kid. I ain’t likely to forget it.”

“Skip it,” Sammy had laughed, “Give me thirty cents next pay-day and we’ll call it square.”

The resurrection of that old scene stripped the mystery from Miller’s actions. The man had remained true to his word, Eddie thought bitterly, and in his own twisted way would he discharge the debt incurred on a remote Holland battlefield. The discovery spurred Eddie into frantic casting-about for a means to avert the impending tragedy. The soldiers had dispersed — they would be waiting in barracks for word of a change in Sammy’s condition. Eddie was aware of an ominous stillness as he returned to his own quarters. Military activities had ceased with the news of Sammy’s injury, and a pall seemed to hang above the part of town where the company was stationed. He felt relieved to find the house deserted when he entered, and proceeded to his room, where he slumped disconsolately on his bed.

Gone now was the tranquillity he had found in Bruck, to be lost irretrievably if Miller went unchecked. That knowledge seared him, driving him to renewed efforts to find a solution, but it was a Gordian knot, repelling and tormenting him, and in a mood of black despair he heard Hauff’s heavy tread coming down the hall. The interpreter came into the room and looked down with compassion upon Eddie’s distraught face.

“Cheer up, Eddie,” he said encouragingly. “I got a letter for you. Mail just came in.”

"Thanks, Hauff," the corporal replied dully. He appreciated Hauff's sympathy, and smiled blankly when the man authored a clumsy attempt to take his mind from the situation.

"I got a letter from home too, Eddie. Good thing about my letters is nobody can read 'em but me. They're written in German. He paused uncomfortably as Eddie's blank look persisted. "Folks can't write English so good." The big man shook his head. "It's tough, Eddie, Sammy's a good boy, too. He wouldn't want Miller to do anything crazy."

"No," the corporal agreed at length. He wouldn't want Miller to do anything crazy."

"You know," Hauff continued, "there are guys with Miller now who aren't exactly broken up because Sammy was shot. The only thing some of them regret is that they didn't pull the trigger themselves. But they'll string along with old lunkhead." He paused, then added: "Some people can't see the light til' the candle burns their nose."

"What can we do, Hauff?" the corporal asked.

"Maybe the kid won't die."

"He'll die," Eddie said quietly.

Hauff held out a huge, toil-hardened fist, stared at it speculatively.

"If worse comes to worse, maybe I can persuade him to attend Sammy's funeral with dignity and quiet sorrow."

Eddie shook his head. "You can't lick Miller," he said. "The man's mad."

"I can put a knot in his tail he'll be a long time un-
tying."

"That's not the answer," Eddie replied.

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"Well then," Hauff sighed, "maybe we can ask the kid to shoot Miller too. That'll solve everything."

The two remained quiet, each occupied with the same thoughts. They were an odd pair. Their association for the past two years had been little more than casual; between them was an affinity of feelings rather than intellect. Hauff made no attempt to conceal the fact that he considered his present occupation to be temporary and involuntary. He had once confided to Eddie that a Minnesota farmer had no business away from a Minnesota farm.

At length the giant rose, retrieved his sheaf of letters from a bureau, and walked to the door. He stood there for a moment, regarding the corporal with troubled eyes. "Well, Eddie," he said, "if we can't outfight him, we'll have to outsmart him, and that's your department. Whatever happens, though, I'll be around."

"Thanks," Eddie answered morosely. His glance dropped to the letters in Hauff's hand, and when the interpreter departed, the corporal's eyebrows were knitted in thought. He remained sitting on the edge of his bed for a few minutes. Then he began to pace the floor, making his trips from wall to wall as unhurried and regular as a pulse beat, or as the pendulum of a clock swinging to and fro, and while he walked his old air of abstraction returned.

For perhaps fifteen minutes he maintained this solitary patrol. It was ended finally by a timid knock on the door, and he opened it to find the younger of the two sisters standing there.

"Come in, Fini," he said kindly.

The girl shook her head, while her eyes flickered apprehensively around the room. "My mother would like to see you," she told him nervously. "Please go to her."

She slipped away and the corporal followed, frowning at the prospect of finding the family stricken with grief and fear, and at the necessity of bringing strength when he was himself in dire need of it, but when he entered the room he found them strangely poised and calm. The mother came to him immediately, murmuring a hasty *Gott sei Dank*.

"How is the wounded man?" she asked in a voice brittle with anxiety.

"I don't know," Eddie answered truthfully. "He is still in the orderly room—I think his condition is poor."

Fini's glance shifted from one face to the other as she acted in her customary role of interpreter.

"He will die," the mother said tonelessly. "He will die, and what will happen to little Franz?"

She turned to the boy, who had taken refuge behind his father's chair, so that just his white face was visible.

"Nothing will happen to him," Eddie said decisively. "It was not his fault. He is guilty of nothing except a great misfortune." Then he asked quietly: "Have the authorities spoken to you?"

Fini's English vocabulary did not contain the word "authorities," and he was forced to rephrase his question.

"Yes," the woman replied. Two officers had approached the boy immediately after the mishap and they had seemed satisfied with his version of it.

"Then you have nothing to worry about," he told her.

His glance went quickly around the room. Because of its assortment of conflicting furnishings the place had always an appearance of disarray, and he had never become accustomed to it. It struck a harsh chord each time he entered.

"Where is Blondy?" he asked, noting the older daughter's absence.

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"At the farm," the mother replied blankly. "We must eat even when men are shot."

The corporal nodded silent assent. Then he addressed a final word of encouragement to her, nodded to the father, who had remained silent throughout the discussion, and took leave of them.

In his own room he again threw himself on his bed, and for the first time since the ill-starred event, abandoned himself to abysmal grief. The company had known him as an aloof, quiet person; only a few had been interested in penetrating the screen of reserve he placed about himself. The injured man was of these few, and a strong bond had resulted that seemed destined to be cleaved by Sammy's untimely death. It was natural that the cleavage should be painful.

Eventually, when the first pangs of his sorrow were spent, the corporal arose, absent-mindedly splashed water on his face, and reviewed the decision he had reached. He became aware of a growing anxiousness to face Miller and have an end to the affair, and this startled and puzzled him, for it was as if he had caught himself wishing for the death of the man in the orderly room. The shooting had taken place in the neighborhood of ten o'clock, and the sunlight, which had grown steadily weaker in the past two hours, now made its final retreat through the window of his room.

The waiting period seemed interminable, and he was relieved when a sudden commotion outside informed him that it was over. The die is cast, he thought, and for some inexplicable reason an image of the farm below the timberland and a blonde haired girl flickered across his mind's eye.

Men were milling about at the far end of the street, and as he approached heated voices carried to him. "Here's

Keller" someone called, and attention was focused on the slim corporal. Half-way down the street stood Hauff, waiting, and as Eddie went by, the interpreter crushed a cigarette and joined him.

"Sammy died," he said simply. Eddie did not reply.

The crowd opened a path for the two and at the end of the path stood Miller. If the man had seemed terrible in their previous meeting, he was demonic now. Anger made a grotesque mask for his face. He was silent until Eddie and Hauff halted before him. Then, in a voice twisted with fury, he said:

"Sam's dead, Keller. He never even came to." Miller was having difficulty breathing. "Now we'll see about that lousy kraut family."

Eddie tried hard to sound calm, but his own voice was strained and his face milk-colored as he asked:

"What are you going to do, Miller?"

"Do? Well, first we'll have a little house-warmin' party," Miller replied hoarsely, "only this particular house will get so damn warm it'll burn right down. How's that for a start?" Then, ominously: "What about you, Keller? Sammy was a pal of yours. You gonna let him die and then sit around drinkin' schnapps and eatin' sauerkraut?"

"Mother of God," Eddie said to himself, and then, aloud and desperately, "Listen, Miller, Sammy wouldn't want you to do it. It was an accident. Sammy was shot by his own gun — he laid it down and the kid was playing with it. I knew Sammy. He—." Miller's voice lashed out, cutting Eddie's words.

"Get out of the way, Keller." He moved toward Eddie, stopped when Hauff stepped forward. There was a scowl on

Miller's Reputation

the massive interpreter's blunt features and a strange ugliness in his voice.

"You better listen to Eddie," he said.

Miller examined this new obstacle through narrowed lids. He was a coiled spring, and Eddie's words tumbled out rapidly as he worked to take advantage of his reprieve.

"I know how you feel," he said, "but just give me a couple of minutes."

He reached into his pocket and with fumbling fingers brought forth a letter. "I want you to listen to this, fellas," he told the circle of grim faces. "It's something a guy wrote to his mother." Turning to his ally, he said: "It's in German, Hauff. Read it, will you? Just the underlined parts." The silence that followed his request was disturbed only by Miller's heavy breathing and the scuffing of feet as the surrounding men moved closer.

Hauff took the letter and began reading the underlined portions of it slowly. The first few lines brought expressions of wonder to the circle of faces. It sounded much like a letter anyone of them might have written, except that it related the writer's joy at having arrived home. None of the soldiers had been home in a long time. Ed watched Miller closely. The man showed signs of impatience.

"It is strange," Hauff was saying, "how we must force ourselves into conformity with circumstances — we can so seldom force the circumstances into conformity with ourselves. Occasionally, though, our task is made simpler. Do you remember the family I mentioned in my last letter? The young fellow, Franz, has taken a shine to me, perhaps because of my chocolate-bar diplomacy. Cousin Franz was about this boy's age when I left him, and I find myself doing for this Franz what I would have done for the other. He has

promised now to take me to a very secret spot in the mountains, where the edelweiss are thick, and in return I shall give him all my chocolate bars."

Hauff's voice trailed off and he returned the letter to Eddie. The silence continued for a moment, broken finally by Miller's fierce voice.

"What's the gag, Keller? So somebody wrote a letter to his mother. A kraut, too," he said contemptuously. There was a restless movement in the circle of figures. Eddie took a deep breath.

"You're right, Miller. Somebody wrote a letter to his mother, and he was a kraut, or at least an Austrian. His name" — he stared into Miller's eyes as he handed him the letter — "his name was Sammy."

The silence continued for a long moment after the announcement, and on the hem of faces there was bewilderment and disbelief. Then it exploded violently into a hot torrent of questions, and throughout the inquisition Miller stood mute and stunned.

Eddie and Hauff edged out of the assembly as it pressed about their opponent, and it seemed to the corporal that they were walking above the crowd and a downward glance would reveal the tops of mountains. They were in front of Hauff's dwelling when the giant cleared his throat, and he passed his hand over a dazed brow before giving voice to his own confoundment.

"What did you do back there, Eddie?" he asked.

The corporal glanced at the interpreter and chuckled.

"Why, didn't you notice?" he said. "I simply persuaded Miller to attend Sammy's funeral with dignity and quiet sorrow."

"I know, but—"

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"What's the matter, Hauff. Surprised?"

"No," Hauff replied, "it's very clear — like a million-piece jig-saw puzzle. But maybe you won't mind fitting the last piece into place. Tell me, Eddie, how did you know which parts of that letter to underline?"

The two men faced each other soberly. "Hauff," the corporal answered, "this seems to be the time for surprises, so here's another for you." He paused. "The first time Sammy set foot in Austria was when he arrived here with us a couple of months ago. But I've been here before, Hauff. I spent the first sixteen years of my life here, and I wrote the letter you read to the crowd." His voice was soft. "I don't think Sammy will mind, do you? After all, Miller has a reputation."

DÉBUT . . .

JAMES DALEY makes his first appearance in the *ALEMBIC* with *Miller's Reputation*, which we consider a sensitive and authentic sidelight to the military occupation of Austria. To fashion his drama Mr. Daley has drawn upon his experiences and observations in post-war Europe and has underscored the work with a sympathy for those European values which he came to admire during his army service on the Continent. A graduate of Saint Raphael Academy and an education major at Providence College, the 24-year-old author is currently at work on his second fictional endeavor. We hope it will appear in these pages next year.

A Passing Thought

By HAROLD E. VAYO, '51

What does it matter?
All this will be the same
When I am gone,
And none shall sing my name.
The ocean tides
As now, will ebb and flow.
Yon soil may droop,
But other sails will blow.
This golden sea
Shall be as gold again.
Those jagged cliffs
Bring joy to other men.
The rose will smile
And cast its sunshine 'round.
Love's old sweet song
From other harps shall sound.
The rising moon
Shall soothe another's pain.
What I have lost
Shall be another's gain.
What does it matter—
This passing life on Earth?
We live to die—and then,
A great Eternal birth.

Meditation

After Reading Dorothy Parker

By WALES B. HENRY, '50

The only cure for the *belle amour*
Is withholding your love and your kiss;
Undoubtedly pure and certainly sure,
But my, all the fun you'll miss.

Beware of the lad whose morals are bad
And shake his hand at the door,
But don't be sad when the selfsame lad
Fails to come back any more.

I don't mean to knock her, this Dorothy Parker,
But doesn't this sound like her verse?
I give her no laurels for her *printed* morals
On love-life from wet nurse to hearse.

For it seems to me that our lives should be
Like a heavenly loan from above:
The original Donor is still the Owner
And may ask an account of our love.

Love is as fair as the mild summer air
And yet we becloud it with smoke,
And daily we scorn it, with sack-cloth adorn it
And make it the butt of a joke.

A thing that is fair and with naught to compare
In this world into which we are tossed:
We will find in the end that it was a true friend,
When the love we take lightly is lost.

A Pastoral Meditation

By CLIFFORD J. BROTT, '50

AMONG my fondest memories are those of spring. How well do I remember treasured walks across the countryside, newly garbed with robes of green. How well do I remember the scented air of spring arising from blooming flowers and fragrant herbs. How well do I recall the first sweet songs of the meadowlark following a season's absence. How clear are my memories of gurgling brooks newly freed from frozen captivity.

How beautiful are the fragile flowers of spring. Where yesterday lingered banks of melting snow appear gentle blossoms amidst luxuriant vegetation. Gone is the barrenness of winter and aroused is the warm and fertile spring.

Occasionally, as one walks across the countryside, can be seen a mound of yellow earth where some rodent has begun his annual activity. Rabbits bound among the flowers reveling in their long awaited freedom. Through the fragrant air comes the tinkle of tiny bells as a shepherd drives his flock to pasture. With the gentle breeze comes the whistle of a plowboy engaged in furrowing the earth.

How sweet to walk in the warm and fertile spring—to walk in meditation across the gentle countryside. For here in the simplicity of nature is found simplicity of man. Gone is false sophistication which but distends man with a pseudo-sense of value. Here are God and man united in perfect understanding. Here is revealed clearly the omnipotence of God and the dependency of man.

One Autumn Afternoon

By HAROLD E. VAYO, '51

BECAUSE Pip and I had often taken long walks together, I was not in the least surprised when he approached me one crisp fall day and asked if I would like to go for a hike with him. The woodlands beckoned with their soft but so compelling persuasiveness and coaxed us to throw off the drab, dusty mantle of the city and replace it with the multi-colored cloak of gay autumn. I accepted at once and we started off across the fields which stretched before us until they disappeared into the cloudless sky.

As we walked along, drinking in the wondrous beauty of excelling nature, I happened to glance at my friend and to my surprise his eyes were downcast and a dark cloud had descended over his entire countenance. Sensing that I had noticed his mood, he, without waiting for me to press him about its cause, exclaimed, "I don't ever want to grow up. When people grow up, they get hard and cynical and forget how to appreciate the loveliness which God has put upon the earth. All that older people think of is how to make money or how to hurt other people or how to do bad things without being caught. I wish I could stay like I am now, forever." His eyes were brimming with tears and his voice broke, shaking with emotion that belied his tender years. To calm him, I put an understanding arm around his shoulder, and we headed for a nearby grove of pines. We had gone there many times before to talk when things were bothering him. I stretched out on the soft, brown carpet of fallen needles

and he followed suit. After several moments had passed in painful silence, we started to discuss his problem and continued until the cloud lifted and his face beamed with a happy, reassured smile.

It is indeed unfortunate that so many people have forgotten the fine art of living. The majority of them are sincere, but genuinely misguided, for they have made the amassing of material wealth the prime purpose and goal of life. The persistent notion that a man cannot be truly happy unless he is surrounded by luxurious finery has become the central driving force in the lives of an alarmingly large proportion of our populace. Many think of happiness, even life itself, only in terms of a large bank account, automobiles, and expensive personal and domestic furnishings. It is small wonder, then, that their hearts become as hard as the gold which they seek, for brotherly love is entirely foreign to this materialistic outlook. Since wealth is the only aim of their existence, any successful means used in acquiring it is permissible and praiseworthy. Morality and ethical behavior are scattered to the winds in this mad scramble. No wonder the heart of a small, sensitive boy is terrified at the thought of growing up!

But what did I tell Pip during our long talk under the tree? I told him the story of a Little Boy just like himself Who lived a long time ago. He had a sweet mother and a gentle, hard-working foster-father who was a carpenter by trade. This Little Boy saw the same hardness and unhappiness about Him, and resolved that someday He would bring to the world a message of hope and would show all men how to be happy. When He grew into manhood He did just this. The message He brought the world was just one word, love.

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Love is the only way to happiness, the only way to true success. It is the art of living. If a person has love in his heart he need have no fear of growing up, for he has already found what the world has been vainly seeking since God made it.

To a Meadowlark

By WILLIAM H. PLUMMER, '51

Heard long ago in some forgotten grove
Sweet singer to a cloudless sky,
I had not heard your song before
You came within my morning eye,
A light the swirling night-mists bore
To guide the day. You sang an air
Heard long ago in some forgotten grove
Where Pan, all melancholy there,
Mourning Syrinx melodiously strove
To warm a heart grown cold for love.
And you upon a laurel bush,
Hidden on green branch above,
Silently in the twilight hush,
With wondering beady eye acocked,
Bent to the fluted five note trill,
Trembling the burning cadence marked,
Its loveliness remembered still.

Embers in the Mist

By GEORGE EAGLE, '50

IT was going to be an occasion, and nobody knew it but Eric. Bill Lee had suggested, "Let's have the girls up to my place tonight—nothing fancy, you know, just a couple of drinks and just ourselves." Hilda and Jean would be there, and the four of them would talk and play records, and no one but Eric would suspect how vast the moment really was. And then, when Bill and Jean were out of the room, he would ask Hilda to marry him.

Now, as he walked up Fifth Avenue in the late afternoon, the idea exhilarated him, and he enjoyed the notion of turning Bill's casual little party into an occasion of such importance to himself and Hilda. He wanted everything to be right. His gray flannel suit was not new, but his best, and it became him; and the argyles Hilda had knitted would go well with wingtips. He did not like French cuffs especially, but everyone said they were dressy, and they would permit him to wear the cufflinks which Hilda had given him for Christmas.

All he needed was a tie. He pictured his neckties hanging on that chrome rack on the closet door, but they all seemed prosaic and conventional. He had plenty of silks and a few neat wools, he had solid hues, polka dots, stripes, and a few fussy little designs he never wore, even to work. There was a fine blue check that was trim, but a trifle stuffy perhaps, and there were several splashy ties which friends had

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sent from Palm Beach and Miami. But he had nothing exactly right. It was going to be an occasion, and he wanted a tie which would somehow sound a subtle note of extravagance. He stopped now before the display of a haberdasher, and he remembered something Hilda had said to him in Boston. They were walking on Tremont Street and something in a shop window must have prompted her to ask an irrelevant question.

"Who selects your ties for you, Eric?"

He turned to her there beside him, cowering against the gusts of March that swept across the Common. "I do. Why?"

"Your taste is good. Dad comes home with perfectly hideous ties, pleased as punch, and we never have the heart to tell him. But you have a much better color sense."

"Huntley says I'm too conservative, he says I dress like a banker."

Hilda clapped a kid hand protectively over her hat. "Huntley?"

"You remember Huntley Gaynor, don't you? You met him one evening at Bill's, we were leaving as he came in."

"I don't seem to.—Look, Eric, I'm awfully cold . . ."

They took a table in a cafe and ordered cocktails. The astringency of the afternoon had given them a high color, and now they smiled in the warmth of the cafe.

"It's good to be inside," said Hilda. "I hate March."

He watched her slip off her gloves and lay them on her bag. Their table was at the window, and the waning dusk lent a softness to the indifferent contours of her face. The wind had disarranged her hair, her lipstick had worn pale, the simplicity of her dress was chaste and undramatic, and Eric was rather sure he loved her.

"I'm glad you came up," he said.

"It's been a lovely week-end. I enjoyed the dance. I can't imagine where the time has gone, it seems as if I just stepped off the plane." She was regarding him with a sort of rumination.

"What are you thinking of?" he asked her.

"I just remembered something. I don't know why I should think of it now, but I did."

He tasted the drink. "This is too sweet.—What was it—something personal?"

"In a way, I guess, but not really," she said ambiguously. "Have you seen little girls dressed up in their mothers' clothes?"

"Of course."

She was turning the stem of her glass meditatively between her thumb and finger. "I suppose this is what they're pretending."

"This?"

"You know—the dance, this week-end, everything."

He lighted their cigarettes. "Did you ever dress in your mother's clothes?"

"I'm afraid I did." She said it faintly, with a strange wistfulness in her face.

"I don't believe it."

She gave a short incredulous laugh. "Why not?"

"I can't imagine your ever being a child."

She said, "That's not a compliment, you know."

"I suppose it isn't . . . You know, Hilda, it's strange, in a sense you're more childlike than a child."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't know. I remember thinking that the night we went to Maude's engagement party."

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Her lips, slightly parted, were inquisitive, her eyes amused. "Why?"

"I don't know." He smiled, leaned forward slightly, and dropped his voice. "You're real, Hilda, there's something here-and-now about you, I love you, and it's time for dinner."

At coffee she asked, "Did you mean what you said before?"

He regarded her a moment evenly. "Will you come up for graduation?"

They took a cab to the airport where the plane shone silver in the night. In the coldness and the roar of the motors they invented pointless, impersonal things to say, and then they kissed, and he watched her walk through the gate toward the plane.

II

Eric stepped into the shop and approached a display of neckties. He saw a rust moire which pleased him, but it would disagree with gray, and he passed it by. He glanced at two or three others and finally selected a rich silk in burgundy. It cost several times what he normally paid for a tie, but this was going to be an occasion.

He did not notice the man entering the shop as he left.

"Eric, are you snubbing me?"

Eric turned about surprised. "Huntley Gaynor . . . It's funny, I was just thinking of you."

"Uncharitably, I'm sure."

"I was looking at ties, and I remembered what you'd said about my being too conservative."

Huntley glanced at the parcel in Eric's hand. "Come on," he demanded, "let's see it."

Eric showed him the tie.

"Good grief, just like a banker. Someday I'll have to speak to you about taste, but right now there's too much to talk about, and anyway it's time for a drink."

They went to a quiet bar off the avenue, and Huntley appraised Eric in that critical, amused way of his. "I haven't seen you since graduation. What are you doing? Working, I suppose."

"Of course."

"How unoriginal."

Their drinks came and Eric regarded Huntley with a smile. "And what about you, Huntley?"

"I've just quit my job with the telephone people. This morning shaving I told myself bluntly that there are a dozen things I'd rather do than go daily into that dismal dungeon and act out that sordid little farce. For one thing, ever since the army I've been wanting to drive out to the coast, and this morning I told myself that you have to act while you're able. That's a principle no one seems to understand but me."

Eric said, "Everyone understands it, Huntley, but not everyone can ditch his job and junket to California."

Huntley sighed. "I hate to be aphoristic, Eric, but nothing is more impractical than prudence. It's something like stashing one's money in a mattress—it's safe, but profitless. This is a terrible Martini and I think we should have another."

He signaled the waiter and Eric lighted their cigarettes. "Life is really clear to you, isn't it, Huntley? I hope you're always as positive as you are now."

"Life is like a Grant Wood oil, you can understand it at a glance."

"Do you really believe that?"

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Huntley smiled. "Of course not. But I've never seen much gain in bewilderment. When it's not pure sham, it's an expensive luxury, and I despise people who make a howling fuss over not understanding life."

Eric was looking at him levelly. "I wonder how much of you is real."

"Only my insurance, and that's lapsed. Let me take you to dinner. You make good conversation and you're worth the investment."

They went to a small German place unknown to Eric, and when they had had another drink they ordered crab-meat cocktails. Huntley said he was hungry and ate voraciously.

Eric said, "When are you leaving for the coast?"

"Early next month, as soon as I can get away." Suddenly he put down his fork and looked squarely at Eric. "Eric, why don't you come with me? You're pale, it would do you good, and you can buy the gas."

Eric smiled. "There's my job."

"Your job is the most depressing thing I've heard of since the army, and you're a fool not to chuck it and come with me."

"There's another reason," said Eric.

Huntley regarded him evenly. "A girl?"

Eric nodded, Huntley stared at him nonplussed, and the waiter served their entree.

"You mean you're engaged?"

"Practically."

Huntley thought a moment. "Have you actually proposed? I mean, has she got you?"

"I'm going to ask her tonight."

"Then it's not too late. Just keep your mouth shut tonight and phone me in the morning."

"Huntley, you're a fool. What if all the happily married people—"

"The happiness of marriage is illusory, and people are driven by the urge to embroil everyone else in the same disaster in which they find themselves. I think we've talked about this enough. Pack your gabardines and I'll pick you up on February tenth."

"The nice thing about you," said Eric, "is that no one has to take you seriously."

"You make me feel like a game of Bingo."

"I wonder if you believe everything you say."

"No, and vice versa," said Huntley; "but one thing I do believe is that marriage is based on a completely false premise. It's the ghastly conclusion of an absurd syllogism."

"If you're not going to finish that roll, I'll take it."

"We act on the half-baked theory that the individual remains the same, we take it on sheer faith that his loves are stable. Nothing could be a more outlandish dodging of the facts. What we tolerated yesterday we condemn today, what we love today we'll hate tomorrow. The indigestible fact is that people are the most fickle of all animals, and it is only by the most laughable folly that they form alliances which can breed nothing but ennui and discontent."

"Are you having dessert?" said Eric.

"I'm only trying to say," said Huntley, "that one's relationships are always fluctuating, always shifting and changing. We try to believe that our loves exist in some pure realm above time and situation, we can't stomach the fact that chance breeds relationships and changes them and sometimes lets them die. Last summer at the beach we built a fire after dark and let it burn to embers, and after a while

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a mist came rolling in and we packed up and went to the car. When we looked back at the beach, we couldn't see a trace of fire, and driving to the city I kept wondering whether the mist had doused the embers or merely hidden them. But of course it didn't matter, because it came to the same thing."

The waiter was there and Eric asked him, "What kind of pie have you?"

"The point I'm trying to make," said Huntley, "is that this inconstancy of people forces us continually to reassess our relationships. We have to go on changing our estimates, it's an endless process, but obviously you can't do it if you're married."

"Apple, cherry, peach, pineapple, and chocolate cream," said the waiter.

"Just coffee for me," said Huntley, "anything sweet gives me indigestion."

Their coffee finished, their cigarettes extinguished, they stepped into the darkness of the street. The chill January night was bracing.

"Well," said Huntley, inhaling expansively, "it's been good seeing you again. Don't be too bilious about your life, it can't be that rancid, and if the shops were open I'd buy you a tie. You have a weak chin, and you've got to watch the chin in buying ties. By the way, have I met this misguided dove of yours?"

"Once, at Bill's."

Huntley squinted reflectively. "Is she the little Philistine that reads Upton Sinclair?"

"No, you're thinking of Bill's girl."

"Well, give her my love, whoever she is, and if you care to, you might drop around tonight. I'm having a few friends in."

III

Eric kicked off his rubbers at the door of Bill Lee's apartment. ~~Bill took his coat.~~ "What kept you?"

"I ran into Huntley Gaynor. Hell, what an idiot!"

"The world," said Bill, "is a pigeon-hole desk, and Huntley's got the key. Where's Hilda?"

"She's coming by herself."

Bill looked at him curiously. "How do you get away with that?"

"She lives across the park, I knew I'd be downtown, and I asked her if she'd mind if I didn't pick her up."

Bill handed him a drink and beckoned him to sit down. "You use your head, I'll say that."

Eric smiled. "You don't mean you're going out to get Jean . . ."

"I've called a cab. She'd blow up if I told her to come alone."

"If I were you, feckless one, I'd go right over to that phone and do exactly that. There's no point in being nineteenth-century about this."

While Bill phoned Jean, Eric affected an inattentive air. He sauntered to the piano and read the titles on the rack, he crossed to the mantle to examine the clock set in a model coach. The fireplace was imitation French of cream and gilt plywood, which Bill's mother had ordered from a department store because no home was complete without a fireplace. Bill's father said it was the damnedest, most useless thing he ever saw, standing there against the wallpaper. Suddenly Eric was aware of Bill putting on his coat.

"Where are you going?"

"To pick up Jean."

"What an inconsiderate little—"

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The doorbell rang and Bill admitted Hilda on his way out.

"Where's Bill going?"

"To get Jean."

"Some people do things right."

"What do you mean?"

"Nothing."

"What's in the bag?" he asked, taking her coat. There was something bulky in the pocket.

"My shoes." She took her boots and loafers off and sat down to slip her feet into black pumps. When he threw the wall switch only one dim lamp remained burning. He drew her up and kissed her soundly.

"Some people do things right," she whispered.

"What do you mean?"

"Everything."

"A drink?"

"Of course."

He mixed them strong, she chid him archly, and they drank in silence. On impulse he went to the piano and sat down. He began tentatively, experimentally, with a simple, explicit melody; but presently, caught in a sudden mood, he sounded the chords of a subtle and haunting theme, vibrant with nuances, and he felt he had never played with such inspiration. He was aware the while of Hilda, on the sofa in the dimness, with her legs drawn up beneath the taffeta folds of her dress. Her hair was almost straight, breaking on her shoulders in a gentle wave, and a mock pearl necklace glistened white at her throat. Her smile was faint and static, and a familiar wistfulness lingered in her eyes.

Presently she rose and crossed the room to him. She leaned her elbows upon the piano, cradling her face in her

hands. Her arms were very pale, her nails long and crimson, and he caught the insinuating fragrance of her perfume. He was amused to find himself the prey of such primitive sensations; the situation was outrageously banal, the sort of scene he disdained in films, but he was strangely intoxicated.

"Hilda," he said, and he was playing very softly. She arched her brows faintly, without speaking. "I just remembered the day we drove up the Hudson and lunched in Peekskill and you were saying something about Flaubert, and that was the first time I really noticed your eyebrows."

She smiled with amusement. "What about them?"

"They're all yours, they wouldn't look right on anyone else." He was playing a languid melody, there was something voluptuous in it. "Do you know the words?"

"Isn't it something about lamenting December?"

"I thought it went, 'You're the only girl who ever made me wish that love were true.' Hilda, do you remember that day at the beach when your halter came untied in the surf?"

"And the night we went to Lewisohn to hear Gershwin. I don't know why I thought of that, nothing happened really."

"Hilda, they'll be back soon . . ."

"I know."

She came over and stood behind him, and then he felt her lips very lightly on his cheek. He flatted a chord.

"Hilda, that time in Boston—"

"That reminds me, I have something for you." She went into the bedroom where he had put her coat, and when she returned she gave him an object swathed in tissue. It was a small doll, with a cherubic face, white muslin dress, and kid shoes which had turned a faint yellow. He looked at

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her inquisitively, and she was smiling, with a sort of whimsy in her eyes.

"I only wanted to prove I was a child once. You said in Boston you didn't believe it."

"I'd give you my six-shooter, or my very best kite, only I left them home." He wanted very much to kiss her, but the doll in his hand inhibited him, and he looked for a place to put it. He went to the mantle and stood the doll by the clock, propping it against the wall. Hilda had followed him, and when he turned around, she was standing very close to him.

"What did you call her?" he asked.

"I forget. Something horrible, I suppose. I probably took a name from a Shirley Temple movie."

Eric regarded her a moment in silence, feeling strangely grave, but adventurous. "Hilda, before they come back—Hilda, I've been wanting to ask—"

The door flew open, and Bill and Jean bounded in, the winter still in their faces, their eyes glistening with January.

"What a night! Paper says it's going down to twenty."

"Hello, kids," said Jean nasally. "Eric, I saw you in the subway the other day, but you didn't hear me when I called to you."

"Did you, Jean? I thought you always traveled by cab."

Jean looked curiously at Bill, who asked if everyone would have a drink.

"I'll help you with the ice," said Eric.

"Put some records on while we're gone, will you, Jean?" Bill closed the kitchen door behind him. "You shouldn't have made that crack about the cab, Eric; Jean is sensitive."

"Too bad for her, I'm not feeling very charitable tonight."

"Just don't be prissy, that's all I ask. You have a way of being prissy at the damnedest times. Hold that tray under the spigot a second. I wonder if there's anything left in the decanter on the buffet."

"Not much. Hilda and I had a drink while you were gone."

When they returned to the girls, Jean was saying something about compacts at Bonwit Teller.

"Bill," said Jean, "you've put ginger in mine, you know I hate it sweet—I wonder if you'd just squeeze a drop of lemon into this."

Bill took her glass and returned to the kitchen. Eric and Hilda rose to dance. Jean sank back into the chair with a patronizing smile.

"You're doing swell, kids," she said, "but, Eric, you're a bit stiff. What you've got to do is relax. Dancing is supposed to be fun, not work.—Thanks, Bill, now next time use soda, won't you, dear?"

"Eric," said Bill, "did you say you met Huntley Gaynor today?"

The record stopped, and Eric and Hilda sat down. "I had dinner with him."

"You poor boy!" Jean exclaimed. "I can't imagine having dinner with a creep like Huntley Gaynor. Sylvia's been out with him, Hilda—remind me later to tell you what she said."

Hilda turned to Eric beside her on the sofa. "You told me in Boston I've met him, but I can't remember—"

"Don't you remember? He came here one night, when we were leaving."

Embers in the Mist

"Count your blessings, Hilda," said Jean, "you got out just in time. I don't think any of us said ten words after he came, I nearly went out of my mind with his talking. Some people don't seem to sense when they're annoying other people. Put some ice in this, will you, Bill?"

Eric felt a strange resentment. He wondered, with some astonishment, why he was allying himself with Huntley Gaynor. He stirred his drink self-consciously. The condensation on the glass had moistened his fingers and he dried them on a cocktail napkin. Hilda took a plate of salted things from the coffee table and proffered it, but he declined with a vague smile. He glanced at Jean, at her carefully trimmed brows, her bright, alert eyes, her full lips. Her sandy hair was drawn straight from the forehead and gathered at the neck in a silver clasp. Jean noticed his stare, and when he averted it to the doll on the mantle, he felt a fresh gladness that Hilda was beside him.

Bill came in from the kitchen with a tray of drinks. "By the way, Eric, what's Huntley up to? I haven't seen him since the night he was here."

Eric smiled. "He just quit his job, he's driving out to the coast next month."

"To work?"

"No, just pleasure," said Eric.

Jean's hand made a quick impatient gesture. "Now that's just the sort of erratic thing Huntley would do. Wouldn't you think he'd stay home and help put his brother through school?"

"You have to act while you're able," said Eric. "I didn't know he had a brother."

"Sylvia told me. Reach over and change the record, will you, Eric? I can't abide Cugat."

"I'll do it," said Hilda, and with her gentle movement Eric caught again the scent which had stirred him earlier. He wished that he and Hilda were alone, but Jean was still going on in her nasal whine:

"It doesn't take you long to size up a phony like Huntley Gaynor . . . Where'd you put the cigarettes, Bill? . . . The night he was here I said to myself, I know *that* type. It's not as though his people had all the cash in the world, it's not as though they couldn't use his help. It looks to me like an extremely selfish thing—" Bill leaned toward her with a match cupped in his palm, and she drew on her cigarette. "Thanks, dear. It looks to me like pure selfishness—"

Eric himself had called Huntley an idiot, but now he felt his resentment of Jean deepen. "You know, Jean, Huntley's not too stuck on you either. He thinks you're Philistine."

"See, that's another thing—he's anti-Semitic."

"Bill," said Eric tensely, "get me a drink, will you?"

"Never mind, Bill," said Hilda, "I'll do it. Come on, Eric, you can help me in the kitchen."

She closed the door behind them. "You've had it in for Jean all evening, haven't you?"

"I have a nice Anglo-Saxon opinion of girls like Jean. She's busy criticizing everyone else, but she can't see how selfish she is herself. For instance, making Bill go out for her tonight—"

"A girl has a right to certain things, Eric."

"So you're defending Jean."

"I'm not defending Jean," said Hilda, "but if she didn't want to come by herself—"

"You were decent enough about it."

Without speaking, Hilda dropped two cubes of ice into a glass. Her face was grave. "Why can't you be civil at

Embers in the Mist

least? You've got a face on a mile long and anyone can see you're in a rage."

"In a rage?" he wailed. "Why the hell do girls have to exaggerate everything?"

"Ask them if they're ready for a drink."

Eric went into the living room. Bill was standing at the piano and Jean was in a deep chair with her fingers dovetailed. She said, "Eric thinks I'm horrid, don't you, Eric?"

"Not horrid," said Eric blandly, "I just think you're a stupid little—" He heard Hilda coming from the kitchen.

"Why don't you finish it?" Jean snapped.

"Because I'm sure I don't have to."

Jean was livid, her eyes wide. With angry suddenness she stood up, brushed past Eric with a muttered obscenity, and flounced into the kitchen.

Bill looked at Eric with a pale smile and said with abortive levity, "Why don't you fight with your own girl?"

The kitchen door opened the merest crack. "Bill, will you come here a minute?"

Eric and Hilda were alone. He went to the piano and without seating himself struck a few empty notes.

"After all!" said Hilda.

He turned to her sharply. "After all *what?*"

"I don't like Jean much better than you do, but you were downright uncouth."

Looking straight at Hilda he felt a flush of hotness. "Now look, Hilda, don't come teaching manners to me, don't tell *me* how to act. I won't take Emily Post from any girl!"

"Eric, stop shouting . . ."

"Stop shouting, start smiling, act sweet! Just try it,

Hilda, just try telling me what to say and what to do and how to act!"

Jean strode into the living room with Bill behind her carrying her coat. The expressionless set of her face, the quickness of her movements as she plunged her arms into the coat sleeves, her assiduous muteness—everything reflected a determined disregard of Eric. She turned to Hilda with a pained smile.

"We'll have lunch someday, Hilda; I'll phone you."

She swept into the entry and they could hear her pulling her boots on. "Bill!" she summoned.

Bill was buttoning his coat and speaking to Eric in soft explication. "Jean wants me to take her home. Wait awhile, will you, Eric? Stick around, I'll be right back." He left and they heard the door close.

Hilda switched off the music and the silence was sudden and heavy. Eric seated himself on the piano bench, straddling it, his hands hanging limp between his legs.

"Hilda—I'm sorry, I think."

Her lips were tight. She took off her pumps and slipped her feet into the loafers and then the boots.

Eric struck a few notes. "You have a face on a mile long, and anyone can see you're in a rage."

In her boots Hilda scuffed into the bedroom and returned with her coat on, a white kerchief covering her hair. She was pulling on her tight kid gloves. Eric remembered having seen them on a table once, in Boston.

"I'll take you home, or we can go somewhere for a drink, whatever you like."

She took her bag from the console. He stood up, feeling warm, and when he loosened his tie a bit, the feel of silk reminded him of too many things.

Embers in the Mist

"I never knew Bill was such a weak sister," he said.

Hilda disappeared into the entry and the door slammed. The imitation fireplace vibrated with the impact, and the doll on the mantle toppled on its face.

He went to the kitchen for a drink, but the ice had melted in the tray. When he returned to the living room he seemed to see everything at once—the ashtrays filled with red-stained cigarette tips, the half-filled glasses, the Cugat record on the coffee table, the decanter with the stopper still out.

He lighted a cigarette and sat down. He was thinking of Huntley Gaynor. Huntley had said that you had to keep changing your estimates, you had to go on reassessing your relationships. Huntley had said that each moment, each thought, each gesture changed people, so you had to keep adjusting your appraisals. Huntley had said that people were inconstant, and for all his glibness and vanity, he was probably right.

Eric went to the telephone and rang Huntley's number.

"Hello?" It was a girl's voice, rather vague and giddy. Eric could hear music and voices and laughter, and a great deal of noise.

"Is Huntley there?" he asked, and wondered briefly if he had the wrong number.

"Huntley," cried the girl stridently, "there's someone on the phone wants to know if you're here."

Eric protested, "Look, if it's not convenient—"

The girl laughed. "Not for me it ain't." He heard the receiver laid clumsily on a hard surface and then lifted again.

"Hello, hello?" It was Huntley's voice now, but unfamiliar and brusque.

"Are you all right, Huntley?" said Eric foolishly.

"If you could see me, chum, you'd know how all right I am," said Huntley, and someone giggled.

Suddenly Eric felt tired, alone in the apartment, talking to Huntley on the phone but somehow unable to reach him. "Huntley, I've been thinking of what you said—about the trip, I mean. I'd like to go with you. You're right about the job, I can get another, and the trip would do me good."

He waited for Huntley to say something. "You see, Eric, all that's terribly up in the air just now."

"Maybe if I call you in the morning—"

Huntley must have covered the mouthpiece because for a moment the voices, the laughter, and the music were gone. "Hello, Eric? I'm rather mixed-up about the trip, you see, and . . . Will someone turn off that damned radio! . . . and—hello, Eric?"

"I'm still here, Huntley."

"Now tell me, I'll be seeing you around, won't I?"

"Sure, Huntley, almost anywhere."

"Good; and we'll have to get together again sometime, it was fun. And you'll give my love to what's her name now, won't you?"

"Of course—I'll give your love to everyone. So long, Huntley."

Eric put the receiver down and squashed his cigarette. He went to the piano and struck a few notes without feeling; and then he heard Bill at the door.

Thirty Pieces of Silver

By WILLIAM HONNEN, '49

Why such remorse o'er blood so cheaply bought?
The Ancients know the man,
Let them now judge His worth.
Have you no pride? Is not that noble spirit
Throbbing 'neath such ragged tatters
Worthy of more genteel garb?

Why do you sit so numb and cowed,
Staring vacantly at the lascivious shadows
As they caper 'cross the wall in eerie bacchanal,
To the tune of the flickering taper?
Why struggle with me, your conscience, now?
The deed is done and needs but the fulfilling.

Bide well the hour when He shall enter the garden
At eventide, when darkness succors secret acts of men.
There you shall find Him. A gesture. . . .
One simple sign is all the effort to be spent
For such a wealth of shekels.

His blood be upon you? Nay! But if it be,
Then richer the earth wherein they lay Him.
It is a debt well paid to one who offered
Hollow words for willing bondage through the years.
He bade you call Him, Master; yet scarce indeed
The crumbs which fell from mouth

Full rich in mouthing pious platitudes;
Too poor to nourish shrunken girth.

Regard the silver hoard before you
Which your fingers till so diligently
As if to make more fertile.
What pleasant dreams the cool and flowing
Sterling weaves of plenty; a paradise
Where time erases harsh memories
With the merciful balm of forgetfulness.

How cruel the suspense which binds you
To this spot! Why suffer so? Arouse yourself!
The night is yet half spent.
Seek out the Master ere the dawn
And ease the gnawing guilt which sways
Your passions.

They spoke of breaking bread within the city gates.
Make haste! For shame if now you play
A weaker role.
To the Cenacle! Revenge is sweet!

Any girl that would do what Frieda did has no business circulating nasty little lies about Rupert Lake. We're not sure ourselves, mind you, exactly where to lay the blame for the Frisco mischief, but we do know that Frieda's word, like Danielle's, is worthless. After all, Rupert may not be very bright, but his innocence is practically fetal, and we're keeping an open mind until Raymond Scungio reports the full facts, next issue, in *Frenzy in Frisco*.

Winter Scene

By HAROLD E. VAYO, '51

IT is with poorly disguised boredom that I listen to my companion extol the merits of the "good old summertime". His glowing narrative skips merrily from beach to woodland to mountain and back to beach again as my eyes, and with them my mind, wander out of the train window and up into the heavy, snow-laden pall which casts everything into a midday dusk. An echelon of high-flying ducks, winging southward with arrow swiftness, momentarily breaks the leaden monotony of the sky. Below, a frightened rabbit bounds across a small clearing into the once-concealing skirts of a clump of skeletal underbrush. A stately pine, solitary sentinel over all the surrounding countryside, crowns a distant peak. It stands out in stark relief against the grim grey-ness of the sky, and every few moments, compelled by the persuasive north wind, it bows profoundly in anticipation of the arrival of regal winter.

A small, white, hexagonal crystal flutters against the window, hesitates momentarily, and vanishes, leaving only a single glistening tear of regret for its hasty departure. Snow has begun to place its finger on the land. Feathery petals are drifting down everywhere. Slowly, unhurriedly, with the infinite patience of master craftsmen, they work a miraculous transformation upon the landscape. Naked trees and bushes, shivering in the ice-tipped breath of the season, are draped from head to toe in noble ermine. Vast fields are covered over with warm, protective blankets of fluffy down. Ragged

mountain peaks, which have withstood the savage onslaughts of jealous Nature for countless centuries, become majestic spires of purest carrara. "Earth has not anything to show more fair."

Night steals quietly in, padding along on the soft, white carpet. Some distance away, a row of houses is tinted with the faint pink haze of a dying sun. A man is burning some trash in an incinerator near the largest of them, and a thousand amber sparks bolt heavenward—home. The moon casts a soft, pale glow over the entire scene and reveals a sight hitherto concealed from mortal gaze: glittering miniature diamonds scattered broadcast on the silvery surface of the snow.

As our train rumbles on, I steal a glance at my companion. Evidently his arguments on behalf of summer sounded no more convincing to him than they did to me, for he has drifted into the gentle arms of Morpheus. With a feeling of profound contentment, I settle into my chair and once more turn my gaze out upon this fairyland, this fantasy in white.

DEBUT . . .

HAROLD VAYO'S belated sally into the ALEMBIC is marked with a miscellany of verse and essays which, we believe, will appeal to all that is romantic and optimistic in man's nature. Following a high school career which we lesser souls can only regard as sensational, Mr. Vayo came to Providence College to pursue the arts. We hope his studies will allow him an occasional moment to exercise his special talent.

The Critic

By WILLIAM H. PLUMMER, '51

HE fixed his *pince-nez* on his nose, stared at himself in the mirror and said:

"I am a critic."

He tied his tie, stared at himself in the mirror, and said:

"I am an intellectual."

While walking to his office he thought, "That was an excellent concert last night. The musicians knew what they were doing. Haydn was refreshing after some of the stuff I've heard. But no—I mustn't allow myself to think such things—I am a critic. I must not enjoy Haydn—I am an intellectual."

That day he wrote in his column:

The Philharmonic presented its regular Monday evening concert last night to an appreciative audience. While the craftsmanship of the orchestra was, as usual, very fine, we could not but wonder at the poor choice of program which presented, among other things, Haydn's "Clock" symphony. One speaks only for himself but I found the insipid sweetness of the piece unbearable. Why cannot a seemingly well-trained group present Czernero-vitch or Dulube instead of these dog-eared classicists. It is torment for a man of trained mind to have to sit unthinking, listening to melody.

C. V. R.

He looked at this, wiped his glasses, and said,

"I am a critic."

He straightened his tie and said,

"I am an intellectual."

He ate his lunch in the cafe around the corner although he detested the food served there. It had what he considered a Bohemian atmosphere. When the coffee was exceptionally bad he would sigh and tell himself,

"I am an intellectual."

During dinner he always studied a small dictionary he carried with him. Any unusual word delighted him, especially if it was difficult to pronounce. He would copy it into his little black book, to be used when an opportunity presented itself. He would think, "This will stump them. They'll have to look it up or they won't understand me."

"I am a critic."

"They probably won't understand me anyway because, I am an intellectual."

He went back to work. That afternoon he sat in his glass-sided office, revised his column, twiddled his pencil, looked very dignified and thought, "I *must* look dignified. I never know when someone may look this way and say,

"That distinguished looking man in that office is our critic. He is an intellectual."

Before going home he stopped in the cafe for a beer, which nauseated him, and then walked home saying to himself, "I owe it to the world. I must never forget that, I am a critic."

"I must never forget that, I am an intellectual."

There was someone waiting in his room when he arrived home; someone with a wild look in his eyes and a gun in his hand.

"Why, what's this?" said the critic in his most dignified tones. "Who are you, my man?"

The Critic

"I am one of those hunted beings you bait and torture in that blunt-edged column of yours, every day in the year; one of those who strive for beauty while you strive for effect, who create while you destroy. I fought you. I tried not to give in. But those criticisms, those destructive, malicious critiques, so witty, so intellectual! You destroyed every dream I had and in doing that you have destroyed me. You have destroyed me and I will destroy you."

"O come, come," said the critic, in his best man-of-the-world manner. "I don't always believe what I write. But I have a position to uphold. *I am a critic. I*" —and he cleared his throat— "am an intellectual."

With a bitter laugh the other pulled the trigger. There was a roar, then silence.

"*I am a critic,*" gasped the critic, sinking to the floor.

"*I am an artist,*" said the artist, wiping the gun.

DEBUT . . .

WILLIAM PLUMMER, in this issue looks up from his *Cowl* work long enough to throw a malicious glance at that hapless brute, *The Critic*, joining veteran George Cochran in what looks to us suspiciously like a conspiracy. Plummer is a graduate of La Salle Academy and a veteran of the Army Air Corps and knows as well as anyone else that the critic will not be silenced. We hope the same is true of Mr. Plummer.

Unrequited Love

By WALES B. HENRY, '50

Here I sit, as ever dreaming,
Always dreaming, ever dreaming;
 Through my mind the thoughts are streaming;
 Endless waves on an endless shore.
Like the wave, my heart is breaking
With an awful, aching breaking,
 Like the soul, the tomb forsaking,
 Seeking for the love we swore.

Through the sadness o'er me creeping,
Slowly creeping, ever creeping,
 Hear the sound of my soul weeping,
 Weeping for the love we bore.
Can you not hear my heart calling,
Wildly calling, ever calling,
 When the eventide is falling,
 Gentle maiden I adore?

Must it be your love is ending,
Slowly ending, ever ending?
 Can that explain the painful rending
 That strikes me to my inner core?
Must I see a new day lifting,
Another heartened by that lifting,
 While I alone am set a'drifting,
 Drifting to a lonely shore?

Unrequited Love

If so it be then speed thy parting,
Take thy love and haste in parting,
Nor ever heed the painful starting
 Within the heart you rudely tore;
But if thy soul be yet forgiving,
Merciful and yet forgiving,
Then I will find a cause for living
 As I must love thee evermore.

account
Idée Fixe

By WALES B. HENRY, '50

Oft in fancy I will go
To the worlds above and the worlds below
And where I go I always find
That the poet's world is in his mind.

Carried along on fancy's wings,
The poet thinks of many things.

And the poet's dream is a joy supreme,
For the fairest maiden is his theme.
But where e'er I go I always find
That the poet's girl is *in his mind*.

Morning Classes

By GEORGE EAGLE, '50

9:00

Statements contradictory
Can't be true at once, you see.

10:00

The world is bathed in tragedy,
In hunger, fear, and sin.
But prayer and love and energy
Can let the starlight in.
A youth of brave and noble bent
Can be a hero heaven-sent
To hold the threatened storm at bay
And introduce a fairer day.

11:00

Take it easy, don't get tense:
The world, young man, is too immense
For you or me or anyone
To change the course it has to run.
Why the over-anxious frown?
Keep your shirt on, lad—calm down!

Lunch

Though time has sorely circumscribed my ken,
The wise have promised grander visions when
These days of mystery
Into eternity
Shall lapse.
Perhaps . . .
But tears shed now will not be un-shed then.

I Wonder

By HAROLD E. VAYO, '51

I wonder, when the day is done,
And Night unfolds her wings,
If Day is sad and if she weeps
The dew, that Twilight brings.

I wonder if the lilies sigh,
And if the roses grieve
Because the day that brought them joy,
Must pass away at eve.

I wonder if the birdlings miss
The sunshine through the trees,
And if they wait with trembling hearts,
The gentle morning breeze.

I wonder if the savage waves
That lash the rugged coast,
Bewail the coming of the night,
Because they love day most.

I wonder why an aching heart
Aches most when shadows fall,
And why the cares that hurt by day
By night, become as gall.

I wonder why the things we dread
Ride on the wings of Night.
I wonder why men turn to God
When Day fades from their sight.



WITH this issue, the editors of the *ALEMBIC* are attempting to revive the Exchange Column which has played an important part in the issues of previous years.

Henceforth, it will be our intention to try to effect a more friendly relation with the editors and writers of those college literary publications with whom we have reciprocated in the past, and who, we hope, look with a not too disdainful eye on our works.

It shall be our intention, while preparing this column, to keep in mind a truly objective point of view. Whereas the bulk of the material of the *ALEMBIC* proper is concerned with those things that relate directly or indirectly to conditions affecting our own sphere of relations, the Exchange department will essay the preparation of copy with the expressed intent of instructing and influencing those outside our sphere.

Among the publications that we have received in the past, whose issues we expectingly await each month, and which we hope to continue to receive as long as they and the *ALEMBIC* shall last are:

Pavan, St. Peter's College, Jersey City, New Jersey.

The Purple, College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, Mass.

Exchange

Spelling
BRUNONIA

Fleur de Lis, Saint Louis University, St. Louis, Mo.

Labarum, Clark College, Dubuque, Iowa.

Cadence, Loyola University, Chicago, Ill.

Brunonian, Brown University, Providence, R. I.

Aquila, Niagara University, Niagara University, N. Y.

The Stylus, Boston College, Boston, Mass.

Duquesne University Magazine, Duquesne University, Pittsburg, Penna.

The Saint Bonaventure Laurel, Saint Bonaventure College, Saint Bonaventure, N. Y.

The Loretine, Webster College, Webster Groves, Mo.

The Albertinum, Albertus Magnus College, New Haven, Conn.

In addition to the colleges publishing the above named periodicals, our issues are regularly sent to other publications and individuals in various parts of the East and Middle West. It is hoped that they, too, look favorably upon our efforts.

It shall also be our intention to mention those articles that have particularly impressed us, in order that they may not be overlooked by others who may have neglected works that we might deem praiseworthy. All too often, especially meritorious works do not receive the attention to which they are entitled, and we believe that favorable comment from outside sources can be of great influence on neophyte authors such as most of us are. Therefore, we propose, not only to point out worthy efforts, but, if those publications with whom we have relations assent, constructive and well-meant criticism of these works. We hope that others will reciprocate in this matter.

The editors of the *ALEMBIC* hope that such a program will tend toward better relations between collegiate publications, by effecting a mutual influence, and by insuring im-

partial and strictly objective criticism of praiseworthy compositions.

Not willing to offend anyone, we will refrain from particulars until we shall have received permission from all those concerned.

J. J. L.

Education

By GEORGE EAGLE, '50

You saw a diamond in the frost,
A ruby in the rose;
You heard the music in a verse,
The tune a zephyr blows.
You strolled along the summer shore,
The spray against your face,
And saw the tides upon the beach
A changing pattern trace.
You heard the rustle of a leaf,
You glimpsed its autumn blush;
At eventide you watched in thrall
The winging of a thrush.

To plumb the secret depths of these
Enchanted things you yearned,
And thus you opened wide the tome
And labored till you learned.
You learned—oh, yes, you learned; but then
A price you had to pay:
To know what once you understood
You threw your heart away.

Kaleidoscope

Being a variegated changing pattern, scene or season

By CHARLES F. WOOLEY, '50

Prologue—

“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven . . . a time to weep, a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to love, and a time to hate: a time of war, and a time of peace.”

A TIME TO LAUGH

THE night had a circus aroma about it, and the quickening steps of those in the vicinity seemed to bear out the assumption. Strings of chestnuts hung neatly from the old vendor's cart, and alongside hung equally trim strings of multi-colored nuts, row on row. Underneath these inviting strings were bins of small cakes that were a cross between a cookie and a doughnut — all covered with icings that were pleasing to the eye, as well as the taste.

Passing the cart, the music that hung in the brisk, slightly chilly, evening air, was revealed as coming from a platform draped with red, white and blue banners of every type. The gaudiness of the platform was probably for the purpose of covering up either the cheapness or lack of preparation that went into its creation; no matter, its bright colors and equally vivid lights did just that.

Below the rippling flags, and slightly above the heads of the crowd, the band went solemnly about its business of filling the blankness of the evening with melody. And fill they

did, for they were undoubtedly members of the old guard of musicians whose Sunday afternoons had long been connected with concerts in the park and parades on various Main Streets. Their music had a liquid quality, and as it flowed its vapor seemed to encompass all who heard; that is to say, all who heard and were of the age of reason and beyond. For the kids carried on as usual; darting in and out of small groups and clusters of grown-ups like bees in a honeysuckle bush.

Armed with peashooters, and with many carrying gas-filled balloons (the vendor did a marvelous business—*Mamal Please!*) they carried on their roughhouse in the style to which they were accustomed.

The platform served also for the presentation of the inevitable speaker, who in turn relied upon broken English and fluent Italian for the conveyance of his message. The message was one of good will towards "all peoples", and had as its constant reminder that the day was the feast of Santa Lucia. Eventually the limelight was returned to the band who carried on in their undaunted manner; and everywhere there was laughter.

A TIME TO MOURN

The leaden sky seemed suspended by unseen wires, and the appearance lent by its low-slung clouds did little to improve the sombreness of the late Fall afternoon. Winter's approach—why here it was the seventeenth day of November already—lent a chill edge to the damp air; and all the while the menacing clouds scowled lower and lower, threatening at any moment to belch forth ton upon ton of drenching rain.

The small, slightly stooped figure at the water's edge added a pathetic afterthought to the scene, and the staring

Kaleidoscope

eyes seemed to look right through the huge object on which their attention was fixed. A slight tremor seemed to pass over his entire body, as though trying to rid himself of the depressing burden upon the bent shoulders, and the momentary shudder deposited all the sadness that he felt in his body into the beady, yet thoughtful, eyes.

The huge object, which lay in the small pond formed by the week's intermittent rain, was the scene of great activity. Even from here he could recognize many of his former friends—former—that was odd, why think of them as former? Nevertheless, there was that feeling that he would never see them again, nor they he, as if they were going away, never to return. The Big Thing, they had never really named it, just seemed to sit there, squat, ugly, monstrous and formidable. Some said that it was over 300 cubits in length, but he hadn't the slightest idea what a cubit was, only that it was bigger than anything he had ever seen. Why, the biggest elephant in the forest seemed puny alongside; and how ugly it was, covered with that black goeey substance, which, when warm, stuck to your fingers.

Yes, he had scoffed, many long years ago when he had first heard of the idea. But the years had changed him—and anyone can make a mistake once. They said that the lower story (there were three, he knew) held only fresh water, and that the other two were crisscrossed with many rooms; some empty, some filled with many strange things.

The sky seemed anxious to fulfill its promise of rain, and a lonely drop splashed on his nose for company, followed soon by several more lonely drops, seeking a place where they might lie and rest, after their long trip. The small fists clenched and unclenched at his sides; night was beginning to

follow the now steady rain in descent; yet he seemed not to notice, for misery and sadness know no time.

It was odd, too, that his friends had subjected themselves so easily to this "Captain" as they called him; for usually that type had no place in their society. Yet it had happened, they (well, some of them) had accepted this "Captain," and when *he* had realized how just and kind this man was, and had asked to be allowed on board, he was refused; "All filled," was the reply.

And so now he stood, tiny rivulets forming, and streaming their way thru his short, bristly hair, down the lined and weary face, and those pathetic, helpless eyes! How silently they cried out; how openly they pleaded forgiveness; how mournfully they accepted their fate. The rain poured as it had never poured, torrents beat against the already drenched earth; puddles reached out forming pools, and he could feel the chill of the water against his hairy ankles. The rain made vision difficult, but it was the tears that really obscured the Big Thing from his eyes, and as the water rose higher and higher, and the Big Thing slowly tried out its sea legs, he raised his hairy arm and with a feeble wave summed up all his sorrow, resignation and understanding with one last farewell.

* * *

Many years ago, there was a flood, prodigious in size, terrifying in destruction. An Ark was responsible for the few that survived; and future progeny depended upon the "two of every kind" of all the beasts. There was also, a *third monkey* that tried to get on the Ark — "Captain" Noe was bound by orders to refuse entry — and as the water rose higher and higher, and Ark began its role of destiny, then only came the realization there was "a time to mourn."

A TIME FOR LOVE

The mist that blocks your vision momentarily isn't caused by the slanting flakes of snow; neither is the unrestrained jovialty of the jostling crowds caused by an abundance of bargains; nor is the air of static expectancy a result of any unfounded rumor.

I guess you notice the smile on the salesgirl's face, the sudden spryness of the grocer, the snap in the postman's stride, the cheery flush to the tree seller's face, the whistle from the laborer's lips, and the general note of tolerance, simply because they're so, well, not out of place, because they really aren't; but rather of use.

There's a sense of urgency in the wind, too; a tendency to beat the deadline, to have everything ready by the time appointed, to grasp all those loose ends and tie them into a binding, yet attractive bow. It's a time of noses pressed against show windows, of thundering (the small scale) locomotives diving into tunnels that lead to the unknown, and of dolls that surpass the magnificence of anything ever before created.

It's not a season that has definite boundaries and prospects, like Spring, for it can rain, and spirits aren't dampened; it can snow, and smiles grow broader; the sun needn't show, yet warmth somehow travels from heart to heart. The season itself owes its existence, I guess, to the desire to prolong the spirit accompanying the Occasion as long as possible.

It's not a season handed down from time of the Roman Gods; and it's not a Mecca of high-pressure salesmanship. Then what is it, you say? Well, it's a time of brotherly love, an expression that at this time of the year is trite, but true. It's true, also, when you stop to think it over, that "every

individual . . . is the center of his own universe, the one for whom all other things exist . . ." but here it seems that for a change these individual universes overlap in their search for identity; and that under each universe one finds an individual, and that beneath each individual beats a human heart, and that within each human heart there is a measure of that non-seasonal gold, Love.

AND A TIME TO DANCE

The pulsating throb of the tight skin drum skipped nimbly over the well-padded and foot-worn ground, reverberated off the ragged shale slope, and boomed back stronger than ever in echo form. Around a fire which seemed to throw forth flames rather than to lose itself in fiery boredom jogged a series of grotesque figures, all engaged in weird contortions of their human forms. The weirder in actions, the greater the satisfaction they seemed to derive from the accomplishment, and their movements corresponded almost exactly with the guttural grunts and piercing howls that issued forth from their never-ceasing organs of speech.

Flecks of glowing fire light danced across gleaming, bronze bodies, the steady rhythmic pounding of the drums seemed to quicken the pulse, and noiseless, padded feet shuffled quicker than before. The howls grew shriller, drums beat faster, and feet moved even more rapidly than before; the noises grew and grew until they lost their individuality, and the figures shook, cavorted and squirmed until they, too, lost their individuality.

For this was a dance of death, death to whomsoever should meet the dancers on the morrow; violent, almost inhuman, death, as violent as their contortions and as inhuman as their shrieks.

A TIME OF WAR

War, the fickle breeder of power and destruction, which determines not who is right; only who is left. The true opium of the people, from which they can abstain, by which they can be horrified, but without which they cannot exist. Did not the sun that dwelt upon the Maid of Orleans, also look upon the majesty and awe-inspiring might of the Aryan's Panzer Division? Or did it ponder for one second to see whether or not the cross on the armor of the combatants of the Holy Wars changed to any degree, the color of the blood they left to glorify the sands of time?

For "all the world is a stage," and from its high point of vantage in the balcony, the sun must surely have noticed as the Alexanders, the Caesars, the Napoleons, and the Kaisers performed their power-inspired dances of destruction, and listened also as Satan's frenzied accompaniment fell off to a single eerie note that denoted the end of their performance. As men bluster to and fro hastening to improve wholesale destruction, the same sun that lingered on the cave-man's club; lingers again, gently, almost fatherly on the graves of warriors down the ages, and the breeze, nodding in agreement, carries the whispered observation—"What Fools these Mortals Be."

AND A TIME OF PEACE

Magnificence is something man has sought after since first he existed; glory is something he has in turn reveled in, and again, wallowed in. Peace is the haystack in which these two needles are hidden; yet foolish man prefers to seek them by far more destructive and inefficient means.

Man is something that is left when the uniform of battle has been discarded, and peace is that period of time that exists before man has provocation to again don the armor

of war. Peace reigns only when the hand of man holds a plow, his eyes hold the sparkle of achievement not the gleam of destruction, and his feet are planted firmly on the material ground as his head is held high in the spiritual air.

Everywhere the sun looks, it can see Nature's only sign of peace, the soothing coat of green. And the sun ponders, wondering if, like its warmth and light, the peace also goes unobserved, a victim of human ingratitude. For how little does a person know of peace if his days are spent immersed in it; does not human frailty reach its lowest ebb in the act of comprehension?

This lack of substance in the peaceful form of mind has, and will, result in the downfall of eras, nations, and people. But peace, like the river—leaping salmon, has but one spawn, and the offspring must resemble from whence it came not only externally, but internally as well; to be sure, that in later generations, no mutant will arrive upon the scene.

For someday the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: who have trampled the dirt of nations into dust, pocketed the souls of their willing victims, and tortured their enemies into senselessness; shall become unhorsed by four stronger than themselves, and these shall be sent forth with a trumpet and a great voice and they shall gather together the elect from the four winds. And there will be no one among these elect who shall fail to realize the value and prophecy of the words, "Peace I leave you, My Peace I give you."


Epilogue

"And indeed there will be time . . .
Time for you and time for me,
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
And for a hundred visions and revisions . . ."

T. S. ELIOT

School for Critics

By GEORGE HUNTER COCHRAN, '51

"Ah, Masters, come and to my words incline,
And learn to strip apart the stumbling line
Of lesser men, or greater, as may be.
But never grant the latter. ~~Fail to see,~~
(And this is my instruction.) Steep thyselfes 
In blissful ignorance, and like the elves,
Depart when keener minds perceive thy wrong.
Admit not error, 'tis not politic,
But gird thy loins in lunacy, thy song
Surround with web of periphrastic trick.
Speak long, speak loud, but never to the point,
Appear upright, though truly out of joint!
Direct thy words in labyrinthine ways,
T'entangle saner men within their maze.
Let venom be thine own pen's rightful drink,
And rant, and rave, but, horrors! never think!
T'delude the masses' mind is thy one aim,
'Tis work best done by critics such as you,
Whose syllables lack sense, whose minds are lame,
Whose greatest art confuses false with true!"
Thus spoke the Master; then moved back a step
To give to some a chance to speak; one leapt
Up eagerly, a brash young stripling, he,
The critic type to close his eyes and see
Each little wrong in that which others write,
Himself can't pen a decent line of tripe!

And forth to Master's royal rostrum strode,
To speak his words of infant thought to all.
A lean and hungry whelp, a stupid clod,
Whose monstrous words enshrouded logic small.
In martial tones his puerile wrath he vent,
And every weird contortion underwent,
Designed to rouse the ire of all men there.
(In truth, the speaker did not really care
Who heard, believed, or did not give a damn.
'Twas room to talk he wished.) Now, like a lamb
Retired from the stage, worn more by cry
Of words than wish to halt his wild harangue.
(That speech so like some novice baker's pie,
No filling there, but plentiful meringue!)
A smile of satisfaction on his face,
The Master went unto his 'customed place,
Well pleased to see his teachings thus imbibed
And on the minds of all those there inscribed
The mark of ignorance; he shuffled notes
Before him, pausing now and then to gloat
O'er work well done; his voice did mighty ring
As he made special effort to explain
How one might speak, yet never say a thing,
And still not cause the mind one whit of strain!
And now another sought to loose his tongue;
Fair huge of girth was he, though weak of lung.
But wind he did not need; his face all smiles
He spoke with conscious wisdom; and with guile
Deceit his weapon, brandished ~~with~~ his might; with
He turned the light to dark, the dark to light.
With semblance slight of scholar's attitude,
And vain attempt t'appear of some great note,

School for Critics

He held before the crowd some poesy crude,
And with demeanor proud began to quote:
"I cannot write of noble knights of old,
My own poor nights are neither brave nor bold;
Why can't I write of knights? I often weep.
I think because at night I go to sleep!"
The speaker cast this down in quick disgust,
While all about him laughter shook the dust
From off the ancient walls; he spoke again:
"My masters, this is modern poetry,
'Twas made by one not sane, for men the same;
Its rhyme is strained, it has no imagery."
These words set fire to the minds of all.
And many there began to shout and call.
Full hours three the critics then discussed,
(As only certain critics can disgust!)
And after having talked with voices tense,
What ho! concluded that the poem lacked sense!
Then all applauded at this great conclusion,
(Which truly was a work of large import.)
And laughed to scorn the poet's own confusion,
(Themselves the most confused of any sort!)
Now, as the time was closely nearing when
The critics must return, each to his cage, then
Up stepped one more, to make a lengthy speech.
In booming voice, with flourish, he beseeched
That each should strive to emulate the one,
The Master, who, sans thought to self, had done
His best to teach them all the clever art
Of criticism; now they applauded long
His speech and his suggestion; one did start
His gratitude by bursting into song,

Another, subtler than the common crowd,
Gave tongue to personal advice so loud
All were constrained to stop and hear his thought:
“My colleagues, hear me, for 'tis true there's nought
That we can give would equal to his worth;
So shall I say, in praise, that on this earth
We cannot boast of other mortal man
Who speaks so long, or uses words so free;
And so, in short, there's naught who can
Confuse an issue e'er so well as he!”
At this there rose a mighty shout,
The Master smiled; and school was out!

ENCORE . . .

Following his rather mordant *The Concrete Jungle*, CHARLES WOOLEY returns in this issue (on page 65) with an item we consider a bit novel. Whether any two people will react the same to *Kaleidoscope* is an open question, so we'll stick to the facts: Mr. Wooley is a junior pre-med who divides his time between Aquinas Hall and Wood Ridge, New Jersey.

