

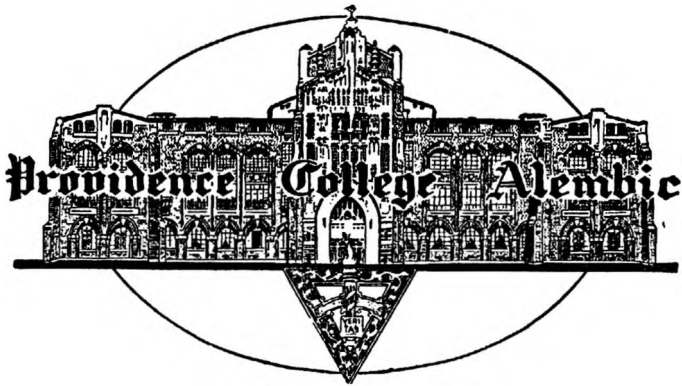
PROVIDENCE COLLEGE

# Alembic

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# THE ALEMBIC



PUBLISHED QUARTERLY  
BY THE  
STUDENTS OF PROVIDENCE COLLEGE  
PROVIDENCE, R. I.

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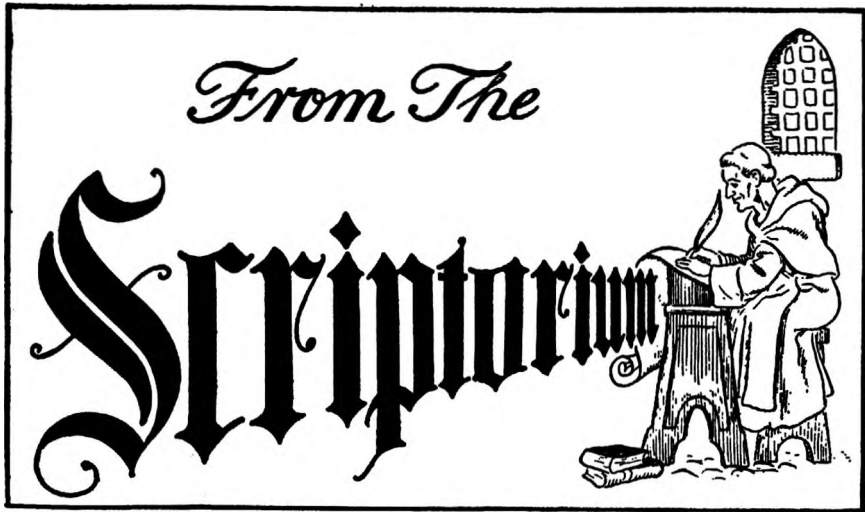
## THE STAFF

RENE FORTIN, '55 .....	<i>Editor</i>
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## Can You Write?

RENE FORTIN, '55

ON the surface, I may seem like a pretty ordinary collegian: I like sports, cars, beer, and girls (though not necessarily in that order). I come from a normal home and am not considered in any sense of the word a social freak. My appearance contributes to this semblance of normalcy, for though I write from the "scriptorium", I much prefer white bucks and crew-cuts to sandals and tonsures: in fact, the friar at the top of the page bears very little likeness to me.

Still, my normalcy is impeachable on two counts: first of all, I am an English major, the culpability of which I share with an infinitesimal minority; secondly, I write for the ALEMBIC, with even fewer partners in guilt.

An English major, as you may have heard, is con-

sidered a dreadful bore, a pompous intellectual character who will dispute about split infinitives at the drop of a hat, and will write lengthy themes on the use of the objective complement in *Paradise Lost*. He is, because of the Black Legend that has denigrated his not-quite-that-bad person, abhorred by all society.

To write for the ALEMBIC is the epitome of social uselessness, however; for though the English major is content to spout his theses alone or in the company of those with similar pursuits, the ALEMBIC contributor seeks to propagate his boring ideas, to force his asinine views upon an audience.

I would not confess my involvement in either of these shameful endeavors except in the hope that, by explaining the origin and the nature of my mania, I may be able to mitigate your censure of me and of my literary colleagues. Under the influence of my English courses I recklessly plunged myself into this unpopular undertaking: I had the audacity to contribute several pieces of literature to the ALEMBIC, and perhaps, the greater audacity to call them such.

Because of the preconceived notion of many P. C. students toward ALEMBIC contributors, I think it is appropriate to compare them to pyromaniacs, their brothers in eccentricity. As the firebug lingers at the scene of his crime to witness the effects of his handiwork, so the writer chortles with maniacal glee over the publication of his work, exults in its effects and sops up the comments, rejoicing that his attempt at self-expression is noticed. For motives apparently as irrational as those of the firebug, he risks his reputation by his indulgence in his equally singular hobby.

Seriously, there is some basis for this exaggerated

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comparison, for in some quarters contributing to the ALEMBIC is considered something opprobrious; it is judged to be an act bordering upon madness. But there is in fact nothing shameful, disgusting, effeminate, sinister, or compromising in expressing oneself. Such intelligent behavior is, from any angle you may look at it, an avocation rewarding to the writer, appreciated by the editors of the ALEMBIC, and, if you hit upon the right formula, enjoyed by the student body, which despite its censure of anything that smacks of voluntary effort really appreciates literary excellence.

The ALEMBIC is a student magazine dependent upon indigenous talent for its continuance; many students have the required talent, but woefully few give expression to it. There is no room for timidity; there is no excuse for it; there is no room for it, if the ALEMBIC is to reach its true proportions. Of course, a higher barrier to hurdle is laziness and smugness. But no amount of persuasion will move a lazy person if he does not want to be moved, so why try? I can simply state that laziness is a reprehensible defect and ought to be removed from your soul—now. Of course, if you don't want to . . . .

## Our Living Year

JOSEPH R. SALVATORE, '56

THE liturgical year is a re-enactment of the life of Christ by means of a formula prescribed by the Church. By following it, we witness His humble birth during Christmastide; we learn to suffer with Him during Lent; finally, we rejoice with Him upon His glorious triumph at Eastertide. By a faithful observance of this cycle we gain

a more thorough knowledge of Christ, and become better disposed to appreciate the secrets of eternal life. It is in effect our consolation at not being physically present during the time of Christ, Our Divine Lord.

During the early days of the Church the observance of the liturgical year was almost non-existent. The earliest Christian feast-day was Easter which, with its prolongation of fifty days to Pentecost, was projected to cover the Sunday observances of the entire year. By the fourth century, however, Christmas the Epiphany, and the anniversary days of the martyrs had been added to the liturgical calendar. In this way the basic structure of the liturgical year, from Advent to Pentecost, was completed by the sixth century. It is evident, then, that the necessity of following Christ's year was felt from the very early days of the Church.

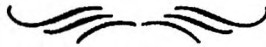
Through this devout practice, we acquire a feeling of unity and of charity, solidly grounded on the truths revealed to us during the course of the ecclesiastical year. This thorough revelation of Our Lord's teachings enables us to understand Him and His Church. It is He who speaks, making more comprehensible the awe-ful truths of our Faith through each successive year. By means of this enlightenment a twofold action can take place: first, we can experience a growth of our knowledge about Christ's doctrine; and, secondly, we can acquire a wholesome development of supernatural life. Many saints testify that a faithful observance of the liturgical year enables one to experience a psychical evolution and spiritual rejuvenation. We can join the entire Mystical Body in following Christ's calendar, in living "Christ's Year."

Now the question arises, "What must we, as Catholic young men, do to take part in the liturgical year?" To

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unite ourselves closely with Christ, we must cooperate with Him. We must not worship according to individual fancy, but in the manner which the Church desires and arranges through its seasons and rubrics. Rather than saying our individual prayers when at Mass, we must give our minds and hearts to those prayers, prescribed by the Church, in a community of prayer. We know that we cannot do this alone, but only with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit whose influence on the liturgy of the Church is undeniable.

The liturgical year recalls to mind and represents before our eyes in an orderly fashion all the mysteries of the life of Jesus Christ. The Church also bids us celebrate the feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the saints. We are offered these examples of Christian perfection for imitation. What we get out of the liturgical year is up to us and to the degree of our cooperation with grace. If we decide to follow the Sunday Mass closely and to prepare ourselves to understand the prayers fully and gainfully, then we are truly drinking at the “fountain of living waters.”





# Communists and Christmas In Viet-Nam

REVEREND JOSEPH CHU-CÔNG, '57

SIX years in the Red-held area of Viet-Nam made absolutely evident to me the paradoxical truth that there was no Catholic feast or demonstration which the Communist atheists attended with more enthusiasm than that of Christmas.

Certainly the Communists, as atheists, do not believe in the Incarnation, nor in any other Catholic dogma. On the contrary, they find religion to be a prejudice that poisons the minds and prevents the happiness of the people, hindering them from taking part in the development of Communism. Moreover, Our Lord's Birthday, with its wholly cheerful but impoverished circumstances, gives them an optimum opportunity for propaganda among the Catholics. Although they counted the Catholics as their enemies and as the hardest to be "enlightened," they relentlessly tried to seduce them, intending thereby to bring the Catholics into a "united front" in the struggle against the French.

That is why, pretending ignorance of the irreconcilability of Communism and religion, they boisterously talked about freedom of religious belief, and took every possible opportunity to convince the Catholics that the Government (Red regime) was intensely concerned with the spread of Catholicism, and that the Catholics as well as non-Catholics had one common enemy, the French.

Every year on Christmas Eve, before the church bell announced midnight Mass, the Communist agents ran around to every corner of the village, their raucous commands over an amplifier awakening the people for a meet-

## *Communists and Christmas in Viet-Nam*

ing. Then, before the unwillingly assisting group, they started a long and exciting talk with a parody of the song of the Angels of Christmas:

Glory to God in the highest  
And on earth peace among *men of poverty*.

It is worth noting that they did not say: "Peace among men of good will" but did say: "Peace among men of poverty," for only by these deceiving and apochryphal words could they persuade the proletarian mass to vent their hatred upon the French. (These diabolical Communist agents even went to church and simulated attendance at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.)

After singing these cunningly changed words of the Bible, the Communist agents stressed "men of poverty" in order to rankle the people against the French. Not less than a learned Catholic, even than a priest, they knew how to pick out all the story and circumstances of the Bible concerning Our Lord's Birthday; but they explained it in their own way.

"Our Lord," they said but did not believe of course, "was born poor in a humble crib. He came on earth in order to bring happiness to us. He came on earth in order to redeem us from misery. He came on earth in order to make all people equal, to make all nations one nation with a mutual love and everlasting peace . . .

"What a pity, however! The Capitalists, the Colonists, obstinately and sinfully prevent Our Lord from performing His mission. The French devils came and conquered our country! They came under the pretext of civilizing our people; but the opposite is undeniably obvious; they came to exploit our lands and make us their slaves . . .

“Therefore, Catholics, come on! Believers in Christ, unite! Go and fight these devils! Drive them out of our lands! The fate and survival of our nation depends on you! We are not happy, and Our Lord’s Birthday is not perfectly joyful until the last enemy in our territory is killed, until the last Frenchman is forced out of our country!”

To repeat all that the Communists had said would be an almost endless task, and to write here their abominable words would be breathlessly shocking.

Despite all that, however, the Catholics were always cool, and never gave any favorable response to the Communists’ appeal, for they knew that the one who talked to them was but an anti-God with the mouth of an Angel, inciting them to do bloody battle with the French today, but plotting to martyrize them tomorrow. The fact that hundreds of priests and thousands of lay Catholics were arrested or killed by the Communists could not be hidden from them.

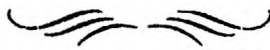
They were cool, not because they preferred to be shackled by the unyielding gyves of Colonialism; for they hate the Colonists as such not less than they do the Communists. They were cool only because they are seeking independence in a peaceful and amiable settlement with the French who, they hope, understand that the world revolution for the right of self-determination is in the balance, and that Colonialism cannot survive any longer. The Viet-Nameese are giving themselves entirely as allies of the French in the common struggle against the enemy of God and of the free world, Communism itself.

The American-backed Premier Ngo-Dinh-Diem is a man of unimpeachable integrity, a pure nationalist, and an ardent anti-Communist whom the people recognize as

## *Communists and Christmas in Viet-Nam*

their savior. According to the American view, he offers the best prospect of building strength in the divided country. General Lawton Collins was sent as President Eisenhower's special ambassador to consolidate his government and the whole weight of the United States now supports it against the Reds.

However, the Viet-Minh Communists are violating the Geneva agreement on Viet-Nam whereby the Viet-Nameese were assured the right to decide in which zone they wished to live. Hundreds of thousands of Catholics in North Viet-Nam are suffering shameful treatment. It is possible that the Catholics will receive the same treatment they experienced between 1856-1862, during the reign of the cruel monarch Tu-Duc, when 1315 bishops, priests, and laypeople were martyred — among them two Dominican bishops, Blessed Joseph Sanjuro and Blessed Melchior Sampedro, both beautified by Pope Pius XII in 1951. This is a diabolically reprehensible situation.



## MR. SPINDLY

JAMES J. MCLARNEY, '56

By the shelter mouth! See, there!  
That was Mr. Spindly. We only did  
Get the slightest glimpse—  
A flicking flash of steel—  
Mr. Spindly doing his work,  
(And you look at me with the egg  
of terror in your open mouth.)  
Slipping down the shiny halls  
On spider legs so thin you'd hardly  
Think they'd hold his gleaming head—  
But oh how fast and trigger quick—  
Without almost any noise—  
Snippety Clickety—  
On titanium feet—  
Across the floor.

(And now you swear and rave at me  
while you are growing beads of sweat.)  
When I was little, very small—  
In the dirty, noisy days—  
I'd hear him outside—  
Purring and whirring and listening—

*Mr. Spindly*

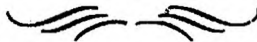
Mr. Spindly doing his work,—  
All thirty eyes darting—  
All forty ears probing—  
I would burrow down among the sheets—  
Then off he'd go in a metal rush—  
I'd wait—

*Snick!*

Mr. Spindly never missed his man.

They say that long ago in the days of Nations  
(You crouch on the dirty ground,  
clutching your puny bow and arrow.)  
That the Germans bred him  
From a bayonet and cybernetic brain—  
Only then the Reds adopted him.  
They added things—  
The eyes and ears I think—  
After that we captured him  
(There! You laugh. Don't  
Mock an old and dying man.)  
And gave him feet and better ears—  
Ears that heard thoughts instead of words,—  
All the Higher-Ups loved him—  
But Mr. Spindly was very quick.  
Snippety Clickety—  
Snick Snick Snick!  
He got them all.

Some say he does it with a needle,  
(Your eyes widen, Friend, I think  
you don't like this needlework.)  
Others swear it's radiation—  
I know he's quieter than in the old days—  
I've watched him take a few—  
The ones who could run—  
He ran them down.  
That was messy—  
He's at his best in the dark—  
When you least expect him,—  
When you're thinking thoughts you shouldn't—  
You'll see his eyes all flicking—  
That shing needle sticking  
From beneath his chromium brow.  
He's very quick—don't try to move—  
Just lie and wait—  
Snippety Clickety—  
*Snick!*



## *The Beauty of Simplicity....*

*Louis Tousignant, '57*

ONE warm November day, the group of soldiers with whom I was touring Italy found itself in the village of Castelgrand. Castelgrand is an almost primitive community completely isolated from the surrounding towns—except for inadequate winding dirt roads—by the mountainous terrain. My first look at the village was enough; I knew now why the two men who had been here before had been so vague in their description of the place. I for one would never have come had I known the condition of this seemingly God-forsaken town.

The houses were nothing but glorified caves, and would suffer in comparison to our American barns. The majority of the homes were actually grafted to the mountain, using its side as one of the walls of the house. The remaining walls were either stuccoed or made up of huge stones poorly piled one upon the other. They were two-story structures, the top floor crowding in the human inhabitants, while the bottom floor sheltered the animals. The homes stood in a cluster about the mountain, and streamers of cobblestoned stairways snaked upward to the living quarters. On these stairways, we could see the women engrossed in the routine of the day, carrying on their heads bundles of hay or of clothes. Adding a comic touch to this routine were the donkeys and the pigs who scampered up and down the stairs after their masters.

Though we were watching all this from a distance, we were noticed by this time by the curious inhabitants, who, we had good reason to suspect, had not seen too many Americans. As we walked the narrow lane that served as



the main street of the town, the natives who lined the street accompanied us with shouts of "Americans! Americans!" We couldn't help feeling that we were somehow on exhibition.

Yet the curiosity was not one-sided; we ourselves were just as intently studying the appearance of these people, strangely by-passed by the changing world. I don't know what my buddies were thinking, but I was amazed: The twentieth century and people this poor? I couldn't believe it. Their clothes were just as ragged as their homes were decrepit, and all the people, especially the oldsters, showed the ravages of their hard life. Yet, from the way they acted, they didn't seem to realize the grimness of their situation. How can that be explained?

A more urgent problem was the fact that there seemed to be some resentment against this intrusion of their privacy. The young men, dark and swarthy, gave us looks which were not short of being hostile. We took some consolation in the fact that the young men of any country have a tendency to appear strong-armed. Another thing that relieved a bit of the tension was the eager gathering of curious children around us, yelling and laughing excitedly, vying with one another for attention.

Any possible trouble, however, was averted by our arrival at the home of the De Santis, the people our buddy had come to visit. After recognizing Dominic, they swooped down upon us, sweeping first Dominic off his feet with wild embraces, and then, after the proper introductions, the rest of us, who acquiesced to this custom with understandable reluctance. When in Rome, do as the Romans? We had no choice.

*The Beauty of Simplicity . . .*

After the rather lengthy and effusive introductions, we were conducted to the house. Its inside was just as grim and bare as the outside indicated: the main room served as kitchen and living room, furnished with one rocking chair and a few wooden benches. The dim electric light barely enabled me to guess the layout of the rest of the home, but there were two bedrooms and one other room which I found out later was a combination cold storage room and bathroom. Leave it to the Italians to figure something out like this.

The conversation rambled on and on as the DeSantis sought to find out about their brethren in America. The women took part in this intensely enjoyable conversation, and it was with regret—ours, primarily—that they excused themselves to prepare the supper. It was then that I learned that preparing a meal for Italians is not a task; it is a ritual. Italians spend two hours at a meal, and their ordinary fare would seem to us to be of banquet proportions. Meat, fish, soup, pickles, coffee, wine—home-made of course—and, of primary importance, the appetizer, either macaroni or spaghetti.

After the banquet, we were told by Dominic, who had become our Emily Post, that we were invited to a dance, and that we could not graciously refuse the invitation. As we walked to the dance hall, we were further advised by Dominic as to what to expect, and how we should comport ourselves. I learned later that he was most inadequate in his explanations.

As we entered the dance hall, I was amazed to see that the dance was already in progress without the presence of women; it seems that in Italy, men have no hesitancy about dancing with each other, the dance is the thing—with

whomever. Dominic noticed my amusement and he himself seemed to take delight in something of which I was unaware. But I found out; for approaching me was a smiling young man with the obvious intention of asking me to dance. These Italians are hard to say "No" to, and Dom informed me that a refusal would very possibly alienate our gracious hosts. Again I had to relent, but with the solemn promise that if he tried to dance cheek to cheek, I would deck him.

Even with the mocking taunts of my friends, it wasn't too bad, or at least not so bad that the situation could not get worse. It did. Oh, indignities of indignities! Someone cut in. Not only was I forced to dance with this first smiling ape, I was shunted about from smiling ape to smiling ape. The dance ended finally, and I was thoroughly demoralized. I returned to the Judas who had brought us into this town and just barely suppressed an urge to damage my best friend.

Was there ever a G.I. who was not revitalized by the sight of a woman? They arrived at last, all kinds and all shapes; too fat and too skinny, just plain ugly and very ugly, not clean, and dirty. I found myself an ugly woman who was twice my size. She was my partner for the rest of the night and shared my gaiety throughout the evening. I had never attended so gay a party before.

Perhaps I was most impressed by nostalgia for the evenings at home. That is something we have sacrificed here in America for the "conveniences" — the congenial family gatherings. This is an old tune, but it is not just so much poppycock, as I thought it before. There is a genuine feeling of comradeship, of friendship, of genuine love

*The Beauty of Simplicity . . .*

in the old family gathering; it is an institution as basic to these rustic Italians as the macaroni appetizer.

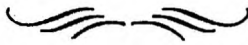
We were presented with a typical picture during our stay at Castelgrand: the whole family gathered around the fireplace, and by "the whole family" I mean the whole clan of cousins, aunts, nephews, grandmothers, etc. There was an old man in the group (I never did establish his identity) who had a skilled habit of lighting his pipe from the hot ashes of the fireplace. Since he held the ashes in his bare hands, he would sometimes have to drop the ashes two or three times before finally lighting his pipe; this project of his was done with the utmost solemnity, and his failure to succeed the first time would draw several epithets of exasperation from him. Other homely images return to me now, such as the mistress of the house doing her ironing in the middle of the group, not permitting her social life to interfere with her domestic duties, nor vice versa.

These are simple people, these Italian peasants, and they have not let the complexities of the twentieth century obscure their true aims in life; thus, the most prominent building in the area is the church, a relatively magnificent edifice. On Sunday morning, we went to Mass at the church with our hosts, and again were pleasantly surprised at the camaraderie of the villagers. As we strolled home, we were cheerfully greeted by every villager who had seen us, or even heard of us; and I would guess that we were an almost universal topic of conversation among the Castelgrandians.

The Italians are a sentimental people; we were now aware of that. Still, we were not prepared for the sincere feeling shown by them in the send-off they extended to us. We were bid farewell by almost everyone in the village, and

when you consider that each person felt constrained to toast us individually, and we to reciprocate, you can well imagine that we had to be very resourceful to walk away sober. The whole clan walked us to the car which we had abandoned when the trail gave out, and the women of only a few days' acquaintance wept as we took our leave.

We were all touched; we looked back upon the village of Castelgrand until we could see it no more. It was engulfed by the dust our machine was kicking up. Maybe our modern machines do swallow up those real treasures of companionship and simple living. The beauty of simplicity had completely conquered five travelling soldiers.



## REDRESS AND GRIEVANCE

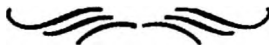
JAMES J. McLARNEY, '56

To stir the sacred dust of ages,  
To peel oil cake with septic nail  
To hack and chip, a defamer's vice,  
*Who are we?*

Words per minute? Lines per page?  
This hypocrisy is bottomless whim!  
Bind we Marlowe, Johnson, Shakespeare  
Unto a vaulting column of spotless chrome?  
Then to pick and pry with steam-washed probe?  
*Who are we?*

Bone-pickers! Charnel ghouls who  
stoop from flesh to higher sins!  
—Let us take up our slide rule  
Done in amphibracs, gird ourselves  
'Round with meters clicking Iambs.  
Bottocelli computed in angstroms lies  
Entombed, while the savant-picker tortures  
Shreiking Chopin with differential analouges.  
*This we are!*

We never raise our eyes from the  
Glaring table stage where the ageless  
Giant is writhing and the clean smells  
and snapping come. Forget yourself  
Amid the stifled yelps of art, root  
Deep in the roomy belly of distinction!  
—But never, Oh No! Never raise your eyes!  
For you might see it floating there above  
Our bloody, ordered heads where it glows  
and burns and mocks:  
*Calipers do not a genius make,*  
*Nor dusty tomes a sage . . .*



## *Quest....*

*James J. McLarney, '56*

**O**N down the ages the bubble floated. Of course it really wasn't a bubble in the strict sense of the word. To be accurate, it was more like a warp. Within the sphere-warp existed Tamir-id. A greyish-pink blob, shot through with streaks of purple, green, and black—this was the existence known for want of a better name as Tamir-id. The word “blob” is also a little misleading, for a “blob” as we know it has three angles of flux or dimensions. Whenever Tamir-id felt like fluxing (which he didn't often because it was a lot of needless bother), he fluxed in varying combinations of twelve different angles. It might be interesting to note at this point that Tamir-id was quite human, just about as human as anyone can possibly get.

Being human implies the possession of a personality, and the little focus of awareness within the sphere-warp adhered to convention in this respect. If one were able to transpose the vices and virtues of a super-intelligence to a mean comparison with its blundering ancestor, Tamir-id would readily become the typical absent-minded professor who stumbles about the campus bumping into people, his mind deep in the joyous reverie of a butterfly collection. Tamir-id collected dead stars, by the way, but this does not enter into our story.

At that moment, or millisecond rather, the blob within the sphere-warp was not in the least concerned about his collection. His thought processes were almost entirely occupied in the profound consideration of his sacred mission. Some small, unguessable portion of him busied itself with the operation of the sphere-warp, but his principal attention was involved in a rapt and awesome appreciation



of the privilege which had been accorded him above all others. He realized that he had not been chosen because of personal attributes or the zeal of endeavor. No, he had been given this ultimate gift because he was an historian, the only historian among his kind. Again came the recriminations of doubt and self-loathing: Was he worthy? The errors and follies of his youth, his sometimes foolish pride and inability therefore to accept the superior reasoning of another—would these faults not offend?

Back, back along the dusty trail of centuries moved the sphere-warp. At sixty-five thousand feet over the continent of Randar-li, or as we would say—North America, there isn't much to see. Nevertheless Tamir-id, in order to pull himself from the mire of shame and doubt, allowed his sensory perceptions to slip a short distance from the confining blindness of the sphere-warp. The instants of his own relative time ticked by while, without, eons spun back at a tremendous rate. He perceived the moon upon which piles of rubble grew back into shining cities which bloomed in their adulthood, only to dwindle to infancy and then disappear completely. Great silver machines whipped by him now, huge gouts of flame springing back into their weapons. A fleet of aliens in black, cube-like ships bunched together and dwindled over the horizon. More cities, wars, invasions stuttered and flickered in reversed animation. Tamir-id reflected briefly upon all these things with the bored attitude of a disinterested observer and retreated back to the privacy of the sphere-warp.

The bubble continued its journey.

Quite suddenly, space about the sphere-warp was very empty. He coalesced nervously within the bubble. The realization occurred that he was almost at his destina-

*Quest . . .*

tion. Over a fantastically thin tendril of energy which stretched a billion years up the time scale to his own civilization came the reassuring group-thought of his people:

“We are one with you, Tamir-id.”

“And I with you,” he flashed back.

They were with him. When he reached The Place, all of his sensory impressions would be transmitted back to those in the future. He was the connection, the vital link. He must not—he could not fail! It had been countless ages since the whole five hundred had gathered together. For this task they were all needed: the combined impetus of their intellects supplied the necessary force which allowed him to exist in the past. Speed was of the utmost importance. The act which involved a certain bending of the fabric of the space-time continuum itself required vast amounts of energy, and the group effort of the five hundred could not last for very long.

It was also extremely difficult and dangerous for Tamir-id. This business of time travel was very tricky. The fact that he might never be able to return to his own time due to unaccountable shifts in the time-flow did not bother Tamir-id; they had explained all that to him before he left. He would gladly spend the remainder of his natural existence as a pool of electron sludge for this, the ultimate honor.

He had handled all the historic research himself. Following hints and clues uncovered by a close study of the celebrated Hun-le Fragment and using the great natural wisdom of his race in matters concerning the Logic of Being, Tamir-id had reached a momentous conclusion. In line with this universe-shaking disclosure, there was but one

course of action which his race could honestly take. They must send a representative. But the problem remained: where and when? The number of factors involved was almost infinite, but in the end Tamir-id had reached his goal. He knew approximately where The Place was and when The Event would transpire. The others had taken care of all the other problems.

## II

There was a tug somewhere within him. He ceased the action of the sphere-warp. Extending the range of his perceptions, Tamir-id lowered the bubble toward the ground. As he dropped through the atmosphere he saw a large city. Thousands upon thousands of scurrying mites moved about beneath. So far, actuality was correlating with his data. The Fragment had mentioned a city of some sort, and The Place should lie to the northwest of the city upon a small hill. The sphere-warp passed over the smoking, pulsating city and came to a narrow river.

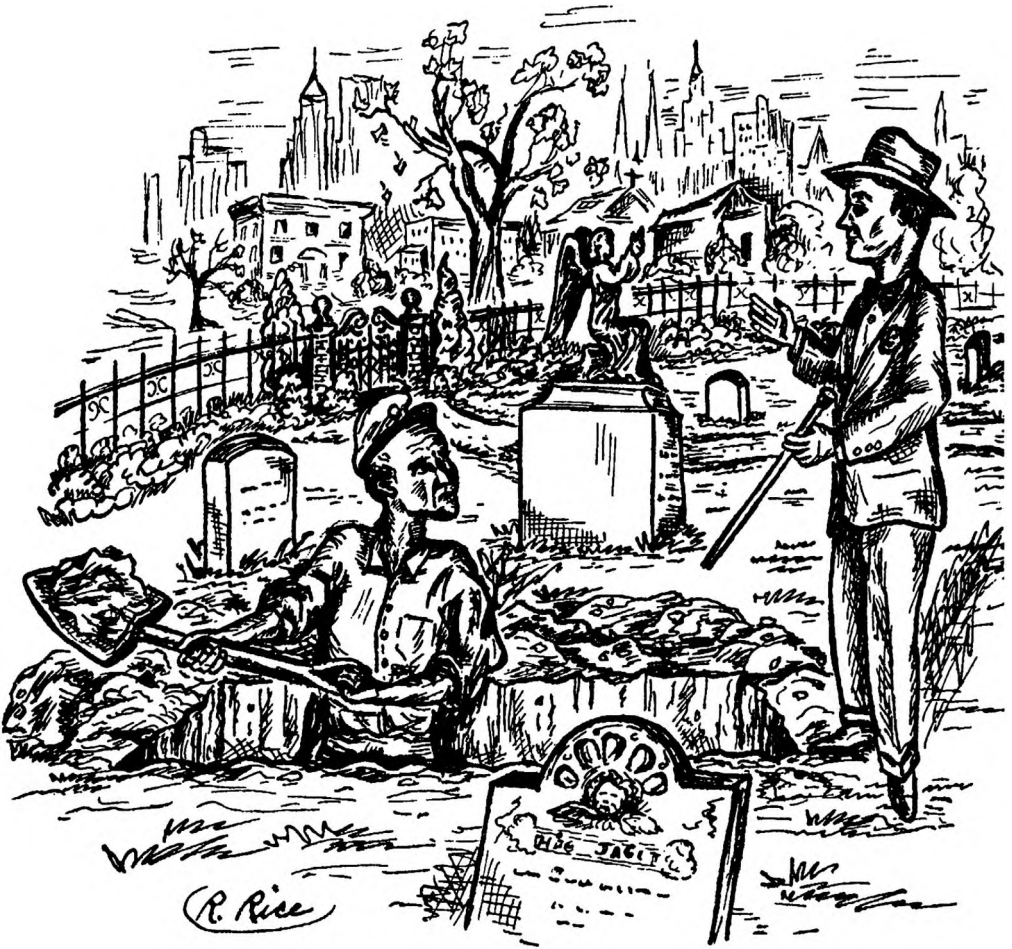
Tamir-id neatly relaxed his force field and plunged into the inky waters. His calculations had never considered a river in the vicinity of The Place! For that matter, neither had the Hun-le Fragment! He quickly conveyed his uncertainty to the five hundred.

“You cannot fail us, Tamir-id!”

Not bothering to reply, he pressed on and crossed over the river. He noted that streams of vehicles were crossing the river too by means of several large, sooty bridges. Finally he arrived at the exact space coordinates where his calculations told him The Place should have been. The sphere-warp touched gently to earth and Tamir-id floated out. He compressed the warp until it was the size

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of a pin head and sent his perceptions out in every direction. He was on a hill, true, but all about him for several miles in every direction there were small masses of stone in every conceivable shape and form. New doubts assailed him.



Could this be The Place? He allowed his perceptions to slide beneath the ground and recoiled in horror. A burial ground! Had all his research been in vain? Either there had been an error in his calculations or the Hun-le Frag-

ment was false, the dreaming hoax of some idiot long since dead. There was only one thing to do. Even though it might horribly alter the pattern of time-flow and forever doom his chances of returning to his own time, Tamir-id knew that he must make direct contact with one of the ancestors.

There was a man digging a grave about three hundred yards away. He was dressed in old work clothes and sported a bright straw hat. His union button shone from the brim. A glance into the mind of this ancestor was disturbing. There were no thoughts of reverence or piety. What Tamir-id perceived in the man's mind was a confused jumble of worry over payments on something called a "refrigerator" and a desire for a cold glass of "beer"—whatever that was.

Terrence Patrick O'Shea was startled by the sudden appearance of a nattily dressed stranger. The man stood upon a pile of freshly excavated earth which had been vacant a split second before. Attributing this seemingly unexplicable physical phenomenon to the heat and the sweat which was continually running into his eyes, Mr. O'Shea assumed his customary attitude and stated blandly:

" 'Tis just where it was ordered, Sur. Thurd row, six in from the edge of the section."

Ignoring the man's completely nonsensical declaration, Tamir-id inquired in a polite manner if this was The Place. The reply which he received was confusing:

"Sure and that it is. Which part would you be after havin', forst, second, thurd, or fourth?"

Tamir-id was perplexed. His calculations had in no way considered the partitioning of The Place. He became

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more definite and detailed, outlining the nature and intent of his quest. The remote ancestor with the straw hat and button apparently mistook his seriousness for something else.

“Yer talkin’ like a lunatic! If I were you, I’d go see Father Jim. ’Tis only three blocks from the main entrance, straight down the street.”

The blob which hovered within the make-believe man detected a resolution in the mind of the ancestor to call a “cop” and have this “nut” taken to a place called “Bellevue.” Present also were feelings of profound respect for the man named Father Jim. Tamir-id left hurriedly, but before his departure he gently touched the ancestor’s mind and erased all memory of the nattily dressed man atop the pile of earth. It was evident even from the stultified thought processes of this miserable wretch that the ancestor called Father Jim was a person of intelligence.

### III

The main entrance, Tamir-id reasoned, would be the gate with the largest stones piled around it. He made himself invisible and moved over the rows and files of tombstones and monuments. Down the shady walk he traveled, passing over the heads of funeral parties, hearses, and flower cars. The thought impulses he received from the people on the walk disgusted him to the point of despair. They were greedy thoughts about something called a “will.” Scattered among these were notes of genuine sorrow and regret.

The tendril to the future and his own people vibrated with urgency and Tamir-id hastened down the walk to the cemetery entrance. His only hope of finding the Place lay with the man called Father Jim, time being too short for him to risk a possibly wasteful contact with some-

*Quest . . .*

little chuckle and told him that his research had been perfectly correct up to a point and anyone could have made the same mistake, especially when one had to guess from a billion years in the future. He said it was a common practice among Catholics to name their cemeteries after The Place. The Event had occurred several thousand years ago on the other side of the planet, and Father Jim was very sorry if Tamir-id had gotten crossed-up.

Then the priest gave a very chastened super-intelligence the most exact date which the historians of the twentieth century had been able to arrive at and indicated on a small map where The Place actually was. This information was relayed to the future as quickly as Tamir-id received it.

“It will be hard, Tamir-id,” chorused the five hundred. “There is a strange sort of congestion in that time sector. We can get you in, but we might alter the time-flow in getting you out.”

“That is of little importance,” replied Tamir-id.

“Then you must hurry! Our energies won’t last much longer!”

The greyish-pink blob thanked Father Jim heartily for the information he had received, before erasing all memory of his visit. He enlarged the sphere-warp once again, and sped on his way. He was oddly sorry that he had to leave the struggling little man in the black suit for in a way the two of them were very much alike.

#### IV

This time Tamir-id suffered from no errors of calculation. He found The Place and it was just as the Hun-le Fragment had described it. When he discovered the reason

## *The Alembic*

for the congestion of The Event's time sector, he was awed. Space about The Event was literally crammed with countless extra-dimensional beings like himself. He was but one among millions. They came from distant suns and stars which he had never even heard of, and they all came with the same purpose as he. So super-saturated was the ether around the small, rocky hill that Tamir-id searched for almost three hours in all the dimensions he was capable of entering before he finally found an opening in nine-space beside a furry thing from Rigel.

And so it was that Tamir-id and all his people found The Place and witnessed The Event. It was practically all over, but this didn't matter to Tamir-id. He lowered himself in the utter subservience of a creature for its omnipotent better and worshipped beside his brothers while from the top of the small hill came the choking Hebrew words:

*"Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit!"*





