

ALEMBIC

PROVIDENCE COLLEGE



VOLUME XXI

NUMBER 1

OCTOBER, 1938

DECISION

NORMAN J. CARIGNAN

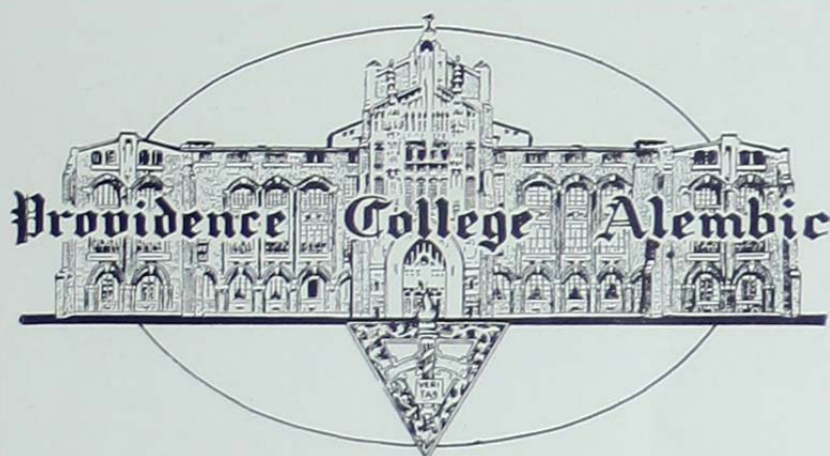
GUNS FOR SPAIN

IRVING WARDLE

"WHAT FLOOR, PLEASE?"

ROBERT C. HEALEY

THE ALEMBIC



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

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In Memoriam

REV. MATTHEW LEO CAROLAN, O. P.

Professor of Latin

Died June 6, 1938

INTO every man's life there comes a time when the loss of a friend creates a void which he is not able to fill. He seeks by memorials and monuments, and, yes, even by prayers and masses, to perpetuate the name of that departed one whom he loved so well, but whom God loved more. To that end, we, the students of Providence College, dedicate this *Alembic*, the distiller of truth and good, to the memory of the Rev. Matthew L. Carolan, O. P., who died on June 6, 1938.

It can be said without fear of contradiction that Father Carolan was a true friend of every student. He spoke to all, he laughed with all, and he worked tirelessly for all even to the detriment of his own well-being. He sought to instill and awaken in the student body a stronger school spirit and by so doing he imbued all with a love of Providence College that had no bounds. Those of us who worked close to him now dolefully feel the loss of his encouragements, his words of commendation and his kind suggestions that always helped in some way enhance the glory of the College he so fervently loved.

Every day there pass from the lips of each Providence College man softly spoken prayers for the quiet repose of his soul. Each day we measure the chasmic depth of that void which his loss has made and we find it the same. We would have him back, but rather we take vicarious joy in his eternal happiness.

Requiescat in pace!

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“What Floor, Please?”

By ROBERT C. HEALEY, '39

IT wasn't the continual clanging of the gates that bothered him, nor the incessant whir of the buzzer. His elevator car and all its oily movements were peaceful compared to the human buzzing around him. They, at least, were ties to the life that had come crashing down.

All day long people came—men, women, children. They crowded into the elevator at eight in the morning. At noon they ran out to lunch and then came back to dole away the afternoon. There was a horrible nervousness about them. They walked fast. They talked fast. Their words of sympathy tumbled out in waves that beat against his heart. They tried to cheer him, and yet he felt alone, hopelessly alone

How long had it been? Little use to cut it down to a matter of days or hours. Time, he had discovered, is a useless convention that man frames to keep himself from going mad in infinity. He had seen its shallowness. He had seen the depth of time, the abyss of the present where everything remains a continual now just as it was at one terrible moment. And he could never forget, even though the world crowded around him every day.

“What floor, please?” The words gave him a sense of security. They anchored him to his job even more than the opening and closing of the grill in front of him. They gave him a chance to cut short unwelcome conversations. Someone would

be saying, "Now, Jerry, you'll have to bear up and get back on the job, it doesn't help a bit to think about it—" when Jerry would cut in with his curt "What floor, please?" though he knew well what floor. He hated to do it. They were trying so hard to be kind, but with their conventionalities they were etching the memory of that moment more deeply in his heart.

Nature, he knew, was running rough-shod over his face. The very path of his sorrow could be traced in the furrows, the pitted eyes and the colorless skin. His hair was sparser and greyer. In a few months he had become gaunt and wizened like an apple drained of its life juice. He just didn't care. There was no reason to care.

He tried several times to explain his attitude to solicitous friends. Now that she was gone there was nothing for him to look forward to but death. They didn't understand. He didn't expect them to understand. Understanding would come only when they could live his life, feel his sorrow and partake of his pain. He knew that his little world was complete in itself, apart from the life of any other person. He alone could push it to its very end, reliving every moment of that soaring night of death and its promise of hope.

What floor, please? At seven-thirty he started this drone and with the throb of his heart it remained a constant reminder that he was still alive while she lay dead. People were speaking to him all day, yet he was alone in a world that he did not know. There was always that mad pounding of time, time standing still, time warning him and calling him away.

"I doubt if she will last," Dr. Jameson was saying.

The wind brushed a few leaves against the house in the autumn night. The voices of children at early evening play sounded in the distance. Jerry sank into the parlor chair.

"There must be something I can do. I'll go crazy just sitting around."

“What Floor, Please?”

“There’s really nothing. But I would suggest that you be ready at any moment. And get someone she knows to stay with her besides the nurse. I wouldn’t worry too much. It’s coming inevitably and you’d better be ready. Call me if there’s any change.”

Jerry sat down in the big parlor chair when the Doctor left. He tried to think the thing out, to realize what dying meant. For thirty-two years they had been constant companions. Nothing had ever interrupted the serenity of their lives. No children had come to solace them and they made each other a symbol of mutual love and faith. The smallest thing each of them did became a delightful topic to discuss at breakfast and supper. Everything flowed so smoothly. Age came in and covered them with her grey hands. And they loved each other so. . . .

He walked into the bedroom before going out to get Aunt Sarah. She lay there so quiet and peaceful, her scrawny arms folded in prayer on the white counterpane. Like an alabaster statue of a beautiful old lady. He turned away and rushed out.

In the cool night air he felt much better. Sarah was just getting ready for bed, but she hurriedly joined him, her stout Irish heart pounding with fear.

“I was afraid it’d be soon, Jerry,” was all she said as they swished through the leaves back to the house. They took chairs just outside the door of the bedroom, where they could watch and pray.

The night ticked on. Eleven came and only deep irregular breathing filled the house. They sat there silently, Jerry wondering if the whole thing was true, Sarah plying her silent beads and the nurse mechanically efficient. At midnight they jumped up as the figure in the bed tossed violently and moaned. She called for Jerry and he took her hand. But she turned her head and went back to the heaving of uneasy sleep.

The clock said terrible things as it doled out the seconds. The slow sounds filled the room with an overwhelming presence. One, two, three. One, two, three. Time moving in a funereal caravan. He could not think. He sat there letting the seconds roll heavily over him until time ceased chanting and he went round and round and finally dozed.

Sarah's light hand woke him. He glanced swiftly at her and then at the clock. It was three.

"Come in quick," she whispered. "I've called Father Evans and the Doctor is coming. Please don't make it too hard."

He crept into the room. Two candles spluttered dolefully on a stand beside the bed. They cast drear shadows on the wall. He stood at the head of the bed and looked. Her eyes were half-closed, like agates covered with a lustreless film. Her heart was pounding unmercifully to keep pace with gasping breath.

"Jerry," she mumbled, looking through him into distance.

He moved to the bedside and took her bony hand.

"Why aren't you coming? I can't go alone." He made out the words slowly.

There was quiet for a time. He sat there holding her hand until she spoke again:

"Jerry, some water."

He went for a cup of water and put it to her mouth while Sarah propped the feverish head. For a moment she looked at the cup and smiled. Then she drank and it seemed that she had delved down into the depths of the cup. She pushed it away and looked hauntingly at him. Quietly she lay back her head and smiled again, a deep ineffable smile that pierced him through and opened up visions of an unearthly joy. It made him think of her young smile, full and beautiful. But thinking

“What Floor, Please?”

made him sad and he turned to pour on her every ounce of comfort he could give.

The candles were fluttering their last oily drops. Sarah was kneeling by the side of the bed crying her sorrow into tears. Suddenly he realized that it was all over, and like a drowning man he clutched wildly at the flood of memories that had carried them through the years. Spring nights when he drove up in his carriage for swift rides through the country. Their marriage day when he had taken her in his arms and said, “Together, dear, until the end.” The years twisting and turning. Winter and summer, all running by in a mad whirl. Time flashing her terrible charms and at last a glimpse of eternity in which he found himself standing helplessly beside a body in a little bedroom.

It stunned him. She was gone! His brain throbbed wildly. He rushed to the bed and pushed Sarah aside. Bending over, he shouted:

“Come back, Margaret. Come back to me, Margaret.” The tears welled chokingly.

Sarah grabbed him by the sleeve: “Don’t bring her back, Jerry, don’t bring her back. For God’s sake, stop it, or you’ll bring her back.

He was sobbing wildly, an incoherent cry that tore out his soul.

“Stop it or you’ll bring her back,” Sarah kept crying.

He did not notice, but there was a faint stirring from the bed. He rushed forward and looked at the fluttering eyes. They opened and she said, slowly and painfully:

“Please don’t, Jerry. It’s so sweet. But come with me. Come with me. Come and meet me soon.”

Her head fell back and they knew it was the end. The outburst had calmed him, but her words kept ringing in his ears, setting up a shuttle that crissed and crossed within his head, weaving a terrible pattern of sorrow. As they laid her one rainy morning in a grave he heard those same words whispered in his ear, hauntingly, lovingly.

What floor, please? He said it mechanically now. At the end of each day he would wonder about the night. How long would it be before he would meet her? Why must sorrow be prolonged, never changing, never ending, only growing deeper in the remembrance of things vanished. He lashed himself with invisible agonies and prayed they would bring him closer to his goal.

“Why can’t you cheer up, Jerry? You haven’t been looking so well lately,” someone had said that morning. The words cheered him and he pushed forward into the day. Afternoon approached and he felt somewhat weak. When unoccupied he leaned against the controls trying to catch his breath. But always there would be someone buzzing, and he had to hurry down to him. That day for the first time since he had taken the job the five o’clock rush hour fatigued and irritated him. Why couldn’t they keep quiet with all their buzzing and gnashing? Why couldn’t they walk slowly instead of flashing by in a hazy blur. No one wanted to let him think of those fresh sweet words.

At five-thirty they were all gone. Until six he would be free to rest. A hard day, and he longed for some comfortable place to lie down. It was getting darker. The days are so short, the nights so long. I must speak about getting more light in these corridors. He rested weakly outside the car on the first floor.

“What Floor, Please?”

Someone passed him and entered the car. He closed the gates slowly, painfully. The light in the car was very dim. He was just about able to pull the controls and start the ascent.

His passenger did not move. He stood there moodily. Through the semi-darkness Jerry surveyed him, hardly caring who or what he might be. He was an old man, like himself, dressed in dark black clothes. A few strands of grey hair showed under his old slouch hat. His eyes were cold and calm, but they wandered helplessly in deep pools of furrowed skin. Old and dying, something wizened and dried up, the very sap of life run out. He knew he had seen him some place before, but it was too much effort to remember. Thinking was painful, so painful.

They continued up. It remained dark. Night must be falling outside. People are running around. Life is being lived. People are dying, too, sweet and happy deaths. Night breathes its fragrance over them and hurtles them away into sunshine.

But something is wrong. I feel as if I'm moving, swaying. I can hardly stand. But I must keep on the job. Last trip for the day. . . . Just one more passenger. Let him off. Go home and dream. But hurry . . . He'll have to get off soon . . . I must . . . I'll ask him!

“What floor, please?” Did I really say that or is this the crumbling of a cataract whirring in my ears.

“The last will do,” said the passenger, and his voice was an avalanche of snow, so cold, so swift, so loud.

The last! He'll make me work out every moment, taking him to the last. Everything so shadowy. I must get him off. We're near the top. Just a little more, A little more. I must do it. Let him off, let him off. There! We're here. What's holding

these gates? I can't open them. I must. . . . He'll report me. Push hard. Push. Get it done . . . get it done. Thank God.

The gates were opened. The corridor was filled with an intense light, suffusive and golden. Suddenly he felt better, but he must investigate. He walked down the corridor trying to pierce the golden haze, and as he walked he saw shadows treading around him. One of them came nearer and looked at him and seemed to smile.

“At last you've come, Jerry dear. I've been waiting so long. Come with me.”

She held forth her hand and comprehendingly he took it in his.

And this was eternal rest. A surge of joy filled him. They began moving, floating together. Behind them he heard a sound, a harsh worldly sound, as if of gates closing and machinery moving, and he knew that tonight or on the morrow they would find a body in his elevator, a sad-looking body dressed in black, grown grey and wizened in the service of sorrow.



Decision

By NORMAN J. CARIGNAN, '39

Damn foolishness, is it?
That I should think of my own path of life,
Then spurn the evil tides of worldly loves,
And grasp the good so rare in a lustful world—
Like pearls in shallow pools of murky mud.
Corrupt, man seeks to rot the universe
With false and sensual ideas of right
And wrong. “Live while ye may.” What a creed!
I feel within my soul a struggling force
Besieging e'er the young but strong revolts
In my adversity. The more it rants,
The more I feel that I've been called to set
The world aright as God does wish it be.
I often hear a voice that calls me near,
And says: “Go teach ye all, the word of God.”
At once it beckons, then it calls, unheard
It cries to me for my decision now.
But who am I, poor simple James, to do
Away with lust and greed, and hate mundane.
Far better fitted is that call to men
More willing, stronger, unafraid to face
The haughty bickerings of men who sin.
I acquiesce and yet rebel, and why?
Am I afraid?
Success is mine in my father's field

And wealth and love accrue in manifold;
Despair the fate of the second call.
My noble purpose fades away as palms
Of fortune come to me. Can I e'er hope
For more than wealth, a home, a pretty wife?
My Jane is parent of my love.
Demure and pure she haunts my very self,
And dims the ardor of my mission call.
But now that voice returns to summon me.
It claws, it gnaws, and seizes me anew
And unrelenting haunts my inner thoughts.

I am as though
Suspended on the lofty cliff of fate
And balancing between my life and death.
If one I choose the world's success is mine.
The other leads to bliss and dark despair.

How can I e'er decide
Besieged by strength of loves that are opposed?
I seek a refuge from these warring might,
But in my solitude, my soul becomes
A bleak and barren no man's land.
Yet in this desert of a mind I know
To Jane I owe a fealty of love.
We've planned our life for happiness.
We knew we'd never separate 'till death,
For we were one in thought, in hopes, and love.
We could not fail. Yet I would break apart
That bond of mind and heart. Our love transcends the real.
It is far more spiritual.
How can the heart be made to beat more slow?
How can the mind forget the things of past?
How can I tear asunder now that force
That binds both heart and mind in one? How? How?

Decision

No! It cannot be done!
My lovely Jane has won my simple heart
And to her every happiness I'll pledge
My future life. My sturdy love for her
Will never cease. She's mine and mine alone.
That voice that had besieged my soul
Now dies away in dire dim retreat.
I sought a freedom from those taunts and now
I have my battle won! I have been victorious!

* * *

But in a victory so dearly won.
There comes at once a conqueror's remorse
That creeps, and crawls, and bores in deep, within
The very heart, and murmurs once again
Its plaintive cry. It seeks to reassure
Itself and make its plea more firm and sound.
That unknown voice returns again and scolds
Me for my act. It cries and now bombards
My mind with thoughts of dark impending doom.
Why cannot the peace of life be my dessert?
Why must I be tortured so?
What have I done?
The verdant leaves have hid the oak from me.
The rose's petals conceal the fragrance sweet.
The flesh of man enshrines the heart within.
The world is thief of all its innate beauty.
The bad without has hid the good within.
Yes, I have been deceived, betrayed, and fooled.
I sought a life that would be true, but it
Was affectation pure and simple.
For I received the gifts of men and found
Them sapped with worldly venom. I liked them.
I thought it was the best that I could have.

The goal I set in life was happiness,
And thought Jane's love had given it to me.
But such a love was fleshy, human in
Its nakedness, and transitory, bound
To fade or die in its fragility.
I fled the sensual and lewd, and found
Myself on a barren desert, all alone.
I thought the world could give me what I sought
But it was vacant, void, and reft of good.
That joy sublime is found within myself,
An inner joy that comes from action.
'Tis better to do than to receive.
He who receives is thankless, discontent,
Supinely gleeful in his selfish mirth;
But he who does is thankful, happy in
His deed—a thing well done.
It is so with me.
I'll spurn the evil tides of worldly loves.
I'll grasp the good so rare in a lustful world.
I'll put those pearls in shallow pools of mud,
And make them sparkle with the glamor of
A new found purity.
I'll face the bickerings of men who sin.
I'll face the crimes of men and pardon them
With love divine and strong.
What have I done?
I've brushed aside the leaves and seen the oak.
I've caught the fragrance from the rose.
I've felt the heartbeat of a God-made man.
I've found the beauty of the world.

Rebuff

By MILTON LINCOLN, '40

“WELL done, Jimson. You have the satisfaction of having done your work well and conscientiously. You are a credit to the Department of Special Investigations of the Relief Bureau.” His self-approration was interrupted by an attendant.

“A Mr. Gold to see you.”

“Show him in.” Swiftly, Jimson saw to it that the chair for Mr. Gold was set in the proper place. He placed a pad of blank paper on top of the folder, and alongside of it a pencil.

A small middle-aged man was ushered into the chair. Jimson nodded, “Mr. Gold is it not?”

“Yes.”

“You’re 38?”

While his visitor confirmed this fact Jimson, slightly shocked looked him over quickly. Short and timid he had a thin face sharpened at the chin by a very small, pointed Van-dyke beard. The eyes were hidden behind lenses so thick that Jimson had difficulty identifying their mouselike color, or their red rims. Bushy hair ringed a bald pate like a wreath and his hands were thin and drawn.

Jimson bent over the case history, checking for dates when Gold had said that he had no money in the bank, or that he had

no resources. Several times he found what he sought and marked them. He examined the bank transcript and saw that Gold had \$500 while he was on relief claiming to be destitute. A clear fraud. A criminal fraud.

The drug store still belonged to Gold, too. A serious case. He made notes of the questions he wanted to ask, to make sure that he gave Gold a good going over. He stole a glance at his quarry, then, taking the forms out of the folder separately, he asked.

“These are the applications that you signed when you asked for relief, are they not?”

Gold nodded. Without inspecting them he accepted the statement as correct. Jimson made a note of the admission and put down the form. He selected the bookkeeper’s list of relief payments.

“Is this transcript of relief a correct statement of the money you got? Are the periods correct?”

Gold glanced at the sheet. “Must be, if you have it.”

Jimson made his notes, put down the form and leaned back in his chair.

“Mr. Gold. You saw the investigators a number of times while you were on relief, didn’t you?”

“Yes.”

“When you saw those investigators, you always told them that you had no money. Isn’t that so?”

“Yes.”

“You realize that this action on your part was a criminal act.”

Rebuff

Jimson looked at him sharply and sat up in his chair. After first pulling himself up erect, he sat back, tilting his chair. He focussed his attention on the glasses behind which were hidden the eyes.

The little face became older, jaundiced and waxy, with the lines more deeply graven and marked. The chin sank closer to the chest as the shoulders sagged. There was no answer. Jimson went on.

“While you were on relief, you deposited \$500 in the First Savings Bank.”

He waited a moment so that the older man facing him could answer.

“You had a drug store at Cherry and Fifth at the same time.”

Again Jimson waited. When no answer was forthcoming, he pressed his point and asked, “That’s true, isn’t it?”

The head went up and down weakly.

You got your relief by fraud. You knew you would never get relief if we knew about that money; or your store.”

He watched the old man carefully.

“That was a crime, and you can be sent to jail for it. Do you know that?”

The head jerked to attention so that the eyes could look at Jimson. Then, slowly wilting, it dropped forward. The face, sharpened to a point at the chin, threatened to bury itself into the chest. Through the glasses Jimson could see tears begin to form and the lines deepened still more. An eternity of oppression would be necessary to make such sorrow. The pain that grew inwardly drew in with it the lines that make their mark

and mark the character. Gaunt and haggard, the little man was now old far beyond his years.

Softly now, Jimson asked.

“Why didn’t you tell the investigator? Were you afraid they wouldn’t give you relief?”

Painfully, the old head turned left and right. Tears stole down the cheeks falling into ravine after ravine, stopping, then reinforced, completing their journeys. The lips started to move and Jimson bent forward to hear. He would let him speak as he wished. In the despair and sorrow there was yet dignity. The voice began, quietly and mournfully. Jimson could barely distinguish the words. At first he couldn’t understand what the old man was talking about, but he listened, holding his breath for fear that the sound might drown out the words. Without realizing it, he fell under a spell. The dignity and sorrow, the forced calm, the picture of age in youth, all part of a quiet struggle under a great weight, were factors to create the spell. Unconsciously Jimson acted so that it would not be broken.

“My friends! Could I anybody?”

There was a pleading anguish and distaste in the voice as the eyes looked off distantly. The whole manner gave evidence of an inner struggle against telling his story. A struggle that gradually subsided as the tale got under way.

“Do I want relief? Would I take relief for myself?” Dreamily, he answered his own question. “Oh, how nice it would be to stop. Just to stop. To shut off all the noises and words and thoughts that keep running through my head. To close my eyes and really sleep. Without dreams and without

Rebuff

thought. Not always to have to remember that, no matter what, I still have to get up in the morning. I could almost be happy if I were free to lie down, knowing that all was finished, and I could go on wherever I'm to go. And how simple. No pain. No suffering. Grace knew. That morphine, it is so easy. Just lie down and sleep."

He heaved a great sigh and then shook his head.

"But my little girl, she needs me too much."

He hunched himself further, his body bending forward in the chair. "You ask me why didn't I tell. How could I? Could I tell anybody that my own friends had killed Grace?"

He closed his eyes and shook his head in fond recollection. "She was a wonderful woman. Always thought of the other person." Again the voice stayed while the owner looked speculatively into the past.

"When I was graduated from the School of Pharmacy, I still had a few dollars. I took a trip to the other side, where I met Grace. In Spain. She was a graduate pharmacist, too, and we got together over things that interested us both. Soon we decided to get married. There we lived for a few years and then we took all the money we had left, and what we could get for the house that Grace got from her people when they died, and we came here. Our little girl was five. We were very happy. We took the money and bought a pharmacy store."

Jimson shifted carefully, fearful of breaking the thread of the story. The old man spoke on, completely ignoring Jimson. It was living again for him. A return to life from limbo. He sighed deeply again.

“At first it was a success. We were in a Jewish neighborhood, and business was enough to save a little money. After a little while things began to drop. I couldn’t understand it, and Grace, who did understand, wouldn’t tell me. Soon our savings were gone and we were in trouble.”

He placed his hand over his eyes and rocked back and forth in his chair. He didn’t hear Jimson speak to him. When he was ready to continue, he stopped rocking to pick up the monotone, like the eternal song of sorrow of his race.

“There was a Gentile janitor in our building and he told me later all about it. He was a good man, and was mad as the devil at the way the people had acted.”

“Grace came from a cultured family. To the people in the neighborhood, who could speak only Yiddish, she could never talk. They knew I was Jewish. They saw the name and they spoke to me in Yiddish. When I was in the store, everything was all right. When I was out, and they had to try to talk to my wife, they suspected that she was a Gentile. It became the talk of the neighborhood and some even asked the janitor—he was a Gentile—whether my wife was a Gentile.”

With his finger he brushed away the tears that trickled down his cheeks. Again he sighed, his body bent so far forward that he looked as though he might fall out of his chair.

“They talked among themselves, asking everyone in the neighborhood: ‘Do you know if Gold’s wife is a Jewess?’” The grocers were asked, “Does she buy and act like a Jewess?” In the synagogue they talked about her. They tried to get her father’s and mother’s name from the bank. They even questioned the little girl and some of them followed her to see how she acted.

Rebuff

“I knew nothing about it. I never heard even a whisper. But she knew. She was wonderful. She found out without asking. To her, a look, a nod of the head, a wink of the eye, some little expression, they all meant something.” He paused apprehensively. “Even my boyhood chums from the neighboring streets, true followers of God, regular attendants at Church gradually passed me by. My world seemed to be slipping away from under my feet.”

“And when she found out!”

He sat in his chair rocking back and forth gently again, unable to continue. The little beard trembled with the effort. The tears rolled down unashamed from behind misty spectacles. The monotone resumed, the head still nodding imperceptibly.

“I left her in the store one afternoon, while I went home to lunch, and when I came back I found her on the floor in the prescription room. On the table was an empty bottle of morphine. She left a little note saying she didn’t want to be a burden to me all my life. A burden to me!”

The first bitterness had had appeared in his tone. After a moment of heavy silence, the bitterness was completely gone.

“The teacher of my little girl told me it would be wrong and selfish, to think of killing myself and leaving my girl an orphan and unprotected.

“When my wife was buried, my friends from my youth sent somebody over to pay their respects and at the same time to see whether a priest or a Rabbi officiated. How disappointed they were to find that in death my Grace was to return to God through the spiritual goodness of both a priest and a Rabbi.”

The tears had stopped and he removed his glasses and started to wipe them. He appealed to Jimson.

“Could I tell them? The \$500 was from her insurance, and I gave it to the undertaker for the funeral. I took relief only after she had been buried for some time.”

“The store?” Bowed as he was, he was still able to shrug, “I never went back to the store, or passed in the neighborhood.”

Jimson opened the drawer of his desk, thrust the case folder inside and closed the drawer. He watched Gold get up and leave. Then, not trusting himself, he avoided all eyes, grabbed his hat and walked out of the office.



“We Wuz Robbed”

By THOMAS MULLIGAN, '42

IF a sophomore should lower himself to gaze upon the literary dribble of this freshman, he might instantly surmise that the tenor of this article is entirely inimical to second-year men. At the outset I wish to state that I firmly believe, in spite of outward evidence to the contrary, that a sophomore has a heart. His erroneous conscience (Religion, 101-C) will some day be righted. This theme, to get to the meat of this hash of words, means to expose the one great evil of the sophomores. Some may question the use of the singular “one great evil.” However, I have, after careful thought, decided upon the sale of books as their chief crime.

We came, innocent, unsuspecting freshmen, to the portals of old P. C. There descended upon us sly, unscrupulous sophs. The slaughter did not begin immediately. There was an interim. They carried their books around, let us know they had them. After this period of proper reluctance—designed to make the frosh book-hungry—they commenced their sales.

On the campus, in the corridors, halls, and classrooms, in the cafeteria—everywhere one saw sophomores accumulating profits from white men. The prescribed attitude of the sophomore seemed to be one of a person extending favors. If you were sold a book, it was not a sale, a barter, bargain, or trade; nay, it was a charity, a gift, favor, or the present of a soft heart. To them money was incidental. They sullied their honor if they

argued price with the frosh. You asked them for books, you, not they, tried to bargain, they, not you, said yes or no.

But perhaps this general type was better than the few sophomores who went so far as to actively bargain with the freshmen. These knew no price too high, nor any tale too implausible. Some even sold books at higher prices than the book shop. For that type there is only one way to go in life, and that is upward—for they have hit the bottom of moral degeneration.

The high-pressure boys generally worked in pairs. This, of course, was not made apparent to the intended victim. One knave would saunter up to some prospective customer, while the other would station himself conveniently near. The freshman, being given the usual line and the usual outrageous price, would look around for some impartial bystander to find out if the price was as sacrificial as was claimed. The other soph sister would slowly turn, looking as though he was interrupted in some deep reverie on things more spiritual and noble than sordid bargaining. He would then tell the freshman that this stranger's price was more than fair; in fact, he had just seen such a book sold for one dollar more, etc. Immediately the book would be bought. After completing the swindle, the sharks would then move off to find another one of the type said to be born every minute.

If one could believe the sophomores, there were very few who endeavored to rise scholastically by poring over their books. The book to be sold was said to have been bought new from the bookstore — as to when they omitted to say — after the merest glance through the pages, the book was then placed upon a shelf to collect dust for the remainder of the semester. Therefore the lucky freshman was getting a practically—how they stretched that word—new book at a second-hand price.

Even if the book was marked in you couldn't win. Pencil notes in the margins of pages were said to enhance the value of

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the book—for was not a book with notes or answers worth more than one without them?

We warn professor not to give any second-year men a quiz on illegal business practices—they know them all. What is it that has made them this way in one year? Or is this their real inner self asserting itself in the maturity of their years? Can't they realize the finer things of life? Must they forever trudge on with their heads buried in the mud of selfishness and their feet struggling in the quicksand of cheap deceptiveness?

We can only hope that with the passage of years their shallow minds shall see their frauds in the true light and that they shall repent of their crimes. Some day they may yet have a soul and not a cash-register for a heart.



Guns for Spain

By IRVING WARDLE, '39

EVEN now, when something happens to make me think about when I was a kid, I remember the fun me and Johnnie used to have playing down behind the old harness shop. We played a lot of different games and make-believes down in that big lot, but I think we used to play War more than any of the rest. We had a lot of soldiers, the kind you make yourself in those lead molds, and we'd spend whole afternoons staging advances and retreats and massacres until it was time to go down for papers. Johnnie and me both carried papers. That was when we were about nine or ten.

Johnnie was funny about War and killing even when the men were only lead soldiers. I liked to knock down whole batches of his men but Johnnie was different.

"You must bring that whole bunch of marines over here." Maybe I'd say something like that. "And I must wipe out the whole bunch. Then you kin attack over here."

"Aw, there aint no need of that," Johnnie would say. "There aint no need to knock 'em all down. Only knock down a few."

He never knocked down as many as me.

Then Johnnie and me grew out of playing soldiers and then, even though we did live next door, we didn't see so much of each other because Johnnie changed over to the sister's school and I kept on at old 14. We were starting to shoot craps then.

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instead of playing soldiers, and learning to laugh at the dirty stuff on the basement wall.

I went over to Masterson to high school when I graduated from 14 and Johnnie went to Saint John's. Johnnie was a good ball player, but he had to quit during his Junior year to work for his father when his other brother died. Johnnie's folks and mine always had about the same, just enough to drag from Saturday to Saturday.

Johnnie's father was a junkman. It always seemed darned funny to us that he was Irish and not a Jew. That's where Johnnie and me used to get the lead to make the soldiers when we were kids.

After I got out of high school my uncle took me on with him to learn bricklaying, and sometimes I used to see Johnnie come driving by in his father's old truck with a load of iron and papers, and, sometimes then we used to go out and drink beer on Friday nights.

Johnnie never bothered much with girls. He said they cost too much.

One day Johnnie's father had "& Son" painted on the side of the truck behind his own name and he made Johnnie a partner. And about three months after that the Spanish War broke.

Everything was great for Johnnie's folks when the war came. Scrap iron was damn near as good as gold in a way. They were shipping scrap iron as fast as they could over to Spain to make guns and the rest of the things they use in a war. Johnnie bought a new roadster and my mother told me one day that his family had bought a house about four blocks west. Things were booming for the junkmen then. Things looked so good Johnnie's folks put their savings in a home of their own.

There was a girl who lived over on Quentin Street who used to get around a lot. Sometimes I'd see her when I was com-

ing home late at night, sitting out there in a big car with some feller. I saw a lot of different kinds of cars.

Once I came by there about 2 o'clock and I saw Johnnie's nice new roadster outside her house, and she and Johnnie sitting in it.

"Hi-ya Jawn," I said and went along home.

My mother told me at breakfast one morning that Johnnie was going to marry that girl over on Quentin Street. His mother had been over visiting the night before.

They clamped down the arms and war materials embargo about two weeks after that; bottom just fell out of the scrap iron market when they stopped the shipments to Spain. It was a month before Johnnie was going to be married.

I didn't see Johnnie's car so much outside that house on Quentin Street, and then I didn't see it anymore at all.

One night Johnnie's mother came over when I was home. She said that Johnnie had lost his new roadster because he didn't pay the notes and he wasn't going to marry that girl on Quentin Street. She said that girl on Quentin Street was just no good. She said that Johnnie stayed at home nights all the time now.

When she went, I got thinking about when I was a kid and about all the fun Johnnie and me had then.



“A Couple of Years Ago . . . ”

By LOUIS C. FITZGERALD

IT was at a testimonial dinner for Father Howley, first Providence College faculty director of athletics, that I was originally brought to the realization of the P. C. I didn't know. The dinner was held last spring, I think, in North Providence, and a goodly number of alumni were there. The alumni who really helped to make Providence College great were present (my presence has never been satisfactorily explained) including such athletic names as Charlie Reynolds, Ed Doherty, Addis O'Reilly and others.

In the course of the evening almost everybody in the hall was called upon to reminisce of some happening that occurred during his acquaintance with Father Howley. Each had a different story to tell; some were humorous, some bizarre, but all giving an idea of what this young and struggling college had to contend with before her name became recognized and respected.

In this connection I have been more than happy to record some of the choicer bits that I can remember from my own four years, in the hope that when a list of anecdotes is finally compiled, some of the glories of the class of 1934 may be a little better understood, and I hope, appreciated.

A rather shy, good-looking gentlemanly football player by the name of Joe Wright matriculated at the same time I did. The Staten Island Mr. W. was well liked by all our class, graduating from president of the freshman class to the junior prom committee, and taking a post-graduate course in extra-curricular activities as captain of the football team in his senior year.

It was during the third year of monthly examinations that Joe and I planned to go to the Hub to see the Friar basketball team do a job on the five from Boston University. By that time, Joe had decided on a girl living in Valley Falls whom he thought it would be a good idea to take with him to the game. As the girl slated to endure my company for the evening lived in Lynn, I was more than agreeable to brother Wright's arrangements.

For sake of avoiding an argument we will call Joe's girl Mary, that not being her name. Pretty nearly on time, this being Joe's first attempt at going north of Pawtucket in search of a date, we picked up Mary, and hied ourselves to the game. The game itself was not too important—we missed one quarter, the Lynn lass missed the early train, and we had to wait for her, and B. U. missed beating Providence by about 17 points.

On the way up the air had that calm, cold quiet that presages a storm. Little flakes of snow were drifting down as we left the arena, but after all, snow in January isn't too startling. Ed Keegan stopped me on the way out of the arena and asked if we minded his riding home with us. "Not at all" was the response, "if you'll wait until I drive back to Lynn, I'll pick you up at the Statler at midnight."

Joe and the two girls wanted to go dancing after the game so I accompanied them. We had a good time and managed to

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get out of the restaurant about 12:30—Lynn and Providence yet to go. I stopped at the Statler to see the Keeg, and found him busy explaining to the house detective. I interjected a word to the plainclothesman to say that I would pick Ed up as soon as we could get back from the city of Lynn.

By this time it was snowing, the like of which Lake Placid and St. Moritz have yet to realize. The going was slow, but the roads were not impassable. In due course of time, say about 2 o'clock, I got back to the Statler for Mr. K., only to find him again in earnest conversation with the detective.

The four of us were finally on our way to Providence. Thick, wet, sticky snow fell silently and ominously on the windshield. For a length of time the windshield wipers functioned, then finding the sticky snow too much for them, failed. I always felt sorry for Keegan's wet feet as he got out to remove the snow from the windshield. That occurred every two or three miles. No lights on the highway, no traffic, no plows—no anything but the thick damp blanket, now some six or eight inches deep.

By four o'clock we reached Wightman's Diner. Off to the right is a back road which cuts off about twelve miles on a trip to Valley Falls, and of course we decided to take the shortcut. Never too good in the daytime, the road was rutty and piled high with falling snow. The field that the car finally skidded into wasn't any asset either and, as we wound up against a fence, Mary began to cry and started to recite her beads.

The car just wouldn't budge. A milkman came along and tried his best to get us back on the road, but to no avail. We pushed, we pulled, we put blankets under the wheels, but still we remained nestled close to the fence. Keeg thought a shovel

might help, and even a blind man could see that at least it wouldn't do any harm.

Ed and I walked the mile to the farm house, woke up the farmer and three neighboring dogs, and had to leave a copy of "General Metaphysics" as security for the shovel. When we trudged back to the car we now found Mary reciting two rosaries, one in each hand.

At six o'clock Mary was driven up to the door. Joe, the gentlemanly boy described in the opening sentence of this anecdote, went to the door with her. He didn't need to—as Mary ascended the steps, the door mysteriously opened, a hand reached out, and Mary was yanked in. Mr. Wright was left with his hat in his hand, and good intentions in his heart.

Of course our years in college were spent during the run of that noble experiment, with more emphasis on the noun than the adjective. I suppose, although I am not sure, that some of the glamor of undergraduate days is now gone, with a dispensary on every corner. At least I do know that some of the things that happened to us can't ever be duplicated.

Passing over such stories as the case of the fellow who ate a half a pound of butter because he wanted to drink at a dance and didn't want to become sick from the bootleg liquor, I will tell about the aforesaid Keegan and the way he put over the junior boxing bouts.

Keegan was a hard worker, and when he set about to accomplish a thing, he usually did it. Fortunately for the junior class, he was appointed on the committee for the boxing bouts. That meant that all he had to do was fill a program with advertising.

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At the time there was a certain Eddie Leonard known to many of our young gay blades. Keeg thought that Mr. Leonard would be good for an ad, and either because I had never met Mr. Leonard, or because I was treasurer of the class, I was invited to go along and watch how ads were obtained.

Up a dark flight of stairs, Mr. L. had a door with a mirror in it. From the inside you could look out and see who desired admittance, but from the outside, all you could see was your own reflection. As we rang for the bartender, Mr. Keegan told me of the sales psychology he was going to use. Ed never got a chance to practice it, because we never got in—brother Leonard thought I was a “revenoor,” and wouldn’t open the portals. Ed told me later that the ad in the program reading “Compliments of a Friend” was the result of a return visit that he paid to the establishment, without the services of the treasurer of the class.

I wish I knew the whole story about Bob Lucey’s bugle. It’s an interesting tale, and as near as I can remember, it has to do with the pre-game spirit of the Rhode Island State-Providence College gridiron clash. The Friars had wandered off their campus one night, and by some means or another had returned with Rhody’s pet mascot, a sleepy-eyed ram, entirely un-car broken, it was later authoritatively reported.

The Kingston boys, not at all pleased with the idea of their ram traveling the sacred precincts of College Road, then known as Pagan Alley. En masse, thousands, nay millions, of State undergraduates swarmed up on Friar Hill one night along about eleven bent on getting their mascot, the P. C. senior president, or both.

As the motorcade approached, Mr. Lucey was just tucking away his bugle for the night. Half of his pajamas were on and half—well, they never have been found since. Noting the glare of headlights, and hearing the Kingston songs and cheers, Bob dashed out of his house and with bugle a-blowing, roused the neighborhood for miles around. Through doors, out windows, and over porches scrambled the battalions who were to protect what never rightfully belonged to them anyway. With Bugler Bob leading the way they marched in disarray up to Harkins Hall to put to rout the invaders.

When the smoke cleared some 30 minutes later, the Friars still had the Ram and their senior president; while Lucey had his bugle and half of the half of his pajamas that he started out with.

Probably the last item I will have room to mention in this article concerns a debating trip to New York with J. Ford McGowan, a smooth and polished talker, and Arthur Geoghegan, a deep and studious thinker. Debating differs from baseball playing in that you don't have to keep in condition on a road trip, consequently some nights the debaters didn't get to bed until half-past ten or eleven.

Mr. Geoghegan, who was finally graduated with honors, as was also Mr. McGowan, decided that after the last debate he would visit a lady, whom he referred to as his aunt, out on Long Island. There being a symphony at Carnegie Hall that night, Ford and I weren't able to make the trip with him. However, we were to meet him at Columbia about 11 o'clock, and drive home.

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Arthur didn't show up at 11, nor did he at 12. At one we went to bed, still awaiting Mr. G. When we were rudely awakened at 3, we knew that Art had finally arrived at 116th Street. The story that he told of his delay was this:

“I've been riding around on the subway since ten o'clock. I couldn't find Columbia and I guess I've been all over the city. But it was cheap enough—it only cost me a nickel.”

Queried as to the contents of a bundle he was carrying under his arm, Arthur said that they were RABBITS which his “aunt” had given him to take home to his young sister. At three-thirty Ford, Arthur, the rabbits and I started for Providence. And if, as the records show, we made the trip in three hours and a half, remember it was only because we didn't want the rabbits to die, or do anything else before we hit these plantations.

And now a cloud hovers over my landscape. It is darkly ominous, resembling work very much. It blots out what many more memories I would like to conjure up, and already I feel myself writing “News Release for Immediate Publication . . .” Providence: Alumni certainly had some good times while they were at college . . . Look for story behind story . . . and finally, 30, signum mortis, on every story.



Sights and Sounds

By ROBERT C. HEALEY, '39

The child watched horrified as they put the bloody body in the trunk. He wanted to cry out but something caught him. They carried the trunk down the stairs and he followed them with terrified eyes. Suddenly he cried out and it echoed through the place. His mother grabbed him by the arm and carted him out of the theatre.

●

“Really what do you think the moral was?” said the first lady as they came down the balcony steps. “I can’t figure it out, and I’m absolutely lost if I can’t find a moral. Everything must have a moral. That’s why we have so much sin in the world today. But I do think he was right in running off with her. Dear me, let’s get home.”

“Yes,” said the lady at the opera, “I go to everything that’s art. It don’t make no difference, if it’s Chinese or Yiddish. We hear it’s good and we go. That’s all there is to it—Hyman, pass me a gumdrop.”

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“Come on, Frank, and play for them. You can study for the exam later.” He played that night wildly. Variations on a theme of modern swing. He played on and on until they forgot and he forgot and only music remembered. The next day he flunked.

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The little Italian fruit seller was sad. “I work days and she works nights and I never can get a date. I almost took her out one night but she had to go some place. But some day I’ll show her. I’ll make *her* love me.”

Prelude

LIONEL J. LANDRY, '40

THE feverish patient heard the sound of a nun's clacking rosary and turned his eyes to the distant door. The outline of her broad black robes was lost in the darkness and only the approaching noise of her beads and her dimly visible white coif made known her presence.

"Is there anything you would like to have?" she whispered. For a long time the patient said nothing, letting her words blend with the music and noises of the night: with the sad chirp of the crickets, like the twinkling of the stars converted into sound; with the light, monotonous hum of the San Francisco night; with the throaty, sensuous trills of a night-bird, far away in the mysterious depth of the night.

Then he said, "Pepita! You have come at last, Pepita? But why do you wear black? Why are you dressed in mourning? On such nights you should wear your mantilla." And his voice trailed off into silence.

He looked at the nun's black form float away and disappear in the black void of the opposite end of the lightless room and turned to the black ceiling. There queer oblongs of vivid white light were projected by a lamp in the street below. He stared at the rectangles, which only seemed to intensify the brooding, inky black of the cavernous room.

Sweat trickled down his sides and soaked him through. He struggled to free himself of his suffocating blanket, to let the

night-breezes dry and cool his burning, humid body. Long through the night he tossed on his sickbed, writhing, hot, weary, until he saw something which made him sit bolt upright. He tried with all his might to shield his eyes from the vision which was forming before him; he clutched at them with his fingers, blindfolded himself with his palms, but to no avail. Regardless of his agitation, the vision came, bringing with it many scenes, full of soft, diffused colors. Exhausted, he sank back, realizing that to close his eyes could not prevent those flashing images from entering into his sick brain.

“Lima!” he said, half to himself, half to the night. Despite his desire to evade those resurrections of impressions long dormant, the patient felt impelled by a queer curiosity to gaze avidly at the memories which his delirium crystallized into actuality before his very eyes.

Lima, he recognized it easily. It had been on his second expedition to the old Inca ruins. As an archeologist, young George Banks had been among the most brilliant of the world and his research on lost Peruvian civilizations had merited him a respected name. It had been on this, his second venture, that he met Josefina Juarez, and her widowed, nervous mother, Doña Isabel. He had always called Josefina “Pepita” and her mother “the widow”. It had not been long before he fell in love with Pepita, and the widow, not wishing to pass up such a good match, had readily consented to their betrothal. Yes, Lima was familiar.

But oddly enough the picture which his fever evoked was a vague composite photograph, for there were the sinister purple and white Andes, the gleaming facade of the ancient Spanish cathedral, the sunlit market-place, warming with Indians in gay, particolored shawls, and the interior of Widow Juarez’s spacious garden—all placed in the same picture, seemingly overlapping one another. Now one aspect of the picture faded into nothing, only to be replaced by another familiar scene—Pepita in her

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festal mantilla, or again the Easter procession in the great square before the cathedral. And through it all, the naturally bright colors of sunny Peru were intensified to a remarkable degree by the patient's distorting delirium, so that the cathedral gleamed a dazzling white and the azure of the skies took on an immeasurable depth.

It was strange to see himself in those scenes. It was as if he had all at once become two persons, the one the actor, the other the bewildered and exhausted audience; the one the famous young himself of thirty years ago, the other the cowering, sick himself of the now. The former was the indistinct, vague memory which the vision endowed with life and motion; and all in all, it seemed that he had been taken back, body and soul, back thirty years to his stay in Peru and yet had stayed back in his hospital cot to watch.

He had tried to prevent the vision, but now his resistance disappeared before a new-born eagerness, a morbid, exaggerated eagerness to see to the end what the brilliant, grotesque phantoms would do. His memory told him what had happened; his intuition told him what would happen. Nevertheless he wanted to see.

Above all, he dreaded the disappointment of a half-finished dream. He wanted to see all, all, and tried to rid himself of that overpowering fatigue, of the heat and the leadenness which were torturing his body. His supreme wish was to see . . . to see . . .

* * *

"Pepita!" the widow Juarez's voice was unnaturally shrill. "Hurry, or we shall miss the procession. You must excuse her, Señor, she will be down soon. Pepita, do hurry, child; the señor is waiting. Oh, but that girl . . . Pepita!"

And suddenly Pepita was there, her presence a natural companion for the warm sunlight that streamed into Widow

Juarez's best parlor. George felt an agreeable glow possess him, as if the sun's beams had permeated his whole body. His heart beat a little faster at her graceful, old-fashioned curtsey and her rich, deep voice bidding him a happy Easter.

They were mounting the steps of the cathedral, Pepita, the widow and he. The abrupt change of scene seemed quite normal, and the fact that there had been no transition from the parlor to the Great Square passed unnoticed to the patient. The great bourdon was booming away, up in one of the towers. It caused a tingling sensation in George's ears and the overtones, the vibrations, deep-toned and loud penetrated to his very marrow. And when he looked up to see the bells, the belfries seemed to stretch far into the blue Easter sky.

They made their way from the white sunlight of the outside to the warm, glowing interior. As they took their places near the sanctuary, George turned towards the Resurrection window, to be dazzled and stunned by the bright mass of colors. Emerald green trees, golden sand, wine-red plumes on thunder-struck Roman soldiers, and in the center, a Man with a clear, white skin, arising from a silvery sepulchre. The sun, shining through, bathed the filled cathedral with deep, rich hues.

A few minutes passed. The cortege was entering. People knelt as young acolytes in white cassocks and filmy white lace surplices walked up the aisle. In measured tread the solemn procession, all gold and scarlet and black and white filed by, while a choir sang exultant *Resurrexit's*. The splendor, the profound ecstatic atmosphere of the ceremony enraptured George completely.

But he started when he heard the clinking of the censers beating against their golden chains. Incense! He dreaded the moment when the great golden canopy should be borne past him, when priests would swing laden censers and fill the air with

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a sweetish, heady aroma. It was strange, he reflected, how the very smell of it had always affected him. Giddiness and that unbearable feeling of being taken bodily into the air had never failed to impair him at the slightest wisp of the fragrant smoke. But for Pepita's sake . . .

* * *

The patient felt oppressed and stifled, as if the night had become a lethal pressure all about him, but with a supreme effort he endeavored to see to the end this strange vision, this fantastic mirage.

* * *

The procession had gone by and had entered the sanctuary, where hundreds of candles burned with a clear and steady flame. Incessant blue-gray clouds drifted lazily from the altar, and as the service progressed, they increased in quantity, so that the whole spacious nave of the cathedral was draped in a mobile, shifting veil. Moving, mysterious, illusory, the blue clouds floated about, tinged with the mellow tints of the old stained-glass.

Soon everything about George became wavering and unsteady. He tried to master the encroaching dizziness, but with little success, and at length, no longer capable of bearing the oppressive perfume, he turned to Pepita, whispered to her and stumbled to a nearby doorway.

He had no sooner stepped outside than the sun seemed to lose its brilliance. There were no clouds in the sky, yet unmistakably the sun became dimmer as each moment passed. The cathedral steps quivered beneath him a little, but he attributed both strange occurrences to the dazed, drugged state of his mind.

The clear, bright air, inhaled in deep draughts, soon restored him. The earth shook again, slightly. A glance toward the

great plaza, at the far end of the cathedral, revealed nothing unusual, except that the sun shone with an eerie half-light. Only a moment later a great rumble, a thunderous roar accompanied a horrible upheaval of the ground. An unseen hand ripped open the plaza and created a large fissure the whole length of the square. The side of the cathedral showed fast-growing cracks, until it was apparent that the walls should soon fall in upon the congregation. The rumble ceased, only to be replaced by another terrifying sound. The crumbling of adobe and masonry mingled with screams and cries reached his ears; the continuous, loud drone of falling fragments, punctuated by hollow booms as huge pieces of stonework crashed down—"Santa Rosa!" "Santa Rosa!" ejaculations from wounded, dying worshippers—the great belfry tottered a little, then plunged straight into the milling crowd in the cathedral . . .

The full extent of the horror of the catastrophe was not long in impressing George, but another thought was foremost in his mind . . . his Pepita was somewhere in that huge mass of debris. He dashed into the cathedral through the same narrow doorway through which he had sought the pure outdoor air.

The candles glowed through the hazy air, like so many suns attempting to pierce the mists of a cloudy day. The omnipresent clouds of incense had grown thicker and thicker. The priests, he saw, were still chanting, as if there had been nothing to interrupt their sacred service, but he could not hear a note of their singing. The crowd was crazed, imploring; he could see from the movements of their lips that they were crying out "Santa Rosa", but he could not hear a syllable of their frantic prayers. There was a great gap in the roof at the opposite end of the cathedral, but he did not see it. And suddenly he saw Pepita. His only intent was to reach her, to carry her out of the crumbling cathedral.

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Heedless of the curling, agitated smoke which was beginning to envelop him, he lingered on in a desperate effort to reach his beloved. All about him were unseen hindrances; chains, invisible, yet none the less strong, pulled at his ankles. He felt violently sick, and the swirling incense blinded him. But still he kept on, toward the vanished face of Pepita.

“Pepita!” he shouted. “Pepita, where are you, Pepita?” There was no answer, no sound. All was silent, save for a noise comparable only to that of a rushing wind in a deep cave. “Pepita!” he cried hoarsely.

Always those invisible chains multiplied, until he felt that he could not drag his feet a step more; always he grew dizzier and dizzier. If only there could appear a rift in that maddening cloud, or even a minute interstice. On and on he plunged, losing himself completely in the drifting, insubstantial masses, until he felt that he too was nothing more than a volatile, capricious wraith. And slowly the clouds parted above him. There on the ceiling of the cathedral he saw three oblongs of bright white light. And the shadowy blue-gray incense closed in again.

He felt that he was being picked up bodily into that insane emptiness and then that he was falling, into a deep, bottomless abyss of blue smoke, falling forever, falling . . .

* * *

A few moments later when the silent nun entered the ward again, she bent over George Banks's bed and saw that he lived no more.

Brother Sebastian's Monkey

By WALTER F. GIBBONS, '39

BROTHER Sebastian had lived all but two of his twenty years in the little monastery of Ravalles, in the foothills of the Spanish Pyrenees. Abandoned by unknown parents at a wayside shrine among the hills, he had been found by the kindly fathers of a nearby religious house, and adopted by them. Since that day, eighteen years ago, he had not ventured beyond the rambling stone walls encircling the monastery grounds. Whatever he knew of the outside world had been gleaned from the musty old manuscripts in the library, and the lectures of Father Ambrose.

Ambrose had been his teacher and guide from the first. Kind, gentle, though perhaps a bit unschooled in worldly affairs, he had taught the boy to say his first Pater Noster. On bended knees the two would recite the beads, presenting an oddly incongruous picture, the old monk solemnly chanting his prayers, the little boy, still but a baby, absently repeating the meaningless words, all the while twisting and twining the fascinating little wooden beads of the monk's rosary. With the years, however, the boy grew in faith and piety, so that it was a delight to the godly men of the house to contemplate the youth at prayer. Such innocence, such love, such celestial beauty radiated from his countenance that it would bring tears of silent joy to the eyes of the older monks who knew the value of such spiritual peace.

Brother Sebastian's Monkey

One day Brother Sebastian, toiling in the fields later than usual, chanced to stray to a long-neglected corner of the grounds, where the high stone wall was beginning to crumble in places. Drawn by an irresistible curiosity, the pious young monk approached a breach in the masonry, where the stone had already fallen away, and peered out into the world.

Not a stone's throw from the wall, on a grassy hillock, sat a young shepherdess, surrounded by a little herd of grazing sheep. Leaning backward on her arms, face raised to the Mediterranean skies, she lay there on the turf drinking in the fading day, all her rounded throat and face bathed in the soft mellow light of a sinking sun. Her loose, fair tresses, burnished by the slanting rays, shone like a golden halo. Just then, as if to complete the idyllic scene, she began to sing a gentle song, a haunting Spanish madrigal from days gone by, her only accompaniment being the gentle lowing of the sheep.

*She lived among the mountains wild
Where first I saw her.*

*I knew that she was Nature's child,
And that I loved her.*

*She found her way within my breast
And there I made a little nest*

*Wherein she dwelt, until I felt
That she was mine, all mine.*

Stock still Sebastian stood and gazed, for what might have been an eternity. The angelus pealed across the fields, summoning the monks to prayer, and still he stood, rooted to the spot, unable to tear himself away while the vision remained. Brain numbed, his parched senses alone functioning, he drank in her fragile, sensuous beauty. Thinking nothing of the fu-

ture, forgetting all his past experience, he seemed to give up his whole being, soul and body, to the exciting reality of the present. Finally her song was ended, and as Sebastian watched her preparations for departure he was painfully conscious of her sinuous grace, and his breast contracted with an unfamiliar feeling. She crossed the glade, and disappeared over a gentle slope, but still he stood, following in his thoughts this ethereal creature from a world apart.

At last he turned slowly back towards the great grey monastery building, feeling that a new force had entered into his life. Uneasily he contemplated his return to the deadening monastic routine. From beyond that wall, life, in all its exhilarating freshness and vigor seemed to call him. It was with difficulty that he resisted that call.

“But do I want to resist it?” he heard himself saying.

For an instant the question stopped him in his tracks. All his habit patterns, so carefully laid down during the past eighteen years, seemed to totter precariously before this onslaught. But only for an instant. No sooner had he spoken the question than he brushed it aside angrily. Quickening his pace he continued along to the monastery. But as he hastened through the twilight shadows he became vaguely conscious of a strange presence that dogged his footsteps. Unaccountably, ridiculously, he felt not completely alone, as though something of this newly discovered world were following his flight.

Time and again he turned quickly in his tracks, trying to surprise he knew not what. Each time, as he did so, he could have sworn he saw just the faintest tip of a shadow darting behind a rock or a clump of bushes. Though he had never known

Brother Sebastian's Monkey

fear or superstition, this vague, intangible feeling clutched at something way down in his breast. He shuddered, and hastened on.

Back in his cramped cell at the close of day, he sat hypnotized before the barred little window, gazing out over swelling hills, distinguishable from the starless sky only by their intensified blackness. A storm was rising. In the tense atmosphere Brother Sebastian felt an ominous foreboding. Out there somewhere in that apparent void a little shepherd girl was singing.

Never before had Sebastian seen a woman. Indeed he had heard little spoken of them, for all of the female species except insects and birds were rigidly excluded from the grounds. For him they had existed in a vague, abstract way, a sort of semi-reality, unspeakably evil. Good women there had been, he had been told, but these few had long since ceased to exist. He recalled the words of the bitter, ascetic Father Basil, aged Superior of the Community. "Sebastian, you are probably a bastard. It makes no difference. You are here, and you must be good. Avoid women, they are evil. Shun them as the black death. It is the only way to salvation." Yet, this hauntingly beautiful creature—.

A low knock at the door started him out of his reverie. That would be Father Ambrose.

"Come in, Father," Sebastian called.

The door opened slightly, and Father Ambrose, ancient now, and decrepit, slipt into the room. His fine, white hair, brushed back from a high forehead, gave him a serene detached

appearance, as though his soul had already left this world, and was waiting for his body in another one far better.

“God bless you, my son,” he said in a gentle, beautiful voice.

“And you, Father.” Sebastian was glad of the interruption, glad of someone to talk to, someone to take his mind from this strange affair.

“And how is your manuscript progressing?”

“Very well, Father. Let me show you.” He took from the drawer of his writing table a great scroll, the work of another, which he had been commissioned to embellish. Since boyhood he had shown a rather unusual talent for engraving the capital letters of chapter headings. The latest one, which he showed now to Father Ambrose, was a large capital “T”, sketched so as to resemble the Cross, the expiring figure of Christ hanging limp on the cross-bars. At the foot was a fine little figure representing Mary weeping miserably on the ground.

The old priest scrutinized it for a long time in silence. Then he said quietly,

“Excellent, Sebastian, excellent. Quite the best thing you have done. This Mary, really an exquisite piece of work. Do you know, young man, you are rapidly gaining a reputation for your work?”

“Do you really think it lifelike?” Sebastian asked. “You know I’ve never seen—that is, you know, women aren’t allowed within the monastery grounds. I only know from paintings and statues.”

“Ah, there’s no doubt it is realistic enough. Almost too realistic, I’m afraid,” he murmured thoughtfully.

Brother Sebastian's Monkey

"Father, why does everyone think women so evil? Weren't there any good women besides Mary?"

"Now, now, Brother, I shouldn't worry myself about that. There are enough things—"

"But—"

"Yes?"

"Well, of course I know nothing about it, but it seems to me that—well, that *all* women can't be bad. Some, perhaps, but not all."

"Young man, there are some things—." He stopped, and glanced up sharply at Sebastian. "But yet, of course," he continued slowly, haltingly, as if to himself. "I should have known there comes a time—. Tell me." He fixed his eyes intently upon the young man. "Tell me, Sebastian, what is the trouble?"

"Why—why nothing," Sebastian stammered, coloring. "I was just thinking—." His voice trailed off. He could not bring himself to tell the old man. Instinctively, for the first time in his life he felt the barrier of the generation that lay between them. It stung his conscience to keep anything from Father Ambrose, his confessor, as well as intimate friend, but there it was. He couldn't tell him.

"Yes, I suppose—I might have known something—." The old priest was deeply moved. Without being able to guess what it was, he realized that something had happened to stir the curiosity of his protege.

Sebastian, torn between remorse and a chilling dread that Ambrose would guess the trouble, felt that he must offer some explanation. Trampling ruthlessly on his conscience, avoiding the searching eyes of the other, he mumbled something

about "that statuette—in the corridor. The Boeotian Woman, you know. It attracted my attention. I guess—."

"Ah, yes, I see." Ambrose breathed a sigh. "I see. Well, I must leave you. And I suggest, Sebastian, my boy," he continued, rising to depart, "I suggest that henceforth you sketch only male figures. More virile, you know, more inspiring to the students who will use these manuscripts."

"Yes, Father, as you say." Sebastian felt completely disgusted with himself. As the door closed he leaned back against it and shut his eyes tightly for a moment, in a vain attempt to stem the flood of self accusation that welled up in his soul. Mingled with the image of the wronged priest, the remembrance of the shepherdess seemed to vie for supremacy in his mind. Then, supplanting both, the vague shadow that had pursued him through the fields, gradually overcast his mind, darkening it to all else but a feeling of futility, and despair. For a moment he wondered what was to become of him.

Just then, a strange, unearthly noise cut through his brain like a knife. He started, eyes wide open, every sense quivering. What was it?

"Oh, God! God!" He nearly swooned. There, in the middle of the floor, dancing, leaping, bounding, shrieking in a mad frenzy of glee, was a small white monkey! A monkey—fantastic, incredible—a monkey in his room.

At his cry the mad creature only increased the fury of his activity, racing in narrow circles round the room, bounding insanely from bed to table to desk, all the while that weird, howling, demoniacal noise flooding the room. The awful shriek reverberated through Sebastian's brain as if to burst his temples. His breath stopped, he staggered back into a cor-

Brother Sebastian's Monkey

ner, crashing to the floor an antique statue given him by Ambrose. Still the ungodly din persisted.

Momentarily Sebastian expected the whole community to burst into his room. It might have been twenty seconds or twenty ages that he stood thus, trembling, waiting for someone to come. But it soon became evident that no one was aroused by the noise. Perhaps—perhaps this was all his imagination, this fantastic scene. He waited for the little beast to disappear, to be absorbed back into the air, whence it must have come.

Suddenly it ceased its violent career and, smirking and grinning with an almost human malevolence, it sidled up toward him. Shrinking back into his corner Sebastian tried to scream, but found his throat shackled, his tongue bound. Not a sound escaped his petrified lips. This deathly quiet, following the shattering clamor, was worse than the silence of the grave. Completely unnerved, he slumped to the floor, eyes bulging, mouth drooling, face distorted. Then as if tiring of inactivity, the monkey dashed furiously to the window, and perched upon the narrow ledge, seemed to beckon Sebastian to follow him through the window. Finally, with one last, piercing shriek it hurled itself through the bars, and disappeared into the night. Shattered, trembling in every limb, Sebastian flung himself fully clad on the rough cot and slept till morning.

* * *

Returning from lauds the following morning, Sebastian paced nervously back and forth in his dark cell. Was it all a dream, that mad scene of the previous evening, all but the product of an over-wrought imagination? No, it was not a dream. That he realized. Every muscle of his body was stiff and sore, as after a violent physical struggle. His whole head

throbbled, his eyeballs burned mercilessly. Suddenly he recalled the upset statuette. Lighting a candle he crossed to the corner. There it lay—shattered. Father Ambrose's gift. Well, he must invent some explanation. This time it would not be so difficult. He awoke thirsty in the night, and rising to fetch a drink, bumped it accidentally. That would do. It didn't seem to make much difference, anyway. Already something in him had begun to change.

During the night the storm had broken, and for two days it rained incessantly. Those two days were a living hell for Sebastian. Every fibre of his being longed for the sight of the shepherdess, yet, while the rain persisted he knew she would not come. He followed out the dull routine of the community mechanically, in a half-stupor. On the morning of the second day, passing through the west corridor, he noticed that the Boeotian Woman had been removed. It hardly mattered. If only he could glimpse again at that lovely vision.

On the morning of the third day the sun rose bright and warm, dispelling the hovering mist that loitered after the storm. Almost feverish in his haste, yet trying to preserve a conventional decorum, Sebastian hurried through his routine duties and escaped into the fields. Gradually he worked his way over to the gap in the wall and peered through, fearful that she had not returned. There she was, reclining on the grass, a little to the left of the former spot, but very close to the wall. Simultaneously, he became frightfully aware of the presence of the little white monkey. No sooner had he set eyes upon the girl than the diabolical little beast jumped up before him, prancing and whirling about his feet as before, but making only a low, chuckling sound. Sebastian paled. Cold sweat coursed down his face. All the horror of that other night rushed back

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upon him, doubled and redoubled in intensity. Back against the stones he lay, panting through rigid jaws. What, in God's name, did this mean?

Suddenly the monkey dashed a little way out into the field and stopped, as if beckoning him to approach the girl. Back and forth it ran, coaxing, tempting. As the shock wore off, Sebastian recovered, and now watched fascinated. What did the creature want? No, no, of course he couldn't. With a nervous little laugh he shook his head at the monkey, and called it back, lest it attract the attention of the maiden. As it returned to his heels, and playfully clambered up his legs, he patted it gingerly. For some time he watched the girl, unobserved, and when he turned to leave, the monkey trotted at his heels. From that day forth, it was his constant companion.

At first he thought it inevitable that the monkey would be discovered and driven out of the monastery, but as he passed through corridor, meeting various brethren, he realized that it had not been perceived. When Ambrose visited his cell that evening, just after complin, though it sat upon the window-ledge in full view, he seemed not to notice it, and said nothing. For a while Sebastian wondered at this, but as time passed he gradually came to realize that only to him was the monkey visible. Why had he been singled out in this manner? What meaning did the monkey have for him? In some vague fashion he knew that it was connected with the shepherdess, yet for a long time he did not fully comprehend his trial.

Day after day he continued to visit the now familiar corner, fearing that each time would be the last. Yet still she came, moving around the little glade, back and forth before the wall, with her herd. At times Sebastian struggled with his subtle temptation. Conscience-stricken, he would vow not to

return to the wall again, but as often as he vowed the little monkey was there, pulling at his legs, pushing from the rear, wildly urging him on to keep his secret rendezvous. Almost it seemed to whisper in his ear, reasoning away with diabolical argument the pangs of remorse which tormented him. Each evening the tired monk, returning from the fields, tossed on his rough cot all through the long hours of darkness, unable to sleep, harrassed by tempting images clamoring for his attention. It was a relief when the dull alarm for lauds finally sounded through the building each morning, bringing at last a respite from his harrowing vigil. Gradually the strain began to tell. Bloodshot, sunken eyes, and hollow cheeks; hurried, nervous gestures; a queer little laugh that seemed to startle even himself; all these gave testimony of the inner struggle. Ambrose noticed, of course, as did all the others, but hesitated to speak to the boy, not knowing the cause or the nature of the malady. Sebastian bore his cross in silence, jealous indeed, lest it be snatched from him, for the shepherdess had become his whole existence, driving out all else from his mind.

Then, one day, the inevitable happened. As he stood there, watching from behind the wall, the monkey unexpectedly dashed out across the intervening space, and pranced around the girl. Slowly she looked up, and, apparently ignoring the monkey, caught sight of Sebastian, who was too stunned to draw back out of view. After a moment of confusion and blushing, she smiled, and beckoned to the monk. Aghast, Sebastian stood for a moment breathless. Then, throwing down his tools, he fled headlong towards the monastery, as if pursued by the devil himself. He did not stop until he reached the safety of his own cell, where he fell breathless to the hard stone floor. For some time he lay thus, unable to move. When finally he bestirred himself, it was long past the hour for the evening office. Sinking

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to his knees before the lighted candle on his little shrine, he prayed to the Lord for mercy. But there was the monkey again, tantalizing, suggesting, whispering in his ear, until only the distorted logic of Satan seemed valid. In despair he flung himself away from the altar, and began to pace the floor. Wheeling, walking, turning again; now faster, now slower, but never for an instant stopping. The sun sank; the moon sailed up serenely from beyond the hills, crossed the heavens, and dipped below the far horizon. Still he paced.

As the first light of dawn streaked across the skies, putting to shame the fragile flame of the guttering candle, Sebastian suddenly halted his pacing. Through bloodshot, watery eyes he saw, standing there within his cell—the shepherdess. Clad only in the gray mist which still defied the dawn, she stood there, pale and motionless. Sebastian wavered. Mind struggled with body, soul struggled with beast, Sebastian fought tooth and nail with the little white monkey. Alternately pulling and pushing, the monkey impelled him forward; his conscience fettered his feet. There was an awful silence. Finally with a dull thud Sebastian fell to the floor senseless.

Father Ambrose found him lying there in a heavy stupor. Gently he raised him up, and put him to bed, without rousing him. For two weeks he remained in bed, cared for by Ambrose, but not a word passed his lips. As soon as he was able to stand he made his way to the room of the old abbot, Father Basil, who himself had been confined for several months under a wasting illness. As Sebastian stood in the door-way, squinting into the semi-darkness of the cell, a hollow, cavernous voice rasped out of the corner,

“Well?”

“Father, I—it’s I, Sebastian.”

“Well, come in, come in. Don’t stand there gaping. Are you waiting for a servant to announce you?”

The young monk timidly approached the bedside. The old ascetic was propped up by seas of pillows, and, staring out of the gloaming with his large, luminous eyes, he looked for all the world like some awful bird of prey. His face was terrible. Blueish-green skin, pulled tightly over incredibly knife-like features, and hanging in loose folds, as though left over, upon what might once have been a neck. His arms stuck out from the sheets like crooked, old sticks. Sebastian suddenly heard his rasping,

“Well, what are you staring at?”

“Uh? Oh,—oh, nothing, Father, nothing. I’m sorry if—”

“What do you want?”

“I don’t like to bother you, Father, but there’s something troubling me, and I thought—”

“You thought what? What do you expect of me. I’m not exactly well, myself.”

“Oh, Father, help me!” The boy sank to his knees before the bed, burying his head in the covers. “Please help me.”

“Come, come, my boy.” The voice no longer rasped, but became almost soft and gentle. “Surely it’s not as bad as all that.”

“It is, it is,” Sebastian almost shrieked. “That monkey! Help me, Father, please help me.”

“Now, suppose we start at the beginning. Then we might be able to make something out of all this nonsense.” The old man stretched forth the pronged shadow that was a hand and gently stroked the young man’s head. Tactfully, slowly, he drew

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out the whole story from Sebastian. Then with a deep sigh, he leaned and closed his eyes, as if asleep. He started to talk, almost in a whisper.

“My boy, you should have come sooner. However, you didn't so I suppose there's nothing we can do about that. It's not too late yet, I think. This is what you must do.”

* * *

Sebastian returned to his room in a daze. “Strangle the monkey, my boy, strangle it to death.” The words kept ringing through his head, swelling, ebbing, then surging up again like a turbulent sea. As he entered entered his cell the little demon, stalking back and forth like a caged tiger, shot at him a hideous look of contempt and ridicule. Sebastian faltered, paralyzed by his dread of the animal. But the relentless, resurgent tide, pounding up against his conscience, drove him forward. “Strangle it. Strangle it. Strangle it.” Stolidly, mechanically, he shuffled forward like a robot towards the monkey. It dodged, darted about the room, from one corner to another. He followed. Then came the end. As it attempted to elude his grasping hands, it leaped up onto the little shrine where the sacrificial candle burned night and day. Like a moth caught in a strong beam of light, it hovered for a moment over the flame. Suddenly the slender wisp of flame licked up, like a great fire, completely enveloping the beast. For a second only it raged thus, but when it subsided the monkey was no more. It was completely consumed, leaving not a trace of its former self.

Sebastian stared. Then racked by alternate sobs and hysterical laughter, he slumped to his knees before the shrine, not comprehending the manner, but only the fact of his deliverance. At last he was free! A galley slave reft of his shackles. A prisoner rolled from the rack. His soul soared up like a bird toward heaven. At last, at last he was free!

The door opened slowly, and Father Ambrose entered.

“Sebastian, I was wondering—”

“Oh, Father, Father Ambrose. I want to tell you. Now I can tell you all about it. At last I’m free.”

“What’s this? Free?”

“Yes, gloriously, beautifully free. I’m floating on clouds, and the world way down below seems an infinitesimal little speck, only a little blotch on the universe. Up here all is sunlight and beauty, alabaster mountains looming up out of an ocean of blue. Up here is God, and I am with Him.”

“Sebastian, whatever on earth are you talking about?”

“Sit down, Father, sit down, and I’ll tell you.”

“But wait. I’ll tell you first what I came for. I’ve just been given a sick call. A shepherd girl in the village has been stricken suddenly by a strange malady, and is dying. She is being consumed by a burning fever, they say. I thought you might like to go for the walk, and you can tell me your story on the way. Besides, the fresh air—why, what’s the matter, Sebastian?”

“Nothing, Father, nothing—only—a burning fever! Yes, yes, I’ll go. Just a moment, please, I only want to—a burning fever.”

Out there somewhere, over the hills, a little shepherd girl was singing. Sebastian listened, tears glistening in his eyes.

“A burning fever—yes, I’ll go, Father. I’m ready now. But—I’m afraid—you’re too late.”

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