ALEMBIC

PROVIDENCE COLLEGE

VOLUME XXIV NUMBER 1

OCTOBER, 1941

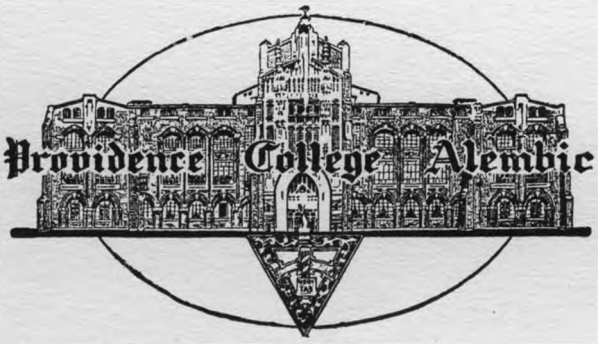
DEFENCE EFFICIENCY

JOHN GERHARD, '44

STRAWBERRY LOVE SONG

CHARLES F. COTTAM, '43

THE ALEMBIC



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As a gesture it's a little melodramatic, perhaps even ridiculous; but we should like, if merely for the sake of the record, to dedicate this issue of THE ALEMBIC to young men everywhere—first, to the already betrayed youth of Europe, whether fighting to defend the cities of Russia from the invader, or facing death in the bloody snow to carry out the commands of a fuehrer, or sneaking through the blacked out streets of Prague or Paris to avoid the Nazi garrison. Secondarily we would dedicate it to the not yet betrayed youth of this hemisphere, hopelessly and resignedly awaiting the word to take its place beside the youth of Europe.

J. A. C.

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New Fingers in the Pi

IF you will roll that eye which kept you out of the Army up and down and across the Table of Contents, you may gather that all the stuff in this issue is the work of newcomers. Graduation hit us like a Panzer division. But we're carrying on.

John Sharkey, of the Junior Class, should have been writing regularly for us long ago. If we can talk him into parting with some of the hilarious essays he wrote for Doctor O'Neill, you're in for some real laughs. His "On First Looking into Newspaper Rumor" turns up on page seven.

"By John Gerhard, '44" is getting to have a familiar ring at P. C., but this marks his first crack at THE ALEMBIC. We thought it fitting to let him give with both barrels, so you will find Gerhardiana on pages 10 and 26.

Frank Whalen, of the approaching vintage of '42, is something of a veteran, having several stories in past ALEMBICS notched on his typewriter. We think his "A Few Minutes of Rest" (page 15) rates another bit of carving.

We suspect that Tom Doyle, '43, was writing about his mother ("Her Majesty the Cook"). We sincerely hope that when she sees him saying his first Mass, she will have been compensated well for services rendered. Page 20.

Charlie Cottam, Junior Class president and our idea of the type of fellow P. C. should aim to turn out, does a nice job with "Strawberry Love Song" (page 30). The tender scene before the fireplace doesn't sound like fiction, Charlie.

We'll assume full personal responsibility for "Alembichords" and "By The Way." Any similarity to Charley Sweeney's style is purely miraculous.

Write for the Alembic!

THE ALEMBIC is nominally published *by the students of Providence College,* not by any select group.

It affords every student the opportunity of seeing his work in print.

We will give fair and careful attention to every story, article or poem submitted for the December Issue. *Don't be bashful!* None of us is a De Maupassant or a Charles Lamb.

How About It, Lads?

On First Looking into Newspaper Rumor

By John Sharkey, '43

WHAT with the war and all, we are in a wonderful position to view from afar with alarm, to get democracy safe on second base, or to just not give a damn. Under normal conditions, I have always been inclined to follow the last course which is safest and maintains the status quo to the cobweb stage. Recent events have changed all this. I now belong to that militant group that's out to get itself wrapped into a neat Bundle for Britain. This decision was not hasty but came rather from long study of the foreign news in the nation's newspapers and magazines.

In those happy pre-war days of 1938, no one said or heard much about the fifth column, the Third Reich, or England first. We took it for granted that there would "always be an England." Just why there should be is now beyond my Celtic comprehension; however, if you remember, the war came. The German Army which couldn't possibly last in sustained warfare proved to be a dark horse; I then started reading the war news. Very interesting this remained until the French Army—the largest standing army in the world—sat down, and then the war followed the usual pattern. God was with the right, but they were not doing so well; it was the same old business of attack and counter-feint and thrust. This prosaic stuff was written as prosaic stuff and ran something like the following excerpts:

> Paris, May 9.—With the spearhead of the German drive in the Luxemberg sector only about

> 10 miles from the Maginot Line, French troops behind the fortification were anxiously awaiting reinforcements.

Or,

> Paris, May 10.—General Armand Soufflé has returned to his post at the Riviera.

It was something you could take or leave alone, like William Wordsworth or anisette. I took it. After Dunkerque, Britain stood against the world.

I followed news avidly by then. Each night I waited for a paper. Each night I pored over the latest air raid as a stenographer over her serial. Finally the bomb fell. Obscurity crept into everything. Listen:

> London, Nov. 7.—After a three day lull, the German air force scattered bombs in virtually every section of Britain last night and early today, causing casualties and destruction in one of its most widespread offensives, *usually reliable sources stated.*

The next paragraph didn't mention who the usually reliable sources were and I soon forgot the phrase. Three days later I ran into this:

> London, Nov. 10.—German bombers damaged an English merchantman off the coast of Ireland and scored a direct hit on a tanker off the Spanish coast yesterday, *informed sources announced.*

I practically dissected the article in quest of the informed, but no luck. These pixie-like phrases haunted me for a time and at last became so common that I relaxed. No sooner had my guard dropped than the war ministry belted me with this gem:

> London, Nov. 18.—A *communiqué hinted* that the RAF bombers had raided Berlin several times, shooting down a Dornier in flames in one raid.

The breaking point approached; it came when I read the following:

> Koritza, Jan. 6.—Generalissimo Guiseppe Pastrami led a flank retreat consisting of three divisions, in the mountains near Podradetz, early today, *military attachés reported.*

There is just one way to solve the problem; I am joining the No Foreign War For America League. This is the surest means of getting there fast when war is declared. It will be nice to meet Giovanni the orderly who shot off his mouth unadvisedly and made the headlines as "military attaché"; or to meet Emilio the waiter who made the same headlines as "usually reliable sources". It will be nicer to know that I am all ready to go even though the last grim notice has not yet reached the front page. When it comes it will read like this:

> Riesengebirge, ?, ?, —Abigail Jones, whose uncle was killed in a beer hall while in the Army of Occupation in 1920, was whistled at by a German soldier as she visited a cemetery, early today; *usually reliable informed uncensored military attachés hinted in a communiqué* that this would seriously affect American neutrality.

Then, brother, start marching!

Defence Efficiency

A little piece written from memory of a conversation with a plumber working at Quonset Point.

By John Gerhard, '44

"WELL, I tell you John, it's the biggest thing you ever laid eyes on. When the government starts something, it don't fool around. Yesterday it took me forty minutes to walk from the building I was working on to the cafeteria; musta been two miles anyway. And men! Lord, you can't turn around without bumping into somebody. Why, just to give you some idea, it takes twenty-seven buses to take all the men down to Quonset every morning from Providence. Starting Tuesday, we're going down on the train though. Quicker.

"John, you know where that sign is that says 'Enter here for North Kingstown Beach'? And do you know where Lynch's Diner is? Yes. Well, about in between them places, they've built a road. Biggest gosh-hanged road you ever saw. Must be a hundred twenty feet across. A man would be a fool to try and cross it. Cars, trucks, tractors, mule carts, bulldozers rushing around like mad. But not foolish. Oh no. There's no waste motion down there. If you're going some place, you've got to have a reason for going there. And alongside this road is the railroad track. They've got it raised about eighteen inches above the cement road. Why, I don't know, unless it's only intended temporarily. If it was going to be permanent I'd imagine they'd have built it on the level ground.

In through the camp itself, they got these big cement roads too. All of them are twice the width of Washington Street. But when you get off those main roads, oho. The mud. I tell you, John, it's something fierce. If it's a dry day it's not bad. The mud is only about five inches deep. But if it's been raining, or the snow is melting, oh boy! Everybody goes around with a rope tied about his body under the armpits so that they can pull him out when he gets in up to his neck. If it's only up to your belly, they ignore you. Sometimes, if it's particularly bad, they leave the guys stuck in the stuff so others can hop across them, using them for stepping stones. Gosh-hang it, they got to do something.

And the water! You know, we plumbers wait until the houses are built and then we take over. After us come the steam fitters, then the electricians, and then the painters. The carpenters have built the cellars but when they did, there was ice under the foundations and it's just now beginning to melt. So we just pump out the water into the mud and it sinks down into the ground and seeps into the next house. The plumbers there pump it out and it goes on to the next house. Six weeks later, the water that you first pumped out has made the rounds and you got it back again. It's interesting. Last Monday there was forty-seven inches of water in the cellar of the Capital House. There'll be good swimming in there this summer.

But they really do some marvelous work down there. A gang of fellers will come along and spot a huge tree which is just where the Signal Corps Headquarters is going to be. Naturally they got to get the tree out of there or hire monkeys for the buglers. But do they chop the tree down? Not on your life. They dig a hole about eighteen feet across and about thirty feet

deep, slip some burlap under the roots, hoist it up with the biggest crane you ever saw, drop it on the biggest bulldozer you ever saw, haul it away about five miles to the other side of camp and replant it, without so much as batting an eye. It's unbelievable.

Everybody down there has a number. They start from 1 and go up. My number is 7,211 but I was one of the first guys there. The fellers that are just starting have high numbers. This system of numbering is a good idea from the government's point of view, but from the worker's, it means that he has to be on his guard. Like the kid that's with me. He's only eighteen years old and he don't know pretzels about plumbing, but the job means seventy-four bucks a week to his folks so what the heck. Best natured kid you ever saw and the most innocent too. I'm doing everything I can to help him stick but sometimes he's impossible. The other day for instance. I was putting some fittings on a four-inch pipe while he stood alongside and watched.

Now if any of the inspectors come along and see you stalling, bingo! They just jot down your number and the next day you collect your last pay envelope. Well, as I was saying, the kid is just standing there and watching me. "Kid," I says, "you're going to get nailed if any of them inspectors come along and see you just standing around. You got to at least make a bluff that you're a plumber. Tell you what to do. When you get paid tomorrow, go and buy a ruler, a pencil and some chalk. Then if anybody asks you what you are, just say you're a plumber and show him the ruler, the chalk, and the pencil. That's all you need."

The next morning I came in and saw the kid waiting for me. "Well, kid, got your ruler?"

"Gee, no I haven't, Matt."

"Well, got a pencil?"

"No. I was going to but—"

"Got any chalk?"

"No."

You see? That's the way it went. But you couldn't get sore with the kid. He wasn't fresh like most kids. Just friendly and innocent. He assured me that he was going to get a ruler, a pencil, and some chalk the first chance he had. I didn't doubt him for a minute.

"Kid," I said, "here. Here is a piece of chalk. I searched around the house all last night for these two pieces of chalk but I'm going to give you one. Here. Now all you got to get is a ruler and a pencil."

This happened about ten o'clock in the morning. Around eleven-thirty, we were putting in a trap over on the far side of camp and I said to the kid, "Kid, mark on that wall, four feet six inches."

"What will I mark it with?"

"Why, with that piece of chalk I gave you."

It was pathetic. I really felt sorry for the poor kid. He searched determinedly through his trousers, then his jacket, then his cap and finally the trousers again.

"That's funny," he kept saying. "I had it here a minute ago."

"Kid, never mind. I'll tell you what to do. It's quarter of twelve and the dinner siren will blow at twelve. Why don't

you get started for the cafeteria now instead of waiting around here? But before you go, take that number off your cap or else some inspector'll nail you for leaving the job too early. Put the number in your pocket and go." I pointed vaguely in the direction of the cafeteria.

The kid left. I figured that he was all right as long as his number was out of sight and I didn't think any more about it.

About a half-hour later the kid returned, all smiles, like the cat which had swallowed the canary. He was carrying a burlap bag. I thought the kid was collecting dead cats or something, but no. In the burlap bag was his lunch. No inspector was going to pin anything on him, he proudly announced.

You see, that's the way things go.

It's marvelous."

jim wanted rest, but he didn't know he would find it this way . . .

A Few Minutes of Rest

By Frank J. Whalen, Jr., '42

THE flying snow beat steadily against the wind-shield of the slowly moving coupé. The flakes swirled swiftly down in endless procession. They fell upon the road, one on the other—food that the whirling treads of the tires seized upon, pressed into small lumps, and vomited out behind. The snow, treacherously slippery, impeded the progress of the car. The enemy of the traveler, it presented a challenge to him and to all his faculties. He willingly accepted the challenge, for he was anxious to get home.

The only thought in Jim's mind as he drove against the storm was home. At home, with his wife and little boy, there would be a haven from all his troubles, even from his weariness. Only a short distance lay between him and Newburg—a comfortable five hours travel. Of course the snow might slow him down a little, but at least he could get home for supper. And home would be a comfort.

This traveling every day was wearing on one's nerves. Sleeping night after night in second-rate hotels throughout the state of New York was not conducive to happiness. The dingy interiors seemed to transmit their gloom. But his expense account was limited, damn it, and he had to get along on it. But this Christmas would be a respite. Young Charlie would be delighted with the tree and with the few toys he would have. And

Kitty would be proud of her turkey and plum pudding. And there would be singing and laughter and rest. Rest. . . .

But the snow was coming down now, harder. The soggy flakes, splashing on the wind-shield, spread out like butter on a hot griddle. As the wind-shield wiper pushed the snow to the side, the slush slipped down the glass only to collect at the bottom. Again and again Jim stepped from the car to wipe away the accumulation with a gloved hand.

The driving was worse. It was becoming more and more slippery. When he drove over onto the shoulder of the road, it gave, and threatened to allow the little car to slide off altogether. On the curves, the rear wheels seemed uncertain. It was hard going. At the bottom, each hill was a threat; midway, a trial; a conquest at the top. But all the time he was nearer to home. Wakefield, Newfield, Sebago, Mechanics Falls—across the Maine he knew so well. Auburn, Lewiston, Winthrop, China, Unity—every mile nearer to home. West Troy—twelve miles to go now; about half an hour, and then comfort—wife, son, and something to eat—restful comfort.

"Once I built a railroad, made it run,
Made it race against time.
Once I built a railroad, now it's done.
Brother, can you spare a dime?"

The singing was a combination of bad tenor and strained baritone.

But this was the Christmas season.

"Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way.
Oh, what fun . . ."

He reached back of the seat as though to feel if something were there.

"We three men of Orient are.
Bearing gifts we travel afar."

The rest he could not remember.

There was Joe Brayton's big red barn over near the clump of pines. It was not far now—along the stretch near where the dirt road runs up to Etna, over the hill beyond, around the curve, and there would be the little cottage.

Down the stretch he rolled. He could see little, but he knew the way well. There was a hole in the middle of the road near the beginning of Durfee's lane, but he missed it. The Etna road was on the left now. He stepped on the gas. Suddenly, with but a slight jar, the car rolled into a great depth of snow, and the rear wheels spun round and round. The forward motion of the car stopped. Jim slammed the shift into reverse, and let the clutch in with a jerk. The car jumped backward a few inches and then stalled. He started the car and tried to back out of the drift. The wheels began to spin. Then Jim tried to roll the car out of the drift by alternating forward and reverse drive in order to gain momentum. The car was stuck fast. Driven up onto the drift, it could not be moved, for with the weight of the car resting on the snow, the wheels could get no traction.

Disgusted with this turn of luck, and with his own stupidity. Jim bound his coat about him, tied his scarf tighter round his neck, and stepped out into the storm. He was not far from home.

Everywhere the snow was above his shoe-tops. In some places the drifts were knee-high. But it was not far now. Walking was difficult—one foot up and out of the snow, ahead with the other. Two strides forward and slip one back. It was tire-

some. And the snow, driving into his face, made it difficult to watch where he was going. Now he walked in the road, the next instant he bumped into a stone wall ten yards from the pavement. It was slow going.

Walking up the hill was a long, tedious task. Here the impossibility of facing the storm made it necessary to walk backwards. Every stride, right up to the top, was an effort. The descent was easier, but every step jarred his whole body. It was not far now, but he was weary. His breath came in great gasps. The cold air, rushing into his mouth chilled his teeth. His legs felt strong enough, but he knew that he was tired, for when he slipped, it was difficult to shift his feet quickly enough to keep from falling.

At the bottom of the hill to the left of the road was a large field—Tom Cottrell's potato field. Through the driving snow, Jim peered along the stone wall and saw what he sought—a huge wagon. Tom had built it big—so big that his barn could not hold it. There it stood in the field, unused except at harvest time. That would be a good refuge. After a few minutes of rest, the half mile yet to be walked would be nothing. With a feeling of relief, Jim crawled beneath the wagon.

Here there was little snow—a shallow coating less than an inch. He rested his back against one of the great wooden wheels. It was comfortable. After a short rest, a few minutes only—just enough to catch his breath—he would go on. It was certainly restful here.

He must rest before going on, but he must not fall asleep. No, he must not fall asleep; he would freeze to death. But he could rest here. It was a shame to stay here in the cold when it was such a short distance home. But he could get his strength

back and then go the rest of the way. He settled back, resting his head on the wheel. Yes, this was real comfort. Rest . . . and then home, and. . . .

. . . Sonny's dancing joy. Christmas cheer. A warm reception from his wife. Food: hot. Christmas Eve supper: mashed potatoes, smothered in the gravy of the roast beside them; hubbard squash; pumpkin pie and steaming coffee. And then to bed. But first—rest. . . .

The next day they dragged Jim out from under the wagon. Frozen, stiff, lifeless, he clutched a package in his hand. He was dead, but he had had his rest.

Her Majesty the Cook

By Thomas J. Doyle, '43

'Midst the clatter of pots and pans
She does her noble work,
Frying this, baking that—
A task she doesn't shirk.

No monument will honor her
When she has passed and gone,
But royally she'll enter
The Kitchen far beyond.

And St. Peter in great splendor
Will enroll her in his book.
With happy heart he'll murmur,
"Thank God; Another cook!"

ALEMBICHORDS

By J. A. C.

JUST as you probably expected, we're still stringing along with Russian choral music. We did manage to branch from the strictly Cossack field, though—hustled our haunches through every record shop in the city during the summer, and though we have to report ruefully that Providence boasts only a puny collection of Russian music, we came up with a few real gems.

SONGS OF THE RED ARMY. *Choir of the Red Army of the USSR. Columbia Album C-68 (six 6-inch sides. $2).* This little trio of records (in an album appropriately red and bearing pictures of the Red Square, little hammer-and-sickles dancing all over the thing) represents probably the best invested deuce that THE ALEMBIC has made in months. It's really a two dollars' worth. Even if the Red Army lads didn't do much of a job here, it would be worthwhile just as a sort of sympathy purchase, gesture toward the courage of the Soviets, you know. As a matter of fact, they are superb—they don't have the tonal richness of the more artistically trained Cossacks, but they have power to spare. And power is what makes songs like these go. There are four Russian selections—*Bourlake de Volga, Song of the Village Mayor, Song of the Plains, The White Whirlwind* —and two in French, namely *La Marseillaise* and *Le Chant du Depart.* If you will remember, we spoke about several of these last year, but the Russo-German unpleasantness instant gave Columbia the idea of combining all the selections the Choir makes into a single album.

Bourlake de Volga sounds remarkably like the *Song of the Soviet Airmen,* which latter probably will never be recorded here as long as Mr. Dies is still around. Wonderful thing—full of grand upward sweeps suggestive of almost anything involving power, and Russians are simply fools where power is concerned. Speaking of that song used by the Soviet Aviation, we have been wondering vaguely just why the mighty *Internationale* has never been recorded. For sheer sweep and military swing, as expression of the spirit that is modern Russia, the *Internationale* is really something. If you are familiar with the Nazi *Horst Wessel Lied,* we may pose a comparison by saying that the Russia anthem has all the goose-stepping, heel-crashing spirit of the *Horst Wessel,* plus a little of what makes the *Marseillaise* still, after the lapse of so many years and wars, the best march of all. The *Marseillaise,* incidentally, is sung as no one else could do it. Probably the Red Choir was singing it from the angle of their own Revolution rather than that of the Bastille affair. Their French is spotty, but their voices are superb, simply superb. Marvelous what can be done with *La Marseillaise*—basso Alexander Kipnis (also Russian—it's a monopoly) does well by it in Schumann's stirring *Two Grenadiers (Victor 15289-B;* reverse, *Der Erlkönig).* He brings it in softly, reverently, makes it almost a hymn—a far cry from the defiant roar of the Red Choir. The Reds sing in triumph; Kipnis suggests the chant for the dead of the Grand Armée. A many-sided composition, that. Inspired.

Russian Imperial Singers. *(Five man Chorus; twelve recorded sides; Decca Album 53. $2.60).* These men are something more on the style of the Cossacks; old folk tunes of the Volga and the steppes are their specialty. A bit different in style from the Red Choir—no attempt at power; most of the songs are sweet, nostalgic old melodies, with lines that you can whistle. All

five of the singers were soldiers who fought the Reds in the sad days after the last war, and lost. They are distinguished principally by their method of blending the deepest basso profundo in the world (three octaves down to *low G below the bass cleff*—something, even for a Russian), with the peculiarly Russian style of tenor, and the intermediate bass and alto. If we may quote Philip Miller, "There is a haunting and irresistible quality about the sound of a Russian voice. I have heard it asserted that no racial quality can exist in the mere tone of a voice, but I am convinced to the contrary . . ." The basso profundo, he of the impossibly low G, is a Mr. Zragewsky, from Kiev. A real veteran of the wars which have beset Russia of late. The songs in the album: *Moscow Street Songs; Down by the River Volga* (*Bourlake de Volga* in the Red Album); *Soldiers' Songs; The Vanished Youth; Songs of the Reapers; Kaleenka; The Sleeping Lake; Evening Bells; The Steppes; Grandfather Pachom* (a famous Cossack number); *The Birch Tree;* and *Family Quarrel.* Best of all is *Evening Bells* (*Vetserni Zvon*), inspired, believe it or no, by Tom Moore's poem of the same name and wider fame. The Soldiers' Songs have a good military swing, if the Tsar's armies ever did have such a quality; *The Sleeping Lake* has a sweet, haunting refrain which you can't get out of your head for hours. The words of these simple songs boil down to equally simple and beautiful English. For example, we have it on good authority that the refrain of *The Sleeping Lake* goes like this—

> It is night; the beautiful lake is dreaming.
> The birds have gone to rest among the leaves,
> And their songs are hushed in the silence of the night.
> The quiet beauty of the lake brings peace to the suffering soul.

We thought that rather nice. This album comes nicely embossed with the Imperial Double Eagle of the Romanoffs, in contrast

to the Red Star and Sickles-and-Hammers of the other folder. It's a hard choice between them—the songs, we mean.

We did buy something beside Russian music, of course—started off the ALEMBIC's collection (it's still pretty slender) with the standard Beethoven *Fifth,* by Toscanini and the NBC Orchestra. The finest performance of what is generally conceded to be the greatest work of its kind in existence. Only Toscanini could draw out the might that stirs within the *Fifth*—we have heard the other recordings, and as for most of them, a slight wrinkling of the nose is in order. We liked the end of the Third Movement especially, where the tinkling melody (which burly Ludwig must have written with his tongue in his cheek) is crushed underfoot by a tremendous crescendo which has all the threat of Hell—and much of the majesty of Heaven—in it. Something to make the people in the third balcony sit on the edge of their seats (*Victor Album DM-640, $4.50*). You couldn't buy a better addition to any record collection.

RANDOM NOTES—Rodzinski's fine job on Rimsky-Korsakow's *"Scheherazade"* (Columbia Album M-398). Typically colorful Rodzinski treatment of a number which tends to drag in most recordings . . . Sir Tom Beecham's healthy whacks at the *Polovtsienne Dances* from *Prince Igor,* via the London Philharmonic. You'll remember this if you saw that motion picture par excellence, *"Der Kongress Tanzt"*. Or maybe you don't like ballet, you poor kid . . . *Song of the Siberian Prisoners* and *Stenka Razin* (Ukrainian Folk Song), by Russian basso Joukovich. Nice songs, but we'd rather hear Chaliapin go to work upon them . . . Xavier Cugat's nice discing of *"La Cumparsita"* . . . Chaliapin's *Legend of the Twelve Brigands* and reverse, *Down the Volga* (Victor Record 7717-A and B). The immortal

Feodor in an expressive number. Not his best, but Chaliapin's worst is any man's smart money.

Do try the Red Army Album, lads. Perfect vocal expression of all the guts and enthusiasm and power that make up the Soviet Union. Regardless of your sentiments in re the Communists, you have to admire courage wherever you find it. And when you can hear it in music so inexpensively, you really have something.

Brains

By JOHN GERHARD, '44

AL MORELLI crouched low in the blackness and intently eye the shack. He could hardly afford to take any chances at this stage of the game. He had schemed for three years how to break out of the prison, and now that he was out he had no intention of going back. Escape-proof, they had said, but the little automatic that he fondled in his belt had opened the way easy enough. Behind him he had left two guards and the trusty sprawled out on the cement floor with neat holes in their skulls and surprised looks on their faces. Al laughed every time he thought how surprised the three had been when he stepped from behind the furnace in the boiler room: the two guards had gaped dumbly and had reached for the revolvers at their waists—but their fingers never even reached the holster.

Three years he had planned that break. Now he was out, and they'd never get him back. He had lain the whole day in a creek. By this device he had lost the bloodhounds and at the same time had saved himself from melting in that terrible Oklahoma sun. It was night now, and cool, and Al was racing to put distance between the prison and himself before the sun again rose. But, he reasoned, a guy has to have food. For this reason he had paused on spotting the shack. That it was inhabited he knew because of the neatly stacked wood pile and the dungarees hanging limply from the tautly drawn wire. Beyond, on the far side of the house, he could see a tarred dirt road, jagged with ruts and gullies. In the distance, in every direction, nothing. Not much danger here, he thought, but Al Morelli never underestimated a situation. Too often the most innocent looking things proved to be sleeping volcanoes.

Al noiselessly tried the latch of the door. Locked. He would knock and pretend that he was lost. If anything went wrong he would knock off everybody inside. He smashed at the door with a huge fist and bellowed, "Hey, anybody around? Hey!"

The bolt inside rasped and the door reluctantly opened. In the doorway stood an old man, white-haired, small and wiry, but alert looking. A prospector, Al correctly guessed.

"Well stranger, what can I do for—" he stopped when he saw the gun pointed straight at his belly.

"You and me got business, pop. Get in there and rustle me up something to eat. No tricks, either, or the buzzards'll be picking your bones in the morning." The gangster towered head and shoulders over the older man, and even without a gun would have been complete master of the situation.

"You're from the prison, ain't you?" said the old man, emptying a pan of stew into a tin plate.

Al started. "How'd you know that?" he snapped.

"Your clothes and the gun."

"Clothes? Damn, I clean forgot about this prison suit. Well, we'll fix that soon enough."

While Al ate, the old man sat in the corner and silently regarded his visitor.

"Might as well dig me up some clothes, pop. Keep you busy. An idle mind is the devil's workshop." Al laughed coarsely. He was enjoying himself thoroughly in his new freedom.

But the old man merely sat there and lit his pipe, not at all disturbed by this new sequence of events.

"How did you escape?" he asked.

Al laughed again. "Surprised huh? Didn't think anybody could escape from that place. All you got to do is use your brains. Just use your brains."

He tilted back his chair and patted the gun. "Sure, brains and one of these."

The old man sat quietly and smoked his pipe. There was nothing he could do and so he did nothing. Perhaps, if he was lucky, his captor would leave soon.

But just then an automobile stopped outside the shack. Its engine choked and died. Al Morelli was not caught napping. He seized the old man by the shirt and snarled, "Make off like nothing's wrong, get me? I'm a friend of yours, see? You don't want to forget that or you'll never live to remember anything else. I've already got three against me; a couple more won't matter. You'll be careful what you say, won't you, pop?" and he patted the old man on the cheek. "You better."

The old man stepped unruffled to the door, opened it.

"Hello, Jeff," he said.

"Hello, Asa, got a letter for you. Kinda late to deliver it, but I have to go in to Guthrie tomorrow and I want to get everything cleared up before I go. This being postmaster is awkward sometimes."

"Come in, Jeff, and have a drink before you go back. Got a friend of mine I'd like you to meet."

Al Morelli kept his right hand in his pocket and silently offered his left to the mailman. "H'ya."

"Pleased to meet you," the postman replied. "Any friend of Asa's is a friend of mine. Don't seem to recollect seeing your face around here before though."

"No, he's been tied up quite a bit with business," the old man hastily interrupted. "He's out here for a vacation."

"Yeah," Al agreed.

"Say, Jeff," the old man inquired, "I read in the paper where some young feller escaped from the prison yesterday. Did they catch him yet?"

The postman shook his head. "Nope, funny thing. They haven't seen hide nor hair of that feller. Name's Morelli. Al Morelli. Oh, well, they'll probably get him before long."

"Well, Asa," and the postman rose and started for the door, "I've got to be going. Anything in town I can do for you?"

"No. Thanks just the same, Jeff. G'night."

"Good night, Asa. Be seeing you soon."

The automobile drove off toward town.

"Very nice, pop," said Al Morelli. "You behaved very nice. I thought for a minute you were trying to pull a fast one, but you were O. K. You're no fool."

The old man smiled gratefully, sat down in his corner and relit his pipe.

Five minutes later a parade of screaming motorcycles and squad cars roared to a stop in front of the shack. Men armed with high-powered rifles poured out and surrounded the house.

"Come on out, Morelli," was their cry. "You haven't a chance in the world. Come on out or we'll go in after you!"

Al Morelli was trapped and he knew it. Al Morelli was no fool however; he walked out with his hands above his head.

With amazement in his voice he asked, "How the hell did you guys find out where I was?"

The smiling postmaster stepped up. "Well, Morelli," he began, "it's like this: When Asa said that he had read in the paper about an escape from the prison I knew something was wrong. Asa does not know how to read. That's why I came out —to read him that letter. The only possible way for him to have known it was from the convict himself. Asa put one over on you, Morelli."

Al Morelli turned and regarded the old man but if "pop" was pleased with himself, he gave no indication of it. He merely watched the proceedings from the doorway and smoked his pipe.

Strawberry Love Song

By Charles F. Cottam, '43

ANOTHER September had come to Strawberry Island, and nature's etchings were everywhere in evidence. The water had taken on a deeper hue, and farther up the shore, where the small white lighthouse stood silhouetted serenely in the sunset sky, couriers of white foam scurried across the rocky point. Little fishing smacks slipped up to the faded grey quays, shedding sails that reflected the orange glow of the twilight hour. Green and red riding lights dipped and swayed in the soft breeze of evening, and here and there a spark of light sprang out of the gathering dusk. The evening serenade of the frogs and katydids rose out of the blue green marshes that lined the dusty causeway. There was no doubt about the beauty of this tiny place. People everywhere knew it by its quiet beauty, rather than by name. For on dark and foggy evenings someone, some place dreams of just such a place as this. . . . a place that is beautiful quiet and alone.

Yes, another September had come to the little island, but to the colony of fisher-folk who dwelt here, it merely meant the end of summer. Soon the sea would be rough and the fish would begin their run for deeper waters. The taste of autumn would fill the air and the rolling greens would be tinted in deep brown and orange. The little island steamer would be drydocked for the winter months and life for the people here would slip back to its isolated simplicity.

In June when Jim Manning brought a bride to the Island, the folks were truly amazed. His coming was a marked surprise

to everyone. Immediately talk began to circulate. There were some who had known him in his youth; they recalled to others their memories of a gangling, wide-eyed boy who had left here for the outside. He certainly had changed, everyone admitted that. And the years it seemed had been good to him, for his features were hard and taut. Outwardly he had changed greatly, but what people wondered was whether or not he had really grown away from them. Surely, they thought, he must have remembered, for he had come back, and with him he had brought a bride. They had all loved her from the start. How slight and kind and beautiful she was. Everyone knew that Jim loved her deeply. Night after night they were seen strolling slowly arm in arm over the dusty ribbons of road, smiling and whispering as only lovers do. How good and clean and wholesome they felt when they heard her haunting, happy laugh ringing clear in the evening breeze. But still they were disturbed. There must be a reason. But they guessed that only Jim would know that.

When the little island steamer docked at Yarmouth with the late afternoon tide, Jim was all impatience. He quickly ground out a cigarette and hurried through the grey drizzle toward the Mary Anne, strode up the small gangplank and began immediately to pace the deck. His face at first wore a melancholy expression, and then changed to almost despondency, as the wind picked up and drove the rain in sheets. With a shrug he pulled his coat tighter around his throat, gave a tug at his dripping hat and continued his restless pacing.

The pilot, a stubby individual, who contorted his face by stowing a beaten old pipe in the corner of his mouth, finally got the mail sack aboard and rounded up three other passengers. The whistle shrieked twice and the steamer moved slowly into the bay.

Jim left the rail and entered the tiny passengers' compartment just back of the small pilot house. His curt "Hello" dismissed the thought of conversation from the minds of the other passengers. Three seats in the rear were unoccupied, so he took one of them and rode alone with his anxious thoughts. "God", he mused, "I wish this thing was faster; Jean will be worried enough as it is without me being late." She was deathly afraid of heavy rains or thunder storms. He remembered now how she shuddered at even the thought of them. And this, he continued, was no time to have her alone. He dug into his pocket for another cigarette, lit it nervously and flung the burnt match onto the deck in front of him. The engine seemed to pound in his ears and he quickly rose and headed for the pilot house.

"Hi, Cap'n!" he called as the door banged shut behind him.

"Howdy, Jim, m'boy," shouted the wizened sailor, "looks like we're in for a pretty blow."

"Guess it does," Jim monotoned. "Figure it's going to be a stiff one?" he continued.

"Well, now," said the Cap'n, "don't rightly know, but September ain't the healthiest time of the year to have a blow. Coast Guards have been flashing warnings all afternoon. Guess this'll be my last trip today." He dragged long and thoughtfully at his pipe, then said with a look that belied his attempt at disconcern, "Well, you know the *Mary Ann* ain't as young as she used to be. She don't rough it so good no more."

Jim didn't answer, but peered ahead through the bleared windshield. His eyes seemed fixed and the lines that etched his face in the eerie light displayed his deep concern.

The wind was rising now, and the rain beat a dull staccato on the decks of the little steamer. Overhead the sullen grey

clouds raced by. How grim and foreboding they looked in the gathering dusk! The wind had risen sharply now and the bay had become a fantasy of black and white. The choppy waters slashed against the hull, sending the *Mary Ann* pitching and stumbling forward. The channel buoy shrieked violently as the angry waters slapped it. Lightning streaked across the heavens, momentarily illuminating the scene below. The husky wail of a fog horn pierced the gloom, adding its dismal groan to the rising storm.

"Don't look so good," Cap murmured. "Don't reckon I ever seen the bay so bad."

Jim turned quickly. "You don't think the water will rise, do you, Cap?"

"Reckon it will," he answered. "You know, I guess mebbe the boys at the Coast Guard station figured it right. Looks like we're in for a real one." While they talked Jim could hear the other passengers conversing loudly in the rear. Trying to hide their nervousness, he supposed.

"How high—do you think the tide will go over the dunes?"

With a kind of scowl coming over his face, the seaman considered it for a moment. "Don't know but what it might. Course that depends on how hard she's blowin' when the tide starts to roll."

The boat seemed to halt, momentarily shuddering as it swung into the face of the storm. The Captain cursed as the boat lurched violently, throwing him hard against the wheel. Suddenly the boat leaped forward. The buoy in the outer channel flashed by the stern and the little steamer swept out in the open water of the bay.

"You're worryin' about your place, ain't you, son?" Jim only nodded.

"Wal, worrying ain't gonna do ya no good. But I'll tell ya, you ought to go down to Jeff's place if'n it gets real bad."

"Down to the lighthouse, you mean?"

"That's just where I mean," said the Captain. "Ya know old Jeff always boasts that old light's the safest place on the island during a storm. Besides, his wife'd be mighty glad to have company when the water starts to pound on the rocks. Make's her kinda nervous, I guess."

Jim thought about this. Down in the light it would be worse for his Jean to hear the surf pounding against the rocks, and besides being up, the wind and rain would only seem greater —but if that's the safest place . . .

"Yes," he concluded, "if the water starts to rise, I guess that's the best place to go."

"There's the breakwater," shouted the Captain as his intent eyes picked up the line of white foam through the gloom.

Jim breathed easier now, but his restlessness increased. He would soon be home. Thank heavens for that. This waiting was driving him crazy.

The *Mary Anne* plowed through the storm and into the quieter waters of the breakwater.

"Glad the government boys built this thing last year, else we wouldn't be docking today," muttered Cap. "It's going to be kinda tough even now, with this wind."

Jim didn't answer. He was watching the crew on the deck groping about in the storm, making the ropes ready to swing her in. The shouts of the men on the dock came to him through the storm. He looked about and hesitated. Then, lowering his head, he pushed out of the pilot house onto the deck. A second later his hat was gone and he stood gripping the rail, watching the men striving desperately to halt the pitching boat. Finally the hawsers were pulled taut and the little gang plank was swung

over the side. It swayed dangerously, scraping against the pier. Still gripping the rail, he moved down the deck. Two long strides and he was over the side and running up the wharf into the wind. His pulse was racing. The wind seemed to clutch at him, trying to hold him back.

"Jim! Jim!" He turned quickly, his face a blank of bewilderment. Jean was running toward him. "Jim! Oh, Jim!" she cried, as she raced toward him, "I was so afraid you wouldn't come."

"Whatever did you come down here for?" he shouted. "Good Lord, you'll get pneumonia."

"But, darling," she gasped, "I wouldn't, I just *couldn't* stay at home. I'm petrified."

The thunder clapped in seeming defiance of her fears. Her lips were blue and Jim saw that they were quivering. He couldn't tell whether or not she was crying, for the rain was streaming down her face.

"Well, let's hurry, darling," he said, putting his arm around her. "The storm's getting worse every minute."

Jim was silent as they struggled along. He was afraid to talk for fear he would only heighten her nervous anxiety. But he noticed that there were no lights on the island. "Guess the wires are down," he half muttered to himself. Passing the dunes he noticed too that the water was already rising.

After what seemed hours they stamped up on their small piazza, drenched and exhausted.

"Better change your clothes," he said. "I'll build a fire."

As he crouched before the fireplace, a million thoughts raced through his mind. What if the water should rise? The tide was not yet coming in and the water was rising. Should he take her to the lighthouse? Upstairs he heard a shutter rattle furiously. The fire was blazing now. Quickly he changed into dry

clothes and sat on the divan before it. Jean came in and sat next to him. Her face was a mask of fright, and she spoke in a trembling voice.

"The storm's getting worse, Jim."

"Why, no it isn't, darling," he said. His laugh of reassurance was hopeless.

"I just tried to call the Coast Guard station, but the lines were down." Her voice was rising and he feared she would become hysterical. "What if the water rises?" she continued.

"Don't worry, Jean, the wires have been down plenty of times before, and besides," he said, "the water won't come over the dunes."

He gathered her into his arms, and they sat there silent for some time. Outside the thunder blasted and lightning stabbed through blue-black clouds. The little house seemed to shudder in fear, but the storm no longer disturbed the reverie of those who dreamed in the little cottage by the dunes.

The fire had settled itself and its soft orange glow danced slowly about the room, enveloping it in a kind of quiet beauty. Its radiance seemed to clothe the love that passed between the two who lingered before it. How silent it was there. How safe it seemed. Tragedy had no place here. How wrong that anything should disturb such a peace, to violate the dreams of lovers that glow in the warmth of a firelight.

Seldom did they stir, for their eyes were fixed before them and all the world was blotted out. Fear no longer tore at their hearts, for fear could not enter the wonders of this new little world. Even the light tones of their whispers did not break the spell which enveloped them.

"You know," Jim was saying in a whisper that seemed sad and prophetic, "I suppose we'll come back here later on, Jean; back to Strawberry Island."

"Oh! Jim," she said softly, "I do hope we can. It's all so wonderful here. These last few months I've grown to love it, darling. It's so lovely in the summer time."

They sat silent for some time, and then he continued slowly.

"I guess we'll be pretty old though by the time we're able to come back. I've been kind of hoping these past weeks that they'd change their minds about sending me west, because I'll hate to leave all this too."

"But we will come back," she said. "Later on, perhaps, but we will come back. And when we do, Jim, we'll love it all the more then, because we'll be older. We can sit here just as we are now and dream of all our younger days. It'll be like coming back to our youth, Jim, back to a place we both love dearly, and we'll be young again, Jim, because we'll be here and to us at least time will never change it."

His voice became even sadder now, but on his face a kind of smile seemed to play.

"Life is such a very funny thing," he said. "You want something with all your heart, and then when you get it you don't want it any more. It's funny how things turn out that way."

"Why do you say that?" Jean said wonderingly.

"Because," he continued, "that's the way things turned out for me."

He waited, silent for a moment, then continued.

"You know, when I was a very little boy I always thought the island was such a little place. So small and far away, it seemed, from everything outside. Night after night, I'd lie awake, and hope and pray the day would hurry when I could say goodbye to the Strawberry Island. All through the long summer days, I'd wander up to the cliffs, and lie for hours,

planning what I'd see and do. I thought that day would never come, but it did. I was fourteen then, and I was going to a prep school up North. I can remember it so very plainly now. My pop had come down to the dock to see me off. He gripped my hand hard like and slapped me on the shoulder. And guess what, Jean? My old man was crying, and that made me cry too. I said to him then, "Don't cry, pop, it ain't like I won't see you. Besides," I said, "I'll make you proud of me, Pop. Honest I will."

"Pop didn't say anything. Just kinda stood there gripping my hand. The tears were streaming down his face.

"That was the last I ever saw of him, for he died that year just before Christmas vacation. I never came back after that. I didn't want to, with Pop gone. And then when I met you, I knew that I would come back. Everything that didn't seem to matter to me before, all the peace and quiet that was here grew up inside me again. That's why I asked you to come back here on our honeymoon. I guess I wanted you to know that part of me that's here."

She leaned over and kissed his forehead quickly.

"You're just like a little boy," she whispered softly, "a little boy that's been out playing hard all day, and now he's come home, to rest. And oh, darling, I love you so very much!"

A terrific blast made the whole house tremble in its foundations. Jean seemed to wake with a start. She looked about the room dazedly. The fire had almost died. Another blast shook the cottage. She remembered now—the storm! She rushed from the divan across the room and peered through the rain-washed windows.

"Jim!" she screamed, "Jim! The water,—it's coming over the dunes!"

He leaped across the floor, and the sight that greeted him as he stared through the blackness made his eyes bulge.

His voice was shaking as he turned to her.

"Jean, we've got to get out of here."

"But we can't go out in this," she wailed.

"We've got to get out of here now. The tide's not in yet," he shrieked. "Don't you know what that means?"

She stood there, staring, her whole body quivering.

"But where can we go, Jim? Where can we go?" she moaned.

"We're going up to the light," he rasped.

"Come on, Jean! Don't stand there. Put on a raincoat, or put on something. Anything will do, but for God's sake hurry."

He wondered as he frantically buttoned his raincoat, if everything would be all right. There was no telling what would happen in a storm like this.

Clutching each other's waist they moved out into the night. The wind drove the rain in a blinding rage. It slashed across their faces, tore at their clothing, drenching them almost instantaneously.

"Come on, come on!" he shrieked, but his voice seemed like a whisper. "The road's over here."

Slowly, doggedly they pushed through the howling storm. Everywhere they turned their way seemed to be blocked by uprooted trees. Even above the wind he could hear the crazy waters pounding against the dunes. He must hurry, he must, he must, he thought to himself. But the wind, the wind was driving him back. Jean felt limp on his arm.

"She must have fainted!" he half cried. He picked her up and staggered and smashed his way into the face of the gale.

Twice he fell, but the storm tore relentlessly at his pain-wracked body. Onward, onward into the night and the storm he stumbled. Hysteria was rising fast within him.

"Oh, God!" he shrieked wildly, screaming into the night; "please help me now!"

His whole body shook with fear and emotion.

"Oh, God, God, where is that light?"

His precious burden was slipping in his hands. Gripping her frantically, he pushed and slashed and plowed into the night. A million thoughts raced through his brain. But he must get there. The thought pounded in him. And then he saw it. A dim orange glow came to his aching, bleary eyes.

"I've made it, I've made it!" he cried. But the cry fell unheard. The wind seemed to mock him and the lightning seemed taunting as it split the heavens with a deafening roar. . . .

By morning the storm had receded. Once again the sky was clear and blue over Strawberry Island, but the sun that shone that day revealed a desolate sight.

Old Ed Hall stood staring dazedly at the wreck that had once been the island's only store. He stayed that way, muttering to himself for quite some time. He turned slowly and started to leave, when he saw a man picking his way through the debris toward his store.

"Hey, mister!" the stranger yelled, "Do you know where I can find the Mannings?"

"If'n they ain't at home, they're probably down at the light. They usually go down there during a storm," said the old one.

The stranger looked at him and he seemed bewildered. His voice seemed hushed and shaken. "My God . . . . . the light got washed away!"

By the Way

WE saw "Mayerling" the other night, at a fifth-run theatre. It made us stop to think, or rather, made us think a little harder about something that's been batting around in our brain for months: the inevitable comparison between European motion pictures and the Hollywood, or It's Colossal Sam, variety. We don't mean to jump into the current controversy over the Senatorial investigation of Hollywood as a nest of Anti-Nazi propaganda. No one ever listens long to our opinions anent the war, and it will be a year come Shrove Tuesday (whatever that is) since we have entered an argument on that topic. That is, except for the angle in the investigation that points a finger at the Jewish movie moguls.

Now, please don't reach for the phone and the FBI number. We aren't putting out any pro- or anti-Aryan racial theories this month. The Hollywood brand of anti-Hitler propaganda is so obvious that it really isn't propaganda at all; propaganda as such is effective only when the points it makes have the field to themselves (cf "Mein Kampf"). When people have access to the news from various and contradictory sources, they are always a little hesitant to accept anyone's say-so in toto. Propaganda's main job is to keep a people convinced; to crowd every other slant on affairs out of the press. Hitler said that a big lie fools the people more easily than does the little lie; that only a perfect cascade of big lies convincingly put can ever win a nation over to a point where it won't listen to anything else. Hollywood will never be in a position to dominate the field of public information, and consequently, as a source of propaganda, it can't

brings us, with a precise little click of the heels, to the Jewish angle.

God knows Hollywood is dominated by Jews. Producers, directors, writers, actors are predominantly Jewish. That fact in se is no condemnation of the Jewish race; rather, it is an indication that our Jewish friends have ability in many and diverse directions. Jews write the stuff, Jews string it together in detail, Jews pay the little chorus girls to peep invitingly out of corners and dangle daringly from chandeliers, Jews examine the studios' books to see What The Public Wants, and Jews put it on the line to see that the Public gets it. So what? So the Jews are smart enough to get there first and take over. Someone would do it anyway.

The real trouble is right at home with the people, God Bless 'em. They determine what comes out of that Californian aesthetic red-light district; Mamie's and Jimmy's hard-earned few dollars, poor old Pop's nickles and quarters, build those Taj Mahals in Beverly Hills. If we don't like a picture we don't go, and usually we know what we're getting before we start for the flickers. We know what sort of pictures to expect when we see names like DeMille and Zanuck and Goldwyn and Tony Martin and Selznick and Alice Faye on the ads. So we go, and put our two bits in the till, and consequently, if our number is anything like legion, we invite another picture of exactly the same standing to go into production. And an honest examination of tonight's movie ad column will demonstrate a lot of things. A lot of depressing things.

Depressing? That's the word. For it is a first principle in writing or painting or composing, that we write, paint or compose for a certain public. The movies, as a big business, must please the widest public. With fairly sharp logic, we may con-

clude that the American public is in a bad way, as regards art standards. If we face the question frankly and admit that there is no attempt at art in the American motion picture, then automatically we remove our pictures from competition with the European, which comes fairly near to striking the fact right on the proboscis. And here we are right back where we started . . . watching "Mayerling".

"Mayerling" is no carefully segregated example of what Europe produces, or produced when there were normal times over there. It's typical. No huge outlay of money. No cast running into the thousands. Simply an intelligent and appreciative regard for the fundamentals of good taste and suggestive restraint. Where Hollywood uses a blueprint, Europe employs a palette. "Mayerling" (produced in France, by the way) indicated the majesty of the Hapsburgs better by an occasional shot of the Imperial crest than Hollywood has done, or tried to do, by showing an hundred thousand hussars swinging through the Ringstrasse (a painfully inadequate Ringstrasse, very backdroppish looking). The ballroom scene makes a good ground for comparison. We have seen Hollywood's "nostalgic" scenes of Viennese grand balls of the 'Eighties. We didn't like them; the scenes were cluttered. In "Mayerling" the producers used a superb orchestra (something Hollywood would dismiss with a snicker) for the music. But statistical comparison is pointless, or rather superfluous. The picture was a tribute to the taste of the producers—and of the intellectual level of the public to which it had been presented.

But Hollywood, like the Mississippi, goes on forever, fathering a bastard art form, mothering a perfect avalanche of semi-pornographic magazines, and forcing a steady flood of fetid tripe down the unwilling gullets of those, and they are many,

who despair of anything better. But if you'll excuse us, we have to run to make the matinée downtown; they're showing "A Yank In The RAF", with Ty-rone Pow-er (o-o-o-o-h-h!) and Betty Gr-a-able (ge-e-e-e!). We hear it's colossal. And we don't want to miss the Evacuation of Dunkerque, with a hundred thousand extras, by God, and each and every one of them showing himself for at least a passing glance.

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