

ALEMBIC

PROVIDENCE COLLEGE



VOLUME XXII

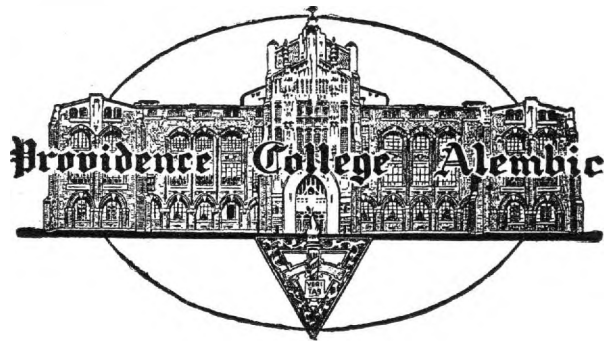
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Anniversary Issue



THE ALEMBIC



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

VOLUME XXII

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NUMBER 2

FOREWORD	3
EDITORIAL	5
CHRISTMAS BELLS	
A Poem, by <i>John Lacroix</i> , '33.....	6
EROICA	
A Short Story, by <i>Robert C. Healey</i> , '39.....	7
SONG OF EXPERIENCE	
A Poem, by <i>William Denis Geary</i> , '39.....	19
JOVIAL EMBROIDERY	
An Essay, by <i>William George Beaudro</i> , '38.....	20
A BARBAROUS EPIC	
A Poem, by <i>James J. Lynch</i> , '25.....	24
FRANKLIN, THE SELF-MADE MAN	
An Essay, by <i>Paul F. Skehan</i> , '23.....	25
VOX EX UMBRIS	
A Poem, by <i>Edward Riley Hughes</i> , '37.....	30
DANCE OF THE YEARS	
A Short Story, by <i>John T. Hayes</i> , '40.....	31
THE HOLY NIGHT	
A Poem, by <i>John P. Walsh</i> , '24.....	37
ON THE ART OF WORRY	
An Essay, by <i>Thomas J. O'Reilly</i> , '35.....	38
WORLD BEYOND	
A Narrative, by <i>Charles E. Sweeney</i> , '41.....	40
WINTER	
A Poem, by <i>John Houlihan</i> , '40.....	48
RAMELIUM	
A Narrative, by <i>James F. Lynch</i> , '25.....	49
VOLTAIRE	
An Essay, by <i>Anis Samaan</i> , '27.....	55

Foreword

THIS month the *Alembic* becomes a new Janus and invests itself with the ancient god's power of simultaneously looking backward to review the past and looking forward to unfathom the secrets of the future. It reflects a bit on this, the twentieth anniversary of its foundation, and examines thoughtfully the manner in which it evolved from the *Alembic* of twenty years ago to the *Alembic* of today. It ponders over the possible literary and academic significance it may have had for Providence College students since its inception. It scrutinizes its short but eventful existence to see to what extent it has followed out the aims and the ideals which its founders set down for it.

These ideals were expressed some time ago when an editor explained the circumstances under which the publication was named. "The name *ALEMBIC* of this publication," he said, "was proposed by the Very Rev. Dr. L. C. McCarthy, now President. An alembic is a vessel—from the Greek *ambis*, a cup—used in chemistry for distilling. The title is a felicitous one, for the purpose of this publication is to distill from the data of life those pure truths that express the highest ideals of the academic world."

Consecrated to these ideals and having pursued these aims for its first twenty years, the *Alembic* feels confident that it will eventually arrive at the goal for which any Catholic college magazine should strive—the expression of Christian truth and ideals in literature.

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Editorial

“CHRIST the Savior is born!”

Over the silent hills of Judea the song of the angels rang and their wonderous song announced the birth of the world's hope. For a God had come to his people, and peace lay in a manger bed. And sheperds heard the angel's song, and leaving their flocks they came to gaze in awe on Mary's Son. And wise men followed a splendid star to lay their gifts with love at the feet of a little child. At the feet of the Joy of the world, with hearts suffused with hope.

And today, as then, in the hearts of men, a joyful hope awakens. For Christ is still the Prince of Peace, and Christ is with his people. And we who know the story, and we who *have the faith*, are not afraid for the world, though it throbs with war, and nation is at the throat of nation. Though the forces of evil surround us, and hymns of hate fill our ears. For faith transforms our seeming ills, and hurls a shining blaze of hope where all seems lost and hopeless. This then is the season of joy, the season of hope reawakened, for Christmas means hope or it means nothing. Out of the turmoil and distress which surrounds us, we fix our eyes in faith on the Babe in His manger bed, adore with the Magi and the sheperds as the celestial choir sings out

“Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.”

Christmas Bells

*Ring out from your steeples your mystical madness
O note of the yuletide, O silver-tongued chimes;
O make the heart merry and banish the sadness
And bid us drink gladness for this Christmastime.*

*If never, forever in what follows after
We find the emotion of hope seem to shine;
Then let us breathe deep of the love and the laughter
That swells to the rafter and lingers divine.*

*Let no solemn moment, tho' yet no irreverence
Creep into our midst like a ghost in its pall.
Let nothing that hints of a moment of severance
Loss or deliverance enter the hall.*

*Let rainbow flames roar as they pass in the ember,
Wedding the snow, as it melts from the height
Of skies that are gray with the age of December;
A year to remember; made Holy tonight!*

By JOHN LACROIX, '33

(Reprinted from the Issue of December, 1932.)

Eroica

By ROBERT C. HEALEY, '39

AN air of shabby luxury filled the shop. Two barber chairs were serenely unoccupied and months-old magazines lay scattered over a trio of moribund waiting chairs. There was one large window but a sickly green shade repelled the warm afternoon sun. The barber sat reading.

From time to time he looked up, murmuring in an enraptured undertone, "how deep, marvellous," or some such vague ejaculations. Only heavy footsteps outside the window indicating the approach of a possible customer disturbed him.

And finally steps beat nearer. The battered screen door creaked open and the barber threw aside his copy of "The Idiot." He rose, his small moustached face gleaming in an oily smile.

"Ah, Mr. Thompson, good afternoon," he proclaimed. The voice had a touch of the exotic in it, a soft rippling accent that sounded foreign and far away. It was sweet, though, and Thompson smiled.

"Hello—hot, isn't it?" he replied.

That was the depth of the countless conversations they had ever had. It never went further than the weather and those few basic realities which are food for the tongue-tied. For years, over six to be exact, it had been like that. Never had either been able to pierce the light shell of the other's personality. One seemed the stern complement of the other in this extraordinary

The Alembic

business of living, and in that unsubtle way they treated each other.

Martin Thompson had entered Amadar Sakadian's barber shop for the first time six years before. He had sniffed at the shabby luxury, he had reneged at the months-old magazines, and he had remained for a haircut. Amadar was cordial then, was cordial now. A slim ageing Armenian with small face and features and an ungainly quiet youth. They were relatively unchanged now. Thompson had weathered school life and had finally emerged as an assistant librarian in a city branch library. He was almost self-satisfied, smug and settled, and yet in his ideals there were castles of independence. At times he was full of an immense practicality and again he would be listless and diffident. In his heart he pitied the poor barber, Amador. He pitied him his circumscribed life, his bounded frontiers and his hapless trade. He had pitied him six years ago and he was still pitying him now as he sat back into the barber chair for the tonorial rites.

Amador was facile with the electric shears. He fondled it like a child as he guided its whirring way through Martin's light hair. Indeed, it was a rite with him, plain and simple. He exulted in the neat line against the hard skull, and surveying the dripping hair he knew that he was as much an artist as the titan Michelangelo standing grim-faced in the quarry at Carrara letting stone drip off a miraculous David.

Martin didn't. He hated to enter the shoddy shop and trust himself to the ministrations of the evil foreigner. Why, he could be home practicing his violin or reading something high, something mightily beyond the deadness of the barber shop. He glowered at himself in the glass as he watched the barber circle dexterously around with tweezers and comb.

The music of snips was finally broken as Amador glanced

Eroica

at the clock, scowled, and stepped over to a small radio on the work shelf. He turned it on and returned to his work.

"I almost forgot," he said apologetically as he wielded his tools once more.

"Oh, yes," Martin murmured apropos of almost nothing. Sinking a little deeper into his thoughts, he was only conscious of the music. Somewhere people were playing, violins were swaying and here was he. He revelled in the fountain of joy. Oblivion pressed him.

"I see that you, too, like music, Mr. Thompson." The barber startled him, and he was awake to hear him conclude "—so few people do nowadays."

Martin answered rather hastily, "Yes, I've always liked that sort of thing," and then began to think. It all fitted together in an amazing way. The barber, the radio, and then the music. Perhaps this person likes music, too! The inference was annihilating. To his mind a barber was a barber, and couldn't bother with anything else. Preposterous. He decided to investigate.

Amadar placed the comb and brush on the shelf. With an air of finality he began:

Cautiously, "Do you listen to much music?"

"Listen? I love music. I live it every day. It's like a delicate ambrosia that I drink with the Olympians."

He almost fumbled at the unfamiliar words.

"There are even times which I feel terror-stricken and awed at the beating of a titanic bar."

There was more than the little barber here. It was a man pleading for his life, defending his heritage, seeking the truth. Before the judge in the barber chair he declaimed heroically. Thompson could see the man's heart in his words. It was pure, but he hated to see that soul's beauty. He responded lamely:

The Alembic

"I know, Mr. Sakadian, music has always been a deep source of pleasure to me."

But had it? He wondered even as he spoke. Trying to steer a course amid the paths of music he had often felt lost. At times everything seemed so artificial, so unworthy. Do I like this because I think I should like it? he would ask himself. And then a few deep notes would glide into his consciousness and he would taste the depth of that same ambrosial cup.

He wasn't listening to Amadar.

"I'm so glad I find you out. I knew that you weren't like my usual customers. They sit into the chair and seem asleep. And you, you come and seem alive. And now this. You'll . . . you'll have to come up to my house and hear some music much better."

"You have a radio there, too?"

"Yes, yes, but we have an electric-phonograph. There's nothing like it. Absolutely. Once you hear that you'll never want to listen to radio music. We have all kinds of records, operatic arias, symphonies, anything. Won't you come some night?"

This was more unexpected. Still in the chair, Thompson stiffened and then relaxed.

"Yes, I will, some time."

That "some time" was a concession to his pride. These people could have those phonographs and he couldn't. Terrible, terrible. Yet he longed to rush off immediately and drink in a full meal of music.

"Where is your house?" he asked.

"Across the street. You see that third floor front?"

Martin surveyed the place. Dingy, tattered, dirty. There was a fish store on the corner. A crumpled newspaper lay on the front doorstep. A frowzy woman was washing windows on the second floor. A withered geranium stood on the window

Eroica

sill of third floor front. He swallowed his observations and resumed:

“I’ll be glad to come. Some night I’ll surprise you.”

“There may be a few of my friends about, but they’ll be entertaining.”

Amadar’s voice was thankful. He patted the hot towel about Thompson’s face. The operation was soon over. The money clinked into the register and Thompson opened the battered screen door.

“Good-bye,” he called back.

There was the house before him. Third floor front gazed down on him with implacable force. The withered bud was still on the sill but the frowzy woman was gone. He tried to forget it all but the needle of the little Armenian’s electric-phonograph kept scratching in his mind.

He wanted to hear that phonograph. The more he thought, the more the records crissed and crossed in his ears. Music and song, music and song playing in the night. Sweet melodies, strange and enchanting.

He stood before the house nearly a week later. An odor of fish drifted into his nostrils and he winced. But he couldn’t go back now. He pushed open the front door. Malodorous. The stairs cracked painfully as he started up. Wallpaper cracked and faded. Carpetless, worn stairs. All so dreary, devastating. A bulb painted a dull red threw a ghostly light at the top of the stairs. There was a broken shoe outside one of the doors on the landing, and a few uncleaned milk bottles. The front window curtain waved disconsolately as he turned up the second flight. It was darker, more uncertain. He groped into the darkness above. There were voices rising and falling in spirited conversation as he went to the door nearest the hall window.

He knocked, but the voices chattered on. No answer.

Again he pounded, and heavy footsteps sounded. A thick-set, sharp-eyed foreigner opened the door.

"Mr. Sakadian, please," Martin whispered into the maze of tobacco smoke. A slight figure rose up from the other side of the sitting room and stepped lightly to the door.

"Ah, Mr. Thompson, I'm so glad you come."

Amadar was voluble. He shushed the talking group and ushered Martin before them.

"May I present a dear friend of mine, one who has our life and loves at heart."

He stopped as if to let the full meaning of his phrase creep in.

"Mr. Thompson," he continued, turning to Martin, "these are a few of my friends. We gather here of an evening to talk and to enjoy ourselves. First there's the Doctor here. Of course he hasn't his degree yet but he expects to get it next year. Mr. Thompson, Mr. Khamis."

Martin liked the fat dumpy man. His hair hung confusedly and he seemed to be perpetually in distance contemplating truth and beauty. He bowed slightly at the introduction and resumed a low whispering with his companion.

"And Mr. Katchian here, our tailor who lives down the street. He's now working on a translation of old Armenian poems. You'll like them."

And down he passed through the entire group. There were about eight of them, all simple humble souls pursuing their own crafts. Martin counted their accomplishments. Only one had gone to higher education, but all were ambitious. They were all doing something, some little thing that was in some way fulfilling those deep ambitions. They are entirely self-educated, entirely appreciative of everything.

“First we’ll have the Marriage of Figaro Overture,” he began. “You must love Mozart, sweet, tender, beautiful. And then some Wagner, perhaps the Siegfried Idyl and the Liebestod. And finally,” he breathed quickly, “we’ll have the Eroica Symphony. I’ve waited so long to hear the Eroica and now in a moment it will be.”

“Bravo, bravo,” they shouted.

The concert began. The big brown box began grinding and Mozart came forth. The violins grimaced as Figaro danced along. There were whispers of love and chords of conspiracy. Martin sat enthralled. There were a few low voices about the room but he did not notice. Siegfried wandered in the forest and Isolde’s heart broke, and yet his spell was unbroken.

“And now the Eroica,” Amadar said, placing four records in position.

The Eroica. Thunderous chords and it began, powerful, strong. Martin stirred in his chair. The melody came forth, rising up, up up, developing, expanding. The room was quiet, everyone in the music.

Amadar edged very slowly into the chair next to Martin.

“Let me talk to you for a while,” he said softly. “Listen, but don’t speak.”

“I have watched you closely tonight. I have seen you wonder. I know why. You did not think that such as this and people like these could exist in these surroundings . . . Sh!”

The new theme began. It was more flowing and more subdued.

“But here we are. Don’t speak, just listen. We’ve found all this in America, all we would never have thought of at home. I was a child once in Armenia. It’s . . . oh, so many years ago. I must have been born around 1905, a terrible year. My

Eroica

father was the teller in a small Armenian bank in Hadjin in Cilicia. He had a respectable job, a wife, a home and children.

"I was happy in those early days. I went to a little grade school our colony conducted. The Armenians love schooling, you know, even under the foot of the oppressor. The Turks were oppressors and had been for ages of our history. But I knew nothing of that then. I went to school and had a huge time. There were very few subjects in that school. I always wanted more, but old Sheir, the teacher, used to tell me that some day I could go off to Aleppo or perhaps Constantinople and learn all I wanted.

"Enough of that. I was happy; we were all happy."

The music seemed to reflect his feelings as it swung into the recapitulation at the close. "And then—," he continued.

And then a slight pause and two deep notes cracked forth. The sonorities of the Funeral March began to sound. They rolled forth, like the measured beats of heavenly drums. The cortege moved slowly on, gathering a whirl of power and movement.

"And then," resumed Amadar in a lower and sadder voice, "—and then came the Turks. It was sudden at least to me. I was ten and I knew just a little about the trouble. There were guards and Turks all over the place all the time, but I didn't know anything would happen. My brother was a member of a secret committee and sometimes he did not come home for days, but that didn't bother me a bit.

"One day everything broke loose. We were ordered to get ready immediately to move out of the town. My father was frantic. My brother was missing and no news had arrived of events in surrounding places. We rushed about that night working to pack a few necessities into cloth bags. It was impossible to get carriages and we knew we would have to walk.

I remember how my mother sat and mourned. She would stare clear-eyed about the house, her own house, and then break into tears.

“I think that for a while I enjoyed the excitement of rushing about, but as the night wore on and neighbors began to crowd into our house I began to fear. My sister Freda stayed with me and tried to keep me calm. The excitement increased. Rumors of massacres through all Armenia reached us. There was continual rushing in and out. At times we heard gunfire and then kneeled to pray.

“I became more and more frightened when even Freda wouldn't notice me. Dawn began to break. The first rays broke over the flat-roofed houses, glinting on the guns of Turkish guards. About six, a mounted Sikkh rode through the streets telling everyone to leave houses and prepare for the march.”

The music had risen to the heights of hell. Martin pulsed with the feet of marching thousands. He heard the trembling drums pound fiercely. He heard the creak of the funeral train. The dead Napoleon being borne into Vienna, the Armenians crowding out of life and home. He picked up the thread:

“—came and told my father that he would lend him his cart and driver for a price. Most of our goods were placed on the cart. I never saw them again. All of us were soon driven together in the principal square of the town. The Turkish commandant appeared and ordered able-bodied men to separate and get ready to march. I saw my father and one of my brothers march off with the tattered horde under the prick of bayonets.

“The women and children who were left behind did not know what to expect. We are ordered back to the houses, however. A sorrowful group, my mother, my two sisters and I, trailed through the streets back to the empty house. They were all crying. For the rest of the day nothing happened. As the

Eroica

night came on gunshots came to our ears and cries of all kinds filled the air. My mother was in hysterics. She had all the doors locked and bolted and intended to spend the night before her little altar.

"I was put to bed, at least for the moment. But I had screwed up enough spirit to decide to venture out to see what was happening. Down the back window and I was in the back court. Darkness was heavy about. I was afraid to go out into the streets so I kept climbing fences until I had circled 'round to a principal street. Twice I saw huge, unkempt mobs rushing through the houses of well-to-do Armenians. I heard women's screams. I was afraid now, even to go back. The shouts of the mobs rang through the streets. Guns boomed and screams sounded everywhere. For hours I crouched under a tree in a yard about a mile from my house. At last I had enough courage to return.

"I cannot say it. You will not ask me. The house was empty and wrecked. Where, where were they? A question I have never solved. Though I fear and have feared to say it, I know they are dead, all of them, father, mother, brother, sisters.

"I spent the night in that empty house. I even slept. In the morning I put on my dirtiest clothes and wandered into the deserted streets. Someone picked me up and brought me to the French consul. He heard my story, nodded his head and arranged to have me board a French refugee cruiser at Aleppo."

The dead march was finished. The music sank into silence and then broke into happy joyous measures. Amadar continued in a new mood:

"Thus, I was sent to America. Some kindly people adopted me and I began life again. It was a newer and better life. I became a barber. I have worked hard and now I have my own little shop. But more than that I have my friends, my music, and my books. All these mean so much to me. Here in Amer-

The Alembic

ica I have found all of them. Sometimes I wonder what would have happened if I had remained in Armenia. Somehow I don't care now. I have everything I can wish for. I see men and admire them but I am content in my own way. So are all these here. They live and die doing the greatest for themselves, even though that greatest may not seem much to you. You understand?"

Martin nodded. He understood. He understood in a full and vital way. He had just listened and now he didn't speak. He listened as the Eroica unfolded becoming greater and greater. The fourth part swelled and finally left the room hushed and spell-bound.

"That is all."

Amadar had broken the silence first. Martin did not reply.

"I'm afraid I must go," he said finally, rising.

"As you wish. I'm sorry to see you go. But you will come back, won't you?"

"Yes, I will come back."

"Good-bye," Martin called back as he closed the door. The words echoed in the hall. He went down the stairs quickly and out into the street. There was the barber shop before him. It wore a happy familiar air. He turned pensively on his way. There was peace and quietness in his heart.

(Reprinted from the Issue of November, 1937.)

Song of Experience

*I sat upon an old stone wall
Beneath the star-filled sky and trees
That shone with flying fire, like spangles
On Nature's velvet raiment.
The noisy heath
Played obbligato to my moods
On crickets' tongues.
The peace which I drank in
Seemed to increase
With every ripple of the stream.
The very air was laden with
A sweet content
Which gulped me like a cloak.
I lived no longer on this globe
But rather in the sphere of sylphs
And elfs and angels.
But then a cloud obscured the stars;
A playful wind skipped over low hills
And quenched the fire-flies' flames.
It frightened sylphs and elfs
And angels all away; but not content with this
It flaunted in my face
The fact that it was free,
And danced mischievously away.
I felt a chill upon my cheek
And realized I was on earth—
A man with human cares.
A desolation crept upon me
Compressing my full soul to human mould.*

WILLIAM DENIS GEARY, '39

(Reprinted from the issue of December, 1936.)

Jovial Embroidery

By WILLIAM GEORGE BEAUDRO, '38

WESTBROOK Pegler, columnist, recently wrote an article condemning "the persiflage, the store laugh and all the jovial embroidery which constitutes conversation—in the routine relations of people." How much better off we would be, he said, if people would, like Joe Louis, simply express themselves "beyond any possibility of misunderstanding and, having done so, shut up." Pegler said it in some eight hundred words, and concluded with this frank confession, "I am acutely self-conscious at this point, feeling that all this could have been pointed out in much less wordage."

"Jovial embroidery"—now there is a pithy phrase! In two words it exactly describes the countless little frills and trivialities with which we camouflage the dull, stern, oftentimes ugly outlines of reality. An orchid to Mr. Pegler for this apt expression, but for his opposition to what it conveys, a great big bunch of skunk cabbage.

For, after all, the tendency to adorn our speech and writing is a key fortress in the defences which we instinctively throw up against drab fact. This pleonasm which Mr. Pegler so heartily deplors has a softening effect—like putting padding in the cell, so that the inmate will not beat his brains out when he hurls himself against the walls.

But suppose, for the sake of argument, we agree with Mr. Pegler. Then, to be consistent, we must condemn the work of

Jovial Embroidery

Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton and all the hosts of poets from the beginning of literature. For poetry is certainly not vital to the "routine relations of people." Likewise with all writing, except possibly certain records, biographies, histories, and scientific treatises. Yes, the columnist would *surely* be forever banished from our newspapers. (Alas, poor Pegler!)

Why, under the Pegler Plan, even Patrick Henry, whose independence speech has been so long admired, must be regarded with disdain. The oration sounds wonderful, to be sure, but most of the words are unnecessary. Pat should simply have said, "Gentlemen, Georgie's not doing right by us, let's kick over the traces." Or should that "gentlemen" be cut out?

And poor old Edmund Burke—why, instead of being one of the world's greatest orators, he was an absolute waster. All the people who sing his praises must be out of their minds. Just look at the record. He talked for three days in his Conciliation effusion, when he could have delivered his message in as many seconds. Why didn't he just say, "Now, listen fellows, we're all wet about these Indian fighters. Our policy is economically and logically wrong. So let's give them, and at the same time ourselves, a break"! In these few words he could have expressed his views beyond any "possibility of misunderstanding."

"Jovial embroidery," however, is by no means limited to speaking and writing. Under that head might conceivably come everything man has devised to relieve the oppressive monotony of life's essentials. Indeed, one might well include within the scope of the expression whatever there now is about human relations that makes them more complex than when the first man and woman practiced the simple life in the Garden of Eden.

Our earliest forbears probably started out in life garbed in the most elementary fashion. Then Eve put an apple blossom in her hair—for is it not reasonable to suppose that the "eternal

feminine” was responsible for the first “jovial embroidery”? Soon thereafter she and her spouse appeared luxuriously clothed in uncured skunk skins.

One fine day Adam was surprised to hear his wife say, “Have an apple, dear,” instead of pointing to the fruit and grunting. Little did he suspect that this was the birth of language; little did he foresee the far reaching effects these, the first words of woman (bless her), were to have on all succeeding generations. Later, some descendant decided that waving his arms, stamping his feet, and having his wife rub his back were unsatisfactory ways of keeping warm, so he started a fire. Perhaps this same gentleman, or one of his near relations, decided that a certain day was too hot to lug a cow down to market to swap for a jug of rum, and brought a promissory note instead, thus inaugurating our present banking system. It is not difficult to suppose that some native chief, wanting to give his picture to a dusky sweetie, commanded the tribal medicine man to make an image of him. The wily medicine man drew a picture with razzberry juice on a piece of bark (He first used his thumb for a brush, but since the king was a great hand with the girls, the demand was high. So, developing with experience, our medicine man soon learned that the little finger did a neater job). Thus art was launched. In still another part of the world a young warrior, upon unwrapping a fish, saw some scales on the fig-leaf wrapper (forerunner of cellophane), thus unwittingly discovered music.

These are but a few examples of “jovial embroideries”—for such they are, if we believe Mr. Pegler, since man’s “routine” was rolling along very nicely before they were stumbled upon. The reader’s own imagination, with these stimuli, doubtless can point out to him how other “embroideries” started, and how much they are a part of our life.

Jovial Embroidery

Putting all nonsense aside, it does seem to me that this world would hardly be a better one if its inhabitants should begin to speak in monosyllables, and take the flower boxes out of the windows of life. The women living in Brooklyn tenements could live without the struggling geraniums on the window sill—maybe a minute bit more light would come into their dingy kitchens if they threw the plants away. But they would not think of dispensing with the poor flowers, for from them comes a certain subtle spiritual light which is quite priceless.

Perhaps we have been unnecessarily hard on poor Mr. Pegler. He probably only wanted to indicate that senseless prattle is not only a nuisance, but often a curse. Justly enough he attached vicious gossiping and vituperative campaign speeches, pointing out that people, by the abuse of the gift of speech—"start fights and feuds, disrupt friendships, provoke riots, and bore one another to exhaustion"; while politicians obscure the "material issues" with "personal hatred and other confusing emotions which prevent the expression of a sane verdict." Right. I loathe such antics as heartily as anyone. But there is nothing "jovial" in such "embroideries."

The little pleasantries exchanged during the short pauses of the whirlwind working day, remarks about the weather, or how well an acquaintance is looking—these, like the swoops and swirls of chirography or false fronts on a building, relieve the prosaicness of utility, and make pleasant the dry traffic of the business world. These are of the type of "jovial embroidery" which I firmly believe do merit a place in life.

(Reprinted from the Issue of January, 1936.)

A Barbarous Epic

*"Trim," I said in tone quite meek;
"Shave," added the barber sleek.
Lathering my forehead, eyes and mouth,
He scraped my features from north to south.
He carved and cleft with skillful art,
To make my face a graphic chart.
He slivered my nose with painful slash
And cut in my chin a bloody gash.
I rose from out that barber's chair
And spoke to him in serious air.
"Abuse if you must this old bald head
But spare yon single hair," I said.
A gleam of joy suffused his mask.
"Shampoo?" I heard him boldly ask.
My sterner nature within me stirred
To life at that barber's cruel word.
"Touch you that hair on this bald head,
Die like a dog! Shave on!" I said.
Shave on he did—just as before
And cut me in twelve places more.
Then gazing at my naked head
"Too late for Herpicide," he said.*

By JAMES J. LYNCH, '25

(Reprinted from the Issue of February, 1923.)

Franklin, The Self-Made Man

By PAUL F. SKEHAN, '23

THAT which is of paramount interest to us today in the *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* is the portrayal of successful advance through one's own efforts. In this sophisticated age when every man's advance is met with a cynical smile, a shrug of the shoulders, and the epithet "pull", it is refreshing to read the inner story of a great man, and to renew our confidence in honest effort. The conviction that success is proportionate to application is strengthened. Lincoln probably is our foremost example of the self-made man. He rose in the face of appalling barriers without the inspiration of a flesh-and-blood paragon before him, without the inducement of an enlightened civilized environment, without contact with the life of a city, nor the bustle of a seaport town. Lincoln built his own whole structure, he laid his own foundation, employing stone where too many others are content with wood. To this extent Franklin was not self-made, and to a like degree posterity has ranked him less than Lincoln.

Franklin had this solid foundation of his character laid for him by his father. Repeatedly and unstintingly in his autobiography he refers to the felicitous influence of his upright father on his career. He relates the instance of the wharf built under his direction by his school-fellows from rock stolen from a house under construction nearby, and he closes with the words, "* * * several of us were corrected by our fathers: and, though I

pleaded the usefulness of the work, mine convinced me that nothing was useful which was not honest." He relates how many men of importance in the political affairs of the community were wont to consult his father on grave matters. He recalls the manner in which his father would guide the dinner-table conversation to topics that would tend to improve the minds of the children. With such a father, Franklin was started on his journey of life with a certain momentum that perhaps every boy does not receive.

But Franklin's credit here, as ever afterwards in his life, is that he absorbed and utilized the admonitions. It is true that many opportunities came unsolicited to him in the course of his life. Instead, however, of allowing them to remain mere opportunities he seized them and moulded them by his own efforts into valuable realities. Whenever he felt the hinting pressure of a favorable breeze he did not hesitate, but hoisted his sails and scudded onward to fame faster than laborious routine at the oar could advance him. Yet he did not scorn the oar after the wind died down, and his dogged efforts during the lull between the fortuitous gusts at least prevented him from drifting back, if, indeed, they did not further advance him. Thus he never lost in idle jubilation the advance just made.

There was no phase of his life that Franklin did not methodically set himself to bettering. Wisely he did not attempt to rise to exalted heights of knowledge, nor to perfection of character in one grand sweep. His method exemplifies striving for moral perfection. He listed what, in his opinion, were the thirteen principal virtues and he says, "My intention being to acquire the habitude of all these virtues, I judg'd it would be well not to distract my attention by attempting the whole at once, but to fix it on one at a time." Pursuing this resolve, he drew up a little schedule tabulating these virtues and having

Franklin, The Self-Made Man

spaces where each day he made cross-marks opposite those virtues violated. He concentrated on one virtue each week and had the experience of first finding his transgressions more numerous than he had supposed, but gradually, after unremitting watchfulness and daily examination, less frequent.

His first notable efforts toward advancement were in the intellectual field. His arguments with his young friend Collins convinced him of his own shortcomings in the use of English. He immediately sought for some ladder by which to rise. A copy of the *Spectator* fell into his hands and, being struck with the style of its composition, he practiced the imitation of it. It is remarkable how this boy still in his early teens could analyze himself, perceive his deficiencies, and unerringly strike upon a most effective method of correction. Though in school but two years, he seemed to have an instinctive ability to formulate the most beneficial course of study for his particular need. With a perspicacity worthy of an educator he devised a method of improving his literary ability by study of the *Spectator*. He would read a certain passage diligently, note down a few hints on the context and lay these aside. Then in a few days he would take up his notes and endeavor, without referring to the original article, to reproduce from memory a paper containing as much of the thought and the style of the original as possible. Constant practice brought such proficiency that occasionally he seemed, in small matters, to have improved the original.

No hour passed without lending in its flight some impetus to his advance. The idle argument with his fellows, the stilted versification of youth, the very daily labor at which he earned his board and maintenance tangibly contributed to his progress. He read an account of Socrates containing some samples of his method of arguing. The assiduous boy immediately recognized therein something of value to himself, so applied himself to

mastering that unassuming but most effective form of argument, practicing daily with his co-workmen, and soon acquiring such skill that they would challenge his simplest question with "What do you intend to infer from that?" He studied poetry and considered it beneficial for facility in the use of words and the instant command of synonyms it would engender. He applied himself diligently when learning the printer's trade, and gained from it a valuable knowledge of spelling and punctuation, or "pointing", as he termed it. Each activity he enjoyed for its own sake, but he did not neglect to extract from it some lasting adjunct to his own resources.

He lost no opportunity to borrow or read a good book. At first the books at his disposal were limited and of an indifferent nature. But as he advanced in his trade, he made the acquaintance of stationers' and booksellers' apprentices and was able to borrow from them overnight such volumes as he desired to read. Even at noon time, while other workmen were having their lunch, he ate little more than a piece of bread with a glass of water, and then delved into some book until work was resumed. This devotion to books was the keystone of Franklin's success. Deprived of the benefit of a regular schooling, he was thrown upon his own resources and forced to dig out what he thought of value.

This intellectual advancement opened to him new avenues of endeavor. His knowledge of books served as his passport into the homes of many influential people. Civic officials recognized his ability and learning, and often transacted their business with him rather than with Keimer, his employer. Such contact with the important politicians turned his thoughts to public questions. His first political activities were those of a pamphleteer. His ability to write, coupled with his remarkable powers of argument and persuasion, soon brought his newspaper to the front as a powerful moulder of public opinion.

Franklin, The Self-Made Man

Upon winning success, Franklin did not pause to enjoy his honors with ostentation and self-complacency. His life was one of constant application and activity. Each new success to him was but one step more, leaving much of the climb still ahead.

In his intellectual and political advance Franklin had not disregarded his physical betterment. In his youth he had enjoyed and become proficient in all aquatic sports. He was well developed by this exercise and he pursued at different times various systems for the strengthening of his health. In eating he practiced moderation to the point of frugality. He avoided intoxicants, especially while at work, and in London astonished the beer-guzzling workmen by his "water-bred" strength. Further we need only state that he lived to the age of eighty-four.

Perhaps the only part of his life to which his self-making tendency was ill-adapted was his religion. In his early youth he gained access to theological works of a controversial nature and these had the effect of making him doubtful of all religions. So he discarded established religion and regulated his life by certain shrewd maxims arrived at from a purely natural point of view. He considered a precept good if its visible effect on man was good. The inadequacy of this self-made religion was manifested by some of the grave *errata* (as he gracefully terms them) of his earlier life. There are, indeed, some limits to which self-reliance should be carried.

The principal lessons that we may learn from this man are industry and ambition. We must apply ourselves in the ardent way in which he did, we must read widely, improve our English, and become the master of our work. He had an astonishing capacity for work, and lived temperately so as to maintain the physical strength to carry on the work. He ad-

The Alembic

vanced rapidly by alertly watching for opportunities, preparing himself for a higher responsibility all the while. He did not blatantly seek recognition and political honors. They came to him. Whenever a critical time came, and the situation demanded a man of great capabilities, the people confidently turned to Franklin, secure in their assurance that he would throw himself wholeheartedly into the task, and add it as one more successful chapter to his illustrious life.

(Reprinted from the Issue of December, 1920.)

Vox Ex Umbris

*A white cloud rides
across the purple sky.
Somewhere
a bird sings.
I hear faint voices in the night.
The stars are grave, sedate—
cold and proud as jewels on a queen.
The moon smirks at the sickly clouds
who bow and fawn upon her.
A slight wind plays
about the willow's straggling locks,
and all is calm . . . a far cry,
and all is still.
A white cloud rides
across the purple sky.
Somewhere
a bird sings.*

EDWARD RILEY HUGHES, '37

(Reprinted from the Issue of December, 1936.)

Dance of the Years

By JOHN T. HAYES, '40

THE wind drove against the old man as he made his way homeward through the winter streets. It blew the snow whirling and eddying around his legs in fine spraying blasts. It tugged at his coat tails and caused them to flap and beat against his thin legs like the wings of a wounded bird. It frolicked about him like a mischievous child, leaving him calm for one moment and the next moment swooping down on him again with greater force. With diabolical cunning it snatched the breath from his mouth and left him gasping. At times he pressed close to the houses, or stumbled into doorways to avoid its clutching hands. But standing still only made the cold more biting, so he continued on his way, holding his coat tight about his neck with a hand that was numbed and senseless.

At last he reached the great gray tenement house in which he lived. As he had been nearing the house he had heard music coming from within. And now as he turned in the gateway the music became louder, and he could see fantastic shadows bobbing and swaying on the square patch of light which fell from the uncurtained kitchen window. Now too he could hear the laughter of those within, and the stamping and thumping of heavy dancing feet. And as the old man passed the lighted window his own shadow fell with those of the dancers but it did not mingle with them. It was straight and rigid. It was out of place. And the light streaming on his thin pinched face caught for a moment a look of sullen hate.

The Alembic

Schrieber wanted nothing but quiet. To sit hunched before the great pot-bellied stove which heated his room. To smoke his old pipe, and every so often to sip at his bottle of whiskey. He wanted to sit and dream and to talk to himself. Indeed the others in the house thought him out of his head, and often complained to the landlord about him. For at almost any hour of the night he could be heard talking and muttering to himself, or laughing harshly as if he had told a joke which no one else could possibly see. Sometimes he would sing, and his thin cracked voice breaking on the stillness of the night would send a cold chill of fear stealing over those who heard. And they would shudder in their beds, and swear that the old man was mad. If they had not locked their doors they would rise and lock them quickly. And more and more they grew to hate the old man, and wished to do him harm for he looked on them with contempt and an undisguised hatred.

And now as he entered the house the door slipped from his numbed hand and closed with a loud creaking report. The old man cursed beneath his breath, and the kitchen door opened and then was slammed quickly in his face. "It's only that tottering old madman," he heard a woman's voice say, and then there was a great roar of laughter. "Fools," he shouted at the closed door, "Blind fools and hypocrites." This was greeted with another roar of laughter, and the woman's voice saying, "Listen to the old rooster crowing." Blinded with rage the old man made his way slowly up the three flights of stairs to his attic room.

On entering his room he closed and locked the door, and lighting a match he groped for the light, but the match fell from his hand, glowed feebly for a moment on the floor and then went out. So old Schrieber sat down in the dark and gazed into the fire watching the bright dancing of the flames. The music from the kitchen came to the old man muted and echo-like. The dull

Dance of the Years

thumping of the dancers' feet, and the occasional shrill laugh of a woman. A car passed on the street below, with honking horn and laughing voices, and the old man remembered that it was New Year's eve. "New Year's eve," he said aloud into the glowing coals. "New Year's eve. Friendless, friendless and hated." He shivered, and drawing his chair closer to the fire, he drew a half empty bottle from his pocket and began to sip at it. And gazing absently into the flickering of the flames, he saw in them visions of days long since gone. Out of the flames came a memory of a New Year's eve of long ago, when he was a young man on the Islands; a native girl stealing through the night to his house and tossing tiny pebbles on to the roof as a signal that she was waiting for him. How eagerly he had left the house in spite of his father's warning. And when the bells in the village were ringing in the New Year he was with his native girl. And now he saw two soft brown eyes smiling up at him from the flames, and a shadowy sorrow stirred within him, for those were the days when he had loved and been loved.

Another vision came back to him from those days on the Islands. The vision of his young wife, the daughter of an English officer, and of how when she had come to him radiant and happy, and told him that she was with child, he had cursed her, and raged at her, driving into her heart his hatred of children, until near crazy with pain and sorrow she had prayed to her God to take her child from her. And so it was, for the child was born dead. But the heart-broken woman could no longer stand the sight and touch of her husband and she soon left him. And out of the flames looked a pair of blue eyes, sad and reproachful, and the old man stirred uneasily. "I am sorry," he said softly. "God knows I am sorry." But the blue eyes continued to stare accusingly at him. They burned into his own and into his brain. He tore his glance away from the fire, but wherever he looked,

Dance of the Years

so that some were knocked sprawling to the floor, and trampled under foot.

“But wait, wait,” roared the landlord, waving his hand for silence and swaying slightly. “When the clock begins to strike twelve, we must have a dance of the years. The youngest girl shall dance with the oldest man.”

“Yes, yes,” cried the tenants. “A dance of the years.” But suddenly there was silence among them and the oldest men in the crowd looked at each other in a frightened manner, and some of them grew pale, for it was a belief among these people that he who danced the dance of the years, would not live to see another year in.

Nitka was the youngest girl, but who was to dance with her. She stepped into the middle of the kitchen, but no man made a move. She looked about her questioningly, and then at her father. “It is almost twelve,” she said. Still there was no one among the men who moved. And then in a hoarse whisper some woman said, “Old Schrieber.” It was as if a shadow had been lifted from their hearts, and they began to laugh wildly, and made a concerted rush for the door.

Their shoutings filled the house but Old Schrieber did not hear them. He still sat, head in hands, moaning softly in the darkness. And a gray ash was forming over the once bright bed of coals. He did not hear them come tramping and stumbling up the stairs. And it was not until their shoutings were just outside, and they had begun to pound on his door, that he was aware that something was going on. At first he did not believe his ears, he thought he had lost his mind. But when someone threw their weight against the door and caused it to crack sharply, the old man called out timidly, “Who is it? What do you want of me?”

“Open the door,” they cried. “Open the door. It is almost midnight.” And before the old man could move, the door was

broken in, and a dozen eager hands were reached out to clutch him. He gave one frightened cry, but that was all. He allowed them to carry him unprotesting down the stairs. And in the babel of their own voices, they could not hear the old man thanking God for the death that he knew was now on him. As they entered the kitchen the clock began to strike. The old man looked dazedly about him, into the evil leering faces of these people who hated him. And he shook with a sudden fear. And the bodies faded and all the old man could see about him were eyes; drunken eyes and evil eyes, shadowed eyes and shining eyes, eyes at first far away, and then floating on a sea of smoke, eyes that came gradually closer and grew horribly large, until within an inch of his face they burst into colored flames. Flames that licked at his face and stifled him. And he was vaguely aware of a monotonous chanting, as of many people repeating "Dance, dance, dance, dance." He felt someones arms tight about his waist, the chanting grew in a shrieking crescendo. And out of it came a voice close to his ear, "Dance with Nitka the dance of the years." There was a breath hot on his face and a body pressed to his own. He felt himself whirling in dizzy circles. Somewhere a clock was striking, suddenly it stopped, and there were no longer arms about him. He felt himself falling, falling, falling, and then in a great roar of laughter, silent, soft oblivion.

The old man lay huddled on the floor, his arms sprawled out in front of him. "Come, old man," cried the landlord, when the laughter caused by the grotesque dance had ceased. "Come, get up and drink with us." But Schrieber did not move. He made no sound, and a strange frightened silence fell over the room. The tenants looked wonderingly at each other and then at the old man. They began to whisper softly among themselves and one by one stole from the room, until only Nitka and the

Dance of the Years

old man remained. Nitka sat by the fire, her head in her hands, and sobbed wildly.

“Quiet!” commanded her father angrily. “He was old. It is just as well.” And stooping he lifted the old man onto his shoulders and carried him to his room. There he lay him on his bed. On leaving he closed the open door of the stove, in which there was nothing now but cold grey ash. Next morning he called the tenants together and told them that Old Schrieber had died in his sleep. And they were all agreed that it was an easy death for such a hateful man.

The Holy Night

*The earth was snowy white,
The sky in sable drest
When angels praised that night
The Holy Babe thrice blest.*

*And Shepherds hoary saw
The Virgin's Infant Son—
Approaching near with awe
They kissed the Holy One.*

*They stand there now bewildered,
With hearts rejoicing great;
For God their love had answered
With Jesus Christ carnate.*

By JOHN P. WALSH, '24

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On the Art of Worry

By THOMAS J. O'REILLY, '35

WORRY has been a hobby with me since I was a little boy. In my senior year in high school I worried so successfully that I had a nervous breakdown—in fact nearly went crazy. As I have achieved high honors in the field of worry on numerous other occasions, I think I may speak with some measure of authority on the subject.

One thing I have observed particularly: if you are not doing your own worrying, somebody else is. Most of the people who believe so strongly in serenity are simply letting somebody else take their irritations. If you see a lady riding along blissfully in a limousine without a worry in the world, it is pretty certain that somewhere there is a "guy" with two worries in the world. Just as most generous people are generous with somebody else's money, so are serene people serene with somebody else's serenity. There is a fixed quantity of worrying to be done in the world and if you are not doing your fraction of it somebody else is doubling up for you. There is no particular virtue in being philanthropic with money which you have gypped from somebody else, and there is no credit coming to you for being calm with a peace which you have plundered from some relative.

History has been made by worriers. Our civilization, such as it is—and it isn't much—has been built by people with a great capacity for the "blues". We would still be in the Stone

On the Art of Worry

Age if certain of our sourer ancestors had not been able to say, "I've Got Those Stone Age Blues." They worried us out of our natural lethargy and put us where we are today, in the Monoxide Age.

Years hence, when we are all using flying machines, we will not have to thank those tranquil souls who now regard a flivver as the ultimate in locomotion but these restless spirits among us who cannot tolerate *terra firma*. History is made by the nervous.

Be a success, do your own fretting. We hear it said again and again: "Most worry is unnecessary; do only the worrying that you have to do." This is a false and pernicious pedagogy. I say worry on the slightest provocation. Worry with the most slender justification. Worry when it is unnecessary so that you will be all the better prepared to worry when it is necessary. Practice makes perfect. It strengthens the worry muscles. Do not wait for the genuine crises of life; suffer a lot of imaginary crises. In short, do a lot of "shadow-worrying" so that when you must step at last into the squared circle with a real worry, you will be nimble and quick.

(Reprinted from the Issue of December, 1932.)



World Beyond

By CHARLES E. SWEENEY, '41

THE red brick building at the top of the grassy slope would have been deserted but for the youth who sat on the bench outside. Bob Shannon had come far too early for the opening exercises of his first year in college. Now, only the distant murmur of a city going to work disturbed the stillness of the quiet college scene.

Bob's lanky frame took on a hooked appearance as he cupped his face in his hands, rested his elbows on his knees and stared down unconsciously at the grass at his feet.

His first year in college. He wondered dejectedly if it would be the failure it promised to be. "How could it be otherwise?" he asked himself. Here they would prattle morals to him, morals which he knew few believed in and fewer practised. Here they would preach to him their impossible world of ideals, a world which he believed in once but which had crashed about him during the summer, leaving him with hardly a shred of an ideal to repair his shattered dreams. Here they would mold his character and make him a Christian gentleman and an upright citizen. Now, he had his own ideas about Christian gentlemen and upright citizens.

He'd been much happier before last summer, though, with all his high ideas about the world beyond his boyhood. How he'd wanted to get out of high school and into a job when all the

World Beyond

time he hadn't the slightest conception of what it would be. Bob ached at the thought of the perfect happiness he hadn't realized or appreciated when on his high school graduation day last June he stood tall and proud on the stage of the big downtown theatre and gave the valedictory address into that mass of white faces. The nervousness he had felt while giving those idealistic phrases—"Sunrise of hope"—"true, loyal, Christian men," had not succeeded in subduing the sincerity welling within him! Never had he been more completely content, at peace.

Bob traced the crease down the left leg of his newly pressed suit and flicked a speck of dust off a shiny black shoe. It felt good to be wearing good clothes again instead of the sweaty old khaki outfit that he'd worked in all summer. And even though he didn't get an awful lot out of college, it would be a relief from heaving beer kegs around all day in the hot sun.

"I must have been doing that for at least three months," he figured. "We graduated at the end of May and I landed the job early in June. They would have hired anyone that day," remembering how the sales manager had sized him up as being husky enough and put him on the truck before he even asked him his name. "It was so hot that they couldn't get rid of half the beer they had orders for," he thought. Those twelve hours he had spent helping the truck driver, Jack Thurlow, lug kegs and boxes and cans in and out of an unending chain of stores had been the hardest work he'd ever done.

He'd gloried in it though—his aching body, his sweaty clothes. Late that night he had gone home proudly to his Mother and solemnly announced that he not only had a job but that it paid twenty dollars a week. Grown up at last, and earning his way!

Bob Shannon, Social Security 078-93-732, nearly got fired two weeks later. The heat wave had gone down and it was cold

and rainy and the state wasn't drinking much beer. Sitting there on the bench, Bob warmed all over again at the thought of how Jack Thurlow had gone to bat for him with the sales manager and saved his job!

Jack and he had got along famously together. Jack had told him that it would be a liberal education to work on the truck and it had been. He'd seen an awful lot he hadn't seen before, especially how really poor people lived and worked. He'd seen them in the factories, long rows of them at benches and machines. He'd seen young girls fainting from heat and exhaustion in the laundries and jewelry shops; he'd seen people who didn't have enough to eat and who showed it in their faces; he'd seen hundreds of dejected looking men hanging around street corners, cluttering up the barrooms.

It had been a liberal education. He'd never realized what people went through to make a living. He and Jack used to talk about it during their noon hours in the small lunch room. They had both agreed that some kind of a planned society was necessary and inevitable if people were ever going to be able to receive the benefit of the goods they produced. They had argued about politics, discussed books, music, and their own ambitions over their empty plates.

Jack was a college graduate and was peddling beer because the same depression which had kept some people out of factories kept him out of an office. Bob had found himself drawn to Jack through bonds of mutual interest and he'd always be grateful to Jack for saving his job.

From his bench on the slope, Bob could look out at the hundreds of houses stretching from the foot of the slope for a few miles into the distance where they faded into the smoking enormity of the mills. He thought of Jack out there, still driving

World Beyond

the truck, of Jack's high forehead, receding, curly, blond hair, of his large, discerning, tired eyes.

Jack had been the first to shake his well-set pattern of ideals. Bob's beliefs had been intact until the day they had argued about religion. They then had changed color. He still had them, yes, but he wasn't able to feel the same way about them any more. Never before had he appreciated the word atheist until the day the young fellow whom he liked and whose intelligence and learning he respected told him dispassionately that he didn't believe there was a God.

The argument had started mildly, had risen in intensity. Jack had labeled the Catholic Church a "hypocritical political organization playing on the false hopes of a miserable world," called the beliefs of the Church "sillier than the ancient myths," called the Church itself "a two faced bulwark of reaction, preaching a merciful God Who condemns the majority of mankind to an eternity of wretchedness for failing occasionally to submerge the instincts He gave them."

The unexpected diatribe had bewildered him. It had taken him time to muster his high school apologetics, to establish a God as "the cause uncaused," to show that only a God "could rise from the dead," to try to distinguish real objections from prejudice.

Jack's ideas on morality had shaken him far more than the attack on religion. His mind had revolted against Jack's "natural goodness." How could anyone lead a life like that? He had hardly been able to believe it. So far, he had thought that Jack was a prince of a fellow, always ready to help someone, generous, intelligent, kind. Jack's cool criticism had left him thoroughly shaken, blindly incoherent. He was disappointed with Jack and slightly apprehensive about the codes of ideals which would have made Jack a rotter. According to them, Jack

was no Christian gentleman and upright citizen. But Jack had been perfectly frank about his life. Bob wondered morbidly how many Christians were as frank and if the only difference between Jack and the other upright citizens he had met this summer was that they were hypocrites and Jack was not.

Bob thought of the day when his disappointment with Jack had further increased, the Sunday of the company outing. He recalled the sunny day, the lake, employees with their wives and children, pretty girls, games, clam chowder, free beer.

At dusk he had sat beside the grinding phonograph in a corner of the bar and had suddenly become oblivious to the laughing crowd when he saw Jack swaying around the smoke-filled tap as though he were glued to that sleazy-looking girl.

He had watched the thick, dull expression on Jack's face, had remembered their old arguments and opposite conclusions. It had been then that he had felt almost a loathing for Jack, and at the same time realized that he liked him more than he wanted. He had gone home with his feelings in a hopeless jumble.

Jack had been indeed a paradox, capable of what Bob had thought at the time were two irreconcilable extremes, personal baseness and beauty. Bob remembered the night when Jack had invited him to his room up on the third floor of a downtown tenement. It had been a small room, just big enough for the comfortable bed, the tall dresser, and a phonograph hooked up to a loud speaker. The room had been disorderly, socks, shirts, neckties, books and magazines all over the bed and floor.

Bob wondered how Jack could have afforded the phonograph and the loud speaker. Their looks and the devices controlling tone and volume betrayed their expense. Jack had hinted that he'd had to pinch to get them, and the records, dozens of them, mostly of Beethoven. Surely they must have taxed Jack's small salary to the limit.

World Beyond

Bob's first lesson in classical music had been almost entirely lost on him. While Jack played and casually explained the records of Beethoven's symphonies, Bob hadn't been able to keep from wondering at Jack's knowledge of and interest in music.

"And you see, Bob, this next part will sound like a bunch of elephants stamping on the ground."

Jack had stood by the phonograph listening and explaining, and Bob had sat on the bed and a new appreciation for music was born in him.

And then Jack had taken him out in the dimly lighted hallway where there was a second hand piano and entertained him with the joyous tragedy of Mozart. Jack had become lost in feeling as he played softly with his calloused hands.

Surely there had been beauty and there had been disappointment for Bob. The works of Mozart like fleecy clouds in a blue sky and the self-indulgence written on Jack's young face. Bob knew he would never forget that night as long as he lived.

Neither would he forget the sordid three days of the summer when George Meegan, the company supervisor, had ridden on the truck with them. There had been a big difference between Jack and Meegan, a difference in the fundamental attitude that they had toward other people. Jack could never hurt anyone; Meegan could and did. Meegan was stocky, darkly good-looking, emphatic in speech and in walk, had been divorced twice, and by his own vivid testimony led a life which in Bob's mind would have put the worst to shame.

For the three days he had been with them, Meegan had kept the unflagging conversation, touching nothing but lurid personal experiences. Bob remembered how those days had been culminated for him when Meegan tricked him into the upstairs

of a dingy barroom, furnished with a crude attempt at luxury. When he had found out what the place was, he had run down the steps with his temples pounding, thoughts of disease clogging his mind, loathing Meegan and his laughter.

He'd never get rid of the memory of that place, of Meegan either, or of all the summer's rot. He had realized this toward the end of the summer when he used to brood a great deal while driving back to the plant on those nights with Jack, watching the white asphalt disappear under the truck's front wheels, seeing the lights of oncoming cars play across Jack's tired features. His thoughts had changed since the beginning of the summer, now they were no longer complacent—"monopoly of virtue."

He asked himself a question that no statistician could hope to answer successfully. "What was the percentage of good and evil people in the world?" The cynicism that his summer had created and nurtured to vigor brought a silent reply to his mind which in May he would have labelled "the product of a 'degenerate' mind." He felt, however, that his intelligence was closer, everything considered, to what the red brick building had for its motto, "Truth," imprinted boldly in Latin in the colored glass casing in the inside of the building. But how could a merciful God condemn so many?

Jack, Meegan, and the others of the summer had completely changed his ideas about men. Men had fallen tremendously in his estimation. He no longer believed in them or in the institutions which they created. Jack, Meegan, and the others had taught him too much about men as they really think and act.

From his bench on the slope he could see an occasional Friar, his blowing white robes outlined against the red bricks of the building. A palpable atmosphere of serene wholesome-

World Beyond

ness pervaded everything about this slope; it was indeed a place removed from a world beyond.

He started feeling the thick, dirty brown callouses all over the insides of his hands. He looked at his watch; 8:30. Jack would be driving the truck down in the city's "Little Harlem," the center of the Negro population. He remembered the different shops on the route, stores, barrooms, joints; he thought of Jack, of Meegan, and of cheap women; he thought of the suffocating heat, of those young girls in the laundries, of shops, the rows of roaring machines, mills, dirt and grease, young fellows of his age standing in line begging for the chance to work for next to nothing, the nauseating stench from the Jewelry shops.

He fixed his gaze on the Friar. Could they show him something better here in college, something better than the summer had taught him? He knew he'd never be happy without his house of ideals. He wasn't happy now, not as he had been in high school. Could they give him something here that he could really believe in? He sensed the wholesomeness of this place on the slope. Could they plant that within him? He hoped that they could.

(Reprinted from the Issue of May, 1938.)



Winter

*Gone is November,
The time of Crimson Creepers and Bittersweet,
And the smell of fragrant bonfires;
When the woods—now relentless and cold—
Stood blushing,
Holding its breath in expectation
Of Nature's whispered secret.
The trees knew;
Crimson Creepers and Bittersweet knew.
They donned showy garments
To join in the last of the festivals to the sun,
For Summer was gone.
Soon Nature breathed again in their branches,
Breath that palled their autumnal glory;
Shed bitter tears in lamentation,
Quenching their fires.
The Earth is now ashen;
The skies are drab;
A sharp wind blows from the North,
Singing Nature's lullaby,
"Sleep, my children, sleep!"*

JOHN HOULIHAN, '40.

(Reprinted from the Issue of December, 1936.)

Ramelium

By JAMES F. LYNCH, '25

LATE one afternoon John Chambers Brice, the archaeologist, and I, were sitting in the University Club idly watching an April shower pelt itself against the window-panes. After a long silence, I suddenly asked his explanation of the recent death of Lord Carnavon, and the subsequent illness of Carter, following closely upon their now-famous discoveries at Luxor; together with the attendant superstition. I knew his view of the matter would prove not only interesting, but enlightening as well, for he possessed a thorough knowledge of the Tut-Ankhamen excavations, and was, besides, an internationally recognized authority on Egyptology. I waited expectantly.

“To my mind, Lord Carnavon died from the effects of blood-poisoning; not as the result of any curse that follows those responsible for the unearthing of Egypt’s royal dead. In reality, Lord Carnavon’s life might have been saved, had he been given prompt medical attention. As for Carter, he had a very slight attack of heart trouble due, doubtless, to constant exposure to the intense heat of the tunneled tombs. A sensation-seeking American newspaperman, quick to scent news, saw an opportunity for a front page story, and as a result, Carter’s slight indisposition following Carnavon’s death, was heralded as proof that there was something in that old superstition about ill-timed death overtaking those who disturbed the Pharaohs’ last resting places. No one knows exactly when or how this

superstition had its birth; but it seems the Germans placed some credence in it, for they are now claiming that they would have eventually discovered the tomb of Tut-Ankhamen had they disregarded a warning sent to Schlegel, who was in charge of their expedition. They point to Carnavon's death as a verification of their soundness of judgment in forsaking their excavations in the vicinity of the king's tomb. Their position in the matter may be correct—I will not say—but I will tell you about an occasion I remember, relative to the same superstition.

“I was working in conjunction with Lord Kendrel's expedition, which was engaged in excavating in the Valley of the Kings. This was in June, 1914. As you probably know, at that time only three rulers remained unaccounted for: Thutmose II, the doubtful Smenkhara, and the now-discovered Tut-Ankhamen. We were concentrating our efforts on uncovering the tomb of some one of these rulers. It was the end of Egypt's summer season, with its fierce, arid heat and ever-present hordes of flies. The native laborers were apparently unaffected by the heat and the insects, but the English assistants were in wretched shape. Then, for the time being at least, we forgot our personal misery, for we had tunneled to what appeared to be the entrance to a major tomb. Upon unsealing it however, we found that it was merely an ante-chamber to the burial place of Rameses III. Naturally our disappointment was great, but it was lessened somewhat at finding that we had unearthed a fully-wrapped mummy. We were perplexed, however, at being unable to identify it. For a time we thought it might have been one of the king's cast from his burial place when prowling robber-bands looted the tombs, but later, when a more thorough examination of the mummy was made, it was decided that it was the embalmed body of Rameses III's favorite man-sevant.

Ramelium

Immediately following the discovery of the mummy, a series of misfortunes began to befall our expedition.

“Jay Denman, an Englishman, fell sick with a raging fever. We thought he had become infected from a mosquito bite; in fact the expedition’s physician found the spot on Denman’s arm where the insect had punctured the skin. Every known means for combating the fever was used. Denman died just three weeks after he had fallen ill. Five days after his death, Hallerton Ranford, an English assistant on Kendrel’s staff, was stricken with the same malady, and almost simultaneously, John Saybrooke, the youngest member of the expedition, fell victim to the strange fever. By this time all Egypt was discussing the death of Denman and the further spread of the fever, and it was only natural that there should arise a great amount of rumor regarding the old superstition and its effect on our company of excavators. I will admit it seemed as if the old claim that death overtook those who disturbed the sleep of Egypt’s pharaohs was being substantiated. And it began to have its effect on the members of the expedition. We began to wonder if there was really something in the old superstition. Was it working out its fulfillment in the case of Denman and Ranford and Saybrooke? It most certainly looked that way. Then George Wainwright came down from Alexandria.

“He arrived at our camp on an exceptionally hot day—hot, even for Egypt—with the word that he took the trip down ‘just to find out what all the rumor and talk was about.’ Doubtless you recall that Wainwright was the only chemist out of all those consulted, who was able to devise a system of ventilating the Hudson tubes. He is a Yale man, and was one of the principal speakers at the dedication of the new Sterling Laboratory. He was certainly a welcome sight to our company, and especially to us Americans. After reviewing what had occurred, he ex-

pressed a desire to examine the mummy. When he had examined it thoroughly, he said that as far as he could see it was in no wise different from other mummified remains heretofore found in Egypt. This disappointed us, for we had had an idea that the outer covering of the mummy might have been saturated with some chemical poison, contact with which caused death. True, those affected by the fever had been bitten by some insect, apparently the common Egyptian fly, but for that matter, so had we all, yet the fever had not attacked us. And still wondering about the solution of the peculiar incidents of the last few days, we waited upon Wainwright's investigation. And we found that our interest was not misplaced.

“Preliminary to his investigation, he established a temporary laboratory in a vacant tomb which we used as a storehouse and preserving room for our finds. The amount of paraphernalia he had brought with him seemed out of all proportion to the end to be gained, yet he had transported the various chemicals and apparatus in remarkably small cases. His laboratory once fitted out to suit his needs, he set about his task. With meticulous care he started to search the tomb in which the mummy was found, and the first thing he encountered was two small piles of black sand. We sensed his interest in them by the careful way in which he scrutinized them. We had left them undisturbed in their dark corner, dismissing them with the thought that they had sifted down through tiny apertures in the masonry ceiling of the tomb and the conical shape, peculiar to such formations, which they had assumed, seemed to bear out the truth of our theory. Consequently, when Wainwright took a generous sample from each of the piles, we thought he was attaching too much importance and attention to details. And when he spent a week analyzing and re-analyzing the sand, we concluded that he was merely wasting time.

Ramelium

“But one day I was in his tomb-laboratory watching him work, when he held out a little bottle of cream-colored powder. It was all that was left of the samples of black sand after a process of successive analysis. And with his usual air of abstraction, he told me that in the parlance of the chemist, that cream-colored powder contained 75% magnetic oxide of iron and 25% titanium dioxide. And remarking that he was looking for something, he added that he was going to boil the powder in a strong oil of vitriol, for vitriol dissolves both magnetic oxide of iron and titanium dioxide, the only two quantities known to be in the powder. If the powder were completely dissolved he had failed in his search—but if it were not completely dissolved! Slowly the powder turned to liquid, and then started to boil. Then a look of disappointment spread over Wainwright’s face, because none of the known chemicals had ever been known to resist the boiling vitriol. But suddenly a strange, buff-colored substance detached itself from the boiling mass, rolled slowly over to a corner of the crystal flask, and for ten minutes defied the intense heat. Wainwright’s face was alight with satisfaction.

“At that moment, ramelium, a new chemical element, was born to the World. And Wainwright had found it. When he had cooled the mixture, separating his precious find from the rest, he told me the story of what is now known as ramelium. At intervals for ten years, he had been testing a bottle of black sand sent to him from New Zealand by a classmate. Countless analyses had brought it to the oxide of iron-titanium dioxide stage, but due to pressing work, he had been unable to take the next step. After evolving a difficult formula for a new commercial dye, he had decided to take a trip, and hence his presence in Alexandria when rumor had the Pharaoh-superstition killing off our entire expedition. Seeing a chance for diversion, he packed up some chemical equipment and set out on a jaunt to

The Alembic

visit our excavations. The rest I have told in detail. It was pure coincidence and nothing more, that he found the two little piles of black sand. He had never dreamed of its presence in Egypt. Wainwright called it ramelium because it was in a Ramesean tomb that he discovered it. And best of all, America was the possessor of it; for having discovered it in 1914 just when the Great War was bursting upon the world, Wainwright saw the possibility of America entering the war, and he kept its discovery a secret, turning it over to the government. We may judge of its value by saying that it revolutionized steel compounding; placing America in a position where she could out-build all other nations in marine, land, and air craft. And strange as it may seem, it was the often-discussed, age-old superstition about an untimely death following those who unearthed Egypt's long-buried kings, that brought about Wainwright's wonderful discovery.

"As a satisfactory aftermath, the deaths of the archaeologists in our expedition were explained. They proved to be the work of the poisonous fly, akin to the tse-tse fly. Of late a preventive serum has been found that will offset the insect's venomous bite. But fairly speaking, we may say that we owe ramelium to superstition and a species of gad-fly."

And thus the archaeologist completed his story.

Listening to the steady patter of rain, I wondered at the profundity of thought, the marvelous store of experience that this tall, erect, blue-eyed old student had acquired in his years of research, travel, and study, and wondering I found the answer. He had spent his years well.

(Reprinted from the issue of April, 1923.)

times lacked a knowledge of the Church's strength. They have indulged in the illusion that force, calumny and mockery would eventually exterminate the sacred institution that has withstood the ravages of persecution since time immemorial.

Among the bitter enemies of Catholicism, the name of Voltaire occupies a prominent place. Voltaire was born at Paris in 1694 and his childhood was devoid of that maternal guidance which contributes so much to the formation of a man's character. To this defect must be added also his association with Chateauneuf, a dissolute abbé, who paved for the young Voltaire the path to incredulity. In his eleventh year Voltaire was sent to the Jesuit college of Louis le Grand, but the lessons of piety and wisdom which he learnt there were neutralized by the pernicious influence of Chateauneuf. Years of dissipation followed upon Voltaire's departure from school, and a visit to England won him over to that Deism of which he became a leader. During his sojourn in England, he wrote the *Henriade* in which are illustrations of papal and clerical iniquity. Considered only as a literary work, the *Henriade* elicited the praise of but few of the writer's contemporaries. Speaking of that would-be epic, Joseph de Maistre says: "I have no right to speak of it, for in order to judge a book, one must read it, and in order to read it one must be awake."

With Voltaire's return to France began his incessant attacks against Catholicism. He persisted in thinking that the organization of the Church was composed of frauds and errors. That Voltaire should become indignant at the number of Christians who led pagan lives may, indeed, be understood. But the existence of some corrupt members should not have led him to condemn the entire society. And yet it seems strange that this condemnation should have come from him whose life had been an outrage to honor and decency. His escapades, his shameless

Voltaire

life, his obscenity and vulgarity have made his name synonymous with filth. Such was the character of the person to whom Christianity was a bore. "I am tired," he said, "of hearing that twelve men were able to establish Christianity. I should like to prove that one is capable of destroying it." His weapon was the mockery which he used in his attempts to make the Church the laughing stock of Europe.

The year 1744 witnessed the first presentation of Voltaire's drama, *Mahomet*. The author's hypocrisy is shown in his dedication of *Mahomet* to Pope Benedict XIV: "Your Highness will pardon the liberty taken by one of the humblest but one of the most sincere admirers of virtue in dedicating to the head of the true religion a work which is directed against the founder of a religion which is false and barbarous. To whom, rather, than the Vicar and Imitator of the God of peace and truth could I dedicate a satire on the errors and cruelties of a false prophet? May Your Holiness deign to allow me to lay at your feet both the book and the author. I dare to beg for your protection of the one and the other. With sentiments of most profound veneration, I prostrate myself and kiss your feet." Voltaire's object in this declaration was to obtain from the Holy Father a commendation of his talent which would facilitate his entrance into the French Academy. Up to the year 1746 the Academy had resisted Voltaire. On February 7, 1746, he writes to the Jesuit La Tour, Rector of the Collège St-Louis le Grand, "I declare that if anything has been printed under my name which would give scandal even to a sacristan, I am ready to destroy it; that I wish to live and die tranquilly in the bosom of the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church." When he was in need of the Catholic vote to enter the French Academy, he took an oath: "In the presence of God Who hears, I am a true Catholic."

These are the terms that Voltaire's tongue uttered while

his mind and all the faculties of his soul were devising means to defame the Church. The publication of the *Pucelle* was an event which proved the depth of his corruption. France had always revered the memory of Joan of Arc, the pure maid of Orleans who had liberated France from the British yoke, but Voltaire presented her in the *Pucelle* as a libertine, and this should be sufficient to rouse the indignation, not only of Christians, but of all honorable persons.

The admirers of Voltaire have extolled him to the heavens as being the champion of equality, but we shall permit Voltaire himself to give his opinion in the matter. In defending the slave trade he says: "We are blamed for our dealings in slaves. They who sell the children are more condemnable than the buyers. This traffic demonstrates our superiority. He who gives himself a master was made to have one." We have heard him praised for his love of liberty and yet when Poland succumbed, a victim of imperial ambition, Voltaire wrote to Frederick II, King of Prussia, November 18, 1772: "Men whisper, Sire, that it was you who devised the partition of Poland. I credit the report, for the partition was the work of genius." We have heard Voltaire lauded for his admiration of fraternity, but where is the spirit of fraternity in the words which he addresses to Damillville: "The people must be led, not instructed. They are not worthy of instruction."

On February 10, 1778, Voltaire arrived at Paris from Fernez where he had dwelt for twenty years. The capital welcomed him joyously. In the French Academy, d'Alembert delivered a eulogy in his honor. The crowning of Voltaire's bust on the stage of the *Comédie Française* was another triumph for him. But the hand of death was already hovering over his head. God was calling and Voltaire's conduct in that supreme moment is that of a coward. In vain will we search in him for that cour-

Voltaire

age and calm which attend the death of the just. We have the evidence of Tronchin, who was Voltaire's physician. Tronchin writes to Bonnet: "When I compare the death of a good man, which is only the ending of a beautiful day, with that of Voltaire, I perceive easily the difference between a fine day and a tempestuous one. I cannot think of his death without horror. From the moment he realized that contrary effects were produced by all endeavors to increase his strength, death was ever before his eyes, and from that moment rage devoured his soul."

The Historical and Literary Journal of Liège for 1778 contains the following letter, the authenticity of which it guarantees: "I have learnt the circumstances of the death of yesterday from the lips of the Curé of Saint-Sulpice himself. I shall narrate only what is certain so that the so-called philosophers may have no advantage over you. Shortly before the death of M. de Voltaire, the Curé of Saint-Sulpice, having heard of his condition, went to see him. Finding him in a lethargy, he roused him and addressed to him a few words appropriate to the circumstances. In a wandering fashion the sick man asked, 'Who is talking to me?' The priest replied, 'It is the Curé of Saint-Sulpice, who, commiserating your condition, offers to you the aid of religion and of his ministry.' Then Voltaire, stretching forth his emaciated hands, cried, 'Ah, Monsieur!' The Curé availed himself of the opportunity and spoke of the mercy of God, Who accepts, even at the hour of death, a contrition which would repair, as far as possible, the crimes and scandals of the past. He added that, since Jesus Christ had died for all men, no person should despair of salvation. At the words 'Jesus Christ' the unfortunate became thoughtful and the Curé, having paused for an instant, tranquilly resumed his efforts, saying all that a pastor could say in such an emergency. At length the miserable man made a sign with his hand, and said, 'Leave me,

Monsieur!' He paid no more attention to the Curé. In vain did the Abbé Gaultier, who was also present, essay to speak to him. He simply motioned with his hand that he wished to be left to himself. In a little while, Voltaire began to rage; and the remaining moments of his life were a continuity of horrible blasphemies, mixed with cries of: 'God has abandoned me, just as men have done! Mercy!' There he was, a hideous skeleton, living, tearing himself, hurling against Heaven a thousand imprecations which blanched the cheeks of the three or four persons who had remained in the room."

Such was the final scene in the earthly life of the great cynic, who had done so much for the cause of incredulity and skepticism. Possessed of a wit, which he misused to suit his vulgar tastes, he thought that he could destroy Christianity with mockery. His correspondence and several of his other works express his bitterness for all that pertained to Catholicism. But Voltaire has passed, while the Church that seemed moribund to him is continuing her apostolate and will continue her divine mission when the name of Voltaire will have sunken into utter oblivion.

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