

ALEMBIC

PROVIDENCE COLLEGE



VOLUME XXIII

NUMBER 3

MARCH, 1941

CHILDREN OF THE SUN

CHARLES E. SWEENEY, '41

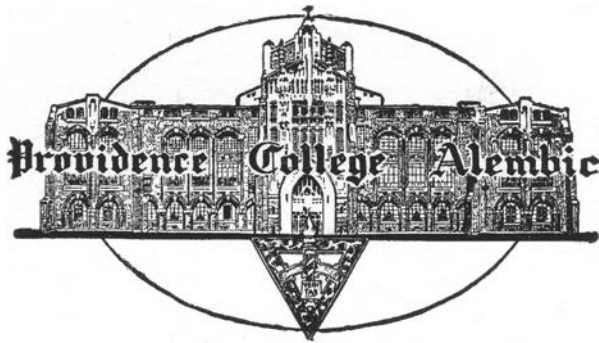
THE RIVALS

EDWARD KAYLOR, '41

RECORDS AND WRECKED CHORDS

A New Column

THE ALEMBIC



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

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Editorial

IN the post-revolutionary period in modern Europe a new political philosophy, Liberalism, was born. Supported, apparently, by the ineradicable apothegms of "science" it expanded with the passing years until it included and informed practically all spheres of human thought and activity, until it was in fact a theology. It recognized man's surpassing goodness over all other beings, it was optimistic about his ability to "muddle through" to a new Utopia, it lauded "nature" and "evolution", and most of all, it gloried in its own Paladian office, The Defender of the "Rights of Man". But Liberalism failed to realize that "rights" imply obligations, that an individual right is meaningless without a corresponding obligation on the part of others to respect that right. Because of this want, Liberalism created contingent facts and circumstances which negated the historical premises which were its *raison d'être*. Traditional Liberalism created a Frankenstein which it can no longer control. It is being strangled in its own "destiny."

Since Liberalism, or "our way of life," will soon be gone, it should behoove us now to look ahead to the new world that will arise out of the present chaos. We no longer have the right to hope for peace. Our elections gave us no choice; now we have only the presumptuous prayer that God will directly intervene to save a decadent civilization which has denied Him. Let us look beyond the war then. We will be hard bestead in those future days to erect a new polity. We must now affirm the principles upon which "our" world will be founded. It must be a realistic world recognizing man's dual nature, spiritual as well as sensual. It must be a just world, not only recognizing man's rights, but insuring them. It must be a good world—a society which fulfills its purpose. This is our mission. May God help us to consummate it.

M. P. G.

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The ALEMBIC is published bi-monthly by the students of Providence College, Providence, Rhode Island. Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office, Providence, Rhode Island, December 18, 1920, under Act of March 3, 1879. Subscription \$2.00 the year. "Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Section 1103. Act of October 3, 1917; authorized April 9, 1932." Printed at the Oxford Press, Providence, Rhode Island.

The Rivals

By EDWARD KAYLOR, '41

THE reunion was a rude awakening. I had returned, my memories tinged with that roseate glow that we brush over pleasant recollections, expecting to drop back, after ten years, into the careless happy-go-lucky way of life we had lived for four years. I found rather, a group of strange men bearing familiar names, men who remembered, as I did, what we were then and realized what we were now. Men trying almost desperately to find the spark that had bound us, for four years, to college, fraternity, and to each other. I suppose that even then, back in college, we had known it would dwindle to acquaintance-ship after a few years, but the fraternity bulletin, a masterpiece of salesmanship, had started old sparks which wouldn't, couldn't kindle. Now all of us were here drinking, lying, joking, reminiscing and realizing fully perhaps for the first time that we couldn't come back.

I tired of the noise, song, drink, and false cheer of the lounge and turned to the quiet of the room I had been assigned. This hadn't changed, I felt. Banners, pictures, lamps, walls, floors, all the same, exactly as I had pictured them—yet I felt a stranger, an intruder.

Interrupting what promised to become maudlin sentiment, Dick Humphrey banged into the room and flopped on the couch. For a few moments we were silent, listening to the sounds of grown men trying to find youth.

"Fools!" he exploded at last.

"Getting you down, too, Dick?" I asked.

"Nooooo," he exaggerated. Then switching abruptly, "Why wouldn't it get me down or anyone else for that matter? When we were here we acted normally, as we really were. Now, though, all of us are attempting the impossible. Trying to be what we're not and can never be again. If only we didn't try so hard, we might really enjoy ourselves. Every year I think that perhaps this year will be different—and every year it's the same. This is your first taste of it. Don't fool yourself. It'll always be the same. I'm staying away from now on."

Hoping to change the subject I asked, "Are all the fellows back, Dick? As I remember there were twelve from the house who graduated in '27."

"That's right, there were twelve in '27, and fourteen in '28. Of the twenty-six twenty-two are here. Two from our class are missing, Jim Burton and Albie Gordon. House secretary just proudly informed me we had the largest representation of alumni suckers—only he didn't put it that way, of course."

"So the 'rivals' aren't back. What are they doing now, or don't you know?" I asked. I remembered them as the class briliants but I had never been particularly fond of either, Jim having been too quiet and bookish for me to like actively, while Albie was an unbearable, egotistical snob who was popularly despised.

"I take it you didn't read the house notes in the fraternity journal during the year after you graduated. Oh, that's right, yours was 'address unknown' for about two years while you were with that geographic survey. Jim's dead, and Albie—I'm not sure where he is. But I know where he should be," he finished significantly.

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The manner in which he spoke aroused my curiosity. Speaking of Albie his mouth had pulled tight and his voice, usually well modulated, sounded strained. Hoping to find something interesting in this visit I prompted, "How did Jim die? When?"

The grim expression on Dick's face gave way to speculation as he said, "Well . . . I don't know. . . . You see, it might have been accidental but—well, judge for yourself. If what I suspect is true, then I helped kill Jim. But that's the damnable part. I don't *know* that he was murdered."

"When we graduated, Jim, Albie and I stayed on for advanced work. Albie and I roomed together. Neither of us lost any love on the other. That superiority complex of his, that super-inflated ego that bordered on monomania made him almost unbearable. Often we ignored each other for days.

"What annoyed me most, I think, was the way he felt toward Jim. Jim was consistently superior in his scholastic record, was in fact the best student in the school, and while he was no 'social lion' he was admired for the way he carried his laurels. Albie, however, felt that Jim was making a deliberate effort to outdo him purely from spite and that feeling became almost an obsession. You remember how he used to slight Jim, belittle his efforts, and in general do everything possible to make things uncomfortable for him, even in our junior and senior years.

"Jim and I were taking the same course and during the first semester he helped me over some of the rough spots. Jim knew I was having trouble and invited me to study with him. Naturally I accepted. I found the going easier after working with him. He had a genius for brushing aside the chaff and presenting the germ of the matter in language even I could

understand. During these nights I learned a great deal about him. He had never been really healthy, I knew, but I found out why he never attended any of the games. You remember we used to wonder about that? We had finished studying one night in early November and I mentioned something about the football team. He surprised me by saying, 'I understand Bellus has become quite a blocking back.'

"I suppose I showed the surprise, for he immediately added, 'Oh I can read about the games even if I can't see them.'

"Then I asked him something I've regretted since. 'Why can't you see the games? You have the time, the opportunity, and the money, and yet you don't even listen to the broadcasts. We all wonder about it?'

"When he answered he spoke lightly and carelessly. 'I don't like anyone to feel sorry for me, and the fellows here, I'm afraid, would be too kind and considerate if I told them, so I let them think what they will. But, since you've asked, I'll let you in on a deep, dark secret.'

"I regretted the question almost immediately, for beneath the air of banter so foreign to his nature, I could detect a note of bitterness and sadness, a longing I had never associated with him because he had always seemed so—so self-contained. The words were welling up now, the bantering air was dropped and I was seeing for the first time something of what he felt but had never showed.

" 'When I was a kid, I had rheumatic fever and a weak heart. Not a simple weakness that might be nursed along indefinitely but one that would balk at any undue strain. I was bitter for a while, but Father Connors, my parish priest, showed me the futility of feeling as I did. But more than that he gave me a goal to work for, a goal that I would find more difficult

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than that of being a good athlete—that of being the best student in the school. I'm not naturally brilliant and I found it was a pleasure to excel in something. But don't think those dreams of what I might have done or become don't crop up.'

"All the while he talked he kept his eyes averted from me, and when he finished, I sat there like a fool, unable to say or do anything but stare at him. When at last he looked at me he smiled wryly and said, 'I'm sorry Dick. I don't often get this way but tonight I'm afraid it had the better of me, and I felt I had to talk it out to someone. I know you'll respect my right, or rather desire, to feel like a martyr and that you'll not tell the rest of the boys. Good night, Dick.'

"I don't remember leaving the room, or reaching my room. I felt as though I had seen something I had no right to see. Others would probably have made a public spectacle of the weakness which he had kept locked inside him. Perhaps he was wrong to feel as he did about pity but, however you consider it, he had courage. That is what I was thinking of—that, and the attitude we had displayed toward him—when Albie strolled in.

"'Has teacher Jim been in good form tonight? Did he tell you all about the wonderful compliments he received on his latest article in the Graduate Quarterly? I wish that fellow had some of the headaches I have, and then see how well he does,' he added viciously.

"I usually ignored his cuts at Jim but tonight I was in no mood to listen to him. 'If you had one fraction of his courage and intelligence, you might approach being half-way human,' I snapped. 'And if you had his heart you'd be crying for pity to high heaven.'

"'What about his heart?' he asked. 'I've never heard anything about it.'

"No, because he hasn't publicized his infirmities or his successes as you do,' I stormed. Then, forgetting everything, I told him what I had learned.

"The story had a curious effect on him. At first he smiled indulgently as though saying, 'Yes, yes, go on,' then slowly the smile faded, to be replaced by a look of thoughtfulness. When I had finished he said, 'So that's why he always worked so hard to keep his marks above mine. Compensation for the loss of bodily activity. He picked me, I suppose, as the most likely challenger of his superiority and maintained his marks as a test for himself. You know he won every scholastic award worth winning—the ones I would have won had it not been for him. But of course he had a good reason.' Even now he couldn't forget his own selfishness and pride, but he had least shown himself capable of understanding. 'Yes,' he went on, 'I'm afraid we've all done him an injustice and it should be repaid somehow. No, I won't tell anyone what you told me and I won't let him know you talked about it.'

"During the next month his attitude toward Jim underwent a gradual but startling change. He was no longer unpleasant, and that in itself was enough to cause comment, but several times he went out of his way to be helpful.

"I wondered why he had changed so completely, knowing as I did how deep-rooted his antipathy was. Something happened then that was insignificant, at the time, but now suggestive, in the light of what happened later. A slip of paper lying near Albie's desk caught my eye and as I stooped to pick it up I saw it was a library request slip and that the book listed concerned cardiac diseases. As I say, at the time it didn't seem important, for Albie was an omniverous reader and oftentimes read volumes on some subject that caught his fancy for the moment.

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“Several times during the period Albie offered rides into the city when he, Albie, had business there. Once or twice, Jim accepted, more, I think, to avoid offense than for any enjoyment derived from them. Jim told me that automobile rides were apt to be too strenuous if any speeding were done. He was afraid of speed as some are afraid of cats, or dark, or small rooms. I asked him if he had told Albie that and he replied, ‘Oh yes, and he’s very considerate but occasionally he forgets and bears down too hard for comfort, so that when he slows down I’m almost blue in the face from holding my breath. I don’t know why I feel that way, there’s no reason for it that I can see. I suppose it’s a phobia of some sort.’

“On Friday, the week after this conversation, Albie persuaded Jim to ride in to the city with him. During the early morning, sleet had fallen and at ten-thirty a change in the wind brought light powdery snow which made driving treacherous. I tried to persuade Jim to stay at the house, saying that it was no day for riding, especially for him. While I was talking, Albie came in and asked, ‘Coming, Jim? If we leave now driving won’t be so bad, and by the time we’re ready to return the roads will have been cleared and sanded.’ The impression he gave as he talked was that he wanted to get Jim out of the house before he had a chance to change his mind. I wish I had stopped Jim then but what reason did I have? He was old enough to take care of himself. He knew what he was doing. So—he went.

“About a half hour after they left, a phone call informed me that the car had skidded at the foot of Turner’s Hill and that both were at the county hospital. Albie hadn’t been hurt at all, but Jim had died on the way to the hospital. He hadn’t been seriously injured but his heart was in no condition to withstand the strain of the shock.

“For a while I couldn’t bring myself to believe that he was dead. Then, as full realization came, I wanted nothing so much as to get my hands on Albie. I was filled with wild thoughts of beating him within an inch of his life, for I was certain that the accident could have been avoided. Following this train of thought, I suddenly remembered the book on cardiac diseases. Feverishly then I sought other clues that might indicate premeditation. By this time I was sure that Albie had intentionally crashed the car, expecting what had happened. His hate, for it had amounted to that, the belief that Jim was conducting a one man persecution, the sudden change, so contrary to his nature, when he learned of Jim’s ailment, the book on cardiac diseases, all these, for me, led to only one conclusion—Albie had murdered Jim. But of proof, there wasn’t a shred. Who would believe a story like that? No jury would believe that jealousy or pride in scholastic record was sufficient motive to kill. And even if they did there was no proof that the crash was anything but an accident. He could claim that he knew nothing of Jim’s heart condition, and no one could prove he was lying for only he and I knew the truth. This last thought plagued me momentarily and then blindingly I realized that if Jim had been killed *I was equally responsible*, for it was through me that Albie learned of the weakness that caused Jim’s death.”

When Dick finished speaking his face mirrored the struggle between his belief that the accident had been intentional and the hope that it was not. Slowly he asked, “Bob—what do you think?”

Fool's Folly

By IRA T. WILLIAMS, JR., '41

THE little man was slumped in the chair deep in thought. His whitened hair fell down over his forehead in a cowlick and his eyes were staring blankly at the floor at his feet. Even though he was slumped, it was easily seen that he was a little man. His eyes were clear blue and his features distinctly Nordic. Probably he was one of a long line of illustrious potentates who, in some bygone day perhaps had wealth, titles and even kingdoms at his disposal.

Yet such was not his lot at the present time. Surely his surroundings did not bespeak such a condition. His clothes were shabby and wrinkled. His tie, one that was most popular in the early twentieth century, was soup-stained and bedraggled. The room in which he sat was not of modern design but rather of eighteenth century style. And the chair which supported his weary frame was overstuffed and as one could easily see, overworn. Its once shiny mahogany arms were scratched and in need of a varnishing. Here and there along its sides large puffs of white batten stole out from its cover of mohair.

But with all this old-fashioned setting the man was of the present age. The modern newspaper at his feet assured this. Truly he was one of us, yet he was one of the past, one from the pages of history.

Shifting wearily in the battered old chair the little man picked up the half-smoked cigar that lay smouldering on the metal ash-tray by his side. As he re-lit it, his eyes flashed demoniacally as that of a man infused with a sudden idea of immense proportions. He smiled the smile of one infested with hideous and cruel plans, as if concocting some devilish scheme. Then the smile, or more correctly, the smirk, left his face and his eyes once more stared unseeing at the space before him. Puffing thoughtfully on the cigar which was glowing like some red-hot ember, his head nodded, ever so gently at first, but more pronounced each time. He yawned once or twice and his head finally fell heavily upon his chest. The glowing cigar fell from his lax lips, tumbling upon the floor to smoulder away and finally die out. The little man's breathing became heavy and sonorous and his arm fell, dangling inert over the chair.

As if wafted in upon a cloud, a robust, ample-bosomed woman waddled into the room and took her place beside the little man. She too was Nordic in appearance. Her ash-blond hair stole out from the dust-cap that was draped over her head. Although not a young woman she was still vigorous as was noted by the apple-red color in her dimpled cheeks. When she walked, it was as if the old dutch cleanser lady had stepped off the can and was in life, real and alive. Holding the little man's gnarled, coarse hand in her chubby pink one, she gazed at him appraisingly.

"Ah, Anna," he said in a voice that was heavy with a German accent, "if men only knew how to act when the time came how much better off the world would be. That's the trouble with the world Anna, they don't know how to cope with the situation when it arises. It's all the same be it peace or war, work or play, they never know what to do in an emer-

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gency. The rich and the poor, the strong and the weak, the common soldier and the generals, they all fail in a crisis.

"Now take Caesar. He was ambitious, Anna, ambitious. Nothing wrong with that. No. He wanted to rule the world. And he did. But when it came time for him to lead his own country that was different. Do you know what he tried to do, Anna? He tried to become a dictator. A dictator? Oh, that's when a man wants to be the boss of a country without letting anyone else have a say. No, true, we haven't anything like that now, Anna. The people nowadays are too smart. But he didn't get away with it either. The people refused to be subjected by tyranny and they killed him, Anna. They stabbed him to death. All because he didn't know what to do when the time came. He was too ambitious.

"Now Napoleon was a smart general and an ambitious man, too. But like Caesar he wanted to rule the world. His French legions were the most powerful of the times and they conquered all. But the Little General saw a distant horizon that might be conquered. He saw the vast land of Russia that, he thought, was ripe for plucking. 'There is a land that would be a feather in my cap', he thought. 'I'll conquer that and then I'll rule the world'. That was ambition, eh, Anna? He almost succeeded, too, only he didn't know how to cope with the situation.

"It's like I said. You have to be smart to rule the world. He defeated the Russian Army. Sure. But he defeated himself too. Do you know what he did, Anna? He burned the crops and destroyed the land as he marched towards the Russian capital. Then when he started back there was nothing left to do but retreat on empty and desolate ground. Sure, Anna, he defeated the Russian Army but the Russian winter defeated him. And

all because he wasn't smart. You see. A man must know what to do in an emergency if he is to rule the world.

"You remember the Kaiser, Anna? Ah, you nod excitedly. Yes, I know that you met him when he lived here in Doorn. You were indeed fortunate to meet such a great man. Now don't be angry, Anna, but he wasn't smart either. Mind you, Anna, he was a good man and I know that you liked him a lot, but he was not smart. Yes, true, he was ambitious. Like Caesar and Napoleon before him he was ambitious. He, too, wanted to conquer the world. At one time his armies were the best in the world. Great fighters they were, Anna. Even though he had the world against him he almost won. Why didn't he? Well, that's strange, Anna. It doesn't seem to be sure in anybody's mind just why he didn't win. Me? I think he was too chicken-hearted. That's it, Anna, too chicken-hearted. He should have continued his submarine warfare. He should have continued bombing the cities. He was too easy, Anna, that was it. What happened to him? He had to leave his country and live in exile just as Napoleon did. Yet these men were smart generals and ambitious men. They all wanted to be rulers of the world. But they failed. Failed. Failed because they didn't know how to cope with the situations. They did the wrong thing at the right time and as a result they failed. Fools, fools, all of them. That's what they were, Anna. Fools!!"

As if out of a dim and distant eon a voice seemed to penetrate the cloud that enveloped the little man. "Come now, Mein Herr. Wake up. It is bad for one to fall asleep in a chair. You'll catch your death of cold."

"Was I sleeping, Anna?" questioned the little man.

"Yes, you were sleeping, Mein Herr. Come now, you are tired and it is past your bed time. Come now".

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"I-I-I must have been dreaming then. But I am right, Anna. Those men were fools. They weren't smart. They didn't know how to cope with the situations that arose. I-I would have done it differently. I would not have failed to conquer the world. I am smart, eh, Anna? I am smart."

"Yes, Mein Herr, you would not have failed. You are smart."

"I would conquer the world for the German people. I would lead them out of their bondage. I would rule the world, eh, Anna? I am smart."

"Yes, that's right. But come now. You must get to bed. It is late and you know that you cannot stay up late. Remember what the doctor said. You must get plenty of rest, Adolph"



RECORDS AND WRECKED CHORDS

A PING *Esquire* seems to be the latest trend in magazine editing, and be it far from us to miss the bus (sounds rather like the initial couplet of a neat little limerick, doesn't it?). The *Alembic* staff is without the services of even one phrase-turner of George Jean Nathan's calibre; that lone reader among a hundred thousand who scans the index page will note that our list of contributors is about as star studded as a night in London. Consequently, since we have no one to stack up against Phelps, Brody or Cummings, our imitation of *Esquire* must of necessity be strictly anatomical—limited to a mirroring of form (!). Apart from stellar staffing we don't concede *Esquire* anything anyway—except perhaps a six-figure subscription, slick paper and George Petty—and while for reasons of censorship a presentation of *Types of American Beauty* graced with graphic illustrations is verboten to these pages, surely the pilots of the *Alembic's* moral attitude can't have the heart to refuse an Imprimatur to a dissertation on phonograph records.

"Dissertation" is perhaps an unfortunate word to apply to this column (it IS going to be a column, you know); perhaps "disputation" would have been nearer to the essence of the thing. The writer of a column on records is stretching out his neck under the guillotine of public opinion, for the record buying citizenry may be divided into two quite hostile camps. One camp might well adopt for its theme *Scrub Me Mama With a Boogie Beat*, and the other, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. True, there

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are a few puzzled souls who can't quite decide to which battalion they belong; for them, we might postulate *Jeanie With the Light Brown Hair*, that tuneful enough little ditty so much worked over of late.

Now, we personally have no serious quarrel with swing, jam, jump or jive music, for the elemental reason that we simply don't consider it music in the true sense of the word. Beethoven and boogie-woogie have in common only the media of expression: notes written on a scale and a certain variety of instruments for making the notes come to life. We think it should be self-evident that popular music is essentially a study in rhythm, directed toward the happy feet of ten million American kids. Witness the importance of the drummer in any good swing band; subtract him and your popular music loses much of its dance appeal. Even the most jive minded jitterbug couldn't lie in bed and enjoy *Beat Me Daddy Eight To The Bar* played over six or seven times in succession, which would seem automatically to eliminate jive from the realm of true music. Music which is directed primarily at the feet, not at the ear, would seem to occupy a separate orbit from music which is defined essentially as *the art or science of harmonic sounds*. Music which cannot find its final destination in the ear, but which is too harsh to stop there and must explode through terrific gesticulations of the feet, is not an appeal to the aesthetic sensibilities, and must be discarded in any consideration of the essence music.

At this point the camp followers of *Jeanie With the Light Brown Hair*, Negro spirituals and other "light classics" begin to assume a self-righteous look. Here we must make another distinction; certainly this sort of music has an appeal not aimed at the feet, and which does stop in the ear and pleasantly stimulate us aesthetically. The fault, if we may justly call it that, of this

type of music may be summed by its generic description: light classics. Why "light"? Because, this music interprets exactly the same emotions as do the standard classics, but more "lightly". Its dimensions are smaller, as though the composer had built a filtering dam between emotion and listener; only part of the emotion is passed through, and the composer who sits in judgment of what should be held back has all too often been in error. The masters of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries gave their emotions free rein, and let their audiences pass on whether too much had been transmitted for full absorption. Beethoven or Mozart contrasted to Stephen Foster or Carrie Jacobs Bond is tantamount to playing the Boston Symphony Orchestra against a Gilbert and Sullivan Company, or moving a Cape Cod cottage next to Westminster Abbey. Gilbert-Sullivan and the Cape cottage are things perfect in their class, but their class is necessarily on a plane lower than that of the Boston or the Abbey—and why should we be satisfied with other than the best, the greatest, the supreme?

The pity is that we as a nation have a weak musical digestion; that we can stomach nothing more solid than *Beautiful Dreamer*, *End of a Perfect Day* or *Deep River*. Those compositions are lovely things; their value is not merely transient, but it is deplorable that the great American race, while smashing through every barrier to forge the mightiest nation the world has ever seen, has adopted such comparatively puny music as the transcription of its powerful spirit. It is axiomatic that the music of any people has reflected its characteristics, its strength, and its color, if any. Witness the colorful Spanish dances, the powerful melancholy of Russian folk music, the almost hysterical color of Italian opera. Are we to conclude that the driving force and energy of the American people is measured adequately

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by *Camptown Races*, *Seeing Nellie Home* or *Swanee River*? Superficially these songs have movement and emotion, but they tap only a small reservoir of America's capacity for feeling and living. The Negro folk music we should ethically discount, for the colored race brought its great feeling for rhythm and sorrow from another land. It seems strange indeed that America has produced no recognized master . . . perhaps there is an inverse correlation between industrial expansion and artistic creation. Whatever the cause, America stands aesthetically in need of a strong cathartic. Let's hope it will be prescribed soon.

To return to our adumbral theme—records. The foregoing, in case you are puzzled as to just what relation it has to discs, was intended merely as an explanation of our attitude toward popular and light music. In columns to come—if they come—you will find only direct appraisal of current classical recordings, with an occasional mention of a light classic especially well done. The jump and gyrate we shall leave to Ken Cayton in *The Cowl*, Ken being both better fitted to criticise popular music and more sympathetic toward it.

This having degenerated into a thing of deviations, it might be best to get all the sidetracking finished now. In subsequent columns, as we have said, there will be discussion of records without benefit of preliminaries, but in searching for an angle on recordings we decided to direct this column toward those who are just starting a record collection, or who have not advanced far and who are wondering what next to purchase. This would appear an ideal point at which to insert a few hundred thousand words in re the care of records, choice of needles, and related items.

I

Next in importance to choice of the best recording of a selection are needles. This problem is as simple of solution as

it is important . . . *never, under any circumstances, use any sort of metallic needle on your records.* In the first place, you will be eternally annoyed by the surface noise, reminiscent of your Uncle Herman's snoring in C Sharp Minor (incidentally, technical terms of music will be glaringly absent from this column) . Secondly, metallic needles chew patiently at the smooth grooves of your records, gradually chipping off the shellac and bits of steel or chromium from the needle. The result is logical: the grooves are reduced to microscopic Alpine ranges, and you will never derive the full richness of tone that the record had when new. The sapphire needle which plays over a thousand recordings has been offered as one solution, but it is not an adequate answer. The jewel is naturally much harder than the record; while the sapphire will never chip, it will cut into the record as a diamond cuts glass, and while the needle will still be good after a thousand playings, not so the record!

The only, and therefore the best, thoroughgoing solution to the dilemma is the soft fibre needle-cactus or English thorn. These, being softer than the record and of non-chipping material, not only do not injure the record but actually improve it with use. The fibre acts as a buffer, smoothing and polishing the grooves instead of grating on them, and after fifteen or twenty playings your record will be at its peak of excellence, and will continue so indefinitely. And, surface noise is absolutely eliminated. The soft needle may be sharpened on extra fine sandpaper, or on an ingenious little gadget which Decca sells for a dollar. Sharpening will be necessary after between six and ten playings, but the soft needle will outlast the metallic, which must be thrown away almost immediately. Best performance, a safeguard for your records, an economy . . . once you've tried cactus or thorn needles (preferably cactus) , you will never

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use anything else. And we're not getting a commission from anyone for the plug.

II

You wouldn't think of reading a good book a few times, and then throwing it away, so why do just that with fine records? Good music may be assembled into a library fully as enjoyable as a collection of literary classics, and it seems a shame to allow any part of such a library to lapse into scratchy cacophony through neglect. Care of your records is an easy matter, and one that will pay dividends in pleasure. First, of course, is the elemental consideration of being watchful of the whereabouts of your discs. Records left lying on the floor or near chair legs will eventually find their resting place in the trash barrel, victims of careless feet. After playing a record, always replace it immediately in its album or rack. Thus it will have sanctuary from Number Twelve brogues, the dust that is in every room, and from travelling rocking chairs.

Secondly, *keep your records clean*. Any dirt that accumulates on the surface may be easily removed, and should be before each playing, by a small brush. Any sort of soft brush or hand mop will do, or you may obtain a little circular woolly gadget from the omnipresent Decca Company — most record dealers give them free to good customers. Never touch the grooved playing surface of a record with your hands. If you can't learn the knack of balancing the disc with forefingers on the edges and thumbs in the center, simply use our method: buy a pair of ten-cent cotton gloves at the dime store. Perspiration from even dry hands leaves a mark on the record, and will eventually coat your record with a greasy film which will muffle precise tones. The dime stores sell a preparation which may be painted onto the record to remove stains of any kind, but

this will be unnecessary if you have exercised the above-mentioned precautions. Sweep the record once or twice with the woolen brush before playing, and you will benefit by hearing the artist as he intended to be heard. Cleanliness is always commendable, but with records it is essential.

Never lend your records to anyone under any circumstances. Friends may not be versed in the care of recordings; they may use metallic needles, or leave finger prints all over the things. Be smart, not generous.

III

Choice of records is so completely a matter of personal taste that we should be foolish to list "ten records essential to every library." As concerns familiarity with classical music, you belong to one of three classes:

- (a) You know less about it than we do (conceivable).
- (b) You know just about as much (possible).
- (c) You know a lot more (probable).

This literary lemon is directed at (a) and (b), because (c) will perceive immediately that we are only casting about blindly after the manner of the dilettante. Our personal collection is still in embryo, so instead of ranging the masterpieces of all time in ordered lists with neat little commentaries, it might be better simply to mention the better recordings in our collection or soon to be acquired. You know . . . Build Your Collection With THE ALEMBIC. Not that you will dash out to annex every disc we mention, but if you are just starting a collection, you might do worse than to buy some of the recordings we happen to have.

A few cautions are in order here. Don't become prejudiced in favor of one or two orchestras or conductors, and proceed to get your favorite selections done only by them. We hear

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a lot at present about Toscanini; now, Arturo is without doubt the greatest conductor of all time, and he can do wonderful things with any orchestra or any selection. But we cannot agree with the enthusiasts who insist that Toscanini could draw a masterful rendition of Beethoven's Seventh out of the Tanktown Symphony Orchestra. The orchestra is of prime importance; the conductor can only arrange the music and strive to make the performers produce what he envisions. But Toscanini cannot undertake to instruct the individual musicians in the mastery of their instruments; he is not a magician, and must work with what he has. Granted that he can make the NBC Orchestra, one of the world's finest, perform better than could Ormandy, for instance, this is no guarantee that Toscanini plus the NBC make the finest recording of any given selection. With some music Koussevitsky and the Boston Symphony—and there *is* an orchestra—do a superior job. With some music Beecham and the London Philharmonic are supreme. The point is that to insure getting the best recording of your favorite music, you should hear what every great orchestra and conductor has done with it. The Boston Symphony is generally recognized as the greatest orchestra, and Toscanini as the supreme conductor—but the two never get together for a recording; a dozen other orchestras are only a half pace behind the Boston, and several other conductors only slightly less great than Toscanini. Remember that slogan about “trying all three.”

At this point we might proceed to list a dozen masterpieces with their best recordings, but we are ever mindful of our promise just given, to mention only recordings we have or shortly shall have. It would be foolish to criticise something we hadn't heard, and the only selections we know at all well are those we possess or have had played at the dealer's. The recent

price war between Victor and Columbia records has brought prices down as much as 50%, but even so, some albums remain quite costly. You might follow our practice of buying symphonies a record or two at a time. We are doing this with Beethoven's Ninth, or Choral, Symphony, one of the finest things in the realm of music.

Symphony Number 9 in D Minor, Felix Weingartner Conducting the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and the Vienna State Opera Chorus. Columbia Album MM-227. (\$8.50) You will agree that \$8.50 seems pretty stiff, but this album has eight records, and that price is really quite fair. We couldn't manage the \$8.50 in one payment, so bought the record (68357-D) which has the first and sixteenth sides, arranged, of course, for a drop mechanism phonograph. Even if you have a manually operated machine this is the best album, because you can put at least three or four sides on the wheel before you must stop to remove any records, and the continuity will be better. This recording of the Ninth is the best in existence partly because very few important orchestras or maestros have touched it—Toscanini and the NBC, Koussevitsky and the Boston Symphony, and most of the other top notch organizations have let it strictly alone. But Weingartner and the two Vienna societies have done an admirable job, and I doubt that any orchestra could have put out a superior interpretation. The 16th side has the Choral Finale on Schiller's *Ode to Joy*, which should move even a sworn carpet cutter to awed silence. Hear this recording if you would see what we mean by the composer's power given free rein, and we think that thereafter you will cock a beady eye at *Jeanie With the Light Brown Hair*. Come \$7.50, we intend to get the other seven records.

Symphony Number 5 in C Minor (Beethoven)—Toscanini and the NBC—Victor Album M-640. Here are three of

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the greatest names in music combined: Beethoven, Toscanini and the NBC Orchestra. We said previously that different organizations have made the supreme recordings of the various classics. This is a case where Arturo and the National Broadcasting Company Orchestra are tops. When you want to purchase a Beethoven Symphony, look for those three names and you will have the best. The trouble is that Toscanini et Cie don't record enough of Beethoven—we should like to see what they could do with the Ninth. The NBC under Toscanini is quite the equal of the Boston Symphony under Koussevitsky; some critics even prefer the NBC, pointing to its incomparable string section. It is a situation similar to the point of titillation in chemistry: here are six great orchestras, with greater or lesser conductors. Give any one of them the greatest conductor and the result will be a perfect recording. As for the Fifth, we don't quite know the adjective best suited to it. Perhaps you might say it is the most tuneful of Beethoven's symphonies; at any rate, it is undoubtedly the most suitable for general appreciation.

Strauss Waltz Album, Arthur Fiedler Conducting the Boston "Pops" Orchestra—Victor Album M-445. Here you will probably hoist an eyebrow in our direction and point to the previous discounting of light classics. But Strauss Waltzes are in a class by themselves; they conform to no general classifications, but seem destined to live forever as the personification of gayety and loveliness. They remain a graceful bridge between our time and the light-hearted Vienna that can never be again. Everyone likes Strauss, but not everyone has heard him played properly—only as mutilated three-quarter time dance music shortened almost to nothingness. Fiedler, himself of Viennese stock, gives sympathetic interpretation to Strauss—perhaps more in concert style than for dancing, but the result is beautiful. Each record

in this album is a twelve-inch disc, begun on one side and completed on the other—the way Johann wrote the waltzes. Peccavimus . . . the last, *Frühlingsstimmen*, is ten-inch—a shorter waltz than the others. The records contained are *Artists' Life*, *Vienna Blood*, *Wine, Woman and Song*, *Emperor Waltz* and *Voices of Spring*. When you get Strauss Waltzes investigate this album; we compared it with those done by Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra, Beecham and the London Philharmonic, and others—and we still prefer the recordings by the “Pops”, which is not generally rated as a top flight orchestra. In our opinion Fiedler is slighted by the critics; the Pops is one of the most versatile organizations around. Remember, a large group of musicians from the Boston Symphony Orchestra play in this one on the nights of the famous Pops Concerts. Anyone who has never attended a Pops Concert has missed something; everyone sits around informally drinking the renowned Pops punch and listening to the music. Some nights they play dance music or nonsensical things, and fun is the password; other nights something serious is accomplished. The Victor Company has recognized the ability of the Pops by peppering its catalog with records by Fiedler. Which leads us automatically to another of their albums.

Tschaikowsky: Overture 1812 (Ouverture Solonnelle)
—Fiedler and the Pops Orchestra—Victor Album M-515. The *1812* is another of those unfortunate compositions destined to receive frequent bursts of aspersion solely because they have been performed too often. The *1812* has been done for decades by every orchestra that boasted a strong enough arm to beat the *Marseillaise* on the bass drum. That is weak criticism; it reflects merit on the music that it has remained so popular. This is one piece of music translucent to the most unimaginative listener;

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you can't sit through it and not see the mighty vanguard of Napoleon's *Grande Armée* struggling through the terrible Russian winter to Moscow, the arrival frustrated by the abandonment of the city, the terrible suffering, the French corpses by the roadside, the heartbreaking retreat, and the rejoicing of the Russians in the 350 churches of Moscow. If you have any inkling of the story, you can reconstruct the advance and retreat from the recurring theme of the *Marseillaise*, swelling to a final, surging roar as the French approach the gates of the city, then fading dismally to the accompaniment of the icy winds, the triumphant power of the Tsarist Anthem and the church bells tolling the victory. The story goes that the *1812* was first performed in Moscow by a tremendous orchestra of hundreds of pieces, the bass drums being replaced by cannon actually thundering the beat. Fiedler has no howitzers under his baton, but he has a magnificent group of artists who know how to interpret power and pain. This recording is infinitely superior to that of Stokowski and the Philadelphia, for instance, the only other recording with which we are familiar. The Don Cossacks do excerpts—the two Russian hymns—on a Columbia record mentioned further on, but that is matter for another hundred thousand words.

Moonlight Sonata (Beethoven) and Minuet in G Major (Paderewski)—Ignace Jan Paderewski, Pianist—Victor Record 16250—*A and B*. The old master made this recording quite recently, and they do say that his hands aren't quite what they used to be. Even granting that, a stiff-handed Paderewski is still the superior of about anyone on records. The *Moonlight Sonata* needs no comment; practically everyone can whistle its melody. It compresses into one clear, jewel-like composition the immeasurable ability of Beethoven to create a mood. We like to think that poor old Paderewski had in mind some rustic spot in un-

happy Poland when he made this recording; we can picture him brooding at the piano, thinking perhaps of how once the moonlight bathed his beautiful gardens where now the utilitarian Nazis are growing potatoes. The reverse side has his own composition, *Minuet in G-Major*, a lovely study in piano technique. Even if "G-Major" means nothing to you, hear this for the work of a master's right hand. The piece is an endless, tumbling cascade of notes, effortless but precise and never blurred.

IV

Zwei Russische Volkslieder and Don Kosaken Volkslied
—Don Cossack Choir, Conducted by Serge Jaroff—Columbia Record 4163-M.

Excerpts from the Overture 1812 and Excerpts from the Coronation Scene of the Opera Boris Godounow (Moussorgsky)
—Don Cossacks—Columbia Record 7363-M.

Aljoscha's Lied, from Dobrynja Nikititsch by Gretschaninoff, and Song of the Indian Guest, from Sadko, by Rimsky-Korsakow—Don Cossacks—Columbia Record 7342-M.

Song of the Plains and The White Whirlwind—Choir of the Red Army of the USSR—Columbia Record 4204-M.

Song of the Volga Boatmen and Song of the Flea—Feodor Chaliapin, Basso—Victor Record 14901—A and B.

Two Selections from Act Four of Boris Godounow: Prayer of Boris and Death of Boris; Recorded during the Actual Performance at Covent Garden, London, on July 4, 1928—Chaliapin as Boris—Victor Record 15177—A and B.

Why give these records a separate grouping—and why lump them all together? You will notice that all are sung by Russians—and for our money, Russians have a corner on the voice market. We can't explain technically nor theoretically why an unsoaped moujik from Omsk on the Tomsk should have,

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from birth and without benefit of training, a voice that in this aesthetic poorhouse of ours would command \$10,000 per year, regiments of raving debutantes and a life contract at the Metropolitan. But out of Russia they come, the greatest voices the world has ever known: Cossacks from the Don, longshoremen from the Volga, prisoners from Siberia and peasants from Nishni-Udinsk, Krasnoyarsk and points east, who apparently devote their lives to starving for the benefit of Mr. Hearst's papers.

The real pity is, thousands of potential Pagliaccis remain buried in the vastness of Russia, squatting around miserable fires and wasting their ability on the wolfpacks. Walter Duranty once said that any regiment of the Red Army might be selected at random, told to sing, and would promptly make the finest choir in the world look like just so many other fellas. We think there is proof of that available; anyone who has travelled Russia beyond the scope of the Cook's Tour of the factories and subways—imagine travelling to Moscow to see a subway—has come back with glowing reports of peasant singing. Writers like Duranty and Negley Farson have ventured out a little way onto the vast reaches of the steppes; they are qualified to speak. The magnificent voices that are hidden away in the part of Russia that still thinks the Little Father resides in the Kremlin—even the Communists haven't the slightest idea of how to reach them—can only be imagined.

Why God should have favored the Russians and slighted the rest of us I don't know; we can hardly wait to see how many moujiks have made the celestial choir. They must fill it. Perhaps it has something to do with the food, or lack of it, that Russians eat, though rumor hath it that the flank of the Russian cat is woefully low in vitamin content. Perhaps again those great organ voices spring from the one per cent of vodka that is not

alcohol. Or possibly, to sing that sort of bass one must first have been exposed thoroughly to the brutal Russian winter, have watched whole provinces starve to death. Russian voices lend themselves best to songs of sorrow or barbaric power, and probably the latter is only a reaction to the prevalence of the other. We sit for hours listening to the records of the Don Cossacks, who sing usually unaccompanied by so much as an harmonica. True, Jaroff's Cossacks are a professional group, but they were originally formed from an ordinary group of Russians who happened to be in the same prison camp near Constantinople. And they are but one example of what Russians can do with their vocal chords.

The greatest individual Russian singer, and the supreme Basso of all time, was Feodor Chaliapin. The story of his success has something of the DeMille Era about it: from boyhood he had been employed at a few kopecks a day—precisely, about twelve cents cash—in carrying freight onto the boats that ply the Volga. One of the Tsar's men heard him singing as he worked, and you know the rest. The following year Chaliapin was receiving \$6,000 per annum in the Imperial Opera at Moscow, and the most underpaid man in the world. It is difficult to think of him as a man; he is one of those figures of history and legend who live through the memory of their works. Chaliapin is a voice; it matters little who he was or what he did—in his powerful peasant frame was incorporated the greatest bass voice in the realm of music. He secured his place in music principally by his inspired portrayal of Boris, Tsar of all the Russias, in Moussorgsky's opera of that name. We have several of the records from the actual performance at Covent Garden in 1928 (including those mentioned above), and we cannot bring ourselves to sigh and tchk-tchk for the present unhappy plight of

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that building. Chaliapin that night demonstrated to Londoners the purpose for which Covent Garden had been built, and any subsequent performers will only profane the place. We rather hope the *Luftwaffe* will erase it.

At this point we have a confession to make: since purchasing the records of the opera, we have never dared to read the complete story, because we fear it may be different somehow from the picture we have as Chaliapin sings privately for us . . . we like to think that the great musical booming is the tolling of the bells in the Cathedral of Saint Basil (remember the legend that its architect had his eyes gouged out by Ivan the Terrible so that he could never duplicate it?); that the sounds made after he is stabbed by his wife—she must be his wife—represent his crawling on his hands and knees to die at her feet; that the dignified chanting after his dramatic death represents the voices of a dozen dirty, black-bearded Russian priests, all of them ringers for Rasputin.

We wonder if Eddy and Thomas and the others who separate the gullible from five dollars per evening have heard that piece of singing . . . we should think they would feel like the composer long ago who said that he found it difficult to write a symphony—he always imagined that Beethoven was looking over his shoulder. In Chaliapin's company, Eddy and Thomas are a couple of freshly starched cowlick-crowned choirboys; they strain after their notes. Chaliapin rolls along with effortless power, taking everything in his stride, and he has the added blessing of marvelous dramatic ability. Often there come to our place here people of the *Jeanie With the Light Brown Hair* school (let us temporarily dismiss the devotees of *Scrub Me Mama With a Boogie Beat*). When they ask to hear the phonograph we sigh and put on Chaliapin's *Death of Boris*, and watch

the reactions. Women bring out handkerchiefs, men light cigarettes and try to look unconcerned, but the cigarette usually burns out without being puffed. You really feel that death blow—you wince, and expect an announcer to step in hurriedly and say that there has been an accident. But if Chaliapin leaves you unmoved . . .

Yes, it really bothers us, this idea of Russia having the monopoly of voices. We like to have a good explanation for everything, but that beats us. It's just there, you can't do anything about it, and no one wants to. We suppose that out of the great frozen silence of Russia will continue to come men whose music makes ours seem strangely puny, and sadly, many more will stay behind to waste their talent on the wolfpacks. At least we can obtain records of the few who have escaped the all-clutching paw of Papa Stalin; we can marvel at the way Jaroff's Don Cossacks sing their precision and power without musical accompaniment, imitating what they need: dogs barking, wolves howling, sleighs whistling over the crusted snow, church bells. We can hear the surging *Marseillaise* by the Red Choir, done properly for the first time, or the Retreat from Moscow in Tschai-kowsky's *Overture 1812*, trembling with the might of the *Grande Armée*, the retreat, the bells tolling the victory and the magnificent Tsarist Anthem. And we can always switch off the little Eddy's and Thomas's in favor of Chaliapin as Boris, Tsar of all the Russias, standing on the broad steps of the Cathedral of Saint Basil and using the "God-given organ voice of Russia" to demonstrate conclusively that on this planet, supreme genius in any form comes but once.

J. A. C.

Children of the Sun

By CHARLES E. SWEENEY, '41

ONCE upon a time there lived in the rich, green Pasture of the Sun dozens of little boys and girls who were Children of the Sun. For many years they were all together in their abundant homeland living on milk and cream and Easter Eggs. They'd romp and play all day and at night they'd all curl up and go to sleep in the many soft and deep hay stacks in the fields. All of them were very happy; they were indeed Children of the Sun.

Their Pasture was on a high plateau far up on a mountain and the mountain was high and steep and stood up like a sentinel in a large Valley which bore many rivers and was covered with thorny thickets. All that the Children were able to see from their mountain was another mountain which was beyond the Valley below and very far away. There lived a rich Old Man in a House that he'd been building, some said, for centuries. On clear and sunny days, the Children could look across the Valley and see the crochety and stout Old Man, who was limping—probably from gout—and had indigestion from eating too much. He was always fighting with all the people and animals over there who were starving and hungry and who wanted some of his riches.

The Children of the Sun lived happily for many, many years until one time one of the Children—his name was Rudolph—thought to himself that he'd become a little richer than

the others. So, what did he do? He gradually hoarded his eggs, stealing some of the other Children's eggs every once in a while, until after a time Rudolph had a great, great collection of eggs, more than all of the other Children had. Rudolph was very mean. Deciding that he should become even richer, he not only urged a few of his close friends, who were crafty like himself, to hoard and steal too, but he also used to climb out of his haystack every night when all the other little Children were asleep and steal one of the hens and hide it in one of the barns.

Rudolph kept doing this until many of the little hens were missing and the other children were beginning to grow hungry because there were hardly any eggs left. But Rudolph was selfish; he didn't care how hungry the other children became because, he, Rudolph, was getting fatter and fatter while the other children were getting very thin. After many days famine began to fasten itself on the little community. Everybody was frightened terribly. Many of the Children were sick. Others walked around, talked and argued saying that something had to be done. Panic nearly overtook the little country. But, at last, a hero rose from out among them. It was none other than the handsome Ernest, who soon became the pride and joy of all his little neighbors.

Ernest told the other little Children that all they would have to do would be to give him power. Power was all he needed. Power—and he would feed them all. All the hungry Children decided that they must do this if they would keep themselves from starving to death. So one day they all had a meeting and they decided that handsome Ernest should be the Supreme Mandater of all the Children's fortunes. Rudolph and his friends didn't like the looks of this at all. Rudolph knew that nobody should have any power, now that he, Rudolph, was the richest

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in the land. He said it would be dangerous to give so much power to one Child and he added that he viewed the whole situation with a great deal of alarm.

But Ernest was wonderful. He told the Children that they should not worry about starving but all they should do was to stop worrying. He, Ernest, would feed them all. The first thing Ernest did was to rule that nobody could own too much of anything and that if anybody saved up too many things he would be penalized so much that he would wish that he'd had sense enough to stay poor like the other children.

Then Ernest said that the Children simply couldn't starve. All the eggs were gone, he said, and they must find more even if they had to postpone their games for a while in order to look for them. So all the little Children began to look for the eggs and for the hens who laid them. They searched and searched and searched. Rudolph and his friends began to wring their hands. Suppose they found his hens! But the Children searched and searched and searched in vain and not a hen or an Easter Egg could be found because Rudolph had hidden them all so well. By now, all the little Children were almost dead from starving, except Ernest, who was able to nourish himself from his power, and Rudolph and his friends who had plenty of eggs.

But at last Ernest saw how fat Rudolph was. Ernest called a meeting and demanded to know how Rudolph managed to stay so fat. Rudolph was truculent. He said that he, Rudolph, was a substantial man. He had much common sense. Ever since he was a boy he had worked day and night to support his widowed mother and her ten other children and put himself through the Academy at the same time. Rudolph told how he had starved himself when everybody else was fat and that how he, Rudolph, had a right to be fat because he had initiative.

But all the thin little Children sent up a great cry. Rudolph had no right to be fat while everybody else starved. Ernest thought and thought and thought. Finally he told Rudolph that he would be obliged to feed everybody else and that his, Rudolph's friends, must help. Rudolph said that this would be impossible, and added that if such a thing happened the Pasture would dry up and everything would die because nature wouldn't stand for it if he, Rudolph, was obliged to feed everybody else. But Ernest said that Rudolph must feed everybody else because he, Ernest, was for the common Child who could not be allowed to starve. Rudolph said that Ernest could do no such thing because it had never been done before and he repeated his dire prophecy about the Pasture drying up if Ernest had the nerve to mandate his, Rudolph's eggs, into the common possession.

But Ernest was adamant. All the Children were shouting that Rudolph had no right to be fat at this time. So Ernest mandated that everybody should go to Rudolph's barn for breakfast, dinner and supper and for tea in the afternoon. He ruled that Rudolph's friends—who were not as scrawny as the other children—would have to contribute to feeding the others. Rudolph howled that this would be unbearable. But so it happened—and Rudolph had to take some of the eggs that all of his hens laid and feed them to the starving Children.

After many weeks of this, everybody began to get healthy again but Rudolph was getting thin from worrying and wringing his hands so much. Rudolph finally told Ernest that the Children must start in soon to get some of their own hens and raise their own eggs again. But Ernest consulted his adviser, who was a professor in the Academy, and they decided that no, this would be a waste. It would be unthinkable to do such a thing as long as everybody had Rudolph's eggs. Rudolph moaned

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and grieved. But he moaned and grieved all the more when Ernest decided that if any other Child ever had a hen or an egg he should bury it in the ground and plow it under because, if too many hens grew up, such a situation would spoil the admirable plans for eating Rudolph's eggs.

Then, said Ernest, we need to work. Not for anything special. We, said Ernest, must work because that is good for a Child's soul. So all the little starving Children started in to work. With shovels and wheelbarrows they dug a huge hole right in the middle of the Pasture. Then they put a sign on it stating that all this work was done because of Ernest and that it was his hole. Then they piled all the dirt up until it was like a very big hill. They put pipes and tunnels in the hill; they planted grass on it; they stood around watching it and then they put a sign on it saying that this big hill was built because of Ernest and that the Children gratefully gave the hill to him.

But Ernest was still not satisfied with all this work. So all the little Children tore down the hill again and filled up the hole. When everything was all done, Ernest told the little Children that he was their benefactor—look what he had done for them—first they had a hole, then they had a hill which was almost as big as a mountain. And all the little Children cheered and cheered and said that Ernest was wonderful and that he loved everybody. Ernest smiled a handsome smile in thanks but Rudolph was gloomy. Rudolph thought that Ernest was ridiculous and wished that the Supreme Mandater would take a vacation and recover his sanity.

And so things went on happily for all the Children except Rudolph and his friends for quite a long while. Rudolph's face began to be heavily lined and he assumed a permanent frown, saying that the world had gone mad, that decent people

couldn't make a decent living any more and that he, Rudolph, was being persecuted because of his good qualities.

But—alas for Ernest!—his power began slowly to wane. He could see that he was getting less and less popular. Everybody was satisfied with eating Rudolph's eggs, but what began to pall on the little Children was the fact that Ernest made them keep on working. The first hole they had already dug and filled up some five or six times now and they thought that perhaps they should do something else for variety's sake. At first Ernest had a bright idea. He made them dig two holes and build two mountains. Then, instead of putting the dirt from the first hole back into its proper place they put it into the second hole and vice-versa. When all this was done, Ernest decided that, after all, every piece of dirt to its own hole—so he made them dig up the holes again and put the right dirt in the right holes. This satisfied the Children for a long while. Three times a day and once in the afternoon, old sourpuss Rudolph would come around with meals and the Children would glut themselves on the eggs of Rudolph and his friends and would have fun jeering at Rudolph. But the Children became so satisfied that they were indifferent to the handsome Ernest whose pride was hurt and who longed to have something sensational happen to restore his injured vanity.

And it did happen! One day when the Children of the Sun were busy digging up the second hole, they heard a terrible noise coming from the mountain across the Valley. It was a high-pitched, maniacal, screaming—and a gloating and ravenous and terrible laughter. A Hyena, who lived in a forest on the Old Man's mountain, had suddenly darted out of the woods and had clawed a little baby to death and was devouring him as fast as possible. The Children of the Sun looked on askance. This

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was horrible, they said, and they all declared that they were very glad that nothing like this could happen in their Pasture.

The Hyena had eaten the little baby before anyone of the people on the other mountain had had time to interfere. And now that he had finished, the strong but cowardly animal paced back and forth in front of the crowd looking very, very fierce and defying anyone to come near him. Some of them made a start to attack but the Hyena howled and howled and looked very fierce and all of the people soon lost their courage. Then the Hyena paced slowly over to the Old Man's House and bared his teeth and screamed and howled a great deal more. But the Old Man was safe and he knew it. He alone had the power to defeat the Hyena but the Old Man was so gluttoned from eating so much, and was so lazy and indifferent, that he just ignored the animal and disregarded the helpless people who lived on the mountain and were unprotected from the Hyena and his friends, the Bear and the Wolf, all of whom were constantly menacing the community from their hideouts in the forest. The Old Man, thought the Children of the Sun, was truly a coward. He was afraid to come out of his House. He was old and besides, when everybody was busy being afraid of the animals, nobody paid any attention to trying to get some of his, the Old Man's riches, away from him.

As the days went by, the trouble on the other mountain seemed to be getting worse and worse. The Hyena kept coming out of the forest and would scream and holler at the Old Man and say that if the Old Man did not share his riches, he, the Hyena, would beat down the Old Man's House. But all the other people shouted down the Hyena until he was forced to get the help of the big clumsy Bear and the cowardly Wolf. Then the three of them would browbeat the community and would continue to hurl insults at the Old Man.

But the Old Man was content to remain in his shuttered House and would only come out on his balcony once in a while and tell the animals to be quiet, to stop disturbing his sleeping and his feasting and to let the other people live in peace. The Old Man said, moreover, that he was Law and Order and Decency and Righteousness and all but the animals believed him.

Things continued in this wise for a long while and meanwhile the Children of the Sun were finishing taking the dirt from the first hole and putting it back where it belonged and vice-versa. But the trouble on the other mountain kept on getting worse and worse until, one day, the Hyena came out of the forest and, after much menacing and screaming and horrible laughing, told the people of the other mountain that he was far superior to everyone else, that he was the only one who had a right to live and that he soon would kill and eat them all.

The people were very, very terrified. They were so afraid that they all tried to run and hide in separate places, but it was of no use. Soon the Bear joined the Hyena and together, right on the Old Man's front lawn, they attacked all the people, who were so paralyzed with fear that they could do nothing. They were no match for their adversaries and it was no time at all before the Hyena and the Bear were devouring the helpless people they had killed. In the meantime, just at the end of the fight, the cowardly Wolf had stolen onto the scene and was soon sharing in the feast. And when the animals had finished eating the dead people, the Children of the Sun could hear them yelling and screaming and congratulating themselves and hollering to the Old Man that he would be next.

When the Children of the Sun had seen all of this they were more horrified than ever. Even Rudolph said he was horrified. And Ernest! Ernest knew that he must be the man of

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the hour, that he must be the shining hero and lead the Children into believing that somehow the situation was dangerous for them and that they must prepare themselves for any eventuality. Here was his chance for everlasting fame! All could see that old Law and Order and Decency and Righteousness was very frightened and that he was running around on the roof of his House waving for them to come and help lest he be eaten by the three Brutes who were getting ready to attack him. The Children at last began to feel a little more kindly toward the Old Man.

However, they didn't know what to do. They forgot about the holes they were filling up and Rudolph almost forgot about how unjust it was for him to have to feed everybody else. And the more the Brutes menaced the Old Man the more sorry the people felt for him until finally Ernest told the Children that they all must find some way to help the old fellow. So they all thought, and thought, and thought, and finally they decided that they could send some of Rudolph's eggs over to the Old Man by strapping them to a pigeon who would fly over and return.

There was a great argument about this plan. Some of the Children thought that it was none of their business to interfere with what was happening so far away from their Pasture and they thought, furthermore, that the Old Man deserved every bit of treatment he was getting because in his youth he had glutted himself on the lives of others. But others answered that it was of no use to dig up all the Old Man's past mistakes and that anyway, he was Law and Order and Decency and Righteousness. So all the Children were soon divided, the Reds for the Old Man and the Yellows against.

Ernest stood cautiously to one side for a while and he

counted the ones on each side. Seeing that there were two more Reds than Yellows, Ernest said that he was for the Reds and that Law and Order and Decency and Righteousness must be preserved. Ernest had such a winning way that many of the Yellows left their side and soon went over to the Reds and very soon the pigeon was carrying Rudolph's eggs back and forth to the Old Man who would wave gratefully and send Rudolph back a great many pieces of shiny yellow metal which Rudolph prized very much. Ernest was very much in his glory; he was once again the knight in shining armor; he was once again the leader of the Children and once more he was very, very sure of his power. All the Children even said that Ernest was very noble now; that he was a genius in handling Affairs and that the Children of the Sun would, for generations, look upon Ernest as one born to the Mandate.

But even Rudolph's eggs didn't make the Old Man who was Law and Order and Decency and Righteousness much better off. The three Brutes kept circling around every day keeping the old fellow all penned up in his House and unable to collect the income from his riches which were scattered all over the mountain and even as far down as the Valley. Then one day the real trouble for the Old Man started. The three Brutes knew that they just couldn't blow down the House so they all took sticks of fire and started throwing them in the Old Man's windows.

This produced a terrible reaction in the little Children who could see what was going on in the daytime and how the Old Man's House was all lit up with little fires every night. But the Old Man had courage. He would send back notes together with Rudolph's shiny metal pieces, telling the Children that he had courage. The Old Man would say that he had more courage than anybody and all the little Children believed him and Ern-

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est sent him a note telling him how all the little Children admired him. The Old Man would also say that he'd get a touch of fatigue every now and then because he was continually running about his house putting out the little fires which the three Bullies were continually starting.

Now, however, some of the Children realized that things would be very, very bad for the Old Man if nothing were done. They said that they should start an Expedition and go across the Valley and beat up the Brutes who were pestering the kind Old Man. At first there was a great cry of protest when this came up. But all of the Reds gradually began to come to the belief that the Children should send even more help to the old fellow. The Yellows were so small in number by now that no matter what they would say would make any difference, but anyway they made a great shout against this plan. Then the Reds decided that whoever was one of the Yellows was a traitor to the land of the Children of the Sun because, after all, wasn't the Old Man fighting their battle?

The Yellows said that, of course, the Old Man wasn't fighting their battle but was fighting his own and that if he won he'd be just as mean and crochety as ever and, anyway, it would be a sad commentary on the Children of the Sun who were young and brave and strong and healthy, if they had to depend on an Old Man to protect them. They added, that the Pasture of the Sun was so far away from everything that the three Brutes could never come and devour them.

But, said the Reds, that would be just the case. Did not the Yellows know, they asked, about the new zephkriogyro that the first Brute invented in order to fly over the Old Man's House and throw more burning sticks into it? Then, they said, the three Brutes could come right over to the Pasture and eat up

all the Children of the Sun. Now if we build our own zephkriogyro, said the Yellows, but the Reds answered by saying that the Children should all get together and help the Old Man rather than stay in their own country. Let us make some trouble for ourselves rather than wait to see if trouble comes to us, they said.

And Ernest? He was continually jumping back and forth from one to the other. He wanted to please everybody and be everybody's leader, but when finally the Militant Reds had converted most of the Children into the idea of the Expedition to Expedite Happiness, Ernest decided to make a definite stand. Bravely and handsomely and proudly, he told all the Children that the Expedition would start at once and they would use Rudolph's choicer Easter Eggs as projectiles to hurl at the Brutes. All the Children shrieked with glee except a few of the Yellows who were condemned to stay at home and finish digging the holes all by themselves with balls and chains around their necks. Rudolph? He thought the Expedition was a grand idea. If the Old Man died there would be no more metal pieces, and besides, what could be worse than his, Rudolph's, having to help feed the whole population permanently! Let them go, he thought, and he could stay at home and direct the work of the Yellows. Ernest would stay at home, too, together with his relatives and admirers who would form a tonal background for his lilting voice as he crooned momentous encouragements to the Expedition to Expedite Happiness as it crossed the gloomy Valley.

The adventure started. Days passed and each morning Ernest could see the Children of the Expedition proudly weaving their way across the streams and through the thickets of the Valley and toward the mountain. He talked to Rudolph about how proud he was of them and Rudolph would speculate on

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when they'd get there and whether they'd be able to save the Old Man who owned all the brave and shiny metal pieces. And finally one day they could see the Children climbing the mountain on the other side. The Children were worn and weary but they were brave and they all made ready to kill the three Brutes with their Easter Eggs.

Ernest and Rudolph held their breath as the Hyena turned away from the Old Man's House and discovered the Children coming up the mountain. The Hyena began his high-pitched, screaming laugh and threatened the Children with all kinds of dire punishments if they so much as dared to interfere with the siege of the Old Man's House. The Hyena is a self-centered egotist and a frustrated maniac who belongs in an asylum, said Ernest to Rudolph, as they watched the Children approach nearer and nearer until they had reached the front lawn of the Old Man's House and began to throw their Easter Eggs at the Hyena. But alas, their efforts were of no avail. The Hyena just laughed at the Children. Soon he was joined by the clumsy Bear and together they began to hurl the fire sticks at their little assailants. All of the Children were greatly afraid; some of them were killed by the fire sticks, but they all got much courage from the fact that the cowardly wolf, after making a hasty appearance, had become frightened of Rudolph's Easter Eggs and had scampered back into the forest. Finally, their supply of Easter Eggs exhausted, the Children all gathered together and attacked the Hyena and the Bear. There was a terrible fight. Bodies tumbled over one another; there was screaming and clawing and chewing for hours but the Children were encouraged by the war-like shouts of the Old Man, who stayed in his House and ran from window to window saying that the Brutes must die. And from across the Valley Ernest was crooning *God Save*

the Children of the Sun in front of a chorus comprised of his relatives and friends and many of the most militant Reds who were directing things from home.

And when the fight was over there was a horrible scene on the Old Man's front lawn. Many of the Children of the Sun had died but so had the Hyena and the Bear. Law and Order and Decency and Righteousness came out of his House and congratulated the few Children who remained. They were all tired out and injured beyond repair. Then the remnants of the little army went back to the Pasture of the Sun and the survivors were given medals by the Militant Reds, and by Ernest, and were promised many delicious Easter Eggs by Rudolph who was loaded down with the shiny silver metals that were given him by the Old Man who had taken this grand opportunity to establish ownership of the whole of his mountain.

But the end of the Expedition was the beginning of the end for poor Ernest. All the Children in the Pasture of the Sun were dissatisfied. They were so weak from their fight that they couldn't do any work. They started to fight and bicker with one another, and then soon one of the leaders in the fighting—his name was Destiny—led all the Children in an attack on poor Rudolph. They took all of Rudolph's hens and eggs and put poor Rudolph into prison where he had to work for the rest of his life with a ball and chain around his neck.

Even this was not enough. One day all the Children looked across at the other mountain and they saw that the Old Man, who had grown fatter than ever and had the gout worse than before, was bickering and quarreling and arguing with his neighbors. They were all very sad and disappointed with Law and Order and Decency and Righteousness. But what could they do? They were too weak to see that the Old Man was just.

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They were so tired and disappointed that they didn't seem to care what happened. They fought bitterly over who would get most of Rudolph's many hens and eggs.

But one thing would surely have to be done. Destiny was a man of action. He was their leader. They liked to have Destiny tell them what to do in order that they wouldn't have to worry about anything themselves any more. So Destiny organized them in groups and told each Child of the Sun just what he could do, when he could eat, when he could sleep and when he could have a vacation from work, and when he could be able to speak his mind. And to insure all this, Destiny organized his own police force whose members went around all the while making sure that all worshipped Destiny instead of the Sun, and that all did and thought as they were told at all times.

And Ernest? Poor Ernest died of a broken heart and injured pride. His was a proud day while it lasted. But somehow he had overplayed his hand and Destiny and his heirs came into power for ever. From then on there were no more games in the Pasture of the Sun and there was much misery among the Children of the Sun. Their greatest regret was that perhaps Destiny might well have been cheated.

The Master

By MATTHEW P. GALLAGHER, '41

IT would take urgent business indeed to get anybody out on such a day, thought good Mrs. Baums as she stood looking out of the garret window. Only a birth could do it. A death perhaps, but a birth is more important. A midwife cannot be particular about her hours. *Ach*, what a day! The short night, and then the dash through the mud after Herr Beethoven had called her. And the labour had been so difficult—poor Maria! She turned to look at the woman lying on the pallet, almost asleep. Beauty there, she thought. Not striking, but deep—underneath the sick eyes and thin face. The little infant was hidden beneath the folds of blanket. The poor woman, deathly pale. *Gott sei mit dir!* May your little son bring you some of the happiness which you have never known.

It was in the Rhine town of Bonn on the fifteenth or sixteenth of December, 1770. She stood in a small, dark room in a shabby house on the Bonngasse, not far from the Tavern and the Kirche in the center of the village. We can imagine that the cold winter rain clawed fiercely against the garret window that day as the infant Beethoven first was cradled to his mother's breast. It had snowed all night, gradually changing to rain toward morning. The street was muddy and rutted and filled with broad puddles. Along both sides great Linden trees hunched against the wild wind. Tall and gaunt they were; their naked ribs split the river of rain into a thousand tiny rivulets

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as they conducted them to the catch basin which was the street. Now and then they bent their heads together and whispered lowly and then, as if with some gigantic humor, they leaned back in laughter. But it was a satanic laughter, suggestive of grinning Fates or leering Norns.

A noise in the next room brought a frown to her square old face. "That drunken father, bah, he is a bad one." She could hear a bottle drop to the floor and shatter on the stone flagging of the hearth. An unsteady voice broke into song—a beautiful tenor, but marred by drunken accents:

"Mein Herz ist schwer . . ."

Jawohl, a beautiful voice. That was one character that the baby might well inherit from the father. The van Beethovens had a long musical heritage. Had not the infant's grandfather been court musician to Clemens August, Clemens the Magnificent? That venerated forebear had entered the choir school of the church of St. Rombaud when he was only eleven, and soon after he was singing bass at the Cathedral of Liège. He was to reach the climax of his career the year after young Ludwig was born by singing the role of Dalmon in Gretry's *Sylvain*, at Paris. And Ludwig's father was also a court musician, but he had wasted his talents in drink.

It was strange that the van Beethovens had settled in Bonn after the trek from their ancestral home in the Netherlands, for Bonn also had a musical heritage. The Residenz—which could be seen from the rain streaked garret window—had often been the scene of colorful Italian drama, and brilliant oratorios. Of late, financial expedients had forced Maximilian Friedrich to curtail the extravaganzas of the court, but it would not be long before new heights of artistic glory would be reached in that ancient pile. In 1784, Maximilian Franz, patron of the

arts and a true disciple of Josephism, became Elector. Art flourished again in the Rhine Valley as it did all over Europe.

Maximilian Franz was a wise man. With remarkable acumen he foresaw the disaster which awaited France because of the foibles and selfishness of her aristocracy. And in the realization of what was to come he attempted to insulate his country from the heat of revolt. But what foolhardiness it was for a puny Count of the Rhine to draw his sword against the ebullient surge of the new "religion". Within the narrow confines of the pinched court Beethoven saw enough of the revolution to cause a lasting impression in his memory. He didn't see the bloodshed true, and he fled before the territory of Cologne was incorporated into the Cis-Rhenish Republic, but he did see the bourgeois customs replace the lavishness of the aristocracy and he knew now that there would be no patronage for such an ephemeral art as music.

But these things were far in the future for the baby lying in the garret room of the dilapidated house on the Bonngasse. Mother Baums stood by the window. She gazed high above the Residenz to the Taunus Mountains beyond, where the horizon was resolved into a rough and shallow letter "M". Remarkable, those mountains were—just full of weird beings. They weren't the demi-gods of Wagner, but a lighter, somewhat Celtic mythology. The importance of the effect of this mileau on Beethoven's subconscious mind cannot be too highly emphasized. Perhaps the third movement of his Seventh symphony, or the accompaniment to "Nora Creina" reflect some of the cabalistic fantasies that penetrated his youthful spirit. Certainly the physical beauty of his Rhineland *Heimat* never left him. Green horse chestnut trees or lindens lined all the streets and around every door hung clusters of lilacs which filled the air with a fragrance

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that might well overcome a stranger with its sweetness. Beechwoods enclosed the park that was later to become the Venusberg gardens. On the mountain slopes a profusion of wild flowers of almost every color and aroma made of the country another paradise. And in every garden plot grapes abounded, both wild and cultivated, adding their own peculiar scent to the symphony of aromas which pervaded the rich valley.

But the dominant factor in Beethoven's childhood was not the physical or psychical milieu which Bonn provided but rather the home life which his drunken father and the lack of any person with whom he could confide made miserable. There was one shrine in that home however to which the young Beethoven clung tenaciously, to which he came as a disillusioned sinner for inspiration and encouragement—that was the picture of his grandfather whom he almost apotheosized. "There was a man," he would say to Eleanora van Breuning as he pointed to the portrait of the ruddy gentleman. And then he would go home with Eleanora and there enjoy the happiness which he had been denied at his own house, in the intimate circle of that friendly family. Frau van Breuning took a kindly interest in him and helped him to overcome some of the violent anti-social tendencies which his father had nurtured.

Young Ludwig soon showed his precocious ability in music and his father was not long in exploiting the youthful prodigy. The brutality of Herr van Beethoven made him incapable of understanding the child's real nature and talents. He immediately set about to secure a prodigious musical education for Ludwig in as short a time as possible. Teacher followed teacher in rapid succession and all were mediocre. Beethoven later said that he was the worst educated child on earth. But his father persisted and he forced the boy to study without cessation until Ludwig thought that he hated music.

At the age of fourteen, Ludwig was appointed assistant organist at the court of the Elector, Max Franz. Now he leaped to maturity. Three years earlier, when he met Frau van Breuning, he had made the first step outside of the family; now he had broken almost all ties.

In 1787, Beethoven made the third and in some respects the most important step of his life. This was his first trip to Vienna. There is little known about his experiences in the capital, but it is traditional that he met Mozart there and improvised for him. Then Mozart is said to have uttered his famous words: "Keep an eye on this man. The world will hear of him some day." Whether he did any important work in Vienna at that time is unknown, but it is certain that his horizon expanded tremendously and that he acquired a wealth of inspiration from the surging, vari-colored life of the metropolis.

But his happiness was chilled by the illness of his mother. In July he hurried home to see her premature death. From now on, he was the actual head of the family, and upon him devolved the necessity of educating his two younger brothers. This he attempted to accomplish by working at various positions in Bonn—piano playing, orchestra work, and composing.

Five years later, he again travelled to Vienna where, this time, he was triumphant. In a short time he was acclaimed as the first pianist of the city. His success made him arrogant and proud. This feeling of superiority was further increased rather than dampened by the cold reception which his new compositions received. Vienna's critical minds had been moulded into hide-bound conventionality by the music of Mozart and Haydn, and they resented the unconventionality of the *aufgeknöpft* Beethoven.

Something of the fierce nostalgia of the Danubian gypsy melodies seemed to enter into his Viennese pieces. The three

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Trios for Piano, Violin, and Cello, and the three Sonatas dedicated to Haydn, marked this period. There is an alternation of joy and sadness in them. A mysterious lyricism. It was Vienna, that's all, the center of the World, the gateway to sunny Italy. It was Vienna as the musical capital, before the construction of the Ringstrasse. Color! Sound! Life! Native Poles, Bohemians, Turks, each in his distinctive costume, met here and mingled in a glorious kaleidoscope. At night the blue skies, the Romany campfires on the plateau, the glittering Alps, and below the tortuous Danube flecked with stars. Beethoven drank deep of this Pierian spring. Each morning in the Augarten he sat and sipped his coffee and watched the mad and merry gallop of humanity towards hell.

About 1800, when he seemed to be approaching the climax of his career, the terrible realization that he was rapidly growing deaf struck him. The cause of the malady is unknown. Perhaps it was the result of small-pox. This was the motive for the writing of the Heiligenstadt Testament in 1802, one of the most heartrending testimonials of human despair known to man. It was an account in the form of a will of his thoughts at this time. It was an expression of the agony of a man who has found that he has placed his trust in an ephemeral god.

Of all the pathos in history, none is more poignant than the picture of the Master sitting amidst his orchestra in the great Concert Hall of Vienna and realizing that he could no longer hear his music and that his conduction was out of time.

But he regained strength. His determination could not be shaken. It is the Beethoven of this period that we conjure up in our romantic images of the Master. Pock-marked, heavy drinker, body like a bull, aptly symbolizing his character, violently temperamental. He lived in squalor and yet bathed every-

day. And a strange cook—his meals were beyond the power of description. Even Frau van Breuning shrank from visiting his apartment. He walked along the streets gesticulating wildly and talking to himself. The pockets of his nondescript coat bulged with paper on which he took notes with a huge carpenter's pencil. His contempt for convention was carried over into every phase of his life. He had no control over his temper whatsoever and he once tried to break a chair over the head of Prince Lichnowski. "*Halb-verrückt*," was the terse comment of Magdalena Willmann, the singer. If outward turmoil is indicative of an unstable mind she was undoubtedly correct.

This was a period of great creative activity in which he expressed absolute self-confidence in his ability. His Fourth, Fifth, and the Pastoral symphonies were written at this time. His monetary difficulties were somewhat lightened in 1809, by a yearly pension of 4,000 gulden, which he was awarded by three Viennese noblemen. Almost undivided attention could now be devoted to his work.

An augury of ill, however, was the death of his brother Karl in 1815. On his death bed Karl asked Ludwig to care for his nine-year-old son. This trust was to have a profound effect on his whole future life proving a continual drain on his creative and financial resources. His love for the youth was also to provide one of the most striking of the paradoxes with which his life abounds. There was only one human on earth who could change Beethoven's mind once he had decided upon any course, and that one was this worthless youth. In 1820 he received full custody of the boy from the courts and his last seven years, despite the disappointment caused by his nephew, were characterized by a renewed vigor in composition.

The year before, he had struck upon the happy practice of conversing with his visitors by means of writing in notebooks.

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These notebooks are invaluable in analyzing his last years. Numerous afflictions crowded upon him—cirrhosis of the liver and its progeny, jaundice, rheumatism, eye trouble, and peritonitis, and, worst, of all, the affliction that had plagued him all his life, financial trouble. On his deathbed he was forced to appeal to the London Philharmonic Society for help.

His death was painful as was his life. The Master died on the afternoon of March 26th, 1827, while a violent thunderstorm raged outside. It was a *passend Tod* for such a life, a fitting death. We think of death usually in terms of stillness, waning light, and somber shadows, but of Beethoven's death—there is no other idiom than the tempest. What thoughts tortured his mind during those last hours? He was eminently human. But surely there was more. *Du leiber!* Did not his body burn with the passion for expression? Was his soul not wrung to its vibrant core with a pleading, pitiful, unanswerable? That subtle *élan*, the meaning of life—almost he had grasped it; it had ridden the crest of his surging andantes. How close he had come, and yet so, so very far. And now, at the threshold of life, he found the answer. God in His infinite mercy would not tolerate that the Titan whose soul burst with the song of heaven should falter in his journey there. Beethoven received the last rites and died in the Church.



BY THE WAY

WE were talking to a small-town politician one day early last fall. Big man in a small town, minnow in a puddle. He reminded us of W. S.'s famous description of the rise, climax and denouement of an average man. We supposed he'd be classified in the "belly-round," "wise saws and modern instances stage." He was the substantial type, well-heeled financially, sartorially and psychologically—too much of an emotional gourmand to be a hypochondriac.

At the moment our friend had shifted his club-like intellect from the consideration of an imminent two per cent increase in the town's water rates to a horrendous discourse on life in general and in particular to the callowness, spinelessness and cynicism of modern youth as exemplified, we concluded from his fishy glances in our direction, by none other than our own non-vertebraical selves.

Mr. Belly-Round waxed on conscription with warm approval. He'd discoursed on the defenseless state of the nation. He'd consigned Hitler and all his works to the stop where all evil doers and cuss word provokers are supposed to get off at. He'd called for a lightening of the White Man's Burden by annihilating a particularly troublesome part of it. He'd taken verbal vengeance on the thousands of fifth columnists who, he said, were running around sabotaging the hell out of the nation and who, he added, ought to be defending Musso-

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lini from the ravages of an inferiority complex instead of coming around here taking bread out of people's mouths and cluttering up a white man's country. Then, said he, the country must be prepared.

"The Army," he said, "will be good for lots of you. The trouble with this country is that the young fellows just haven't got guts. You're soft; you're no good. Riding around in cars all day—soft food, no hardships. How can you expect character from a bunch of drugstore cowboys. I'm telling you, you young guys need long marches and discipline. It'll do you good. It'll roughen you up; yes, that's what it'll do; it'll roughen you up; make men out of you."

With that, Mr. Belly-Round flicked the ashes off his Havana, hitched up his trousers so that they could be more fittingly supported by his paunch, turned around and started ambling up the long flight of stairs in the Town Hall. We had been slightly provoked to hear the Politician speak but, by the time he'd managed his blubber up the steps and, breathing hard, had disappeared, we were as riled as all the Gaelic in our cynical frame could make us.

At present writing the Army is a major reality for all of us who have had one opportunity to vote. We suppose the politician and the rest of his ilk are happy. There won't be quite so many drug store cowboys. All of us will be storing up character and bestiality in an army camp somewhere so far from civilization that it might as well be Europe. If the country goes to war we'll all be first class heroes and first class killers. The world will have a blood baptism, a gory rechristening into the ways of the just. Everybody will be raving for justice and humanity. National defense will require that we go to church more often to build up our backbones. We'll give ourselves

a heavy dose of righteousness and then, when the war is over, and we are able, we'll let down our hair and go back to our jazzy normal.

We admit we're being cynical. But we are not cynical about ourselves or about the age group in which we had the misfortune to be born. We are cynical and ! ! ! ! ! about those our elders and those our rulers who didn't have the ability to control themselves, much less the nation or the world, and who now have the rotten, crass, barefaced nerve to sit on top of their flesh pots and preach to us about character.

Ever hear of the "problem of youth"? It does seem that we do constitute a special problem. Our collective characteristics are morbidly described in "trend" stories in magazines and newspapers. We don't seem to catch on to the national swing of things. We don't respond with much enthusiasm to the finer things of man and the nation. We're too pinkish. We're too radical. We won't believe what our national sages tell us. They're trying to figure out a solution for us as they did for the farmers, the garment workers and the others. But we're different. We don't respond. We're just a bunch of destructive critics of everything good. We're too lazy, too preoccupied with liquor and sex to be concerned with the national good. We're insensitive to ideals.

Perhaps we are insensitive to ideals. But let our elders accuse themselves before they start tossing bricks in our direction. Shortly after we were born our elders threw everything noble to the four winds and indulged in one of the greatest national orgies ever known. Exteriorly, politics hit a new high in corruption; business launched on a senseless, self-destructive chase of the dollar, a chase which gave the lie to the whole doctrine to *laissez-faire*; writers and dramatists put Freud on a pedestal and a doped public paid millions to keep him there.

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And something seemed to happen to man. Poor thing! Victim of the environment which simply wouldn't let his nervous system alone. It must have been fun, Mr. Belly-Round, and how's your environment treating you today? Fun to double cross yourself and live *conveniently*. No, *orgy* isn't the word for you; you're intelligent and a little discreet. But *convenient* is. Your business, your politics, your human relations were all quite convenient. Your wife was convenient to you and you to her. You couldn't have been much more to each other because now she gets her response, not from the kids who were such a nuisance to bring up, but from a Pekinese.

A depression followed the flush era; our elders lost some of their money, a little of their ego, but managed to maintain the delicate and convenient balance between environment and response system. Then along came the youth, babes in wonderland, with nice clean tabula rasas. We were smart kids. We caught on fast. Now our teachers are horrified at the things they moulded.

Consider the potent factors which produced an excellent crop of cynics from among our numbers. We've been given every opportunity to imbibe the ideals of our elders and to see those ideals expressed in practise. We had our own way with education and were taught to view with sceptical and laughing eyes everything which smacked of the old and therefore of the superstitious. We learned the cynical side of the 1914-18 affair. Our adolescent years were spent in looking in retrospect at the '29 financial mess and in wondering if the depression would ever be over in order that we could get jobs. As far as the higher things were concerned, life had reached a soul-destroying stalemate. It was almost inherent in the country to accept decent living as a thing to be tolerated and to plug for the ideals of the cinema as things to be achieved. No one

said anything at that time about our having character. It seems that now we must revamp our lives because such a rejuvenation on our part becomes a practical necessity for the oldsters who helped swell the debacle which produced the cynicism in us.

The other night we heard a drama critic talk about the current state of things theatrical. His main objection against the theatre of the present was that it does not represent its times. Said he: "This theatre of ours sits on the doorstep of the world with a lollypop in its mouth." Which is perfectly true. We wish to add here, however, that this America of ours has, for the last couple of decades, been sitting on the doorstep of life with a lollypop in its mouth. We, the inheritors of the flesh pots, are smirking at our elders who, having made perfect pigs of themselves, are lecturing us about disciplining our urges, gastronomic and otherwise.

We admit the need of a revival. We're all for it. But we hope that if it comes now it won't go out the window as soon as the war or the crisis is over but will have enough strength and vitality to weather another flush stage like that of the 20's. We admit we're cynical. But we charge that it's the duty of our elders to correct that state of mind. We don't say that those in our own age group can't reform against the crush of fashion. We know we are capable of it. But an appreciation of basic values would come a whole lot easier to us if we were given the opportunity to see those values actually realized by the people who did so much to tear them down.

We hope our elders, following the lead of our would-be intellectuals, will begin to take cognizance of the dignity supposedly inherent in them. We'd hate to go to war to protect 10,000 corporations, 130,000,000 belly-rounds and 30,000,000 Pekinese.

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