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PROVIDENCE COLLEGE

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MAY, 1941

FOR THE FATHERLAND

J. A. CONWAY

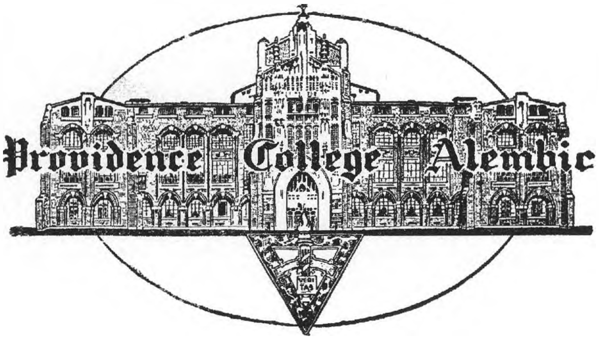
END OF A VISIT

HAROLD RICH

THOUGHT

JOHN GREENE

THE ALEMBIC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The Quality of Decorum

DECORUM is a widely misunderstood quality. The word usually conjures up unpleasant pictures such as long noses and monocles, spats, and Pekingese—the genteel rabble—, yet essentially it is no more than the simple manifestation of charity. Decorum doesn't demand gentle manners but it does insist upon a consideration for others sufficient to effect inoffensive conduct. Decorum isn't synonymous with the "cult of form," nor is it a decoration, that is, in the sense of ornamentation, but it is a decoration in the sense of a badge of honor. It is the sign of a charitable gentleman. Decorum bespeaks an understanding of man's nature and of the purpose of his existence. It is the obligation corresponding to the rights of a social being.

During the past year this generation has suffered a severe dislocation of its minutely planned existence. It has lost much but gained more. It has a firmer grip on fundamentals because it clung ever more desperately to its Faith, the nucleus of fundamentals, when its prejudices were drowned in the terrifying sweep of new ideas. That is why this generation has a true perspective of man, a creature of matter and spirit, naturally gregarious. That is why they realize that man must live in society, that to be happy he must adapt himself to the nature of society, that he must sympathize with the nature of man. That is why they realize that a man to be happy must be decorous.

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For the Fatherland

By Joseph A. Conway, '43

ERNST and Paula made a handsome couple. Everyone in the noisy little Gasthof inquired about them . . . "Waiter, those two at the corner table, now, who are they?" And always the evasive *"Ach,* how should I know? We serve so many soldiers; a man cannot remember their names." And he was away to draw more tankards of Munich or Dortmund. Of course, one could expect little information these days, especially information concerning an officer in the uniform of the Death's Head Guards. The Swastika armband . . . but the Fraulein, *Gott,* what a beauty!

Ernst and Paula were as oblivious to their surroundings as they were conscious of each other. They seemed to occupy a little island in a sea of Nazi uniforms and beefy girls. Waves of uproarious sound beat against them: shouts for beer and a constant "Heiling" kept the perspiring waiters scurrying through the thick atmosphere of the room, even at this early hour filled with the smoke of bad tobacco and the pungence of red cabbage. There was a continuous banging of the door open and shut; welcome drafts of fresh air wafted in. The windows were tightly shut and thickly curtained to prevent light from leaking out. Blackout rules went into effect at seven o'clock.

Only once the young officer looked away from the little girl. The two blonde heads had been lovingly close over half-empty steins of black beer; they had been talking with the raptness that lovers always have, their eyes never losing contact. But suddenly a soldier in the SS uniform lurched unsteadily to his feet, and shouted drunkenly at the fat little band leader. "Play the Horst Wessel—and make it loud, *ja?*"

Then every soldier in the Gasthof jumped to his feet, and the women as well. Ernst looked away from Paula as the song started; the tenderness in his eyes was replaced by another sort of devotion. Paula stood at his side, barely coming to the heighth of his broad shoulders, and imitated his straight-armed salute. The place was a forest of extended arms. But Paula seemed less enthusiastic in singing than was Ernst, who bellowed with all the power of mountain-bred lungs.

Die Strasse frei den braunen Battalionen,
Die Strasse frei dem Sturmabteilungsmann . . . .

And the little Gasthof trembled to the roar of applause.

* * * * *

"But Paula, we've been over that a dozen times." Ernst spoke half in pleading, half in weariness. "We'll be married as soon as the war is over. It's only the Balkans now, then to England, and peace forever." There was boyish assurance in his voice. "It won't take more than six months. You see for yourself that the Balkan affair won't even cause bloodshed—the treaty is already signed. Else, why do you think I should have gotten leave now, if they need me there, *nicht wahr?*"

"But it's so terribly lonely, being away from you months at a time, Ernst. I lie awake, thinking of you wounded, or . . . it could be done tomorrow. You know Herr Hitler is in favor of having the soldiers marry. Why can't—"

"It's too uncertain, *Liebchen.* I want us to be married in peacetime, when we can start with our own little home without worrying about the army."

"Then you admit that you may be killed! If you go back to the army now, we may never be married at all." Her clear young eyes filled with tears.

Ernst could have kicked himself. Happily, the band had started playing a waltz, and they danced. This was better. *Gott,* what was a man to do? He was so completely in love with her . . . but how could he decently take the chance of making her a widow at seventeen? The Führer had urged all soldiers to marry, but there were some matters which even Herr Hitler couldn't decide for a fellow. He flushed guiltily, and looked about him as if he had spoken the thought aloud.

How graceful Paula was! It hardly seemed like dancing at all—as though he held a cloud in his arms. Cloud was a good word, he thought dreamily. In her snowy white peasant blouse and skirt, topped with that clean-smelling, wheat-golden hair, she might well remind one of a cloud in the morning sky tipped with the rays of the sun. But her eyes, *jawohl,* they were more the tint of the sky at mid-day.

She looked up at him, and he was terribly tempted to kiss her. Hardly the public conduct for a Storm Trooper—he dismissed the impulse and looked sternly away over her little head.

"Do you remember, Ernst, the first time we danced together?"

He nodded. "I won't forget it soon. At the village festival, three years ago . . . you were Queen of the Harvest, and the envy of every girl there, in that beautiful white dress."

"Ernst Schneider!" — and she blushed prettily — "you know it was because you danced with me that they were envious. All the girls were in love with you."

"And the mayor kissed you before everyone, and I was so furious that I had to leave. I even struck poor Willy Bessemer because I thought he was sneering at me." There was an awkward pause. Willy had been killed in the Polish Campaign, after saving Ernst's life in the fighting around Warsaw. Then Paula brightened. The war mustn't come between them tonight at least. Tomorrow he would be gone.

"Did you know, Ernst, that Herr Mayor married that fat Frau Ehrlich?" She forced a little laugh. "It was while you were with your regiment, in Roumania—" and she drew up short, sobering again. Trying not to mention the army, thought Ernst. But he grinned boyishly, as she had seldom seen him do of late, and said something about having eliminated another rival. And he hugged her as if he feared she would melt in his arms . . .

The little band squeaked to a stop, and the dancers started back to their tables. The waiter had at Ernst's signal brought two more steins, and lingered solicitously. "Fraulein would perhaps like another sandwich?" His tone was unnecessarily loud. Ernst looked up reprovingly. "Sorry, sir," muttered the man, and Ernst followed his slight gesture toward the next table. "We have to avoid exciting suspicion." Ernst looked—Gestapo men. He knew the type. Then the waiter put down a menu, pretended to smooth the tablecloth, and shuffled away.

Ernst had half expected to find the note inside. The words were scrawled in hasty pencilling: "Heard you were back on leave. See me outside Saint Margaret's Church in half an hour. I'm at the corner table obliquely opposite you, but don't look at me. Half Himmler's staff is sitting next to you. Allen."

"Ernst," whispered Paula, "what is it?"

Ernst lifted his stein in a little gesture, half emptied it. "Just go on looking as if nothing had happened, Paula. It's from Allen—remember him? Writes for the Associated Press—he was just going to get me a job on the Zeitung when the war started. We have to leave soon."

The band had started playing again. "Let's dance again, and then leave, Paula. I don't know what he wants, but we'll see." And again all eyes were upon the tall young Nazi officer and the graceful girl as they spun around to the intoxicating gaiety of the *Artist's Life*.

Out in the street the air was refreshing after the stale odors of the Gasthof. The April night was full of the dampness blown across the river below the town, and the few lights showing were shrouded in drifts of coal fog. The thousand fragrances of spring were everywhere: the first blooming flowers, the rich smell of freshly ploughed earth, mountain heather. The houses along Friedrich Street emerged from the fog one by one as they walked—it seemed to Ernst that nothing had changed since his boyhood. How he had missed the neat little cottages with their well-kept shrubbery! The baker's shop still had the make-believe pie in the window; his initials were still carved in the tree before Schmidt's butcher shop . . . what a strapping that had earned him from his father! Paul's name was there still too, but poor Paul would never see it again . . . The West Front. Paula saw him staring at the empty butchery window. "The blockade, Ernst. We aren't allowed much meat."

They passed the town hall, its upper half lost in the enveloping fog. "Must they keep it so dark, Paula? It's only nine o'clock."

"The town is in line with Berlin from England, Ernst. We have blackout drills often, and then you should see how dark it is! It frightens me." She put both little hands on his arm. "One night it was very foggy, much worse than this, and the British planes flew so low that they barely cleared the mountain. We thought they were going to bomb us—and all I could think of was how terrible it must be where you are."

"Oh," he replied with a feigned indifference, "we don't see many planes. The Luftwaffe keeps the sky pretty clear."

Then they turned into the town square, and they could make out the stairs of Saint Margaret's. The eddying clouds of fog emphasized the musty smell that always comes from churches. A tiny point of light moved toward them, and an indistinct figure emerged from the mists, walking with an awkward, unsoldierly stride. "Allen," said Ernst briefly, "I'd know his walk anywhere."

The figure resolved itself into a short, slender man with an air of impatient energy. He was smoking an American cigar.

"Hello, you kids!" There was real warmth in his tone. He shook hands with Ernst, puffing the cigar until it looked like a red sunset, and threw an arm affectionately around Paula with the air of Yankee familiarity that Ernst had never quite understood. "Now, this isn't the best place in the world for a conference, is it? My place is over on the next block."

"Block?" asked Paula, puzzled. American English was always too much for her. But the others only laughed, and the newspaperman steered them in the opposite direction.

"Sorry I couldn't join you at the Gasthof," Allen said. Their heels rang sharply on the asphalt sidewalk, and echoed through the fog. "It wouldn't do for you to be seen with me. They've cracked down on me for some despatches I sent about the RAF raids. Yep, right now I'm strictly persona non grata with the Propaganda Ministry. Nothing serious yet, of course" —he had seen Ernst's serious expression—"I've had only one warning, and that's routine stuff. Here's my place." He motioned with the cigar toward the town's only apartment building. "Watch your step—the landlady is a blackout enthusiast, but more for economy than for patriotism, I imagine."

"Wait a moment, Ernst," said Paula, "I can't go in there with two men. Suppose people saw me—what would they think?"

"That's all right, Allen's wife is up there. Quite proper. Let me take your arm—it's black as army bread. I don't mean army bread is bad," he added quickly, with a look at the newspaperman. Ernst stopped in his tracks—Allen was suddenly outlined by his pocket light, and Ernst noticed for the first time that the man looked much older than he had a few months ago. His hair was gray around the temples. But the shock passed, and they started up to the third floor.

Ernst knew something was wrong at the first glance into the apartment. The place was a litter of papers and odd bits of clothing. A dish of half-eaten food stood on the mantlepiece. The bed was unmade. And he remembered Mrs. Allen as a neat woman!

Allen saw the question in his eyes. "I should have told you, Ernst," he said heavily, "perhaps Paula really shouldn't be here. You see, Mrs. Allen died two months ago."

"Died! Oh—damn it, I'm sorry." What should he say? Death was a common thing for him. One more didn't seem to matter.

Paula was the first to break the awkward silence. "Poor Mr. Allen!" she ventured timidly. Then, "Let me tidy the room. Men aren't much at such things." She started a feminine fuss about fluffing pillows and straightening rugs. Ernst saw the tears in Allen's eyes as he followed the girl's quick movements about the room. The newspaperman blew his nose loudly into a huge handkerchief, and furtively wiped his eyes.

"Look, you two, sit down now on the couch. Wait till I move that typewriter." He placed the battered little portable machine on a chair. There was a paper in place; Ernst read the dateline at a glance as Allen walked past him . . . Address By Goebbels. "Is Herr Goebbels to speak, then?"

"In an hour. You'll hear him all right. The public address system amplifier in the street is just underneath the window. They keep me constantly amused. Or perhaps I should say amazed; I hear you fellows are doing all right. Not that I expect you to reveal any military secrets," he added quickly.

"Perhaps we shouldn't wait," put in Paula. "I'm afraid Mother will be worried about me. She's alone except for Aunt Elizabeth, and Auntie is awfully nervous."

"Oh, it won't take me long to speak my little piece," said Allen hurriedly, "and there is a phone here. You could call her later." He chewed at the stub of his cigar. "For God's sake, put your arm around her, Ernst. Don't mind me. You won't be home for long."

"Unfortunately, no." Ernst fixed a vacant stare upon the little carved German clock on the mantlepiece.

Allen's sharp glance never left Ernst's face. "Don't want to go back, huh?" He lit a fresh cigar, and gave one to Ernst. "Now, that's exactly what I wanted to see you about. You don't have to go back."

"Whatever are you talking about?" asked Ernst sharply. "My leave expires tomorrow."

Allen rose and started pacing back and forth, sending up clouds of smoke from his cigar. Ernst thought absently of the smoke screens on the Maginot Line.

"I can come straight to the point." The newspaperman stopped suddenly, and looked at the two of them. Paula was nestled comfortably against Ernst's shoulder, leaning her wheaten curls against his tanned cheek. "You love her, don't you? No—

skip that one. The way you look at her is answer enough." He resumed his pacing, stumbled over the chair with the typewriter and the Goebbels story. "What would you say if I told you I could put you on the way to America tomorrow, book passage for you, and direct you to a job when you got to New York?" He paused to let that sink in.

Ernst looked at him blankly. "But—but that is ridiculous. There are passports and—" He seemed to remember something suddenly and stood up abruptly so that Paula fell flat on the couch. "You forget that I have pledged my life to the Third Reich," he said stiffly. He glanced at the little clock on the mantlepiece. "It is later than I had thought. Come, Paula. Good to have seen you, Allen."

The American placed both hands on the boy's shoulders. His manner was gentle.

"I could put the question squarely up to you, Ernst. Do you love the Third Reich better than you love Paula?" Ernst turned abruptly and walked to the window.

Paula spoke up softly. "What do you propose, Mr. Allen?"

"Just this." He looked over at Ernst, who stood silently gazing out into the fog. "My wife has died. I have managed to save her passport. After the story I shall send out on tonight's speech, I'll be very silently and efficiently taken care of. I realize what I am doing, but with my wife dead, it doesn't matter much." He looked away, and swallowed several times.

"Now look!" He had lapsed into a toneless, journalistic way of speaking. "It would be easy. You and Ernst could get out under the passports I have. I've plenty of friends. You could take a plane tonight for Lisbon, and get the Clipper from there —it's the only neutral port left. Ernst is a born newspaperman

—he was working with me a while back, before he put on a Nazi uniform. I'll assure him a job with my old paper. He could do a series of articles that would set you both up comfortably. And America's the only place left where you can live a decent life, the way people should." He sat down on a chair and looked over at the young soldier. "What do you say, Ernst? The plane leaves in an hour."

Ernst remained unmoved, staring out through the window. The ticking of the little clock was the only sound in the room, then somewhere in the fog a raspy voice started singing *The Watch on the Rhine.* Visions came and went before his eyes . . . his friends, probably sitting now in a beer hall—they could always find beer—talking of him, waiting for him to return with news from home and little gifts. His comrades—what would they think, if he ran out on them? And other visions . . . the terrible way in which an airplane bomb blasted a company to a jelly . . . flames spewing from an anti-tank gun . . . the look of a child whose arm had been blown off . . . the agony of an old French woman whose son lay bleeding to death in her arms. But the Reich—the wonderful New Order that Herr Hitler was to create; he had given his word . . .

The look he turned upon Allen was that of a man of forty. "How can you put me in a position like this? You know I love Paula—but there are other things I must do—it is my duty. Would you ask me to sneak out on my comrades like a cur? *Lieber Gott,* what sort of man do you think me?"

"What sort of man, Ernst? Well, I might say a sensible man. One who wants to lead a sane, normal life. You'll never have it in Germany. You know that." Allen tried another approach. "Look at her, Ernst," he whispered.

Ernst looked. Paula was crying softly into a pillow. Her childlike little shoulders heaved. She wouldn't try to influence him now; Ernst had never given in to her. Ernst watched her for a minute; his clamped jaw relaxed, and he clenched his big fists until the knuckles showed white . . . then suddenly he was beside her, she was sobbing in his arms, and Ernst was kissing her hair, stammering little German words of endearment, and crying a little himself . . .

Allen's hand was on his shoulder. The little smile on his face was a mixture of affection and triumph. "Time for that later, you two. The plane leaves at eleven, and we have a little matter of costume changing to arrange."

They began rummaging through closets, Allen throwing pieces of clothing carelessly onto the bed. Ernst carefully removed his uniform coat, as he had learned in the army; for a moment he gazed sorrowfully at the Nazi emblem on the arm. Again he began to see images . . . abruptly he folded the coat and thrust it away from him.

"I won't promise you a Bond Street fit, Ernst," grinned Allen, "nor a Paris creation for Paula. But these will—"

"Listen!" Ernst put up his hand for silence. "The Achtung signal from the radio." Three strokes sounded from the speaker in the street, silence, then it was repeated. "Goebbels," said Allen simply. "You dress while I get the speech. Paula can change in the little bedroom." The little clock in the next room set up a musical chiming.

A harsh, official-sounding voice was giving the introduction to Goebbels. All over town they heard the amplifiers echoing through the fog. Then the Minister of Propaganda came on. Ernst, through the closed door, heard some words, missed others. Goebbels was reading a statement from the Führer, something to do with the Balkan situation. The melodramatic voice ranged from shouting to whispers. It spoke of broken agreements. Germany's peaceful intentions were being disrupted by the British in Yugoslavia and Greece. Germany must answer threat with force . . . Ernst threw open the door. Allen was busily scribbling in a notebook. Paula had dressed so quickly, ridiculous in too-large clothing. "Ernst, darling, you're not even dressed!"

Out in the street the voice had risen to a hoarse shout.

"Soldiers of the Southeastern Army, your hour has come!" There was more, then the name of Hitler mentioned at the end. Allen folded his notebook, and gazed in surprise at Ernst who stood stiffly at attention from force of habit. The address was finished, and a powerful choir had struck up *Deutschland Uber Alles.* The song reverberated through the foggy streets and down across the empty valley below the town.

Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles,
Uber Alles in der Welt . . .

"Ernst!" shouted Allen, "for God's sake hurry. They've started another invasion. This is the last chance—the plane leaves in forty-five minutes. Get out of that damned uniform!"

Von der Maas bis an die Memel . . .

"Yes," said Ernst, "I must dress." He went back into the bedroom.

"For a minute," he heard Allen breathe to Paula, "I thought he had changed his mind. I certainly wish you kids a lot of luck." And Paula's soft murmur of thanks.

Ernst re-appeared, wearing his Nazi uniform coat.

"Ernst!" her cry clutched at his heart. But how close he had come to being a quitter! This scene would be another vision to haunt him, but so confusing . . . Paula clinging to him, sobbing as for the dead, Allen staring as at a ghost, the song still echoing hollowly through the spring night.

"Please see that she gets home, Allen. I must report at once." He clicked his heels to them, slammed the door after him. His boots made the old house tremble as he thundered down the stairs. The Balkans fighting after all! And he couldn't possibly get there in less than three days—suppose he missed some of the action . . .

The radio had lapsed into silence, but out in the street a lone policeman patrolled his beat, echoing the last strains in a clear tenor. He clicked his heels to Ernst, and went on singing. The voice floated eerily through the fog.

Blüh' im Glanze dieses Glückes,
Blühe, deutsches Vaterland!

End of a Visit

By Harold Rich, '41

THE pleasure, the happiness, the success, if you will, of a visit to a friend's is dependent on the extent to which the visitor is able to adjust himself in a familiar manner to the new surroundings. For "home sweet home" can also be your friend's home if nothing occurs to upset the ease and peace of mind that is characteristic of you in your own home. Whether your stay is enjoyable or not is not so much your own making as it is the accomplishment of your host. All that is required of you is to act as you would act in your own home—be a gentleman. Be a gentleman and the rest depends on your host.

I am about to terminate a visit which has been to me one of the most gratifying experiences of my life. It has been a very pleasurable stay because I have been able to adjust myself naturally to the new environment. I have felt so much at home that not until now, when departure has made me realize that I have not been in my own home, have I been aware of the fact that I have been visiting.

Good hospitality in a visit, like the one I am about to conclude, is more significant today than ever before. Significant because it has proved that there still exists in a world, which is bleeding from wounds of hatred and intolerance, a sense of brotherly love and charity. It has proved that the principles, upon which friendship is founded, have not disappeared entirely. It has proved that there still exists in this world the foundation for peace on earth and good will to men.

End of a Visit

How dear charity is today. It is based somewhat on the theory of demand and supply. During times of peace, when men devote their lives to fostering good will, there is much brotherly love and we do not taste its full sweetness. But in the world of today kindness is almost nil and consequently it becomes precious and the demand is great. How soon peoples in the battlefields of Europe and elsewhere would trade tons of costly bombs for just one ounce of charity.

The world of today is very much in need of the tolerance and brother love that I have experienced in my stay. The instigators of evil, the men who are drowning civilization in a hatred-infested sea of blood could, if they should desire, prevent complete chaos if they would but adhere to the principles of my host. For if they would, then minority groups would cease to be targets for ruthless machine-gunners. Great minds, which could greatly benefit humanity, would not be rotting in concentration camps. Air raid sirens would cease to wail, for planes, instead of carrying bombs and parachute troops, would be transporting men on friendly missions. Mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers would not be torn from each other. The headlines would stop screaming: Death and Destruction. Peace, peace on earth and good will to men would prevail again.

In my visit I have been in the minority group. But throughout my stay nothing has occurred to make me feel like a stranger. Nothing has occurred to cause me to lose the ease I assumed upon my arrival. I have never been forced to do anything that was contrary to the dictates of my conscience. I have been allowed to select my own passive actions within certain bounds. Always my hosts by word and deed have made me feel like a brother.

I, a non-Catholic, am preparing to leave Providence College, a Catholic institution. So well have I been treated that I have been unconscious of the fact that I have been in a home other than my own. Only departure has made me realize that I have been visiting.

How Long, O Lord?

By Matthew P. Gallagher, '41

EASTER Sunday last, as I was sitting in Church striving gallantly to turn the other ear to the vocal blows being administered thrice a thousandfold by a multisonous choir, I was minded of the latter two-thirds of Congreve's well-known line: "Music hath charms . . . , to soften rocks, and bend the knotted oak." Ordinarily, I'm not particularly adverse to unpleasant sounds, that is, with the exception of one type—the rasping of a carving knife on the edge of an aluminum skillet—, and even at times I, too, have thought of the vocal variety as beautifully expressive of the vacant mind, but when I became cognizant of the fact that the trumpet-tongued soloist had mistaken my sparsely clad head for a rock and was actually subjecting Congreve's statement to experimentation, I found that the biblical admonitions to humility and passivity were small proof against the rebellion bubbling in my breast.

"Fine thoughts indeed," you might remark, "for one to be thinking during his Easter Mass." And if I could be strictly objective about it—an impossibility, of course—I would quite agree. I remember a verse of the Sequeuce of the Mass, "Together death and life in a strange conflict strove," and I remember that I couldn't help but remark its applicability to the minstrelsy gushing from the choir loft. At the time, I felt sure that death would—and should—triumph.

I know that my experience wasn't peculiar. Having had a certain experience with Catholic Church music I know that the same abortion of the God-given faculty of expression was committed in almost every church in the Diocese. I know that a thousand others, yea, ten thousand, struggled to suppress the stark rebellion of their intellectual and emotional sensibilities to the attack of their unjust aggressors, as I did. I know that a hundred old Irish pastors (God bless them anyway) continued to croak their *Gloria,* intransigent in the prejudice that music is a pretty, but valueless and barely to be tolerated accidental.

Now the radical disorder in this "scandal" lies in the intellectual obstinacy and prejudice (*prae-judicium*) of the general run. of pastors and religious. The psychology behind the fact is interesting. A nun expressed it well who told a music teacher that the concentration on the act of singing which good singing requires would detract from the attention which should be directed to the Sacrifice itself. This might very well be true for a handful of monks living in cloister but what this nun forgot was that there is usually a congregation at Mass, that some of the congregation come to pray and others come to see if Mrs. Jones has a new hat and others come to sleep, that all of these individuals are profoundly distracted in their divers pursuits by the frozen-teared wailings of untrained voices, and that therefore the singing is appreciated by none, abhored by many, and is generally appraised at a nuisance value of one hundred per cent. Now this shouldn't be, even she would admit. After all, praying, intelligent observation, and sleeping are all good things in themselves and anything that distracts from them is bad, and there is no room for anything bad in the House of God. So let us away with it, mine Christian friends.

From this pious opinion have arisen two errors: firstly, bad singing instead of good; secondly, "religious" music instead of liturgical. As for the first error there need hardly anything be said. We are all too familiar with the horrible stuff. When they roll into the first vowel our stomachs roll in sympathy: those few of our communicants who are made of sterner stuff groan under their crosses and continue to pile up their spiritual "iron men," others of us suffer ungracefully, scowl horribly, and conjure up unlovely vocabularies: and I'm still waiting for that intrepid pioneer who will spring forth from his pew in a glorious burst of individualism and stagger down the aisle out of the church, his eyes flashing defiance. Really it is time that our singers took some compassion on the poor souls who have to listen to them. They are out-and-out menaces, let us be frank—take that one who sang at my Easter Mass, for example. She was an instrument of the devil, without a doubt, innocent, of course. But the culpability here is absolutely irrelevant. What I mean is this: singing used to be an art, I think; art being the craft with which the *species intelligibilis* is reduced to the *species sensibilis* (to you who are not lexicon-ically inclined, the skill with which an idea is transformed into an object), and an artist is one who can do all-stuff-like-that-there skillfully. Therefore, if singing is an art, only artists should sing, and all artists are skillful, but, *terribile dictu,* our singers aren't skillful, so therefore they're not artists,—but they sing.

Wherefore, I propose the first procedure in my Glorious Revolution: the hiring of musicians because of their merit alone and not because of their accidental affiliation to the particular parish. In this way and in this way alone can we protect ourselves, brethren. Let us no longer be the victims of the false judgment and vanity of charlatans.

The second error arising from the prejudice of churchmen against music is the displacement of the Gregorian liturgy by "religious" music. This is the saddest of all. Why the Church has faithfully kept her venerable *Rubrique* in every particular for two thousand years and at the same time has allowed her music to degenerate so is beyond the sympathy even of this great heart (athletic swellings, Stokes-Adams disease, &.c.) . If I were a drinking man I certainly would "take the pledge" if ever I came to Mass some Sunday morning and beheld the celebrant walk into the sanctuary clad in his best soup and fish with diamond studs and a silk topper. Yet modern "religious" music is just as much out of place in a house of worship as formal attire is before the altar. I think this is a very good analogy. The fundamental relationship lies in the very character of the showy mode of dress and the showy mode of music. Soup and fish is designed to attract attention to the individual, to flatter and ornament him. Thus a priest in full dress would not be subordinating himself, as a human instrument, to the Action at the altar, but would be attracting attention to himself as an individual. Thus also "religious" music, such as the Masses of Bach and Beethoven, do not subordinate themselves to the divine praises but direct attention to the personal, individualistic, emotional response of a single soul to God. The very essence of the Mass is the merging of the particular in the universal. It is for this reason that secular music has no place in the liturgy of the Church.

As for plain chant itself there is no question about its artistry. I remember that Mozart once said that he would trade all his music for the privilege of having composed the Gregorian Preface. Plain chant, now called Gregorian, was composed in ages when *Ars gratia Artis* was unthinkable. Men of ancient times looked upon music as a means of expressing feelings only in connection with some event: the dance, the recitation of poetry, or worship. Thus in the ancient liturgical chant the *word* was the most important factor and the music was subordinated to its proper function of expressing the prayer. That is why plain chant is an integral part of the liturgy; that is why it is the proper music for the Mass.

There have been so many papal encyclicals on the subject that it seems nigh heretical for pastors to persist in their perversity. True we have all suffered from mal-education in music; true, their ignorance may be invincible, but, unaccustomed as I am to the exegesis of encyclicals, the words of Pope Pius X in Motu Proprio seem to me to be as plain as a gold incisor: "On these grounds [sanctity, goodness of form, and universality] the Gregorian Chant has always been regarded as the supreme model for sacred music, so that it is fully legitimate to lay down the following rule: the more closely a composition for church approaches in its movement, inspiration, and savor the Gregorian form, the more sacred and liturgical it becomes; and the more out of harmony it is with that supreme model, the less worthy it is of the temple."

Consequently, I make the second proposition in my Great Reform: discard "religious" music and put Gregorian Chant back in its proper place. How are you going to do it? I don't know. Better ask Saint Gregory.

Holy Man of Dublin

By James J. Murphy, '42

SOME men build on sand and fail miserably; others patiently seek out sturdy rocks on which to establish lasting monuments. Matt Talbot, the model Irish layman, was of the latter type. He had tasted of the food of the world, nay had gorged himself with it, only to find it wanting. Then, in despair and utter humility, he turned to God for sustenance.

There was nothing extraordinary in Matt's birth. He was born in 1856 and enjoyed all the advantages that typical God-fearing Irish parents bring. He lived in Dublin and, with the eleven other children in the family, was educated, worked, and died there. Love of the rosary was daily fostered as the family group gathered for evening prayer. There are no legends or novel tales about his boyhood. When only twelve, he left the Christian Brothers' school and secured a position as a messenger for a wine company. Here we trace his fall.

Still only a lad, Matt began to drink. With the same thoroughness that later marked his conversion he attempted to satisfy his insatiable and destructive craving. He received advances on his salary to purchase more and more of the new center of his existence. He pawned his clothes. He borrowed money. Finally he came to depend on the charity of friends who were moved by his pitiful state. When unbridled, man's desires wreak havoc. Matt Talbot proved no exception. Bitter, scorned, and dejected, he was a veritable slave by his twenty-eighth birth-day. An outcast of society, his future was an infinite sea of blackness. But the ways of grace are strange.

Whether an unconquerable conscience moved him, or the beseechings of his pious mother, or simply disgust with himself can only be speculated. At any rate, in this period of his life he began the great transformation. Seemingly on the spur of the moment he declared that he would take the pledge. A spark of determination was ignited in him and, with the fervent encouragement of his prayerful mother, he abstained from drink for three months, then for a year, and finally for the rest of his days.

Let us not imagine that this was a simple procedure. Old and enticing habits are not as easily discarded or changed as a suit or a tie. A definite, slow, painful process must be followed. Victory and peace of soul are found many times in retreat, in withdrawing from the forces that would destroy and contaminate. The humble man of Dublin sought this avenue of escape. He resolved to avoid his old sinful haunts. He secured another position whereby he could more easily carry out his difficult task. He mapped out certain routes which took him away from the taverns and saloons. Most important, he turned to prayer, and thus we see him more and more devoting himself to the things of God as the old passions viciously made final bids for his scarred and battle-worn soul. Through it all Matt remained steadfast.

Daily Mass, countless acts of charity, repeated visits to church, sympathy and good cheer for his fellow workers were all in the order of the day. The time outside of his working hours was spent in deep meditation and spiritual reading. He read chiefly the Bible, Cardinal Newman's works and the *Meditations* of Saint Francis de Sales. Over and above these edifying acts the returning prodigal sought stricter means of chastisement. Matt felt that just as he had gone to the extreme in his vice he should now use all means that would draw him closer to his Master. The strict fasts and bodily disciplines, emblematic of the lives of saints, were zealously carried out by him. The few hours that he did sleep he slept on a board with chains wrapped around his legs and arms. In almsgiving he was most conscientious, sometimes keeping a mere fraction of his pay for himself. And with all of his austere practises he logically retained his true Irish cheerfulness for he was at peace with God and himself.

The years slipped by and Matt grew spiritually stronger and stronger. So it is that we find him ready and willing for death. The culmination of his unflinching struggle occurred on June 7, 1925, outside of Saint Saviour's Church which is conducted by the Dominicans. As he was waiting for the church to be opened he was suddenly overtaken by a heart attack and passed away, piously gazing upon a crucifix held by a Dominican father. In his passing he was calm and unafraid, for in his life he felt and knew the mercy of God.

No greater summation or praise of Matt Talbot could be given than that expressed by Mr. F. J. Sheed: "There is no looking at Matt Talbot without feeling that he is a perfect example of the Irish people at prayer: not one sort of Irishman but the Irishman as such—the Irishman stripped down to his Catholicism." To the Irish especially he is a lovable character for, as one of their countrymen, he typifies their distinctive faith and perseverance. To the world in general he offers a stirring example of a solid character sanely balancing the material and the spiritual. His great contribution to mankind was a good life simply lived and calmly ended. In the midst of chaos, over-indulgence, and greed, we could well use more Matt Talbots.

RECORDS AND DISCORDS

WHAT with hoarding ha'pennies and cacheting coppers toward getting to the Prom, we haven't been able to fatten the ALEMBIC record collection much since last issue. We did manage to annex the remaining discs of Beethoven's Ninth (and it ain't bad, brethren!), but our albums still demand only a puny portion of space on the bookstand shelf—from the side where the nails stick out, to the place where our *Police Gazettes* and *Esquires* lie artfully concealed beneath decent looking *Ladies' Home Journals.* The only recent additions have been made by our kid sister, who leans toward such haunting things as *Straight Eight Boogie* and *King Porter Stomp;* with anguish we have watched our cactus needles wearing down to powder on contemporary tidbits of the *Harlem Nocturne* school. One night she did come home with a look of I-like-the-classics-too-so-there-smarty in her eye, but it turned out to be *Liebestraum* in the jive beat. Poor Liszt would turn over in his grave at the rate of three hundred RPM to hear it.

Which brings up Old Business. Our dissertation on swing in the March Issue seems to have been misconstrued. Without retracing footsteps and wasting printers' ink, we may re-state our position simply: we DO like swing! What we tried to say in our labored style was that swing is essentially dance music, not listening music, the local Swing Club sessions notwithstanding. If we were the jittering type, we should probably be sworn devotees of jump time, but being of the most mediocre grade of terpsichorean trudgers, we say simply that we like it—and turn greenish glances toward the carefree cavorters who cover acres of dance floor in the space of any given minute. As a matter of record, out of our own hard-won shillings we bought some swing platters after the Prom—now, that "sweet swing" that Larry Clinton played was our idea of something not half bad. We don't know just what the kids say about *Deep Purple* or *My Sister and I,* but they were rather nice, in our evaluation; not swing, probably, perhaps something nearer light classics, but not bad in the blackout atmosphere of the Biltmore. We bought those two, plus Glenn Miller's two *Serenades* (*Sunrise and Moonlight*), and while we still prefer Beethoven for listening, we like Glenn too. So there.

We were ashamed to ask the record dealer, who is a pretty obliging sort, to play through symphonies for our criticism, since we didn't have enough money to spare for even Al Goodman's hash of Strauss Waltzes (incidentally, avoid those as you would a leprous milkman). So, we were quite unctious and unobtrusive in our manner; had him pick out a few records which we had seen described in the Victor releases for the month. Both were albums of liturgical music—the Cossack treatment of Russian Orthodox Church Music, and Beethoven's magnificent *Missa Solemnis.*

Russian Liturgical Music, sung unaccompanied, by the Don Cossacks; Victor Album M-768. $3.50.

Not being close to the people who control such things, we can't explain how the Cossacks wandered into the Victor Company—they have recorded exclusively for Columbia, lo these many moons. We plucked the dealer timidly by the sleeves and suggested that perhaps these were different Cossacks? There are so many Russians, you know. But he emphatically asserted that this is the same group, and we didn't have the intestinal fortitude to demand the descriptive material that goes with the album. We knew that the Cossacks always sing under the aegis of a half-dram size fellow named Jaroff, but on these records they are conducted by a gentleman who has a name so long that it should be hung on hinges. If they are indeed different Cossacks, then the others had better begin massaging vodka onto their vocal chords, because these records are perfect. Russian singers have such uniformly good voices, what with eunuchs and floor-scraping basses, that it would be difficult to pick one group from another, but these must be the original lads from the River Don. Probably another mob of moujiks wouldn't stoop to swiping the name.

This is really a superlative job. To us who are accustomed to the Roman Catholic Liturgy, Russian Orthodox music will be a surprise. It isn't so much that their music is more beautiful than the Gregorian Chant; the fact is simply that we don't possess such voices in our churches. The Cossacks could take *Mary Had a Little Lamb* and make it fill Symphony Hall with harmony.

Remember that fellow who, as the singer of the Russian Mass in *Rasputin and the Empress,* really hit the lowest and most powerful notes that a bass can make? Or perhaps that was before your time. If you multiply that lone priest by twenty or so, you have a rough notion of what the Cossacks do with Liturgical Music. For our part, we should rather have seen a Solemn Mass in the Cathedral of Saint Basil than watch all the slinking —or is there a better word?—LaMarrs and Dietrichs from here to Hollywood and back. It must have been an inspiring sight.

We once read somewhere that there is a bird—a thrush, or a lark, or something—who sings in an ascending scale until it reaches a note so high that the human ear can't hear it; only the throbbing of the bird's throat indicates that it is still singing. The Cossacks go to the other extreme of the scale; in parts of the Requiem, by Bakhmetieff, they descend lower, still lower, until you find yourself gulping sympathetically. Then they go so low that your mind can't even picture where the note should be on the scale, and it isn't singing at all, but the sort of low moaning that must pass through the gates of Purgatory, or that the planets must make in swinging through space. A congregation that sits through a Mass like that must feel that it has, for a moment at least, looked into the dwelling place of Infinity.

The album contains Tschaikowsky's *Blessed Be the Lord*; Gretchaninoff's *Credo* (Second Liturgy) ; and by lesser Russian composers, *Inspire My Prayer, O Lord!*; *Requiem*; *Song of the Seraphim and Cherubim*; *Pater Noster*; and *Lord, Have Mercy.* Buy this album, and when you weary of too much jive music or the recurring plugs for Fomo-Seltzer or Carter's Little Liver Pills on the radio, you can put the Cossacks' treatment of religious music through your phonograph . . . and you will be reminded that mankind can be dignified after all.

Missa Solemnis (Mass in D)—Beethoven; Koussevitsky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, assisted by the Harvard Glee Club and the Radcliffe Choral Society; Victor Albums M-758 and M-759. $13. And worth every sou of the price! We shall, with becoming frankness, admit that we have by no means heard all the records; the patient dealer (name on request) allowed us to play selected parts.

To make an attempt at a discussion of the Mass in D, exclusive of this treatment of it, we should have to propose a scholarly discussion of Beethoven's life, the point at which he found himself when he composed the Missa Solemnis, etcetera usque ad nauseam. At the editor's earnest plea to cut the column this time to, at most, novelette length, we shall skip that, and speak briefly of the treatment itself.

The word is superb. Flawless, perhaps. Or mighty. The best orchestra in the world, man for man, the second greatest conductor—a close second, at that—and the two ablest collegiate choral groups in America, throw their gifts together to interpret what Beethoven himself termed his finest work. The recording was made at an actual performance at Boston Symphony Hall, quite recently, and the RCA engineers deserve a tubful of orchids, though the acoustics of the Hall are admittedly excellent—unlike Covent Garden, where Chaliapin battled stupid engineering and architecture.

Beethoven had trouble with this work, but Koussevitsky throws enough dynamism into it to cover that. Beethoven was essentially an artist, a creator with sweep and imagination, but in composing a Mass to fit the Catholic requirements, he was naturally restrained. Like a Heifetz playing on two strings. He knew he couldn't take liberties with the Roman Catholic forms—he didn't have to. This is perhaps the most inspiring music on wax today, and that regardless of whether you are Catholic, Protestant or indifferent to religion. The Boston societies, under their—we almost said peerless—conductor, make this the music of a dynamic religion, not a collection of chants uninteresting to the non-religionist. Mr. Joseph Cottler, in the Victor Record Review for April, made some appropriate remarks about the *Missa in D*:

"Programmatically, the *Kyrie* is an invocation, the *Gloria* resounds with trumpets and exhilaration which subside into the quiet joy of the *gratias agamus* reminding us that the Adagio of the Ninth Symphony was written at about the same time, the *Credo* is rock-sure with faith . . . there is no mystery in the

Crucifixus, no rhapsody over the *Resurrexit* . . . the anguished cry: *Miserere Nobis* is raised, and the *Missa Solemnis* ends with the hopeful *pacem.* Peace."

We can vouch for the *Credo* and the *Resurrexit,* and the whole thirteen dollars' worth of *Missa Solemnis* is on our must list. Put the most powerful composer of all time at the disposal of the Church, even force him into the forms the Church has never abandoned, and you emerge with something glittering with the dignified beauty of an archangel, and so powerful that you feel the Almighty Himself must have touched it.

But please, lads, use soft needles, not metallic . . . or all the little devils in the world will dance merrily over the surface of the records, and for all the beauty of tone you derive from the Solemn Mass through hard needles, the old gentleman himself may as well be croaking first tenor, and not a little of the power transmitted will be his.

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