ALEMBIC

PROVIDENCE COLLEGE

VOLUME XXV FEBRUARY, 1947 NUMBER 1

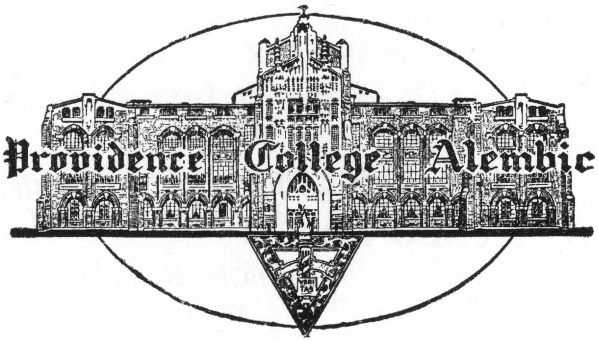
THE BEAST

ROBERT E. DOHERTY, '49

A STRANGER IN STRASBOURG

GEORGE L. EAGLE, '50

THE ALEMBIC



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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

VOLUME XXV FEBRUARY, 1947 NUMBER 1

EDITORIAL 3

THE BEAST 5
A Narrative by R. E. Doherty, '49

ON COFFEE 12
An Essay by John J. O'Brien, '49

A STRANGER IN STRASBOURG 17
A Story by George L. Eagle, '50

REFLECTIONS 21
An Essay by Joseph V. Shanley, '49

THOUGHTS ON NEW YORK 27
A Poem by R. E. Doherty, '49

CHAOS 32
A Short Story by Edward L. Gnys, '49

ON FLOORWALKERS 38
A Humorous Essay by Coleman Morrison, '47

MOMENT OF VISION 44
A Story by George L. Eagle, '50

LIVING HISTORY 48
An Essay by John Deasy, '48

EFFECTS OF STUDYING THE ESSAYISTS 51
By Andrew G. Fortin, '49

CRITIQUE 53
An Editorial Column

EDITORIAL

The Alembic returns after a three-year absence to join the flow of activities at Providence College. It left the scene when the men of Providence left to turn their minds and energies to war.

Returning now, we cannot help but look for changes that have come about—for it was to change things that along with other Americans we left the normal pathways of our lives. What has happened to those differences we sought to bring about?

National boundaries have been redrawn; the balance of power has been shifted; new regimes have been born, but we look in vain to find any of the real changes so desired at first. There is no restoration of a universal "norm of morality," no lessening in individual greed and selfishness which give birth to pride whence comes war.

Thus, the return to the normal pathways of life is made with the knowledge that the absence may have achieved only temporary gains.

THE STAFF

EDITOR

MAXIMILIAN R. KNICKERBOCKER, JR., '48

Associate Editor

ROBERT E. DOHERTY, '49

Editorial Board

JOSEPH V. SHANLEY, '49

COLEMAN MORRISON, '47

GEORGE L. EAGLE, '50

The ALEMBIC is published by-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 Beast

By R. E. Doherty, '49

I AM still fairly young but I am going to die soon. The adage that "those whom the gods love die young" does not apply to me for I have bathed my soul in evil and can see no hope for myself.

I am tired. I have no control over my mental faculties—I know only that I am utterly confused, weary, despondent, lost, on the brink of insanity (if I am not already insane), and am going to kill myself.

Truly, I can offer no reason for writing this letter during my last moments. When next the clock strikes I shall die and even should this letter eventually be considered a classic it will have no value to me. Perhaps I may have a motive for writing thusly—perhaps—but I think not. I believe that I am just trying to waste time.

I have had a strange life. Indeed, now that I reflect, it has been a full one—during the last ten years especially. It has been full of pomp, error, hate, butchery, bloodshed, vandalism, savagery, confusion and now, no doubt, insanity.

Before I retrogress into my dismal past, before I delight in my last moments' reverie, I bequeath to myself the prerogative of defying the laws of rhetoric because I want to digress a bit so that I may describe the clever method which I have employed to kill myself.

As I am writing away on this paper there is a clock on my

desk which is directly aligned with my head. When next this clock strikes the hour it will by virtue of its reverberations and an ingenious device of my own concoction cause a phial of chemical compounds to explode. Undoubtedly, I will be sent to perdition and possibly even this letter shall survive the ensuing chaos only in fragment. Really, I care not what happens to the letter; it serves my purpose only in that it now occupies my time and lessens the tension before the inevitable but dramatic climax.

And now to retrogress.

I grew up in this turreted and walled town of Belingries. Indeed I was born in this very room. When I was a child I would play with my companions along the labyrinthine streets of cobblestones which are so typical of the Bavarian country. I took great pride in this town as a child. After visiting the out-lying villages or even the busy city of Neustadt am Donau, I sensed the quaint medieval legacy which so distinguished my home-town. Yes, this is indeed a beautiful town; in all my journeys during the war I have not seen one that could rival it. And perhaps the one solacement that I have is derived from the fact that my Heimstatte was left unmolested by that thousand tentacled demon—War.

A few hours ago I walked to the gates of the town. The moon was just beginning to wax in full and, as its light became brighter, I saw how beautiful Belingries really was. Long laces of dark green ivy covered the walls and rustled in the breeze. The spouting waters of our great sculptured fountain sparkled like tinsel strands and splashed against the outer basin with a soft liquid melody. But then all became brighter than ever as the moon loosed itself from the clouds and my head began to throb intolerably. It seemed as though there was no limit to the moon's luminescence, and the pulsations within my head became

more and more severe. And then, suddenly, I could hear those damnable voices, "Beast! Beast! Beast!" they cried, and I saw a thousand Jewish faces before my eyes and was forced to muffle my nostrils with my hands, for I certainly smelled that old familiar acrid stench of burning flesh.

Another noise, louder, more incredible and more frightening came to my ear. It was the noise of approaching hooves upon the cobble-stones. As it came closer I became dreadfully warm; great beads of perspiration ran down my face, my legs, arms and back. I felt stifled with the sensation of intense heat. But I knew—it was the devil coming after me! I was paralyzed as the concomitant accusations of "Beast!" and the fantastic sound of approaching hooves rang in my brain! I tried to run but I couldn't—"Beast! . . . Beast!" I heard—and then I fell forward on all fours and scampered across the cobble-stones while the hooves quickened their pace behind me.

Oh, but I was wise. Furiously I scampered in and out of all the winding streets. Short-cutting through all the old secret ways of my boyhood, I finally found myself safely home where I sat down exhausted and frothing. I bowed my head into my bloody hands and wept for joy that once more I had evaded the Jew-ghosts and the devil. And yet I knew that I must kill myself and go to one, or else live and be driven to his Hell by the others.

* * * * *

I recall now how glorious the pomp of Party meetings at Nuremberg seemed to me. My father, a baker, had been in the last war and was most conservative in his reactions towards the Party. However, I was completely fascinated by "the boast of heraldry and the pomp of power" as well as by the promised glory for the "master-race of Arians". Immediately after the first

assembly, in Nuremberg's Platz-plaza I attempted to join the Storm-Troopers but I was rejected because of my father's indifference towards the "cause". However, shortly after the invasion of Poland I was accepted in the infantry.

I was a good soldier. I realized that discipline was the great criterion and acted accordingly. Soon I was rewarded. One of our officers had been killed at Krackow and, although only twenty-one years old, I was promoted to the rank of Oberlieutenant.

Ah, how easy the going was, I remember! "These weak Poles offer no resistance," I said and every night I reveled in the pillaged and plundered spoils.

But at Stalingrad it was different. The winter was merciless and the enemy was insane. For days, weeks, months we stormed their foolish city until its charred and fragile remnants should have been bowled over by the wind. But no! There was no victory! From every visible site of the enemy there were signs of utter defeat—but we had no victory.

Oh, it was horrible! Our numbers had been decimated; our bodies were filthy and lice-infested; our food was sparse and putrid, supplied sporadically whenever a new group of reinforcements arrived; our clothes were torn and soiled, many of us had wrapped our frozen feet in rags which we had stripped off of corpses. Hundreds had become snow-blind and groped about helplessly like drunkards until an enemy missile gave a finality to their stupor. The wounded sprawled everywhere as if they were groaning bundles on the snow. There was no order, organization, meaning or purpose to the macabre event. We shelled the enemy's buildings and set them into roaring furnaces —but the enemy gathered around the flaming ruins, absorbed the warmth and stoically waited for us to freeze to death.

* * * * *

When I was discharged from the hospital at Dresden I was declared unfit for further front line duty and was assigned as a guard at the political prison camp at Dachau.

Before I went to take over my new duties I furloughed for a week here at my home in Belingries. At first I thought it was fortunate that I should have been assigned to duty in my beloved Bavaria and that I could visit home since it nestled on the way to Dachau. But my anticipation of happiness was cut short. Arriving home I found that my father had been transferred to Pommerania where he was to bake for a garrison. My sister was the only relative that I found—and she was quite mad.

Father had sent her away to the University of Leipzig where she studied music. But she had been caught in an air raid and by some strange fate had had to have her hands amputated at the wrists. Oh, I shall never forget those furlough days; incessantly she would rush over to me and kiss me and then dash back to the piano to play a new piece for me. I watched her bang upon the keys with those horrible wrist-stumps and I watched the smile she gave me and the harmless but so pathetic idiot-look that beamed from her eyes.

When I left my sister to journey on to Dachau my heart was full of hatred and the lust for vengeance. Not only had the sight of my beloved sister turned idiot inflamed me, but I also had personal reasons. My stomach was seamed with scars from Stalingrad. No, no man was as ruthless, as savage as I. No, I was not to become a sadist—I was to be an avenger. I had had a great glorious dream that my race would dominate the world. This dream had engulfed my being, and when it seemed so close to Reality—it exploded. It exploded and ripped open my stomach; it distorted my heart and perverted my brain. Now, al-

though I knew that my dream was doomed, I vowed that I would have some compensation.

I ruled at Dachau with an iron fist. Upon the slightest provocation I had them ushered into the gas-chamber or the crematory. My superiors did not care. They said that I was a disciplinarian when my fellow guards gave notice that even they feared my temper. When the Jewish prisoners called me "Beast" I had them herded before me as if they were just so much enemic ruck. "Beast" they cried. Old men with ashen brows and beards, women with shaved heads and children with branded bodies cried "Beast". But I smiled and ordered their execution. Beast indeed!

* * * * *

When the war ended I evaded the authorities. My superiors at Dachau were tried and executed by the War Crimes Investigators. I, however, escaped and changed my appearance efficiently enough so that as recent as yesterday I conversed with the stupid exponents of the American Military Government without being detected. No living Jew can identify me today—and those ghost-Jews will not torture me any longer.—Oh, in these last moments how supreme I feel! I am the master of my own destiny for I alone have ordained that my life shall end when the clock strikes next.

The clock! It has stopped while I have been writing! Listen! Oh, Lord, I am terrified! Hear! Hear those hooves below my window? Hear those voices crying "Beast, Beast"! It is the ghost-Jews coming for me—I must escape—I must!

The Beast

Excerpt from *Die Zeitung*:

> Belingries, Bavaria: An unidentified inhabitant of this town was shot by a member of the A.M.G. personnel yesterday under strange circumstances. The deceased, apparently insane, was running madly on all fours through the town as would a hunted beast. When the American attempted to calm the demented, the latter savagely turned upon the official so that the use of fire-arms was necessary. The American involved was S/Sgt. Milton Rosenberg.

J. On Coffee

By John J. O'Brien, '49

DURING the eighteenth century when the American Colonists were up in arms over the high cost of tea, their British rulers were apathetically sipping coffee in London. Somehow I suspect that these eighteenth century Britishers sipped coffee, as they did everything else, in great moderation; for I fail to find in their literature of that period any references to those neuroses that coffee drinking was later to produce among Americans. Can one imagine an Addison or a Steele drinking cup after cup of coffee and still retaining that serenity of outlook, that calmness of manner, that philosophical prudence with which they commented on the events of their day? It isn't surprising that staid old England soon turned to tea, for she found in the extract of this little leaf, which comes from a land of dainty gardens and contemplating buddhas, a beverage better suited to her own love of genial leisure and reserved manners.

But it was in enterprising and boisterous America that coffee found an appreciative home, for Americans found in this aromatic bean whose natural home is the turbulent, steaming jungles of Brazil, a beverage which complemented their own love of relentless activity. The American truck driver must have his thermos bottle filled with coffee as he drives his giant vehicle between distant cities in the dead of night. The sailor must have his "cup of joe" on hand as he peers into the cold mists of the North Atlantic. The business man must reluctantly take time out of his busy day to drop in to the corner drug store to guzzle a cup of coffee so that he might better brace himself for the arduous tasks ahead.

On Coffee

I believe that America's coffee drinking habit is partly responsible for the tremendous progress she has made in the last hundred and fifty years. There is a power in coffee which spurs man onward. That great and prolific composer, Mozart, who wasn't an American, although for all his great activity he should have been, fully realized what grand powers were contained in this little bean. One night he discovered that the opening date for his opera "The Marriage of Figaro" was only one day off and as yet he had not composed its overture. Instead of ordering its postponement he asked his wife to brew him a pot of coffee, and with steaming cup in one hand, pen in the other he proceeded to work far into the night. By the next afternoon the opera company had the overture fully scored and orchestrated. Anyone who has ever heard this spritely and bumbtious overture can attribute its beauty partly to Mozart's genius and partly to that ingredient of coffee called caffein, which so sharpened his mind and killed his fatigue that a great composer was able to compose a masterpiece in record time. There are those neurologists among us who would take this caffein from the nation's coffee. If they ever do this, America's days will be numbered for how can we build bigger and higher skyscrapers, wider and longer roads, cheaper and more efficient mouse traps without the caffein in coffee to spur us on? Without the caffein in coffee we would soon become as the tea drinking British and Chinese, lethargic and contented.

I point with pride at the many tons of coffee my country consumes daily. Coffee making has become both a ritual and art in millions of American homes. The many varieties of utensils used in performing this rite are a tribute to America's progressiveness.

When I was a child there seemed to be some mysterious force involved in the use of these paraphernalia of coffee mak-

ing. I remember those cold winter mornings when in seeking the protective warmth of the kitchen I would watch the coffee percolating on the stove. It seemed to me then that there was strange magic here as I saw the sparkling water dancing like a little elf in the glass cap, slowly turning a reddish brown, and filling the room with its exciting and homely aroma. No less mysterious was that ingenious machine, flaming red like a toy fire engine, the coffee grinder at the corner grocery store. I used to marvel at the way the salesman would pour a full bag of beans into the gaping smokestack and receive a full bag of powdery coffee from the small aperture on the side. But my wonderment didn't last long for along with Eddie Cantor and Rubinoff came freshly roasted coffee, ground and packed in tins with the date clearly stamped on the cover, and this marvelous machine disappeared from the store counters.

Like all Americans, I grew to be an incurable coffee fiend. Coffee is a passion in my life, for without it, life would be intolerable. I, like all Americans, believe that the best cup of coffee in the world is that brewed in my own home and I judge all outside cups by its standards. Needless to say that wherever I have traveled I have never found a cup of coffee as wholly palatable as those I drink at home.

I remember with particular fondness the coffee I once drank during working hours at a well known industrial plant. Now, if there is any law which contumacious labor violates above all others these days, it is that one which states that employees shall not brew coffee during working hours. If the reader should at any time be taken on a tour of one of our great industrial establishments by some proud manager, let him not be too much awed by the great show of labor he sees there, for hidden among all those whirring machines and clicking typewriters there is a steam-

ing pot of coffee which these industrious people will tap as soon as he and the manager have left the room. The foreman at the office where I worked had us so trained that should he receive a warning that some executive was snooping around while we were engaged in the ritual of coffee making, we would all act with the precision of a football team executing a play to collect all the cups and saucers from the tops of the desks and deposit them in their proper hiding places. Stolen apples always taste sweeter, and for this reason I will always remember the delectable fragrance of those forbidden cups.

These treats didn't last long, however, for soon I was inducted into the army and there the coffee was bad. According to the much ballyhooed policy of always placing the right man in the right job, the military authorities selected some Jersey City garage mechanics to cook in our kitchen. Consequently they prepared coffee with the same artlessness they used to prepare a solution of radiator flush in civilian life. Nor did their methods improve any with passing time, rather their concoction grew steadily worse as coffee and constantly better as a flushing agent.

However bad the coffee in the army was, it could never compare to that ghastly brew sold under the guise of coffee in a certain cafeteria I daily frequent. I suspect that the employees of this establishment are practitioners of that ancient science of black magic, that every night at the stroke of twelve these people move their two steaming cauldrons out onto the middle of the floor and with proper incantations and abracadabras—boil and bubble, toil and trouble, and all that sort of thing—they concoct a witch's brew guaranteed to cast a spell on all who drink it. Many a morning I have watched their chief sorcerer, now shed of his ceremonial robes for a white apron, passing out this evil potion to long lines of coffee lovers.

Nevertheless, our love of coffee is such that we must have it no matter what the cost. We Americans will drink coffee in spite of the warnings of alarmed neurologists and postum manufacturers. The more coffee we drink, the more cigarettes we'll smoke, the more asperin we'll swallow, the more furious will be the tempo of our lives, and the less we'll be able to relax. This process will go on until we become a nation of raving insomniacs. Then some more sober nation will build a gigantic insane asylum in which to confine us. But even then life shall be tolerable for unknown to the warden, hidden away in some obscure corner of a padded cell some enterprising American will be brewing a pot of coffee for his fellow inmates.

A Stranger In Strasbourg

By George L. Eagle, '50

WHEN Switzerland was opened as a leave area for U. S. soldiers in Europe, Strasbourg was selected as a city in which troops from Germany could spend the night before going on to Basle. For accommodations a three-story building was crowded from basement to attic with army cots. In the better days of France, it must have been a fine residence; in the better days of France, Strasbourg was a center of culture and a scene of historic beauty. Beauty, when it radiates from Christianity, does not disappear in an instant, but the tragedy of the moment may tarnish its setting. It was Father Roger who unwittingly taught me this, in the quiet sunset hour when evening overtakes a summer day.

But the incident properly begins when Corporal Adams and I arrived in Strasbourg the week before, enroute, as I say, to Basle. It was early evening when we squeezed onto the crowded streetcar which took us to the leave center. The once-splendid halls and salons resounded with the random march of heavy Yank boots. When Adams and I had reluctantly accepted our lot for the night, a few square feet in a chill, dusky cellar, we knew the most expedient thing to do was to leave the center and spend as little of the evening there as possible. To this end we walked downtown, because it was a warm evening.

I have since read that Strasbourg had been one of France's cleanest cities, but war had apparently disorganized its agencies

for sanitation and upkeep. Its streets were littered with refuse, many of its buildings were shattered by combat, most of the others were generally deteriorated, its people were shabby and destitute, and surly Moroccans, dressed in American uniform remnants, went in packs about the streets and cafes. Last year Strasbourg was an ugly city indeed.

We sat for a long time on a bench by the river, watching the strollers in the listless Alsatian evening and waiting for the dark. After a while we walked through the streets, glancing at the meagre displays in the shop windows and deciding finally that a glass of beer would climax the evening. We stepped into a cafe of unfortunate choice and seated ourselves at one of the bare wooden tables. The place was being drunkenly patronized by Moroccans, and Adams and I considered it strategic not to be outwardly critical; but as we drank our beer we paid some attention to a tall Moroccan kicking a French slattern while the background was energetically played by a group of vociferous disreputables.

We walked on.

It was dark as we crossed the square to the station, but there, in the daylight hours, the Moroccans congregated, dishevelled in their soiled, haphazard uniforms. I never learned where they came from, or where they were going, or where they had got their francs. "You do business?" came at you from all sides if you passed by with any sort of bag or duffel, and sometimes you sought to discourage the bidders by putting an exorbitant price on your watch or cigarettes, but still you ran the risk of acceptance.

Back in the half-lit cellar the furloughed soldiers were sleeping, and next morning it was a delight to board the train departing from dirty, vulgar, moribund Strasbourg.

II

For a week Adams and I toured that tidy, vigorous little nation in the Alps. When the train from Basle brought us back into France, I do not remember that anyone said, "Now, if we could only go straight through Strasbourg!"—but someone must have said just that. However, another night in Strasbourg was inevitable. Adams and I had brought books with us from a Basle shop, and reading would anesthetize us for the evening.

After dinner at the center, I postponed my novel long enough to consult the bulletins for masses, because the next day was Sunday. I stood for a moment wondering how I could get to any of these churches mentioned on the schedule.

"That one is quite far on the tram, but you can go across the street at seven-thirty." I turned, and at my side was a monk in the simple brown habit of the Capucins. He was short and wore a neat Vandyke and the hair on his head was sparse. He spoke English with concentration, in a quiet voice. "It would take you quite long to go on the tram to the cathedral."

"But you say there are masses across the street?"

"The first is at seven-thirty."

"I'll go then because my train is leaving early," I said, and then he suggested, "Perhaps if you are not busy, you would like to see the monastery. It is up the road about a mile."

It was something to do.

I followed the monk down the stairs and along the drive and out onto the cobble-stone street. It was early September and a perfect evening in the slanting sun. We turned away from the Strasbourg I had seen on my first night there. In a minute he was asking me about the army and about my home and about my plans for civilian life.

He told me about the monastery—how the Germans had quartered a Wehrmacht company there first, and later the Americans an artillery outfit, and how the monks had it to themselves again. Walking along a road in southern France, I knew this priest was different from any Frenchman I had ever met. His mind lay beyond the petty issues of the moment. He was detached but not impersonal, gentle but not effeminate.

We turned off on a dirt road, and there it was, the monastery—as European as yesterday, as universal as tomorrow, out of our age but surely and quietly a part of it. First we passed by the massive wood doors into the chapel, and a few minutes later the priest was leading me along the cloister walk to his cell, describing as we walked the monastery and its life. Soon, he said, the bell would ring, summoning the community to the chapel to chant the poetry of their office.

In his cell were a crucifix, a bed and a desk. From somewhere in the clutter of his desk he took a small picture of Saint Conrad blessing children at the gate of a monastery. He inscribed it and gave it to me.

Somewhere the bell was chiming. We returned through the narrow corridor, along the cloister walk and to the door. We said good-bye.

Inside the monastery the sandals of the little monk were making their noiseless way to the chapel. To the priest's mind he had given to a stranger in Strasbourg a glimpse of monastic life and that was all. Of course he did not realize that his simple gesture had reasserted for me the timeless charm of Christianity.

Outside I looked at the picture and its trim pencilled inscription: "Souvenir religieux, Strasbourg, B. Roger."

"Reflections"

By Joseph V. Shanley, '49

JIM sat in his favorite chair alongside the bedroom window that overlooked the scene of his childhood. He lit a cigarette and watched the smoke slip softly into the air like hazy threads that form the early morning fog. As the smoke formed blue tinted patterns reflecting the afternoon sun, so did his thoughts unfold before him and mirror the days of old.

Jim Stevens wasn't old in years, 25 was all he could be, but his contemplative mien belied his age. Ever since he returned from Europe, bedecked with medals and foreign citations, he had retreated from family and friends. He had been home almost a year—but hadn't shown any inclination to revert to his previous gay and light-hearted manner. People meeting Jim for the first time would be apt to type him as a quiet sort of a lad—one who thought a great deal but talked sparingly. His girl and mother felt this ever so poignantly.

Jim scanned the neighborhood landmarks and couldn't help but feel a tinge of nostalgia as each place he focused his attention upon brought back vivid memories of the past. There was the modern high school across the street—how well he remembered the days when it was being built. Such good times he used to have playing in the sand pits, running across girders, and writing his name in soft cement. A soft chuckle escaped his lips as he recalled delicious bits of pastry—the reward for bringing the workers water and running to the corner store for canned beer.

Yes, there were golden memories etched in the street and buildings of this neighborhood. How well he could recall the old gang of kids, the games of "kick the can" and "buck-buck"—and those Saturday afternoon football and baseball games against the kids from the other side of the hill.

Graduation from grammar school was another vision that flashed across his memory. Oh how big and grown-up he felt when he received his diploma—not only did it mean that James Patrick Stevens, son of Mr. and Mrs. Michael James Stevens, was qualified to enter high school come next September, but it meant that knickers would be replaced by long pants, quite a thrill for a lad of thirteen.

One, two, three, four—just as fast as that the high school years rolled by. Yes, Jim mused, they were happy days—Saturday night dances and romances balanced algebra problems and report cards. Then there were always the ever pressing financial finaglings.

Jim slouched back in the chair, flicked the ashes from his cigarette into the ivy box and thought about the first full week's pay he earned just one month after graduation as a copy boy in the newspaper office. It didn't pay much, but there was a thrill working in a place so important—the city's one and only voice. Someday, of course, after a series of rapid promotions, Jim smiled as he thought of long ago ambitions, he would be sitting behind the editorial dask counseling and warning the people of impending dangers. Oh, what power a little pen did have in the hands of men.

For Jim the war came suddenly and quite unexpectedly. Sure, he had been reading the newspapers and listening to radio commentators, but he never imagined that it would come to this. When he heard the terse announcement—Pearl Harbor

was bombed a few moments ago—he thought to himself nothing will come of this. The Japs would apologize for their planned error. We would accept it. No, Jim reflected, it didn't turn out that way. The Japs were playing for keeps. There was only one thing left to do—we did it. Thousands of young men formed block long lines in front of recruiting offices. Patriotic speeches and dramatic music filled the air ways.

Newspaper headlines screamed revenge. The President spoke and Congress set the war machinery in motion. Still, Jim figured that all the hysteria would pass as quickly as it appeared. No—it increased in fury, an ever-rising crescendo of tragic laden news from the far away Philippine Islands told of a heroic, but futile, struggle against the "hopped up maniacs". Exhaustion, disease and lack of ammunition forced what remained of a gallant group of defenders to surrender.

Yes, that capitulation really infuriated us. It was the signal for more men to jam recruiting offices. The draft followed—peace time industries converted to war time production. Oh yes, Jim cogitated, the war express started to thunder full steam ahead with death as the engineer and money as the fireman.

War became a reality—not something to be viewed and commented upon from the side lines. I was drafted, Jim said over and over to himself, just like a million other guys. But before I go into the army I'll have a good time. Yes, I've had a good time, he mumbled between clenched teeth, watching the patterns of hazy blue carpets sprinkled with sunbeams disappear from view. And, as the seance requires mournful music and soft light to bring back voices from the past—so did Jim once more light up and rebuild the smoky haze that reflected the thoughts of old.

Those first few weeks in the army, Jim mused, are ever so amusing when looking back, but not so while you lived them. Countless formations, supply issues and humble servitude to a bunch of guys you wouldn't let put air in your tires in civilian life cannot be classified as man's most care free days. The weeks of basic training flew by. In no time at all you learned all there was to know about a rifle, mortar, and hand grenade. You learned how to hug the ground and pace yourself on back breaking hikes. You learned how to bitch—that came almost naturally. Yes, all there was to know about land warfare and self protection you learned in a few months.

What a laugh, what a big joke that was, Jim thought. You didn't know a damn thing about anything until you got over there and lived, ate, and slept with war—your constant companion by day and night. Often were the times, Jim brooded, when he would pinch himself to see if he was dreaming all of this—wondering whether he would wake up and find it all to be a horrible nightmare.

Sure he had seen army pictures on why we were supposed to be fighting—world protectors or defenders, something like that. All he knew was that he was tired, wanted to close his eyes and sleep like a baby, not fearing that you might never awaken or be startled by the roar of a cannon or the piercing voice of a squadron leader. God, but he wanted to go home—wanted to see his mother, his girl—but most of all he didn't want to shoot any more. He didn't want to be diving into shell holes. He didn't want to be constantly fearing death from the enemy on the ground and in the air. Does there have to be a war? Jim shouted, his voice piercing the stillness of the room. Can't things be settled other ways aside from having blood as the cosignee? Will man ever learn the folly, the utter uselessness of war?

No, Jim thought, I didn't turn yellow up in the front lines. I even got a medal, "for meritorious achievement in accomplishing with distinction the complete annihilation of a machine gun nest and for capturing single-handedly four enemy soldiers. This soldier, James Patrick Stevens, displayed courage, coolness and skill reflecting great credit upon himself and the armed forces of the United States." What a crock of sawdust. Yea, Jim stretched his mind, I did what the citation says, but there was no courage, coolness or skill or thought of my country. I was thinking of Jim Stevens. If I hadn't got those guys they would have me. I had a lot of hate in me. It wasn't for the German . . . it was for war. It was a rotten stinking mess and I was part of it. Yes, I cried many a day and many a night. My heart cried out and so did my soul—but no one could hear me.

Jim turned from the window, ground the cigarette butt in the ivy loam and moved toward the bed. He stretched out on it with hands clasped behind the neck watching the smoky haze gradually disappear into nothingness.

Yes, he mused, those are the memories I have. Ones of happy, carefree pre-war days and the other's of war time hell—both stick in my mind. One outbalances the other—can't help drawing comparisons.

No, Jim mumbled, don't expect to entirely rid myself of war reminders. But the pains, the piercing jagged blades of bloody memories are constantly cutting me—making my life hell. Oh God, what can I do to gain some semblance of intellectual peace? What can I do to arouse the powers that be to the wanton uselessness of war? Why is this heart of mine so tender? His eyes searched the ceiling. Eyes that would have

burned through walls of asbestos if they had been torches—so intense was the yearning for clarity.

No answer came—but like the solemn chant of an intoned credo, the words of Oliver Goldsmith resounded from the walls of the room. "Tenderness without a capacity of relieving, only makes the man who feels it more wretched than the object which sues for assistance." He tossed and turned like a crewless life boat in an ocean gale. If I could only forget —the words slipped silently from frozen lips.

Jim slid off the bed and walked to the window sill to get his cigarettes. His attention was attracted to the kids playing football in the corner lot, just as he did when their age. He turned from the window but still those kids played before him. Newspaper headlines seered across his mind—was there something he could do? His thoughts again went back to early ambitions—the editorial desk—counselling—warning. Oh what power a little pen did have in the hands of men.

Thoughts On New York

By R. E. Doherty, '49

New York is colossal:
It is the most magnificent city
In the wealthiest nation on earth.
The waters of the Hudson river
Flow down from the Valley of Patroons
To lap affectionately against the pile drivings
Of old wharves;
The East River, as if in representation of the poverty stricken,
Swirls its garbage-surfaced, oil-splattered debacle
Seaward in heraldry of the citadel of wasteful, prosperous America.

Here, on the island of Manhattan,
Man has undertaken the task to shame the pyramids,
As he has sent towering into the skies
Hundreds of gigantic edifices.
They are set together as close as fence pickets,
And sunshine is limited to puny gaps
In the celestial-heighted Wall of Stone.

New York is chaotic:
It is located in one tiny corner of earth
And still, seven-million descendants of Adam,
Representing every nation of the world,

Hustle, mope or stampede through its streets
In search of a livelihood!

New York is gay:
Broadway, one of the world's most popular streets,
Unwinds itself for sixteen miles and features
The most classical entertainment of the time.
Hundreds of rollicking-lifed night clubs
Present reputable orchestras and floor-shows
To the enchanted public
While the aristocratic theater guilds
Promote the finest dramatizations.
The black of night is defied
By multi-colored, flambuoyant lights
Which are ostentatiously designed in huge advertisements.

New York is lonely:
No heart seems to beat in this Great City;
Only the pulsations of eternal, blatant traffic
And the thousand footfalls can be measured.
The essence of Life is everywhere;
It scurries through the streets in human forms;
It seeps over the sills and transoms
Of the Great Stone Wall in the sound of tickertapes
And typewriters;
It breathes up in hot passion from below the streets
From the gush of a speeding subway—
—but no heart can be conceived.
Life is everywhere, but it exists singularly
In each separate being, form and sound.
And all people are lonely—all are indifferent.

Thoughts on New York

New York is ephemeral:
Thousands of visitors stomp daily
Upon the floor of the Seething City.
They come for they have been enticed
By its reputation or because their method
Of attaining a livelihood stems from its
Financially fruitful roots of rock.
Hundreds of people come and go daily,
And with their entrance or exodus
The life of at least one of the City's aspects
Undergoes a minute metamorphosis—
Which leads to an increase in murder and rape
Or a decline in the stock market and general corruption.

New York is powerful:
Lo, here on a once insignificant island,
Man has established in the form of a city
A monstrous despot which now,
As if in realization of its own great import,
Sneers smugly at its makers.
As the sharp, piercing noises of traffic
And the grinding of gears, and the thousand footfalls,
And the blaring night clubs converge, the city finds voice
And seems to say:
"I am greater than all men
And in my stony entrails the interests of the world,—
—commerce, finance and industry—
Are processed only because I exist.
Man built me higher, better and sounder
Than all else, and thus he has made me
Monarch of all I engulf;

Millions of people use my veins and arteries
As streets; they hurry up and down
My body in elevators;

They heal my wounds with cement, stone and mortar;
They extend my magnanimity
With excavators, steel structures and binding rivets.
And I laugh with the thunderous tones of their own doings,
For I realize that all of their achievements
Are meant as efforts to be greater than I.
I watch the pauper become drunkard
Because of the despair of his unavailing existence
While the millionaire, having finally
Scaled my massive frame, looks from his pent-house
To the unobtainable moon and sighs his defeat."

New York is afraid:
In pompous display of his pseudo-creative abilities,
Man has forsaken, destroyed and ignored Nature.
He financed a gallant crusade against the natural
As he sent belching machines and awkward bulldozers
To uproot grass and trees.
And then man supplanted Nature with a gargantuous Idol.
And yet the Idol, New York, fears the vengeance of Nature.
Each day the sun, the stars and the moon are shunted
By a veil of stone—but Time, husband to Nature,
Has demolished the greatest of things.

The pyramids and the sphinx
Were Time-devoured among many other prides of man—
—and now New York waits for the inevitable.
It is awful to vision that time

Thoughts on New York

When gnarled, twisted roots will twine
In and out of its ruins;
When crawling and creeping things
Will nestle their slimy bodies together
Among the shriveled, yellow-parched business files;
In the office drawers and under the rubble.
And at night there will be no million watts
To push back the darkness.
Yet, though the splendor of Broadway
Is sunken and lost in the blowing dust,
Still the greatest drama will be signified
On the site of New York
As the wind whistles weirdly
Through the stubbled debris of Tin Pan Alley,
And the moon-drenched ruins of the Idol
Tell of the Triumph of Time and the Vengeance of Nature.

Chaos

By Edward L. Gnys, '49

ALTHOUGH it was by no means a warm day, large beads of perspiration trickled slowly down Cliff's brow. An expression of agony cloaked his thin, sallow face. This was the third day that he was suffering that devilish torture—that horrible noise in his head. It was evident that he was on the verge of a breakdown. A human being could endure such formidable anguish only so long. This undescribable bedlam which lurked in the very core of his brain was a medley of unearthly sounds which mingled hideous roars and thundering with shattering cries and a whirlpool of unimaginable sounds. Dominating the entire theme was a steady maddening drone.

As Cliff walked slowly down Main Street every little noise annoyed him. Each sound when carried to his brain was magnified thousands of times. And the humming in his head steadily increased its volume in a resounding crescendo.

The breeze gently caressed his damp face causing an icy chill to creep swiftly through him. It was a quite pleasant fall day although the wind blew its cool breath a little too vigorously at times. Every now and then the tired sun, which seemed to be resting after many centuries of work, would raise its blanket of fleecy clouds to see how the troubled world was faring. Then, yawning sleepily it would snuggle again in its comfortable bed. Dry leaves were dancing around in the streets. Dust flew merrily about intent upon finding an eye to lodge in.

Amidst the wonders of nature it was no difficult task to see that the downtown section of the city was a scene of utter con-

fusion. An infinite number of people hurried along in all possible directions. Large people, small people, middle sized people, fat ones, thin ones, young ones, old ones, men, women, children rushed up and down streets, in and out of stores, off and on trolleys, this way and that. And everyone in an extreme hurry.

Cliff brushed his sandy colored hair out of his eyes and walked slowly on. If anyone had taken the time to notice him they would have seen a thin and sickly looking young man of about twenty-four summers, wearing an army field jacket with the collar turned up around his neck and a pair of tan trousers with not too much of a crease left. One hand was in the pocket of his jacket and the other hung limply at his side. He stepped along unsteadily like a blind man groping his way. And this was nearly the case, for Cliff shuffled on without seeing anything or anyone. He was completely oblivious to everything but the turmoil in his throbbing brain. Savage tom-toms were beating out fiendish syncopations in the form of weird, barbaric rhythms.

Honk! Honk! The gurgling horn of a passing car made Cliff suddenly conscious of his surroundings. Startled, he swept swiftly around. He almost reached for the gun in his pocket. Gun!!??——Yes, he did have a gun with him, didn't he? Strange. He didn't remember it till just then. Why had he brought it? No answer was conveyed by his benumbed brain. He became frightened. His head seemed to be spinning around like a merry-go-round. His heart pounded heavily. Gasping, he struggled for breath. A wrecking crew was busily working at tearing down the intricate buildings of his mind.

He stopped walking for a moment and reached for the upper pocket of his jacket. He took out a cigarette and nervously placed it between his dry lips. The end of the cigarette was crumpled and he got a mouthful of loose tobacco. Spitting

the tobacco off his tongue he turned the cigarette around, tapped the end on the back of his hand and once more placed it between his lips. God, but his mouth was dry! He searched his pockets for a match. Found none. Went through them again. No luck. Angrily he cast the cigarette to the ground, squashed it under his foot and walked on.

The clamor of the downtown section annoyed him. The people seemed to be wrapped in one great muddle. They pushed and shoved. Several times he was knocked off balance by someone bumping into him. He was getting fed up with being pushed around.—Damned fed up! Why the hell didn't those stupid fools watch where they were going!

Cliff now reached an intersection and was waiting with the crowd for the traffic light to change. In the middle of the intersection there was a six-sided box in which stood a fat policeman whose job was to operate the light. The officer was talking to a small, bent, old man who appeared to be asking directions. Cliff restlessly waited for the light to change. It appeared that the policeman had completely forgotten about it. Cars kept rushing by in a steady stream. Why doesn't he change that damned light! Cliff was growing more and more impatient. He looked like he was going to explode. His head was splitting! People pushed and shoved. The drums in his head were being pounded with stronger, louder and more violent percussions. The din of the city with its many maddening noises filled him with a strange, palpable fear.

The horns of cars vomitted out their appalling blasts. Trucks sped by leaving behind the echo of their monstrous rumblings. Spine chilling clanking and grinding proved that the trolley cars were not to be outdone in this contest of ear-splitting noises. Voices rose in a screaming chorus producing a

stertorous background for the drunken melody which the whistling wind was weaving in a harsh spectral pattern.

In addition to being smothered by this tumultuous mêlée Cliff was tortured by the turbulent uproar that plagued his torpid mind. He couldn't think. His aching brain refused to function. He grew panicky. Why doesn't that dumb flatfoot change the light! That damned noise! Why doesn't it stop!!!

Cliff pushed his way through the crowd and dashed out into the street. A woman screamed. Brakes screeched. A sickening thud. Faces, buildings, the sun, the sky, all revolved for one horrible instant. Then a pool of inky blackness silently and swiftly blotted out all light.

When the blanket of darkness was finally removed, Cliff became conscious of being in a moving vehicle. He was laying on a stiff, uncomfortable cot. No—it was a stretcher—in what he thought to be an ambulance. He had difficulty even in reasoning this out for his senses were almost completely dulled. One thing he could not forget or overlook, however, was the infernal chaos that unconsciousness itself had not been able to wash away.

"All right now, just take it easy. You'll be okay in a little while." These words came from a husky, dark complexioned man dressed in a white uniform who was sitting beside Cliff. Suddenly, a thought penetrated the chaotic jumble of Cliff's mind. He became alarmed. That color—white! They, were taking him to a hospital!—Oh no!—Not again! He had his belly full of hospitals. For six horrible months he had endured confinement in a hospital. He was sick of hospitals with their thundering silence and their hideous white walls. No more hospitals for him!

His hand gripped a small fire extinguisher on the wall of the ambulance. He scarcely knew what he was doing. One soli-

tary thought fought its way through the tangled jungle of his mind—escape!! Cliff waited for an opportunity. The blaring in his head cried out in harsh, clashing tones. The attendant looked out of the window in the back of the ambulance. Cliff slowly raised the fire-extinguisher and then let it come swiftly down on the attendant's head.

The ambulance was forced to stop momentarily at an intersection where there was a slight traffic jam. Cliff seized the opportunity and opened the door to freedom.

He walked a few steps in a sort of delirium and then his paralyzed brain became aware of a severe shooting pain in his right leg. Though the pain was assailing, its torment did not bother Cliff as much as the gnawing pangs of horror that dwelled in his wretched head. As he limped along he broke out into a cold sweat. His clothes which were battered and deranged from the accident were now soaking wet. His pants' leg was matted with blood. His heart pounded like a trip-hammer. People pushed him this way and that. He thought he was going to pass out. The lurid noises in his head persisted unceasingly.

Bewildered and numbed with pain he halted at a bus stop. Home—that's where he was going. Home. And then to bed.

A bus pulled up. Cliff read the sign. Dazedly he staggered aboard. Each step was accompanied by dreadful pain. He was pushed by the crowd towards the rear of the bus. All the seats were occupied and he had to stand.

Disgorging a roar not unlike some massive wild beast, the bus started jolting along. The people were packed in like sardines. The foul air was stifling. Cliff's clothing clung to his damp body making him exceedingly uncomfortable. His leg ached terribly. The pain was excruciating. From out of the

depths of his inert mind came the dread chaos that filled him with an intense horror. He shuddered.

Ouch!! Cliff winced with pain. Someone had stepped on his sore foot. A million piercing thorns were driven into that leg. Cliff feverishly reached for his coat pocket. The report of a gun swelled the air. The man who had stepped on Cliff's foot slumped quietly to the floor.

While the smoke cleared, Cliff put his gun back in his pocket and calmly made his way through the startled crowd. From the bus he limped down the street leading to his home enthralled with a feeling of happiness. He felt wonderful. His leg still hurt but that was of little matter for the torrent of sound which had infested his mind was gone. His head had cleared.

On Floorwalkers

By Coleman Morrison, '47

IT has always been my contention that floorwalkers lead a very involved, yet exciting life. For those not yet acquainted with this select profession, let me present a letter I have received of late from a very dear friend:

My dear Fritz,

It has been brought to my attention that you are about to seek employment in the Kenyon Company of Taunton, Mass., in the capacity of floorwalker. If this be so, I would suggest a lesson or two in my own school of floorwalkers, as I am very sure this program will prove most lucrative to you. Should you be interested, as I know you will be, let me do you the pleasure of outlining the curriculum. Young men desirious of learning the trade are drawn up once a day in my library where they are instructed in the use of the limbs and exercised by the following commands: Tidy yourselves, Station yourselves, Approach the customer, Launch the attack, Apply the pressure, Retreat in haste, Study the exchange, Bid adieu.

Given complete attention by the pupils, a single course would be completed in three weeks at which time, if I feel the students have attained a passing grade, I issue recommendations for any business concern desired. But in order that you can form for yourself an unobstructed conception of these exercises I shall, with your permission, explain it to you in full detail.

It is our custom to begin each morning with a prayer at which time we ask God to help us with the performance of the

day. My male contingent stand before me with bodies erect, and when I give the command TIDY YOURSELVES, the gentlemen brush off their suits, flirt with their chiffon handkerchiefs, ajdust their cravats, and dust the loose earth from their shoes. This task completed we come to the foremost operation, that of placing the carnation into the buttonhole. At first the water is attentively shaken from the chaste blossom, and the latter is thrust carefully through the opening so as not to crush the precious plant. As you can imagine this entire process is quite elementary and can easily be comprehended within the limits of a day.

The next step, that of placing yourself is more involved than the previous unit. In this lesson I usually demonstrate the correct stance and the position on the floor whence the customer can best be attacked. In this session I also present the introduction of the smile. This is, as you may have guessed, a precautionary measure, in the event you are assaulted from the rear. I prefer the dimple smile myself, but for those unfortunates unable to cultivate the same, I advocate the "toothpaste ad" smile. But because of the many difficulties we meet with, such as toothless pupils, and those who have invested in unsteady dental plaster, this process may take anywhere from four to five days. At the completion we are ready for the next command, APPROACH THE CUSTOMER.

This step requires not only the practise of the deceptive smile as learned in unit two, but also a fair idea of the weather conditions. My usual procedure is to step up to the young lady or man (as the case may be) and in the most charming manner question, "*Good* morning, Miss, what is there I can do for you today?" However, be the weather inclement our tactics are somewhat revised and we ask, "Well, well, what brings you to Kenyon's today, Miss? And such a nasty day it is!" For the con-

venience of my students I have mimeographed a list of salutations to be used on special occasions such as St. Patrick's Day, Arbor Day, Robert E. Lee's Birthday, etc. These few greetings having been thoroughly committed to memory, we have a day of review and in this period we practise our first three lessons.

The next step, a most important one, is entitled, LAUNCHING THE ATTACK, which is usually applied to the young lady who has brought "the little darling" along. In this exhibition we speak directly to the child.

"Well, well, well, what have we here? Now aren't you the great big boy? What is your name, sonny? Oscar! Why, can you imagine that? Oscar is *my* favorite name. And just by looking at you I'll bet all the money in the world you're the smartest boy in the class, yessiree." Then turning to the child's mother, "Don't be surprised, *young* lady, if I abduct this boy of yours one of these days. What I wouldn't give to have one of my own, yessiree." With this our floorwalker forces a few tears to his eyes and gropes for his chiffon handkerchief with bended head, a most intricate labor indeed. Due to the age and sex of the children, this is a most complicated formula and takes a minimum of six days to perform. However, I have provided several brats of various ages for you to practise on, all which tends to make the exercise much easier.

Our next move involves applying the pressure. As the floorwalker in many stores does not actually sell the merchandise, we have the preparatory operation of hailing a salesgirl, but since this is so very artless it is usually apprehended in an hour or so. With the arrival of Miss Smith, we begin the major construction. Our first step is to admonish Miss Smith for arriving so late on the scene. This is done regardless of the time consumed by the young lady in the process of making her appearance.

"Why you know these lovely people are in a hurry," we bellow at Miss Smith. We continue by telling the salesgirl that the customer wishes to see our very best material *and* (most important) we add, nothing too expensive. We usually end our conversation with the salesgirl by saying that we want her to take the very best care of these customers because they are our personal friends.

The sixth exercise, RETREAT IN HASTE, is applicable to the floorwalker fortunate enough to detect anyone entering the store carrying a parcel bearing the store label. Inevitably this detestable person is returning a garment. This is a speedy process as its name suggests and it merely consists of running to the men's room, or if this exit be cut off, make haste to the rear of the department and quietly slip into the stock room. I am extremely favored to be able to count among my friends the National Indoor track champion and he has very graciously consented to run through this sixth unit with my pupils. I think you will find my library is quite large and the complete operation can be perfected there, with exits appropriately placed throughout.

Should you be attacked from behind by some sneak with an exchange, we suddenly lose our poise. Irritably we don our pince-nez and with the fury of an atomic bomb, we grab the package, rip off the cover and drag out the garment.

"Well, now" we shout, "What can be the trouble here?" "Too large? My dear young lady, have you taken into consideration that this will shrink considerably when laundered? Too small? Now come, come. That was our purpose in selling it to you. Why everyone is wearing their clothes short this season." If the lady still persists in returning the outfit, we make matters

most uncomfortable for her by asking many inane questions which are too numerous to mention at this writing. Furthermore, we call the floor superintendent to examine the garment who in turn calls the manager, who calls the Vice-President, who calls the President. I cannot stress the importance of this movement in writing, but I know that you will be delighted when you see our complete study. Moreover I provide a pair of pince-nez to every pupil at the completion of this unit with a year's supply of cleansing fluid. This in itself is worth the price of the course inasmuch as pince-nez are unobtainable at this time. And I ask you what would a floorwalker be without his pince-nez.

Which brings us to the last step, the "HASTA LUEGO" movement. As many of the participants are over fatigued at this point, I make this last unit as elementary as possible. It simply involves the raising of the hand to the mouth, the tilting of the head, a smirking smile and the sputtering of the Spanish expression, hasta luego. (My pupils have also learned to say good-bye in fifty-eight other languages, all of which are equally impressive.) Ninety-nine out of a hundred people won't know what you're talking about but thinking it flattery will smile and wave back.

With this the lesson ends and I feel free to question my students on any point, which, when answered to my complete satisfaction, they are presented a certificate of graduation, beautifully bound in chartreuse and gold leather. It is for this final dividend, your passport to America's foremost department stores, that I advocate your prompt registration. Indeed I am looking forward to meeting you in the very near future and until then I remain,

Your faithful servant,

MORTIMER KLONDIKE, FL.D.

P. S. My extension school, THUMBING THE NOSE, in three lessons is at present filled to capacity. If, however, you are contemplating enrollment, as many floorwalkers are, I should appreciate it if you would contact me at your earliest convenience, as I may be able to squeeze you in around May or June of next year.

Moment of Vision

By George L. Eagle, '50

WHEN we were very young, the nuns said that God made us to serve Him here and enjoy Him in heaven, and in the crystal faith of childhood we believed it with our hearts. We still believe it, of course, but now be believe also in bank accounts, Saturday nights, and the comedies of Noel Coward. Yet occasionally amid the distractions of adult life we enjoy moments of vision when we are sure of eternity and therefore sure it is more important to love God than ourselves. Two years ago such an experience was mine, in a little village in the Pyrenees.

The occasion was a furlough in Lourdes. Troops from many army outfits assembled in Paris, whereupon a night train took us to Toulouse for breakfast and then on to Lourdes. When we stepped off the train and walked through the narrow European streets, I tried to remember what I had heard about the sacred events of Lourdes. I tried to regain the sanguine appreciation I had enjoyed during a film celebrating Mary's appearance in southern France. But that afternoon Lourdes seemed like any other small Continental town I had seen.

We passed the shops and the cafes, and crossing a bridge we arrived at length in a street which was only slightly broader than a sidewalk and which was flanked by trim, austere hotels with their windows opened wide in the July afternoon. To American eyes the scene possessed, as so many European streets do, the disproportionate dimensions of a stage set.

I was shown to a room with Frank, a companion from my unit, and opening the shutters we could see the Pyrenees in the sunset. The hour was very still. The sunlight lay in a golden shaft across the beds, and from the kitchen came the faint aluminum melody of early evening.

Downstairs in the dining room Franco-Spanish waitresses were scurrying about with tureens of soup and slender bottles of red wine. After dinner Frank and I passed through the tiny lobby to the street, where three or four children were chattering in the last precious moments before bed. With our promise of candy one of them secured the permission of her mother to lead us to the shrine. She danced ahead of us through the devious streets as gaily as another child, nearly a century before, had run across the meadows to meet her Queen.

II

The heart of Lourdes is not, of course, the giant basilica but rather the grotto where God gave to a peasant girl the vision of His Mother. This, one realizes, is the scene of an actual contact between heaven and earth. In the wall of rock is a recess to which the eyes are instantly drawn because it enshrines a statue of Mary with her hands clasped in prayer to the God she incarnated. Beneath the statue is an altar, behind which hank countless crutches in mute testimony to faith. To one side is the miraculous stream.

However, it is the paved area before the altar where religion is brought dramatically into focus with life: for here are the pilgrims. Most are kneeling, their arms in the attitude of the Cross, but many are in wheelchairs, or on crutches, or at the sides of those whose sight remains. Here the faint in body and soul kneel before God for His answer, and in the

staccato repetition of their rosaries the lame bid to walk again, the blind to see again, and the tepid to love again. Here and there priests in cassocks are granting to penitents the ancient catharsis of absolution, as beyond them the river flows with a faint murmur through the dusk.

In a chaotic planet this is a vignette of hope. One feels the magic of renewal, when what he has believed all along is suddenly both deepened and heightened.

It was almost dark when we walked up the ramp that sweeps in a crescent to the second level of the basilica. The moon was a dim white petal in the sky, and on the plaza before the great basilica a thousand pilgrims were assembled in devout procession. The illuminated facade of the church diffused over them a half-light. They were advancing now, in the slow, measured walk of ritual, and into the stillness of the evening they were chanting their praises to the Mother of God. Their voices flooded and ebbed in earnest hymn as closer and closer they came to the steps of the basilica. Though standing on the ramp high above them, I felt caught in the spirit of their praise and supplication, and I had never before felt so sure of the purpose in our living.

Walking through the dark streets to the hotel, I knew I had become in some measure a pilgrim. If, stepping off the train that afternoon, I had been merely an American on furlough, the case was different now. It was different because something had changed it, something in the immensity of the basilica, and in the fragrant song of the procession, and in the tremendous meaning of the grotto.

The days in Lourdes were fleet, spent at the grotto and in the basilica and on the duplicated Calvary and in Bernadette's

home and in the shops and the stalls and in the park. And suddenly, on a gray morning, it was time to leave.

I left Mass in the grotto early because it was nearly train time. Frank was serving at the altar, but he came into the room as I was packing the duffel. We hurried along the corridor and down the stairs and out into the street. We could hear the pace of our boots on the cobblestones as we crossed the bridge and passed the shuttered stalls where the avenue turns into the station. The visit was disappearing in the sun. We hardly spoke. Perhaps we were realizing how Mary in Lourdes reasserts God's answer to the weakness of flesh and to the bats of hate and arrogance which flutter crazily through our consciousness; perhaps we were wondering whether this certainly gained in Lourdes would stand effectively, on another continent in another year, against the selfish whim, the risque sally, and the fourth martini; perhaps we were wondering if, indeed, vanity and impatience can be shed at Lourdes like the crutches that hang in the grotto

The train was in the station. In our compartment I realized that when the heart has felt even briefly the sureness of its purpose, the task of the mind is to remember. As the train sped back to Paris, I hoped I could remember.

Living History

By John Deasy, '48

IN recent years educators and those responsible for public opinion in this country seem to be placing more and more stress on the importance of American History, after many decades of subordinating it to more "practical" subjects.

This country is assuming increasing responsibility in international affairs and its citizens are becoming better versed in a world of subjects from nuclear physics to the problems of ethnical minorities. At the same time, however, first in school and later through the numerous channels of public information Americans have been, in too many instances, exposed only superficially to the fundamentals of their national heritage. In short, we, as a people, are gradually losing that practical working knowledge of our country's history which is so essential to a people which have undertaken to rule themselves.

However, it is not my purpose to denounce and condemn. I am attacking neither the established educational system nor the text books now in use. There is valuable utility here if it is properly employed. The danger lies not in what already exists but in allowing it to decay from lack of use.

The growing trend to discount the value of American History, while widespread, is fortunately, not universal. There are numerous counterforces at work, one of which is seldom considered. While some men have been discarding history books others have been building them, building books of stone and mortar, tile and glass, wood and bronze. I am referring to our National and State Historical Parks and Museums. Here

are pages of history that will endure as long as we are a free people. If only men would take time to visit and study the lessons enshrined at these places perhaps much of the Communistic agitation, misguided liberalism, and sectional intolerance rampant at the present time might be curbed.

Today men preach fanatical nationalism and race prejudice and find listeners among many of our people. Profound indeed is the lesson which those, who give credence to such doctrines, could learn by visiting those historical shrines which mark the carnage and desolation of another era when men allowed their reason to be blinded by sectionalism and racial controversies.

They should stand on Marye's Heights, behind Fredricksburg, and recall how waves of blue clad Irish boys were sacrificed on the Altar of Mars by an incompetent political general.

Such men should gaze on that grassy depression into whose gaping mouth one awful summer's morning charged thousands of doomed Northern soldiers in a vain attempt to break the Confederate lines at Petersburg, or stroll across the verdant Pennsylvania countryside where once the Confederacy reached its high water mark, and behold those awesome rows of somber cannon whose shells once rent and tore advancing ranks of grey until the bodies of the fallen carpeted the green slope.

Today, also, there are in our midst men who insidiously voice the word liberty while seeking to destroy its only safeguard. Any American deluded by these false prophets might well benefit by a visit to that majestic valley known in days gone by as the "Warpath of Nations". Perhaps wandering across the ramparts and through the halls of Fort Ticonderoga they might come to know the true meaning of liberty.

That place was well suited for its role in history. It is situated on a promontory at the foot of Lake Champlain, the great natural water route north and south. Here Champlain and his Algonquin allies put to rout the bravest warriors of the Five Nations; here Montcalm erected Fort Carillon and held firm as three times the Black Watch highlanders fought their way to the very crest of his earthworks and three times were driven back in disorder; here rang out the cry of Ethan Allen as he captured the fort in the name of "the Great Jehovah and the Continental Congress;" here Wayne's Continental regulars froze and starved while militiamen daily deserted to their homes; and through here Burgoyne advanced to that bitter defeat which smashed forever England's dream of a North American Empire.

Finally there is one more pilgrimage which should be undertaken by all those Americans who are blinded by foreign ideologies. North from Albany route U. S. 4 runs along the right bank of the Hudson River. At Schuylerville a sharp left turn and a short ascent brings one to the crest of a hill. The broad river, rolling fields, and wooded hills combine into an encircling panorama of remarkable beauty. Here stands a lofty shaft, built to preserve the memory of Saratoga. Few other monuments indeed exemplify such a rare combination of courage and pathos. It houses on three sides the statues of Schuyler, Gates and Morgan, but presents on the fourth, the south side facing West Point, the vacant niche, denied forever to Arnold, demonstrating to all the world the tragedy of treason.

The Effects of Studying the Greater Essayists

By Andrew G. Fortin, '49

MAN'S curiosity may be said to be the greatest factor of human development. This instinct is manifested at infancy, during childhood, adolescence, and maturity. Yet, one can never say that it is ever satisfied. During childhood, one utilizes the catechetical method of questions and answers and accepts Truth on faith. To him, the answers of adults are always satisfactory. Then, adolescence brings forth a fuller understanding of the realities of life and social behavior. At this point in life, the youth undergoes a vacillation between truth and falsity. For the first time in his life, he begins to entertain doubts about the answers to his questions and is thus inclined to hold biased suspicions of his teachers. Nevertheless, beneath these shadows of uncertainties, he more or less remains dormant. Finally, mental maturity bursts forth and his beliefs are shattered. The dawn of private and individualistic study rises. *Le premier pas* in the search for Truth begins.

At this time, the seeker after Truth is in college. During the first year of study, his Primary and Secondary Education is dissected and exposed, in most instances, to have been prejudiced, if not false. The shock of this announcement arouses his curious instinct, and he begins to seek a true conception of the wisdom of the "Elders".

After realizing that the past years have been but a dis-

torted and shallow perpetration of the "Great Thinkers", he begins his Sophomore year. Through the medium of his philosophical studies, he starts to analyse the world about him, and read the "Greater Essayists". The observations of these great men, he finds, are similar to the doubts which he has entertained. This sudden realization weighs him down "ut iniquae mentis asellus, cum gravius dorso subiit onus". However, this bafflement is but temporary as his essay readings progress.

During the course of reading and studying the essays of famous literary men, he familiarizes himself with those "Thinkers". The practicality of Seigneur De Montaigne, the keen analytical power and wisdom of Sir Francis Bacon, the subtle arguments of Jeremy Taylor, the humanity and humor of Oliver Goldsmith, the gentleness of Charles Lamb, and many others, acquaint him with the transient nature of things and the futility of a true and unbiased view of the Truth. These men thought, observed the phenomena of nature, asking themselves the very same questions concerning life, the world, the understanding of Truth. Still, they achieved unsatisfying results for themselves. His literary verve is subdued and his quest for knowledge assumes a slower and surer pace. The thoughts of these great observers of life become, as it were, his own and his perspective of the mysterious cosmos is clothed with a veil of satisfaction. The cloud of doubt passes; his learning activities become truly personal ones; his quest for literary achievement, motivated to a greater extent, is a positive one.

The inquisitiveness of men is thus temporarily appeased. Idealism secedes to realism, that is, man's dreams of ever finding the Truth yields to the stronger force, which is an acceptance of Truth as it stands.

Critique

By M. R. K.

ALMOST any sensible housebreaker, when asked what his prospective "clients" could do to render his profession easier and safer, would not hesitate long to suggest leaving a few windows and doors conveniently unlocked. After all, if it be a practical housebreaker to whom the question is put, he will know his business and he will know what is good for his particular trade.

Generally speaking, however, most people hold a rather small amount of respect for those who have taken up such a pursuit as their life's work. Along with thieves, second-story men, burglars, and others of his genus, the housebreaker finds himself considered as not the best possible company for ordinary folks to keep. Further, the vast majority of citizens seems extremely hesitant to aid him for the seemingly practical reason that, in most cases, housebreakers have a habit of ending their visits by hauling off such valuables as silverware, jewelry, furs, and, occasionally, money.

So great, indeed, is this disregard for thieves as a group and as individuals that several bits of legislation have been passed with the specific purpose in mind that they shall be discouraged and prevented from plying their trade. A mere perusal of a few samples of such legal restrictions will make it obvious that those who passed such laws had little or no regard for the feelings of those with itchy fingers.

Now that is how the public feels and acts toward a specific set of criminals or undesirables. There seems to be little doubt upon society's part that the view and the action taken are eminently justified. Thus, even though a minute section of society objects and attempts to evade by any means it can the censure and injunction of popular opinion, laws have been passed and on the whole rigorously enforced denying this section of society the right to pursue its aims and objectives.

This may seem to have amounted, thus far, to a somewhat ridiculous statement (for all its obvious dignity) of something very trite and very uninteresting. If it is trite and uninteresting, this is so precisely because very little argument or opinion shows up in any discussion of the justice to be found in the public attitude toward the particular type of criminal discussed so far. Nothing seems so utterly worthless as to discuss things which do not involve opinion or argument; at least in most cases.

But, if there be so much unanimity of regard in the matter of thievery, such unanimity does not seem to lend itself towards all types of criminal activity. There are some criminals whose aim is to remove something quite a bit more precious than silverware, jewelry, or even money. Yet, these particular thieves, do not enjoy public censure quite as effectively as their activities would seem to wont. In fact their activities are not always understood as criminal nor are they themselves unanimously viewed as warranting the classification of outlaws.

The aim of this is to show that those with whom these words are concerned are indeed criminals; that they are more to be censured than the general run of public enemies since what they would take is infinitely more precious than all other possessions; and that consequently it is in the public weal to restrain them at least as much as in the case of their lesser brethren. It

is also to show that under the present order what is denied to housebreakers is given to these more dangerous criminals, i. e. aid and comfort in the pursuit of their racket.

Now, the object of theft in this case is nothing else but the individual liberty of Americans and the very thing which is sought provides the thieves with the means to take it. Thus, in this society, those who would take away the liberty of individuals possess the very freedom to do so. They demand of Americans their right to freedom and with it they proceed to undermine the liberty of others. While in the process of taking away their particular "swag" they stand forth as champions of freedom, vociferously clamoring for its preservation and extension to others of their ilk.

In the forefront of every move to bring democracy to "unenlightened" lands and peoples, these prospective larceners of liberty will be found. Humanitarian, liberal, progressive are some of the names or aliases which they assume to hide the fact that they are in truth only servants of a ruthless group the tentacles of which reach into every fibre of society in this and other lands.

There is one name by which they are generally known but that name is avoided like the plague precisely because it is the one name by which they are known in their true nature and purpose. The name "communist" conveys unpleasant and objectionable associations in the minds of Americans just as the name "housebreaker" both names and describes criminals of that type.

But aside from avoiding the label of "communist" for social reasons, there is an even more practical reason why it is helpful to their cause to have some who are not known as members of the party. Those who can avoid the name can act freely

as an advance guard and as protectors for the comrades. It is most advantageous to have certain respectable groups passing resolutions and working for the party without the damaging stigma of "communism" attached. Thus it is very much to communism's advantage to have representatives "incognito" in strategic positions so that influence can be exerted to guarantee continuation of freedom for communists and their fellow-travelers. Wouldn't the housebreaker appreciate having a friend on the police commission or in the judiciary?

It can be seen from this that the task of extending the laws against theft or conspiracy to cover communists poses serious problems, which may be one of the very reasons why it has not been done. Obviously, when great difficulty is encountered in identifying the public enemies here discussed, society does have a bit of a job on its hands to protect itself. Then, too, there is the fact that as yet no actual theft has occurred. Usually, the law requires concrete evidence of theft, preferably that offered when the criminal is caught with the thing stolen.

Despite all these difficulties, however, it would seem that the extraordinary worth of the thing to be protected would warrant some similarly extraordinary action upon the part of the public. If the individual liberty of Americans is threatened by some who use that very liberty to accomplish that very end, then, the only adequate measure in sight would appear to be the restriction of their freedom. The case of the housebreaker has been answered with logic and agility by the public. Why cannot this problem of the communists prompt similar common sense thought and action?