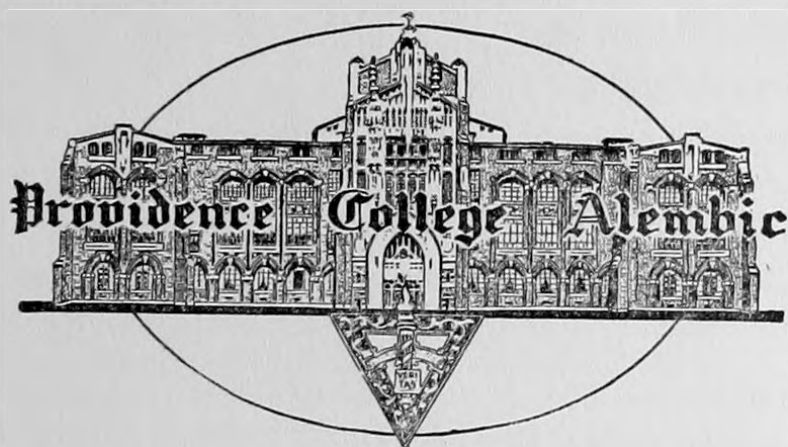


THE ALEMBIC



JANUARY, 1950

THE ALEMBIC



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

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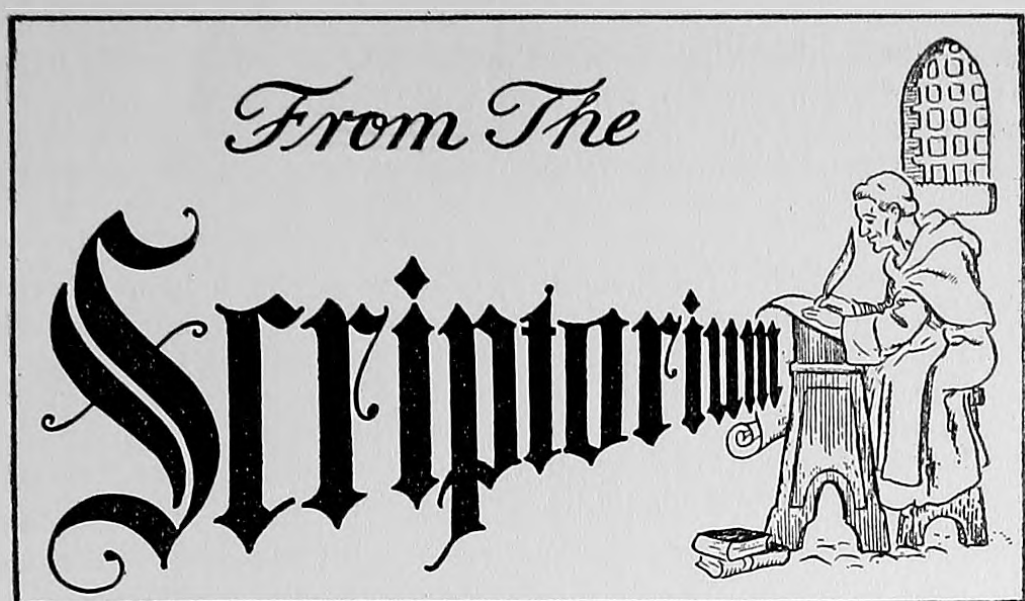
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O. S. P.

HOW fortunate we American college students are, we shall perhaps never know. It is difficult at best to attempt to evaluate the extraordinary circumstances under which we study and pursue our college careers. Yet, I believe it can be said without reservation, the average American student enjoys educational luxuries and unbounded opportunities for mental betterment the like of which can be found nowhere else in this world. It is indeed unfortunate that the advantages enjoyed by us in this country are not a universal milieu of educational environment.

Yet the search for Truth cannot be restricted to the limited confines of our nation for it is the duty of all men, the whole world over, to search out the Truth, to grasp the fundamental principles of morality and justice and to use the fruits of their knowledge to realize a better world. However, the constant refusal of men to embrace and understand the real conformity between a thing and the intellect has resulted in an adulterated version of Truth and has been the main cause for the materialistic state of chaos the world is in today.

Two World Wars have devastated Europe, the heretofore recognized seat of world culture and scholastic thought. The effects of these wars have spread over the face of the globe and permeated the very hearts of men with a lethargic spirit and a dullness of mind which has become fertile ground for the planting of the seeds of atheistic commu-

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nism. Evil flourishes where men no longer think or are no longer free to use the God-given faculties which are their birthright. Yet these conditions are today existent in one of the major countries of the world and threaten to spread throughout the whole of the European continent.

We can, here in this country, to some extent, help to alleviate the trying conditions which plague the students of foreign lands. We can do this through the medium of the Overseas Service Program more popularly referred to as the O. S. P. This program is conducted by the Catholic College Students of America through their national organization, the National Federation of Catholic College Students. The work is certainly laudable; it certainly deserves our support.

The O. S. P. works on a simple theory. Before the ravaged countries of Europe and Asia can be reclaimed to their rightful place in the community of nations, their youth must be educated to forget the ideologies of hate taught to them by their former leaders. The memories of war and destruction, starvation and disease must be eradicated by showing the youth of these countries that there is, after all, something left to live for; that Charity and Love have not vanished throughout the world; that God in His Mercy has not forgotten their plight but holds their situation only as a means to His Divine Ends.

But the way to the Truth must be achieved by practical means. The O. S. P. affords these means. It offers food and clothing to those students who are without. It sends medicine and clinical equipment to care for the ravaged bodies. It provides hostels where the student may find the warmth of a heated room or the luxury of a small library. It offers rest center facilities. In short the O. S. P. gives to the foreign youth a portion of those things which we have become so accustomed to that we take them for granted. It prepares him mentally to receive the knowledge which might be otherwise denied to him.

One of the outstanding works of the O. S. P. is that which deals with displaced students in the United States. It supports them in American Colleges so that they may return to their native lands with the wealth of education and knowledge we have to offer. The O. S. P. has coordinated with C.A.R.E. to send individual packages and to inaugurate a book program to rebuild demolished libraries.

From the Scriptorium

This then, is the program which is offered to you. Here at Providence College we have an active part in the Overseas Service Program through the work of our Student Congress. The Staff of the ALEMBIC asks that the entire student body support this campaign. It is in keeping with all that the ALEMBIC stands for. Its goal is that of our College—Veritas.

In the words of Pope Pius XII, words especially applicable in the Charity of this Holy Year, "The material aid which your efforts and sacrifices have made available will be of valuable assistance to the students who benefit thereby; but more valuable will be the encouragement which they will derive from the knowledge that in their difficulties and privations they can count on the moral support and sympathetic understanding of the Catholic College Students of America."

W. B. H.

It is not easy to lay down the reins. It has been a pleasure to help guide the destinies of the ALEMBIC through the last year. It has been a responsibility and an honor of which I often did not feel worthy. I wish to express my gratitude to my contemporaries on the ALEMBIC for the fine manner in which they have joined with me in our attempt to make our Literary Quarterly a fitting testimonial to the ideals of our College. To those who come after, I can say only this; the trust is a great one — it is a task which will admit of no selfishness. But the rewards are multitudinous. I am grateful to have shared in them.

The printed word may well outlast us all. Even in this, the humble student's effort, let that printed word always reflect the Truth.

W. B. H.

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

La Giuliana

By RAYMOND D'AMBROSIO, '51

ON a frosty morning in the middle of November, Cesare Di Lucca left his home in Tiara for the castle of Giuliano in Savento. The mink collar on his jacket warmly encircling his neck, keeping the cold fingers of the wind from touching him, Cesare, astride his steed, Bella, went along in a meditative mood, not noticing the road or the grey autumn skies, or the dull-colored countryside. And, so deeply in thought was he, that he would have missed the bridge at Guiarri and plunged into the icy waters, had not a washer-woman shouted warning to him. Pulling up the reins of Bella sharply, he swore at his horse; and for the rest of the journey Cesare did not take his eyes from the road a moment.

He arrived at the walls of the city of Savento just as the large bells in the campanile of the church of Santa Maria della Consolazione were sounding the mid-day call to prayer. Cesare, thinking of the difficult mission that had brought him to Savento, sighed slowly, deeply, a bit forlornly, stroking the long neck of his horse, "Ah, *Bella mia*, we are here. May the Virgin help us." With a prayer on his lips, he entered into the noise and turbulence of Savento.

His Nobility, Duke Francesco del Giuliano, was occupied at the moment, Messer D'Ercole, the Duke's acolyte, informed Cesare. If His Eminence had known that Messer Di Lucca had planned a trip to Savento, he would have granted the *signore* an audience. But, unfortunately, His Magnificence was in conference with His Signore, Count of Siena. If, Messer D'Ercole said, with a supercilious sniff, Messer Di Lucca wished to wait, the Duke would see him in his turn. So, Cesare replied only what he could reply: he would wait His

Eminence's pleasure. Returning the haughty bow of Messer D'Ercole, Cesare went over to a chair, sat down, and waited.

An hour passed; an hour of restive waiting. And Cesare, glancing around at the other gentlemen who awaited the Duke's call, decided that it would be many an hour before he would face the Duke. So, rising from his chair, he slowly walked out of the antechamber, wended his way through the drafty halls and passages of the castle to the garden. He hadn't intended to go to the garden; in fact, he hadn't even known where the garden was. But, he was thankful for coming unintentionally upon it. For, since it was a raw day, and the clay-colored heavens augured cold rain, the garden was deserted. And, after the confusion of the antechamber, Cesare was glad to have found this secluded spot.

He sat on a cold marble bench, amid the rimy garden, the color and beauty of the flowers and bushes faded and dead, bringing with them to their graves remembrances of warm summer nights and the love-meetings and the love-pained youths singing sweet, winsome ditties to their sweet, winsome lady-loves. But now, in the keen cold of the oncoming winter, all love was dead in the garden and the only singing now was the tuneless melody of the wind.

The death around him coupled with his failure to see the Duke depressed Cesare. He was sure that his journey to Savento was made in vain. He would never see Duke Giuliano. And, he was just about to rise and return to Tiara when through the damp, biting air wafted a laugh. At first, Cesare wasn't sure whether he had heard it or not. For now there was silence, except for the talkative wind. Then, once again, the soft yet audible gay laugh passed through the day. Cesare turned a few times to learn the direction from which the song-

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like laugh had flowed. Even though the wind tried to trick him, Cesare was positive that it glided from the room that was off the terrace above the garden. Slowly, unsure of himself, Cesare climbed the terrace steps to find out to whom the care-free intriguing laugh belonged. He walked under an arched doorway, and, when he stood outside the room, the laugh, no longer soft and distant, but clear and loud, having the beauty of a hymn, met his ears. Standing close to the slightly-open door of the room, Cesare peeked in. He could see a tall, white-haired, white-bearded painter, brush in hand, standing before an unfinished portrait; and a few feet from this man, in front of an orange-flamed fire, on a makeshift dais, majestically seated on a bowlegged chair, was a beautiful young woman, the origin of the laugh.

Cesare observed that the two seemed to be enjoying some secret joke. The old painter wore a smile and his young model found it difficult to keep her lips together as the painter enjoined her. For a long while Cesare watched them, fascinated by the painter's dexterous handling of his brush and the woman's unmarred beauty. He was equally fascinated by the old man's witticisms and the woman's playful talk. That they were so happy and trouble-free while he was so dejected seemed a bit unfair to Cesare.

The woman posed leisurely, her long black hair, parted in the middle, touching her shoulders with a silky warmth; falling carelessly, loosely about her arms and shoulders was a blue shawl, which she held in her lovely-formed, graceful hands, under her small breasts; and her small, slippered foot rested on a taboret. Her eyes were black, and when not studying her painter curiously, were wandering around the room. And, it was during one of these ocular wanderings that she saw Cesare's spying eyes. At the same moment, Cesare, noticing her

staring in his direction, moved a few inches away from the door.

"One moment, please, Maestro," she told the painter, rising from her chair and going over to the door, silencing the painter's protest by the lifting of her hand.

She threw open the door and saw a fearful Cesare staring at her, disbelieving that she stood before him.

"Well, Messere? What is it?" she asked abruptly. Cesare was too frightened to speak, to give an explanation for his spying. "Have you lost your tongue, old man? Why were you spying on me?" she demanded an answer.

"What is wrong, Madonna?" the aged painter queried from inside the room.

"Nothing, Maestro. I shall be in, in a minute. You, now," she addressed the trembling Cesare, "Speak! Do you hear! Speak! Or I'll have your tongue! Speak to save yourself!"

Her threatening words were all that was needed to frighten Cesare into speech. "Oh, oh, Madonna," he wailed, falling, although it pained him, to his knees, and outstretching his arms, "Forgive me! I did not mean to look in upon you. Forgive me! Forgive me!" he sobbed.

"Forgive you!" she shouted sternly, her raised voice drawing the painter to her side to see what was amiss. "Forgive you for spying on me in my private chambers. I'll have your life." And she said this with such frigid determination that Cesare was sure that she would have his miserable life.

"Oh," cried Cesare. He hadn't the slightest idea who she was. But, he surmised from her mien that she was some lady of the nobility who was capable of carrying out all her threats. "Madonna," he pleaded, "I meant no harm. I was only curious."

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"Do not impute your bad manners, your insolence to curiosity."

"Messere," Cesare turned to the painter, imploring, as if he, the painter, could convince the implacable lady that he meant no harm, "I beseech you, Your Eminence, Your Magnificence, please tell the most noble Madama I meant no harm. I was just sitting in the garden, sad and weary, when I heard a beautiful laugh, so gay and happy, that I wished to ascertain to whom this beautiful song, this joyous music belonged. Be merciful, Madonna; be merciful."

The old painter, discerning the mischievous glint in the woman's eyes, and realizing that she was merely teasing the man, said, "Madonna, perhaps the man meant no harm. It is no injustice for a man to be fascinated by the beautiful laugh of a beautiful young woman. If it were, the dungeons of Italy would be overflowing with men. Come, Madama, forgive the man and let him go. You'll get chilled out here and have to take to bed, and the completion of your portrait will be delayed."

The woman hesitated before speaking, looking from the placid face of the painter to the agitated, fear-riven face of the still kneeling Cesare. "All right, Messere. You are forgiven."

"Oh, *mille grazie*, Madonna." And in an ecstasy of gratitude, he grabbed her hand and impressed it with kisses of thanks.

"Enough! Enough!" she said, with mock irritability, removing her hand.

"Come, Madonna" the senile painter spoke, lightly placing his hand on her arm. "It is cold out here in this passageway."

She turned to enter; but suddenly stopped.

"Madonna," protested the painter, who was eager to get back to work.

"Just a moment more, Maestro. Tell me, Signore"—she spoke to Cesare—"what is your name?"

"Di Lucca. Cesare Di Lucca."

"Di Lucca," she repeated after him thoughtfully. Then taking another step, she once again turned to speak to Cesare. "Messer Di Luca, you're not of Savento?"

"No, Madama. From Tiara."

"Ah, Tiara. And are you by any chance acquainted with Messer Andrea Vervena?"

"I know him well. A fine young man."

"Indeed. Just from your knowing him, Messere, I would say that you are a rogue."

"Oh, no, Madonna. Not I. Believe me, I am—"

"I was merely teasing you, Messere," she assured him, to block the effusion of words that she knew was coming.

"Madonna," insisted the old man, "I will never finish the portrait."

"Grant one more minute."

The old man sighed powerlessly and nodded his head.

"Why did you come to Savento, Messer Di Lucca?"

"To see His Excellence, Duke Giuliano."

"Why?" questioned the woman, giving the painter a peculiar, expressive look which escaped Cesare.

"Madonna," the white-haired painter broke in, "if you intend to interrogate this man, I suggest that you invite him into your chamber where you may do so in comfort and warmth."

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Realizing that the old man's patience had worn thin, she decided not to petition for another second's delay for fear of angering him, and perhaps, by doing so, jeopardizing all chances of the portrait's ever being completed. So, she tendered the invitation to Cesare, who accepted timidly.

The fire was slowly losing its brilliance, so Cesare graciously offered to throw some fresh logs on the dying flames. Given new strength, the fire flared with the heat and vivacity of new life and tinted every object in the room pale orange. For the first time, Cesare glanced about the richly furnished room. There were handsomely carved and inlaid tables, and chairs of tapestry and velvet, and gold candelabra, and a dark arras, and a soft, thick Eastern rug, alive with deep colors and brilliant design.

"May I look upon your portrait, Madama?"

"By all means, do," she said, sitting down.

He walked over to the painting and studied it for a while. In this rococo day of great artists and their infamous imitators, Cesare's eyes were trained to distinguish the good from the bad, the professional from the amateur, the work of the student from the work of the master in all things. And this unfinished portrait of the woman was, beyond a doubt, the work of a master. "It is truly a beautiful painting. The work of a master," he praised, not seeing the hidden smile of the woman. "You are to be complimented, Messere," Cesare lauded. "It is a masterpiece. Why the eyes look real, as if any moment the delicate lids will fall over them. And the hands. Any minute, I'm sure, they will extend in greeting. And the coloring. The folds of the skirts. Exquisite. I'm sure," continued Cesare, "that the beauty and charm of Madama, so singularly captured in this portrait, will someday be renowned throughout Italy. Nay, the world."

"I think you to be a rogue after all, Signore," laughed the woman. "A rogue with pretty phrases." She poured some wine, and handed Cesare a golden goblet, flaming with the sweet liquor. As Cesare took the drink, his eye caught the gleam of the ring she wore on her finger. It was a square gold ring, intricately worked, with small, fire-rubies shaped into a blazing heart.

"It is a beautiful ring Madama is wearing," he complimented her.

"Thank you, Messere. I treasure it greatly. It is a love ring, you know. The only one of its kind in the world. A lover is supposed to give it to his sweetheart. My father gave it to my mother years ago; and before she passed away, she gave it to me. It never comes off my finger." Clenching her fist, she gazed down at the burning ring. "So, you see, it has great sentimental value for me."

Cesare nodded his head understandingly.

"Since you obviously are not in the mood for posing, Mona Isabella, I beg your leave to retire to my chambers."

"Will you not have a glass of wine, Maestro?"

"No, Madonna. I find it suits me to remain abstemious. If you will excuse me." He bowed slightly.

"Tomorrow, Messer da Vinci." And he was gone.

"Da Vinci, did you say, Madonna?" Cesare asked, sitting in a chair opposite her.

"Yes, Messere. Surely you've heard of the great Leonardo da Vinci? I am very fortunate to have him paint my portrait. He is a man of many affairs, with his art school in Firenze and his dealings with Cesare Borgia. I don't know how I ever got him to agree to come to Savento; but he is here, and I am glad. But, I fear that at any minute, he will leave and have one of his students finish my portrait. For that reason I must humor him."

"Leonardo da Vinci!" exclaimed Cesare, in a tone filled with awe. "I—I had no idea who he was. I must offer him my most abject apology for speaking to him so brusquely, so rudely." (Cesare had spoken to him neither brusquely nor rudely.) "*Santa Maria benedetta*," he swore, hitting his forehead with the palm of his hand, "and I, lowly I, called him great. What an affront!" Then, after a moment, "To think that I have spoken to Leonardo da Vinci! How proud I am! How—" He stopped in the middle of his speech because it entered Cesare's mind that perhaps he should be in awe of this woman, too, that perhaps she was some great *signora*.

As if reading his thoughts, the woman suddenly said, "Allow me to introduce myself. I am Signora Isabella Anton Maria de' Conti, a very close and old friend of Duchess Giuliano, with whom I am spending the winter."

"Ah, the Duchess Giuliano. Although I have never set eyes upon her, I would venture to say, from what I have heard, that she is a great woman."

The woman chuckled. "Some say so, Messere." Leaning forward in her chair, she said, "Now, tell me, why do you wish to see the Duke?"

"Ah, Madonna," Cesare began, suddenly crestfallen. "I might as well tell you, for I shall never tell the Duke." He emptied his wine goblet, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, placed the goblet on the table beside him, then started. "I have a son, Serafino. A most brilliant youth. This is no paternal boast. Ask anyone in Tiara who is the most intelligent youth in that city, and he will answer without a second's hesitation: Serafino Di Lucca."

"You must be proud of him."

"I am," Cesare said with little enthusiasm.

"Does he attend a university?"

"Ah, Madonna, he does," Cesare told her, nodding his head wearily. "He attends the university at Padua. And it is for that reason that I have worries."

"Worries, Messere?" she said curiously. "What worries?"

"My son does little studying. He has gotten in with a most wicked group of rascals. And, instead of spending his time in study, he and his fellow libertines go wenching and gambling and fighting, till now there is not a single shop nor man in Padua to whom he does not owe money. I know all this, because now, this infamous reveler has written me a letter telling me of all his dastardly cavortings and carousing; and also telling me that if he doesn't have a certain exorbitant sum of money to pay his creditors, he will be thrown into the nearest dungeon. And sometimes I think that is where he belongs."

"Per Dio, no, Messere. He is your son."

"Yes, he is my son. But he is also an idler, a squanderer, a reveler. But," and he shrugged his shoulders as if there was nothing he could do about it now, and there wasn't, "he is still my son. Now, Madonna, I am a man of modest means, who, like so many I might add, makes an ostentatious show before others of having a great deal, while possessing merely a small part of what people believe I have. In simple words, I have not the money to send to my son."

"So you've come to Duke Giuliano to ask for a loan," she finished for him.

"You know, Madonna. And—and do you think that, if by some good fortune, I am admitted to the Duke's room, he might liberally grant my request?"

She knew he waited for a word of encouragement; but

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she could not utter the word, for she was well-acquainted with Duke Giuliano. "The most munificent Duke Giuliano is a peculiar man. While he has wealth, he is most wary that this wealth does not leave his treasury too often and for no apparently good reason. Now, if your son were the son of a Count, he might, for the sake of Savento, draw from the ducal treasury the amount of gold requisite to save your son. But, since you have no title, and since you come from Tiara, a city in the dukedom where Duke Giuliano is little-liked, I fear that the Duke will not look upon your request with any favor."

"I thought as much." Cesare shook his head dispiritedly.

"Why do you not go to the money-lenders?"

"To those usurious *things*? They would have my heart in payment of the loan."

"Surely you have friends who would willingly make you a loan?"

"I have, Madonna. But I have pride. Rather than have one of them know the financial straits that I am in and the profligate son I have sired, I would see myself in a dungeon alongside Serafino."

"Then," she predicted darkly, "I see no hope of saving your son."

"You are right. As I rode toward Savento, I knew I would fail. Even when I asked Messer Vervena, who, Madonna, you say you know, to write a letter for me, pleading my request to the Duke, I knew I would fail."

"So, Signor Vervena has written a letter for you," she said with interest.

"Yes. He is a good friend of the Duke and Duchess. In fact, their Highnesses spent a month in Savento last summer as guests of Messer Vervena."

"May I see the letter?"

"Of course." And Cesare reached into his shirt, pulled out the letter and handed it to her.

The red and gold seal of Vervena glared up at her from the paper. "I will not break the seal."

Cesare looked long at the woman until she asked, "What is wrong, Messere? Why do you look at me so strangely?"

Stroking his fleshy chin with a long, bony finger, he said, "My friend Messer Andrea entrusted me with another letter."

"For whom?"

Cesare hesitated before telling her. Could he trust her? Messer Vervena had enjoined him to be very cautious in this business. For, after all, in a day of cabals and unexplainable murders, an unguarded word even to an outwardly innocent-looking woman might cause untold trouble. But, Cesare liked the woman; and so he told her, "For the Duchess Giuliano."

"Oh," she murmured, raising one eyebrow.

"He told me to give her the letter, if I should see her. But, I can't even see the Duke. So, since you are a close friend of the Duchess, I was wondering if—"

"Of course, Signor Di Lucca. I should be glad to give it to Her Highness."

"Ah," Cesare sighed. With great relief he handed her the letter. And he was glad to be rid of it.

"And, now, Messere, here is your letter to the Duke." She returned it to him; and his ears detected the suppressed excitement in her voice, as if she had suddenly made a startling discovery. "Return to the antechamber of the Duke's apartment. And wait."

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"But, Madonna, it is useless. I am sure that that stupid Messer D'Ercole will never announce me. Anyway, there are too many people waiting."

"Do not despair." She was out of her chair and helping him to his feet. "Do as I say. All will turn out well."

"But, Madonna," Cesare protested.

Shaking her head with annoyance, she commanded, "Go back and wait. *A rivederci*." And, with a firm push of her hand, she assisted him in leaving.

The antechamber was less crowded than at Cesare's first entrance. He took a seat and waited, although he thought it foolish. The door to the Duke's apartment opened and a man came out and Messer D'Ercole slipped in to give the name of another caller, whose name would not be Cesare Di Lucca of Tiara.

Many minutes passed, and Cesare was just about to get up to leave, when the door opened again and Messer D'Ercole minced out.

"Messer Cesare Di Lucca of Tiara," he announced, in an oleaginous tone.

Cesare's mouth fell open, and for a moment his legs were rendered useless. Finally, feeling all eyes on him, he walked across the marble floor to Messer D'Ercole.

"His Highness will see you now, Messere."

"Thank you," Cesare murmured. He entered the apartment, Messer D'Ercole closing the door behind him with a haughty bang.

The Duke was alone and he greeted Cesare most amiably, as if he had known the man from Tiara all his life. Being greeted with such a show of friendliness, quashed all of Cesare's fears, so that he didn't lose a moment in putting his request before the Duke, who surprised Cesare into speech-

lessness by immediately, without asking him any questions and without Cesare's having to show him the letter from Messer Vervena, by giving, not lending, him the necessary coin to save Serafino from the dungeons. Cesare, as usual, was lavish with his thanks. He called the Duke Magnificent and Illustrious, Seat of Erudition, Light of Italy, Matrix of Magnanimity. And, he would have gone on all day with these expensive epithets had not the Duke cut him short by clapping his hands for Messer D'Ercole.

Half dazed and half disbelieving that he had seen the Duke, and that in a pouch around his belt was the money which the Duke had instructed Messer D'Ercole to give to him, the inexpressibly happy Cesare walked into the darkening day. The biting air of the coming evening pinched his face like needles, awakening him from his dream of disbelief. At a brisk gait, he walked toward his horse, Bella, who was in readiness for the return to Tiara.

Cesare mounted Bella, left the courtyard and made his way out of the city. And, on a hill, a short distance from the city, he rested for a second. Looking back, he could see a miniature Savento, slowly being enveloped by the cold evening. Like a sigh, the music of the bells of Santa Maria della Consolazione sounding the Angelus, flowed across the frosted countryside.

As he turned back to the road, Cesare was startled to find his way blocked by a woman, wrapped in soft, brown furs and mounted side-saddle on a brown horse. Cesare would have had more fear of being robbed if the rider had not been a woman and if she hadn't been apparently unaccompanied. Yet, he braced himself for any surprise attack by her probably hidden confederates.

"What is it, Madama?" he asked.

"Are you Messer Cesare Di Lucca of Tiara?"

"Yes. I am he."

"Then here," she said, slipping a ring from her finger and offering it to him. "I was told to give it to you."

Bewilderedly, Cesare moved Bella toward the rider and took the ring, which he examined for a moment. It was a square gold ring, intricately worked, with small, fire-rubies shaped into a blazing heart. It was the same ring that he had seen on the finger of the woman with whom he had spent the afternoon.

"You are to give that ring to Messer Andrea Vervena of Tiara along with this letter."

Taking the letter which she held before him, Cesare asked, "But—but whom shall I say made him such a priceless gift as this?"

"Tell him the receiver of his letter." And like a ghost, which Cesare thought she was, she was gone.

"The receiver of his letter," Cesare mumbled to himself, frowning. "The receiver of his letter was Duchess Giuliano. But, the ring was on the finger of the other woman. She said it was the only one of its kind in the world. Could it be—" And it suddenly came upon Cesare, with force and surprise and pleasure, that he had been talking to the Duchess Giuliano that afternoon. That she had concealed her identity as a sort of prank which she alone could enjoy. It had been she who had interceded with the Duke in his behalf. She was truly a great woman. And he would repay her kindness to him by carrying the ring and letter to Andrea Vervena. You see, it did not take Cesare's old but romantic mind long to put two and two together and get the correct number.

Touching Bella's tender sides gently with his foot, Cesare said, joyously, "Home, *Bella mia*. Home."

When We Were Young

By CLIFFORD J. BROTT, '50

When we were young and carefree gay
And the world was rich with treasure,
We loved; And our sweet happiness
Surpassed the mean of finite measure.

But ends the day and evening falls
And oft, with darkness, fright;
With twilight waned our once-great love
To nothingness with night.

Now weep I in the wee small hours,
For a great love have I lost.
My scope of life is circumscribed
With a sorrow that meanness cost.

Midwinter Night Enchantment

By HAROLD E. VAYO, JR. '51

THERE is nothing more pleasurable on a cold, blustery, winter night than to sit before a blazing hearth and gaze contemplatively into the dancing flames as they lick and curl hungrily about a crackling pine log. The radiant heat of the fire fills the room and penetrates one's very soul with a warmth not unlike that of a bottle of old wine opened in the company of friends. But even as ancient vintage must be taken on an empty stomach and sipped slowly, ever so slowly, in order that the maximum enjoyment may be derived from it, so also must certain requirements be observed to insure an equally delightful evening at the fireside, rich in congenial reminiscences and enchanting reveries.

First of all the kindling must be selected. Ideally it consists of several pine boughs with the cones still attached and a few strips of birch bark. In the absence of one, the other may be used; on no account is the use of crushed newspaper permissible, for it will permeate the room with a most distasteful odor and make it, for all practical purposes, uninhabitable. The next step to be considered is the choice of a log. It should be of pine, twelve to fifteen inches in diameter, and about three inches shorter than the width of the fireplace. The presence of a few knots on its surface is desirable, although not imperative. The wood itself should be neither green nor dry, but at the stage when the bubbles of sap have become as thick as home-made taffy. Then comes the task of placing the materials in their proper positions. The kindling is arranged on the grate to form a cradle for the log, which is placed about

six inches from the backwall. Now all is prepared for the ritual of lighting the fire. This is performed on both knees, immediately in front of the hearth. The match is lit, with care taken that the acrid sulphur fumes go up the flue, and is applied to the birch bark. A lively crackling announces that the match has performed its appointed duty. The fire has caught.

At once the arduous preparations are forgotten and the fireside easy-chair graciously accepts its burden. The room is in utter darkness except for the flickering tongues of flame and the red glow from the embers. It cast weird fantasmic shadows upon the walls, the ceiling, and the floor. Here is a witch, with peaked hat and broomstick, riding on some eerie, nocturnal mission; there, a knight in full battle array awaiting his charger. The subtle fragrance of the forest fills the air and lulls the mind into that passive state in which it is most receptive to the offerings of the memory and the imagination. Visions of long-ago days begin to take form: the tender smiles of absent loved ones, a ramble through a woodland in autumn, a childhood visit to Grandma's house on Christmas Day.

Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the flame lowers, flickers feebly, and loses itself among the glowing coals. The mind reluctantly wends its way onward through the long, winding road back to reality: the dying fire, the cozy room, the lateness of the hour. Outside, a howling gale, herald of the coming of a furious blizzard, whips the falling snow into a frenzied swirl and defies any creature to venture forth into its turbulent realm.

The fire is out. As total darkness closes in, a voice from the head of the stairs whispers softly to come up soon, for it is long after bedtime.

Singsong of Futility

By CHARLES F. WOOLEY, '50

GEORGE STALLCUP was drunk. Not roaring, raving, drunk — but as was his habit — inconspicuously drunk. He'd been drunk now for two days; a grayish stubble covered his face; and the once carefully blocked Stetson failed to hide his disarranged hair.

He was sitting on the rather worn stairs of a cheap rooming house, and the two seemed to complement each other — worn, tired, indifferent. His hat was pushed back on his head; beneath his feet lay a crumpled newspaper. In a fumbling way, he cleaned his fingernails with a toothpick. An ugly, cumbersome moving van lumbered by, calling a temporary halt to stickball game; yet both these incidents failed to attract his attention. Above him, a radio blared unnoticed, and nearby a kimonoed figure shook out a dust mop, filling the air with flecks of apartment discard.

Through a process of monetary suicide, he had reached a state of semi-sobriety. Furthermore, he had destroyed his credit and member-in-good-standing status at a number of local establishments. Slowly, almost sluggishly, he arose, stood up, and stretched — hitched his pants, straightened out his hat, and stepped gingerly down the stairs. When he reached the sidewalk, he gazed momentarily at the stickball game, seemed dissatisfied with what he saw, and headed for the river.

He walked through a world of reality, yet he seemed removed from it; honking horns, screeching brakes, calls of the vendors failed to penetrate his shell; he was no receptor

for the stimuli surrounding him. The people were a sea around him, and he was a cork that bobbed from crest to crest. At the river, he sought out a deserted dock—walked its entire length, and sat in a manner of a small boy at its edge—feet dangling, eyes seeking to pierce the murky, moving water. The breeze penetrated the alcoholic webs in his brain, and removed them in a nauseating way.

But within him was not the depth and solitude of the river—within him was the cold fear and the bitter hatred of return. Return to where he was no one, not a person, just a number. Return, and his mind convulsed, and vomited forth reasons for not returning—reasons he knew he couldn't listen to. Return—to

The steady pulse of whirring belts, mashing gears, irresolute machinery. The heat inside added to the heat from outside; sweat carrying grime to all corners of the body. The absence of laughter, and in the older men, the shuffling feet and glazed-over eyes, as if there were no sense hurrying and nothing much new to see. The ridiculous arguments during time off; the tightness with which narrow-minded men hold onto the slightest knowledge which they possess, as if its sharing were a personal injury and loss. The way the clock lazes when watched and how it runs rampant when you're kept busy. The taste a man acquires when his enjoyment is measured by his spending potentiality in a commercial world. The examples to every kid who wishes he could quit school and make money—self confessed penitents along this line, whose ability revolves, rises and sets around a minute job, or series of such jobs

How long have you been here? Or to phrase it differently, how many time cards have you punched, how many grimy lunches have you eaten? Do your days seem like notes in

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the endless singsong of futility? Or the human side of things; how many mouths does your pay check fill, how many bodies does it clothe? Whose fault was it that you left school in the sixth grade? — the things that you'll never find in books, because the people who know them don't write books

He flipped the bottle-cap he'd been toying with into the water, spat reflectively after it, and got slowly to his feet. He squinted into the sun, as a gull swept low with a frigid curiosity that only a gull can display. After a parting glance across the water, he started back. The walk was longer than he had realized, and all at once an unexplainable weariness overcame him — after fumbling in a pocket lined with flecks of tobacco, he found a forgotten dime, and eyed the nearby "El". Rather slowly he went through the motions of climbing the long stairs and as he did, he pictured himself a gallant, tragic figure, mounting the gallows' steps—facing death with a sneer playing at his lips, eyes afire with an eternity view, hands clenched at his side, the sun on his noble brow. And somehow it gave him the needed strength, the help to return.

Additions and Promotions

Charles F. Wooley, '50, Raymond D'Ambrosio, '51, John J. Slain, '51 and Paul Flanigan '53, who are all good, clean-cut American students with a flair for pounding typewriter keys, have caused the Oxford Press to reset their type for the page which contains the list of the Staff. We are all sure that this temporary inconvenience to the printer will result in unlimited benefits to the ALEMBIC.

Charlie Wooley has become one of our Associate Editors. All hail and praise, Charlie. There are never too many rungs on the ladder for men of your ability.

D'Ambrosio, Slain and Flanigan have earned their appointments to the Literary Board by reason of the quality of their work and their expressed interest in the literary destinies of the College Quarterly.

'Tis Adieu That I Must Bid Thee

By CLIFFORD J. BROTT, '50

'Tis adieu that I must bid thee
For the evening, love, is o'er.
Too slowly comes the morning sun
When I can gaze upon thee more.

It has been a happy evening.
Now the tower bells do chime,
Arousing echoes in my heart
Filled with love of thee, sublime.

So adieu it is I bid thee
Till the morning bells sound clear;
Adieu it is I bid thee,
But first, a last sweet kiss, my dear.

Blakesmoor Today

By WILLIAM H. PLUMMER, '51

I had occasion to visit Blakesmoor several weeks ago and found it much the same, although no longer deserted, as it was in the time of Mrs. Battle. You may remember that the then master hesitated to change anything in the house out of respect to Mrs. Battle, an old servant who preferred it as her residence and had been allowed to become mistress in all but name of that desmesne. Charles Lamb, who was in some way related to her, often visited Blakesmoor and it is to those visits we owe his description of the house as it was then. When the housekeeper died there seemed no reason to continue the expense of its upkeep and the mansion was demolished. Mr. Lamb returning to the site afterwards and finding no trace of former glories wondered *How shall they build it up again?* He could not know the future.

It is general knowledge that a younger son emigrated to America and one of his descendants amassed a considerable fortune by speculating . . . in railways, I believe. Being somewhat interested in antiquities, as so many Americans are, that wealthy man determined to rebuild his ancestral home, of which he had heard much, and restore it to its original appearance. For this purpose an architect was engaged and, thanks to Mr. Lamb's graphic description and some inventories of furnishings found among lawyers' papers, the result is as nearly perfect as it is possible for it to be.

But however perfect the restoration, something is changed. The effect is not that of an English country house. It may have been owing to the grayness of the afternoon but

as I approached the house I found myself thinking "Dampard." Even the woods took on an un-English (I so nearly said un-American) appearance and the trees tossed by the furious wind were those of the forests of France,

"Curtseying to each other as though Louis XIV were still King."

What I saw was as unreal as if Lyonesse or some submerged abbey had risen from the waters. I later learned that this "French look" was not all my imagination. The architect commissioned to rebuild Blakesmoor was of that famous partnership so much influenced by the romantic revival in its French manifestations that everything they did was, however subtly, gallicized. Thus in a museum one discerns in each portrait the nation, not of the subject but of the painter.

Even the gate at the entrance to the grounds, brought from Italy in the 17th century and closed for two hundred years—though the family had been cautious in politics this gate has not been opened since Culloden—seemed nothing more than a stage prop. The English garden, the formal garden, and the kitchen garden, the latter in front of the house, in what is considered the true medieval fashion, instead of in back, added the final touch to the eclectic perfection of the restored mansion.

The interior is much the same as it was but the twelve Caesars are no longer in the hall. When it was not possible to find the originals, the architect, having a prejudice against the work done in Carrara, preferred to leave that detail unfinished. The great window is back in place, however, except for the fifth panel which could not be repurchased (the modern replica is so perfect as to be undiscernible unless one's attention is called to it) and looking at the multicolored escutcheons emblazoned there I imagined a pageantry of succession and

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honor which would have surprised the bluff squires who figured in it.

Bluff squires. Country gentlemen tending their acres and directing their tenants, respecting God and the King. Perhaps that explains the sense of unreality produced by Blakesmoor today. For where now are tenants and acres? That building, however perfect in detail, no longer serves the purpose for which it was built. What was once the center of the country is now a shell, the toy of someone whose fortune rather than depending on crops and lands is invested in distant cities. That house which originally had its roots deep in the soil of the countryside is no longer the sturdy tree which once flourished there but an exquisite flower living in an artificial atmosphere created especially for it. Perhaps it is not possible to rebuild an ancestral house. *For it is not the past but someone's dream of it which is embodied.*

"Some violent bitterman, some powerful man
Called architect and artist in, that they,
Bitter and violent men, might rear in stone
The sweetness that all longed for night and day,
The gentleness none there had ever known;"—

Yates—"Sailing to Byzantine"

It is said that the grandson who will inherit the estate has intimated he will not maintain it. Whether it will be razed again or given over to some other purpose remains to be seen.

So Christian 'Tis That I Will Be

By CLIFFORD J. BROTT, '50

“Too late, I weep the tears of sad lament
While shreds of life ill-spent around me fall.
Too late, I think of deeds I've done
Which sad to me lie past recall,”
The pagan says;
While says the Christian in his faith,
“Tho deeds of ill I've done,
My Lord forgives if I but ask
For grace divine from God or Son.
So Christian 'tis that I will be
For the wise men say 'tis wise
To live a life of love divine
Where greatest beauty lies.”

The Greek Wheel

By JOHN J. SLAIN, '51

IT'S a funny thing about going to a new post—it never seems as good as the one you just left. Either it's too spit and polish, or it goes the other way and you think to yourself 'Migawd! do these people think they're soldiering?' Or something's wrong. The food, the officers, the billets, the special services, or maybe the men—in fact, it's usually the men. The new platoon they give you isn't ever quite as good as your last one.

"Well I've been in ten and a half years now including that first hitch . . . I'm getting ahead of myself."

The staff broke off for a moment as if to order his thoughts and get his story down. The three of us, Thatcher, Grace and I sitting on the bunk across the room facing him, gathered as we often did of an evening for talk. We sat back on the bunk, our backs against the wall, poured ourselves drinks and waited.

You know, soldiering has its peculiarities like any business, and story telling is about the most ingrained quality of an old soldier. Take the average R. A. man and give him a night off and watch him. Five to seven he'll pull a bottle out of the bottom of his duffle, lean back on his bunk and tell you about the Armistice Day back in '33 when he stood at attention two hours in the rain, or about how he had a platoon once that could execute five to the rear marches hand running, and never lose a step.

What? Doesn't he ever talk about combat? No, not often, because fighting and soldiering are different things. Your old army man regards war as a hazard of the profession and figures one or possibly two are apt to happen during his thirty

years. But he doesn't regard his regular work as fighting any more than a coal miner regards his as digging his way out of cave-ins. Your old soldier knows the normal routine of his trade as standing retreat, standing parades, drilling—and story telling.

That's why Thatcher, Grace and I got interested when the staff stopped and seemed to be gathering the loose ends of his story together. When a soldier sits down for a bull session and stops to get his yarn lined up, you can figure it's apt to be good.

The staff sat there and hooked one foot over the other knee. He sat there for a while looking down at his shoe . . . after about a minute he looked at us one by one. We waited him out. Finally he began to tell us this story just the way I'm telling it to you.

"Grace", he asked quietly, "how long have I been in?"

Grace, who was battalion personnel sergeant, thought for a second. Finally,—“Nine years, rising ten . . . that's right isn't it?”

The staff grinned. “That's what's on your records. Actually, I've been in ten and a half, counting the first time.”

Grace asked, quiet and careful, “What first time? It isn't on the records”.

The staff grinned again sort of wryly.

“No,” he said, “it isn't . . .”

“It was back in '30 when I signed up for my first hitch. I was a kid, right off the farm in the city to make my fortune—and in '30 it wasn't to be made. So I joined up—as simple as that.

“They shipped me to Panama, Coast Artillery. The 771st Battalion, Able Battery. It was a rough and hard life, full of hard adjustments and difficult things but I was doing

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all right for a while, right up until the day Grantman shipped into the outfit.

"I can remember the first time as if it was yesterday. It was a Wednesday afternoon which, of course, was free time in the old army and I was lying on my bunk. The heat was so bad you could taste it. You kick about the heat at Blanding, or Knox or Benning. Why, that summer in the Canal Zone was like a bottom rung on the ladder to hell. And remember I was a kid fresh off a farm in Vermont, and I wasn't used to that kind of weather. So I was lying there alone wondering if I was going to last the day out when he walked into the barracks carrying his duffle.

"He was a big man, tall and heavy. Tall and heavy and powerful. If you could doubt it looking at him, when you saw him carry a duffle as though it was a napkin you stopped doubting. A brute of a man."

The staff paused reminiscently. After a second he continued. "A brute in every way. He was a buck sergeant then, and young for it too. You could look at him and see he wasn't over 28, but when you looked at his eyes you saw how he made it. Hard?, Oh, God, he was hard! there wasn't an ounce, a gram, or a damned speck of mercy in him.

"He walked in and dropped his duffle on the floor, and looked at me a second—then he said, 'Are you in this platoon, soldier?'

"That was all he said. Just like that. But it made me go cold all of a sudden. Grantman was the only man I knew who could give effective marching commands like he was making conversation. Maybe that was because the only things he ever said were commands.

"The next morning we got our taste of him. Oh, mi-gawd, it was awful! He took us out for crew drill on those big 14 inchers, and started in driving right away. I was No. 1 man which, of course, means I had to close the breech after the round and charge were in. Well, come what may, I couldn't handle that breech snappy enough for him, and he cursed and swore, and I got shaky and goofed off. The crew got farther and farther off its targets, and Grantman got madder and madder.

"When it was finally over I was all shaken up. Just a green kid, you know—and that sergeant had ridden me hard. So when we got back to the barracks I asked one of the boys who'd been in a while, what the set-up was." The staff broke off again and grinned at me.

"I guess", he said, "You have it figured out already. Sure it's an old story. A tough boy with new stripes, determined to hang on to them and get some more. It's an old story.

"But what made it extra bad was that Grantman was extra tough and extra eager. It'd be a bad combination in anybody but in Grantman it was poison. He drove us as though all the devils in hell were flogging him with buggy whips to get results. Day after day it went on, and day after day I got shakier at that No. 1 job. I wasn't afraid of the gun, you understand, *but I was really and actually afraid of Grantman*. It got so bad I used to break out in a sweat every time we went near the guns. I'd be stiff and tense for fear I'd make a mistake and then, of course, I would; and I can see him now; big and mad and mean, cursing away to himself in that low voice of his.

"At first he didn't bother the other boys much, they all being older and having been in a while. But after a while my errors and Grantman's bad temper, began to get to them, and

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the whole crew began to come apart. Tempers got edgy, and men got into that state of mind where every man does his own work passably and to hell with the crew. That burned Grantman and the situation called for transfers all around but Grantman was too proud to ask for himself and too stubborn to shanghai me. As for myself—well, I can see now I should have put in for a transfer but back then it seemed to be a question of whether I could take it.—After all I was just a kid.

“Inevitably I guess, the word started to get around ‘Brantman’s going to get a bust’ and Grantman must have heard it because he started after us in the most god awful cold fury you ever saw. He was falling down at his job and eating his heart out about it. Had it been any other man living, some old non-com would have come to him and said, ‘Look sergeant, you’re trying too hard. Now that you’ve got discipline, let up a bit.’ But Grantman—with him it couldn’t be that way. He wanted to go it and alone, just on strength, meanness and pride, and the old timers who saw he’d either ruin himself or his crew or both, just had to let him go.

“I knew Grantman felt I was the cause of all the trouble. That bothered me a lot, but nothing compared to the way I felt when I found out the rest of the platoon thought so, too. Not that they ever said anything, you understand, but I could tell from the way they—well, patronized me, you might say. My first outfit and I was ruining it.

“Then one day things came to a head. Early in the morning, late August it was, we were out on the drill field. There was a sopping hot blanket of fog that was begging you to fall right down on the ground and go to sleep and let it cover you over. The other boys were working along in the daze that soldiers have when they have to keep going even though they’re too tired or too hungry or too hot, when they

stop thinking and feeling and just let their bodies move on command.

"Of course I hadn't been in long enough to catch the knack of that yet, and besides I was under so much pressure that I couldn't relax enough anyway. There was some brass watching us that day so Grantman was under some pressure too, what with the stripes on his sleeve, and all his hard pride in them, together with thinking about all the talk about his losing them. There weren't on the line or anything but no doubt he wanted the best showing possible.

"Which I knew. I was so sleepy and hot but I was bearing down as hard as I knew how to. After all I was a kid and proud, as a rookie is, of my platoon despite everything . . . I tried."

The staff shrugged and continued.

"The way he planned it was first to give the column and flanking movements fast one after another to get us set up, then getting into the harder stuff like the multiple to the rear marches and finally building up, to his pride and joy, the Greek Wheel.

"You've seen the Greek Wheel haven't you? Well whether you have or haven't it's about the last word in drill figures. The way it goes is like this: first you get your platoon marching on file in a circle, then on command every fourth man does a column left, the three men behind him following. When the file leaders converge at the center you give the command by the right flank march so that you got a Greek Wheel with turning spokes but no rim. It's beautiful, but it demands absolute precision from every man.

"The column and flanking movements went o. k. and I got through to the rear marches just a little nervous about what was to come, and the heat and sleepiness and the brass

The Greek Wheel

watching, and Grantman. He was watching me, not tensely, but just watching and waiting, like a man who has thrown the dice and is waiting to see whether he'll make his point or crap out. All the other boys he was sure of, but I was tired and nervous and trying hard.

"He gave the command low and quiet and we filed out of the column into the circling file. It must have looked good because I could see the brass looking impressed and the company officers looking kind of grateful at Grantman. One thing was obvious: if he brought it off successfully the bust talk would be all written off and the stripes were copper riveted on his sleeves.

"When the circle was just right for it, he ordered his squads column left; the circle melted into spokes and it was still good with the files equidistant and covered down perfectly. Grantman waited until the spokes were close together at the center and then snapped 'By the right flank March'.

"So help me, I don't know why to this day but somehow I did an almost impossible thing, made the opposite flanking movement. I crashed headlong into the man following me. Within a second the beautiful symmetry of the wheel was gone and there was just a platoon standing around in a bunch feeling foolish.

"I was sick and ashamed and flustered. There was the platoon standing around in confusion, and the brass laughing, and the battery officers looking embarrassed because Grantman's big production had folded and made himself and them look foolish. The rest was inevitable I guess. Grantman couldn't stand being ridiculous. He walked over to me slowly and we were standing there, looking at each other—me sick with embarrassment and flushed and a little scared, he cold, grim and hating. Then he drew back his hand and slapped me.

I gasped with shock and pain and I could feel every other man there from buck privates up gasp with me. Grantman turned on his heel and walked away, and he wasn't a sergeant any more.

"I went over the hill that afternoon. They let me have a pass to Colon where I shipped as a deckhand aboard a tanker bound for Vera Cruz, left her there and worked my way back to the states."

At that point the staff sat back for a while and sat there remembering. After a bit he grimaced, shrugged and continued to tell us this story, just the way I'm telling it to you.

"I don't suppose it makes much difference what I did those next ten years. I just knocked around here and there, never staying very long in one place. Never did get back to Vermont—

"Then in '40 I reenlisted, using the name I go by now—".

What, will I tell you his name? No, I think we'd better let it ride. Call the staff Jones or Brown or anything you like. Personally, I believe in letting sleeping dogs lie.

"Well," he continued to Grace, Thatcher and me, "I got in to the recent unpleasantness in the E T and when I came back to the States after V E Day, I was a staff myself and the army looked good to me. By that time of course Grantman was a closed book, that was all behind me. So I stayed in. And that's where my story, the one I started to tell you in the first place, comes in.

"After my reenlistment they assigned me to Sill for a while. But I didn't like it much and put in for a transfer.

"As I was saying two drinks and half an hour ago it's a funny thing about going to a new post, because it never seems as good as the one you left. Either it's too spit and polish, or it

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goes the other way and you wonder how these so and so's can think they're soldiers. Or something's wrong. The food, the officers, the billets, or the men, or something. Your new platoon never seems to stack up well against your old one.

"But Fort—was different. From the minute I reported in I liked it. It was what the doctor ordered, not too chicken, but just snappy enough to have morale. I wasn't there fifteen minutes before they assigned me to a company, and a fellow picked me up and drove me over there.

"While we were riding across the post, I sat back in that peep and thought about how far I'd come since that day I went over the hill in '30. I felt easy and secure that was all behind me, and I figured things were beginning to break right for me. Life looked pretty good to me right then.

"We got to the company area and I looked the place over. Even in the half light of dusk I could see it was neat and clean, with the barracks in good shape, the lawn growing nice and green and well trimmed and everything just right. After I got out of the peep I stood there and smoked a cigarette and felt good. It was a good outfit, I could tell that the way a soldier can tell, and you know what a good outfit means."

Thatcher, Grace and I nodded,

"Just before I went in the orderly room I looked at the orderly room across the street. There was a first soldier sitting there doing some typing. I field stripped my butt and started for the door when a thought struck me.

"Fellas, I damn near died. Everything I'd gone through down in the Canal Zone and since flashed through my mind, like the kind of thing they say happens to a drowning man. Finally I put down my bags and walked over and stood outside the window in the dark looking in.

"It was Grantman all right. I'd know the face right enough even after all those years; still big, and powerful and

tough. Maybe he looked sadder and wise with bad memories; maybe he just looked older, I couldn't tell. He was at his typewriter and I could stand there and watch him without being seen, since if he did look up there was a light between him and the window and I was in the dark, and he couldn't see me. So I stood there, and thought of everything I'd gone through because of him.

"I suppose it would make a better story if I could say I thought about walking in and shooting him down or something. But I didn't. The only thing that entered my mind was the amount of grief he'd brought me and how much more he could bring me in the future. Even after 16 years; a reenlistment and combat in North Africa, Sicily and France; desertion is a tough charge to face—especially after 16 years and combat in North Africa, Sicily and France. All I wanted was to keep Grantman from identifying me. Possibly time had softened him, but it was a chance I wasn't willing to take.

"After about twenty minutes he finished his typing and got up to leave. I went back across the street and reported in to my own 1st Sergeant who was happy to get an old soldier for a noncom and showed it. He was due for a surprise though, because no sooner was I inside the door than I was asking for a transfer. I had to get off that post without meeting Grantman.

"The first billeted me for the night and right after duty call next morning I went to personnel and volunteered for the paratroops. Of course, I wanted to become a paratrooper like I wanted a hole in the head, but right then and there my first consideration was getting away. The personnel sergeant major was a pretty smart egg though and he figured out right off that what I really wanted was out. So he put me in for a transfer for this damned tank set-up, which was better for an old cannoneer than the paratroops would be, at that.

The Greek Wheel

"And there it stood. If things went along at best, I might get off the post in possibly ten days. Well you know the Army. It isn't too difficult to keep from meeting a first in another company. But there's always a chance, and over the years I've developed something of an aversion to taking chances. So I claimed my old wound was bothering me and got myself hospitalized. It was pretty delicate work, keeping myself in the hospital without appearing so ill that I couldn't take my transfer if it came through. I swung it though, just lying there and sweating for ten days.

"When they called me up from the company to say that orders were being cut sending me here I had one of the fastest recoveries in the history of the Army medicine. The call came about an hour and a half after I got through outlining as awful a set of symptoms as you ever heard and as soon as I got the word I was yelling for the surgeon and claiming I was recovered. The medics had me figured I guess but they weren't combat men and the war was still fresh in their minds so that they were willing to give me a break.

"I got my gear and went to personnel and picked up my orders. Just as simple as that and I was out from under. They gave me my travel money and I sat down to wait in the personnel office while somebody 'phoned to get me a peep to take me to the train. Pretty soon it came I drove off and that was that."

The staff lit a cigarette, took a drink passed the bottle around and sat back as though he was waiting for something.

"And", he said, "that's the story of how I got here."

The three of us stirred a little, Grace relit his pipe, I hunted for the staff's cigarettes on his bunk and Thatcher opened a beer. Everybody waited.

Finally Thatcher broke the ice.

"Well," he said judicially, "it's a hell of a story. And you never did see Grantman or anything?"

The staff grinned with the air of a man who baited a trap and just found game in it.

"Oh" he drawled, "that's the kicker. When I was going out of the personnel office I decided to enjoy one small triumph over Grantman, just to give me one round, so I asked the sergeant to say good-bye for Sergeant—to 1st Sergeant Grantman. The S-I looked up at me and wanted to know who Sargeant Grantman was. That stopped me cold. So I went on to say I thought the 1st at B Co.'s name was Grantman.

"I got my answer. 'Oh' said the S-I 'you mean Sergeant Reed? Sergeant George A. Reed.' "

The staff stopped and sat looking at us all.

Thatcher laughed. "You mean you had the wrong guy, all the time?"

He just sat there for a second for effect I thought. "No, I mean George A. Reed is the name of a kid who ruined Grantman's first outfit 20 years ago, a kid who went over the hill to Colon; It's my right name.

Grace, Thatcher, and I sat forward and looked at the staff, not saying anything.

Then at last Grace said, "I'll be damned," soft and slow, like that.

"Well like that there's the story and now how about you clearing out of here so I can get some sleep. I'm not keeping open house for you all night, you know. You've heard it all. No, you can't take along the bottle I'll kill it myself thank you and by the way I want you up and out tomorrow at 6 sharp."

What's that? Is it a true story?

How the hell would I know?

marker was set. The sea was as bare as the sky. She knew how he'd feel about his sister's interrupting his morning reverie, but he hadn't had his breakfast, so she started down the beach after him. After a while, finding the walking hard, she climbed on the sea-wall and ran awkwardly along it. She had never liked the beaches after storm, thinking things came out on the strand that would normally remain deep-sunk, but today she was even sick with the wavering pastures of sea, and she usually thought them lovely.

"A clean sea," said the child evenly, when she came up to him.

"A clean sea," said the girl, and shuddered from head to foot.

Looking around fearfully she saw the beaches stretched in a litter of quiet rack, and far out along the vegetable rocks in the fishermen's dock, powder green with slime and sunlight, empty but for one rowboat half-foundered. She stared herself hollow-eyed looking across toward the mainland, which lay along the horizon like sunrise, and suddenly turned in fright to her brother.

"What if Grampa wants to go for a row today?"

"What if he does?"

"Come to breakfast soon."

The girl walked despondently back. As she was going in, she thought to look at their sign, which hung from a gallows-post in front of the house and read "Rooms." Standing in the muddy road leading past to the point, she looked up at it and remembered how they had listened, sitting together in the parlor the night before—heard it creaking, creaking in the wind.

"My God, will you light the oil-stove, Corinne, before my hands turn to stone?"

A Caller from the Sea

"You've got a nice fire in the fireplace, there. Why don't you save the oil till we get a boarder in?"

"We'll get a boarder when we light the stove. Do what you're told, like a good girl, and don't neglect to put a pan of water on top, to keep the atmosphere from drying out."

"My heavens, it's damp enough to rain in here now!"

"Don't cross me, Corinne. I'm a hard man to deal with in storm weather."

She lit the stove and winked angrily at Billy, who was watching them from the window-seat. Blind man, spirit and substance, her exasperated heart flared. On her way from the kitchen with the water she got a stiff black volume from the bookcase and pulled a rocker slant-wise to the fire. Not much of a family in storm weather, she thought. Not much of a mother, she hung her head shamefully. Corinne, thou chocest not the better part. I wish we had a lodger.

Then, hearing their sign creak, she thought: how ugly! Has it unhooked itself? She got up and went out on the dark porch, where she could see a short distance across the Sound and both ways along the island road. She stood for a moment, curious, to watch the limits of the island flicker in the rain. When the wind broke stride the rain would pile up on an angle and rush to a windless falling, thin blades but broad strokes in the tempests of spiritual war. There shouldn't have been anyone stirring. Their sign was quivering firmly on its two hooks, but she was disturbed and hurried inside. In the road someone was standing, doubtful as the weather, looking back at the house.

"I've got a feeling," said Pop, "that we're gonna have a caller."

"On an afternoon like this?"

"On an afternoon like this," he said portentously, "ships look for harbors, hermits fly to their caves, and birds forsake their flight. Any port in a storm."

"Any port, indeed!"

The doorbell rang.

"My Lord," said the girl, and rushed to straighten the room, while the blind man laughed loudly in triumph, "Ha! Ha! Ha!" till the pan of water sang on the stove beside him.

There was silence for a moment, and a rustle.

"Answer the door Corinne, and never mind your hair."

Having done what she could in that room without mirrors, the girl smoothed her dress and went awkwardly to the door.

"Hello!" breathed a romantic voice.

"See our sign?" shouted the grandfather, as the girl backed into the room—"room in any weather! Warm yourself by the fire. See that stove! Warmest little nest on the island, this is. You don't have to look no further!"

With the wind the fire was blasted into heat, and the caller entered, thin legs and scrawny chin showing first in the light—but he was superior to first impressions, young, swaggering, volatile. He was contemptuous of barriers, imaginary or real. As he came forward he saw a curiously defenseless little company: the old man caught by his chair with a smile like pie-stain, the girl breathless against a wall, the legs of the child, shockingly flesh-colored, jutting from the dark wooden window. He smiled. "If only I could tell you," he said plausibly, advancing with clawed hands on the fire, "how friendly this room seems, after the rain and the storm. I've come so far, and the fire, the warmth—you must let me stay the night."

A Caller from the Sea

"Certainly," said Pop, sitting down again. "Go over to the fire and warm yourself."

The caller gazed intently at the old man, his feverish face glittering with rain. His shadow with its feet in flame vibrated on the walls monstrously. His Navy jacket ran a dark fluid on the floor. "Have you taken his coat, Corinne?" said the old man.

"No, Grampa."

She approached obediently with arm's length and took the coat which was smilingly extended; the caller's one faint chance of surviving his visit departed with her into the hallway.

What is there to say to a blind man? The caller longed for the girl's return.

"Oh! back, are you?" he laughed when she came back. "The room was empty without you. I suppose you know, sir, that you have a very attractive daughter. I've traveled a great deal."

Now two sets of eyes rivalled the fish hawk's for intentness.

"And single? Somebody will be taking her from you if you're not careful."

Don't embarrass the girl," said the blind man seriously. "She's past the marrying age."

"Well," said the caller. "... well."

"Do you come far?" she asked.

"Very far," he said, "through many years, many countries, many hundred of miles. But recently, from the other end of the island."

"Do you know the island?" she asked.

"Yes! By all means, if to live here a short year is to know it. Of all the places I've been, this is the most charming."

"Where did you live?"

"At the other end. Evanstown."

"Evanstown," murmured the old man.

Silence planed across the tap at the window, crackle in the fireplace, thunder on the beach.

"If only I could express," said the caller, "how friendly this room—and of course you people—seem. I'll never forget the experience of walking in here. The very walls are hospitable. A refuge. A hiding-place from the storm."

"Why were you out in it?"

"Why, believe it or not, I had gone for a walk. I'd never been to this end of the island, and it's such a pretty island—"

The grandfather, who had been listening carefully, abruptly lost interest in their visitor: perhaps the young man had talked too loudly. At any rate, he settled his body with a quiver and gave himself back to the enchantment of heat.

"This may sound funny, but I believe in doing things like that—unexpected, unusual things, which people laugh at you for. Things you just want to do. Or things you must do, though nobody else in the world sees the necessity. I met a man once"—he smiled at the girl—"in war-time Singapore, I think it was, who was on a sort of quest. It seems he had been drinking one night in a Chinese bar and had seen a man he knew blinded and crippled by three drunken M. P's. No one minded, no one protested, no one remembered. But he remembered. He swore then and there to hunt down those hoodlums and make them pay for their cruelty. When I met him there was one dead, in a Singapore alley. The other two had been evacuated out, but he was still confident. He was young; the United States was not such a large country. With a little luck it shouldn't take more than a lifetime to find them . . ."

"A lifetime is so short," she said.

A Caller from the Sea

"Oh, if only we could find our way out of the fallacy of time," he said urgently, thrusting his fingers cup-like in the air. "Together we could—would you let me? I could show you how there is time: time for all things worth doing: for adventure, revenge. Have you ever lived through days without a clock?—lifetimes without time? Eternity is across the room! We could grasp it. You and I could."

"What would we do if we had it?"

"Don't you know?"

"No."

"I can say no more."

"Shall I try the radio?" she asked. "There might be a break in the storm." She had always dreamed, automatically, of people spending themselves to attract her and now she was feverishly bored. It felt funny. When she got up the caller's eyes burst into flame.

"Lay off that radio, will you?"

"That sounded like a threat."

"Maybe it is."

The girl whirled furiously. Seeing his mistake, he said desperately, "I wanted to tell stories. Stories," he went on brilliantly, "to your little brother. You want to hear stories about the sea, great voyages, don't you, sonny?"

"Billy hasn't had his supper yet," she said. But from that moment she was out of it.

"Give the kid a break, will you? I didn't ask you."

"Do you think 'cause you're paying us board money you can change our lives? I don't have to take anything from you! I'm mistress of this house!" To the caller she wasn't even human. Just a dead hope—a hope had died, another was born. Hopes are like street cars, too, he thought.

"I was just thinking of the boy."

"We'll take care of him. You let him alone!"

"God knows he must get little enough fun in a place like this!"

"We were happy before you came and will be after you leave. Don't worry about us."

"Tell me to go, then, if you think I'm so dangerous. Give me back to the storm."

The moment passed.

"Now I'll tell the boy stories," said the caller. "Unless he's too sleepy, sleepy like his grandfather and his sister."

"I'm not sleepy," said the child.

"Okay, then. No interruptions."

Now in the silent room, while the girl grew sleepy and dozed, he rifled the shadows for gold. He was daring, stealthy, appealing in his attack, and the vast old house was charmed to collaboration. The windows shuddered; the fire sank down; the wind bulleting for the mainland left a sound like claws on stone; above the ceiling the crowds of imagined guests stirred in their sleep, called softly to each other from their dreams. The room itself became a dream; there was nothing lacking now in this lighted vault between the water and the wind. It was as if the illusionless childhood of the sleeping girl were projecting a dream into the room, wherein they were but players of the sleeping moment, the man and the boy, until she awoke.

When Corinne awoke the room was utterly quiet. The fire had gone out. In his chair by the fireplace the blind man was trembling in his sleep, as the cold began to infringe. She went to cover him, shuddering herself, but more from silence than from cold. Then she thought of the storm and her head almost burst with the returning consciousness of sound, the

A Caller from the Sea

rain, the bellowing wind, the surf. Billy was gone. She stood still.

As she did she heard the door in the kitchen open and close, and she ran out, her mind full of disaster. Her brother was standing against the outer door. They began to work slowly toward an understanding.

"Where is he, Billy?"

"He's gone."

"Where?"

"To the mainland." The child sobbed wearily and came toward her. She felt the little masculine arms around her waist: something passed over the house, passed over and shook it, like a blow from the wing of the storm.

"How did he go, Billy?"

"He's escaping. The police are after him. He had to get off the island before morning."

"Why?"

"He was the man who was going all over the world seeking revenge—" He couldn't quite find words. "Do you remember the story?—he killed the man at the other end of the island the police are after him . . ."

"He might have killed somebody! Oh, he might have! I didn't trust him from the first. When I hung up his coat there was a gun in the pocket—" Then she stopped, seeing how terribly every word was being believed.

"How did he go?" she asked as an afterthought.

"He wanted me to help him. I showed him our row-boat."

"No, Billy, No!" They reeled as if dancing, the knees of the girl buckling, the child hanging on.

"Not in the storm!"

"He'll make it," said the child tearfully. "It's not far."

"It's fifteen miles, and open sea. He'll never be able to keep behind the island in the dark."

"He knows how to handle a boat. Besides, Grampa rowed across one time, and he made it."

"With five other men, and a sea like glass! My Lord, Billy, what were you thinking of when you let him go!"

She ran out on the big porch. Seeing nothing, she went down to the beach. He was a short way out on the waves, bobbing like a cork, straining happily at the oars. She tried to call him back, thinking hysterically of the things she had seen, in her short lifetime, come out of the sea after storms. Interminable feathers of rain fell from the clouds on their way. Sometimes he was clear; then he would vanish completely. Once, when they both saw each other vividly, he gestured an insult across the crazy-quilt of surf. His hand made its last picture, far, far away—beyond the cylindrical vault of rain, beyond the din—an empty boat breaking up on a barren reef in sunlight. All of a sudden she put her clenched fists to her mouth and screamed.

After a time it was gone, hysteria, immaturity, whatever it was. She was only sick for the fate of a human soul. Turning to go in, she noticed with a start that Billy was standing beside her. She looked at him with a kind of ardent horror. She put her hand cautiously across his eyes, to draw him away. But he flinched away from the wet hand, his forehead burning with dreams, watching his hero go.

"He'll make it," said Billy.

"He'll make it," said Corinne.



IT seems that the Editors of the ALEMBIC have been laboring under a misconception of the toils, troubles and tribulations which we thought were peculiar only to our particular publication. But it does our hearts good to find that others of literary ilk, of the pen and ink and typewriter ribbon society, contend with the same problems. Strange, that we should have felt ourselves alone in this. Now it is good to know that we have companions who also feel the need of snapping the literary whip occasionally at the student bodies of their respective colleges.

To get to the heart of the matter (excuse me Mr. Greene) the Editors of the ALEMBIC walked into their office in Donnelly Hall one day and found that the Exchange had brought them their long-awaited copies of the Boston College *Stylus* and the Holy Cross *Purple*. These publications are always received with a great deal of interest, read avidly, criticised not too unkindly and then placed in the rack for the general reading of those who do not feel the sanctity of the ALEMBIC office is too overwhelming to forbid their entering therein. Honestly, there is more talk there of last night's basketball game and the supposed lack of justice in Father So-in-So's quarterly mark than there is of Emerson, Transcendentalism or the Brook Farm experiment.

However, the point that held our interest this month was the small bit of editorializing that each publication did on why the students do write, why the students don't write and what the students think of the students who do write and what the students think of the students who don't write. This could go on and on!

In the Boston College *Stylus*, five lines beneath a caption entitled "Continued from inside front cover" appeared a small item which contained amongst other things the word "clique". The general sum and substance of the article was "if you can write any better or if you can write at all, stop thinking that we don't want you—because we do". To get back to that word "clique"; well, it seems that we have heard that word bandied around the hallowed halls of Harkins and Aquinas more than once. *Stylus* is, we suppose, published by just as humane a group of individuals as loiter in the ALEMBIC office whispering "deadline" in a small, low whisper and wondering if there will be enough to print to make another issue worthwhile. We heartily agree with the Editors of the *Stylus* when they intimate that those of a literary trend are not necessarily inhuman monsters born with typewriter keys attached to their fingertips and weaned on a diet of Plato's Republic. As for that business of a "clique"—well, the ALEMBIC has the biggest clique in Providence College inasmuch as everybody in the College is invited to join it. Everyone, that is, who can thumb through Webster's Fifth Edition and whose mind is productive enough to garner some semblance of sense in what he writes.

If the ALEMBIC prints the same writers month after month, it is only because the same writers have found their way across the campus, through the front door of Donnelly Hall, turned right and entered the first door on the left with a

Exchange

piece of paper in their hand. Even at that, we find that there is an occasional Freshman or Sophomore who finds that his courage pays dividends when he suddenly finds himself in print. If there is a single reject slip in our office none of the Staff has been able to find it. Nothing is too trivial to deserve consideration and if it is good it is printed.

We had no sooner put down the *Stylus* and picked up the Holy Cross *Purple* when we found a choice item contained therein entitled "A Statement of Policy." The men at Holy Cross ask just a single question. "What do we wish to make our Literary Publication?" Their answer is certainly illuminating and conducive to much thought. The *Purple* strives to obtain a triple goal, each portion of their objective being worthy of their College and the work they are engaged in.

Firstly, they will write the magazine for the students keeping out of the clouds and yet maintaining a sensible level above the ground. In so doing, they hope to please the three groups on any campus, "those who teach, and those who learn, and those who once learned . . .", inasmuch as these three groups, having Holy Cross as their common denominator cannot have too widely diverging interests.

Secondly, the *Purple* will strive to develop the young writers who come to the *Purple* office with manuscripts. The ALEMBIC feels that the Editors of the *Purple* have caught the real spirit of Catholic journalistic endeavor in this respect. It is not enough to print that which is good enough to be printed; the greater good is in the guidance of those who just fall short of seeing their efforts in print. What greater level of satisfaction can the staff of any literary magazine attain than to see one of their contributors make the grade after previous rejection, especially when his success is due to the guidance of a member of that staff.

Thirdly, the *Purple* intends to be the "guardian of the true spirit of Holy Cross". The *Purple* will leave to the campus newspaper the factual reporting of campus activities and the editorializing on current subjects. As a quarterly they feel that they can grasp the perspective in which College spirit is best visualized. Through the medium of their literary magazine they plan to perpetuate those little things which mean so much when students become alumni—the ivy-covered walls, the cherished friendships, the faculty associations, the traditions and the underlying spirit which make each college great and lasting to its graduates.

Yes, we on the ALEMBIC have learned a great deal from reading the recent issues of the *Stylus* and the *Purple*. Their causes are worthy and well borne out. It gives us a sense of gratification to know that we can number ourselves amongst that strong fraternity of Catholic College writers who strive for the same goal. True indeed, our efforts may be small in the light of an all-encompassing Eternity but the path is always clear in the scope of our Catholic learning; the goal is always *Veritas* and the reward lies in the Hands of a Publisher who understands and evaluates even the most trifling of our manuscripts.

Sonnet for Connie

(Who's unlikely ever to see it)

By JOHN J. SLAIN, '51

Spun honey is colored sweet Connie's hair
Soft as clouds; full as soft her neck, no swan's
Softer nor lovelier. The sun's sun she: light shone
Upon her touches, becomes lighter. Oh! Dare
I such a lighting touch? Only might a prayer
Touch Connie's lips, too voluptuous wan,
Sensuously spiritual they, but for a nun.
Ah! that never may such as I them share!
For to such sweet flowers of God's care
Our human world is a garden soon gone:
They bud, blow, and pass undistilled, not torn
But lifted from it. Who would cross such fair?
 Connie, once I saw thee, fresher than dew;
 Let me, from afar, pay thee my homage due.

To a Lost Love

By PAUL FLANIGAN, '53

Three white willows in a green salt marsh;
The black ducks leave in a rush;
Intricacies fly to the wide sky;
The hills speak only simplicity,
The little salt hills that ebb to the sea—
Here, since you must, you will die in me.

Beauty will find beauty:
Will travel within the transient heart,
Desolating its chamber, until
It finds a sea meadow or a better heart—
So to die again,
As in all the old romances,
In the very loveliest
Of circumstances.

Your murderer, the World, my Love,
Is full of taking schemes:
Puts poison in our daylight
And panthers in our dreams.
We will make beauty of three willows
And a network of streams.

Woven in willows,
Kept by the frills of the tapestried hills
Against a blue sky—
In a sense when I

To A Lost Love

Leave your softness alone in this quiet place
You will be revenged on us for having sinned.
So be quiet in your grave of brackish water
Webbed with wind.

And what of Your future, my fellow-cheat,
Shadow of Love which here will lie—
Will your grace accept with nice deceit
The bilge of the brain, the bloat of the eye?
For myself, I must suffer a number of things,
The fine moods rent by a Harpy's wings,
Lachrymal littleness, widening rings,
The sour notes, in a voice that sings—

But since your farewell was
Not too dutiful,
Thank you for leaving me
Something beautiful.

Debut

Not too long ago a Freshman from West Hartford, Connecticut, dropped into the ALEMBIC office with a manuscript clasped in his hand. Since that time the manuscript has been proofed and sent to the printers and appears in this issue of the Quarterly. We believe that it is good. In fact, we believe that Paul Flanigan, '53 is one of the most promising writers to cross the threshold in many a month. We are glad to present to him the key to our literary sanctum knowing full well that we shall hear more from him in the issues to come. Two poems and a short-story will testify to our confidence. As an example to his Frenchman contemporaries who labor under the misapprehension that our Literary Quarterly is guided by members of the "old guard", we have placed Mr. Flanigan's name in a choice spot in this issue . . . welcome to our Literary Board, Paul.

Lullaby in an Autumn Wood

By PAUL FLANIGAN, '53

The avenues of autumn
Are open to the breeze;
No footfalls scar the pavement
In the citadel of trees.

Rest, Sweet, rest.
As rains that point a static stress
Across the pillars of the wilderness
Are climbing up the wick of day,

So sleep puts out the waiting lamps
Of loneliness.

Debut

Alessandro Rossi, '53, offers a story for this issue which is unique for reasons other than those which usually guide our choice in the matter of selection for publication. Mr. Rossi is a Freshman whose personal history might well serve as indicative of perseverance and integrity. Alessandro has entered Providence College at the age of fifteen which is the usual age to enter High School. Three years ago he lived in Italy and spoke not a single word of English. Today his initial offering appears on the following pages of the ALEMBIC. We do not claim that it is a literary gem . . . we are amazed that despite youth and linguistic difficulty it was written at all. We offer it for that reason. Mr. Rossi, who remembers the street-fighting between the Germans and the American troops in his home town, earns our heartiest congratulations for the excellent work he has done in the space of three years. We hope to see him on these pages again soon.

A Bit of Bread

By ALESSANDRO R. ROSSI, '53

I am positive that most of you readers reading this title, will go wandering in a thousand and one places trying to understand what is the meaning behind the words *A Bit of Bread*.

To relax your curiosity, I will tell you that this story is not of a spiritual substance, but of a great moral value to any spoiled person, as I am certain it has been to the person involved; because you see, a bit of bread cost the life of a man.

Are you wondering how it could ever happen?

I

The millionaire Charles Duremonte, had come home in the early hours of the morning, having spent the night in the Royal Opera House in Rome, Italy.

It was nearly noon the next day, when his butler rushed up the stairs carrying two silver trays, one with some coffee, the other with some mail and a newspaper.

The millionaire, still half asleep, read the headlines in the newspaper, "In spite of the heroic resistance, the Italian Border Division was overtaken by the French Division."

Mr. Duramonte like many other Italians, had thought that the war against France would have been a short campaign with a secure victory crowning the Italian army. But, when he heard that the soil of his country was occupied by enemy troops, he felt strangely ashamed of himself, and of the life he was leading.

He started thinking. When he came to a decision, he dressed in a hurry and proceeded down to an Italian army

station where he enlisted to leave immediately as a simple soldier. After a few days, he was in the line of fire, in the midst of Italian soldiers who were trying hard as possible to hold back the enemy.

The regiment was stopped near a half destroyed town which had been lost and won by both armies in the alternating phases of the battles. Now, the French army was only a few miles away, and their artillery smashed the Italian entrenchments and fortifications incessantly.

One night, some food was passed to the soldiers, and since they were cut off from the rest of the army, it was impossible to give them a warm meal, or even a piece of meat, so they passed out bits of dark, uncooked loaves of bread.

II

When Mr. Duramonte had that loaf of bread in his hands, he tore a piece of it with his fingers, and placed it to his lips. The sour taste of baking powder disgusted him, and with an insulted gesture, he threw the loaf of bread in the muddy road. A soldier, who had already tasted his loaf yearningly, reached out to pick up the bread, rubbed it hard against the sleeve of his uniform, and then began to eat it.

Mr. Duratmonte felt ashamed of his action, and going towards his friend said,

"Forgive me friend; if I had known that you desired my bread, I would have given it you gladly, instead of throwing it in the mud."

"It does not matter," said the soldier. "As you see, I am not fussy."

The soldier was a poor young man, so thin, that his shoulder blades seemed to puncture the worn out cloth of his uniform.

A Bit of Bread

The acquaintance was already made, and the soldier asked,

“What is your name?”

“Charles Duramonte,” answered the millionaire.

“My name is John Vittoria . . . Since a few days ago, I have been confined to a hospital because of a wound, but now that we are in a terrible need of men, they sent me here, although I am not fully recovered . . . I used to live well in the hospital; they gave me good soups and horsemeat. I am used to hunger, believe me. I was hungry even when I was born. Does it shock you? I never did get to know my parents. I grew up in the streets, and I have done all kinds of work.

“My only good remembrance, although very vague, is the one of my childhood when I was in an orphanage, sleeping in a clean bed. When I was old enough, I was put out of the orphanage to learn a trade, and everyone took advantage of me. Nobody ever gave me enough so as not to suffer from hunger. Were you surprised that I picked that bread off the ground, dirty with mud? I have often picked up scraps of food, in the roads, and sometimes even in the dumps; I was hungry you know, very hungry! . . . Many times, passing near a bakery, the smell of warm bread tempted me to steal a loaf! But I never did . . . I don't know why, I guess I just never had the courage.”

The millionaire was moved; he was listening to this man talk, a soldier like himself, and began to remember with remorse. He always had everything he ever wanted, luxuries in abundance, while other people did not even have a bit of bread.

The millionaire said, “John, if we get out of this war alive, we will see each other again; I will see what I can do for

you. I will help you find work, a little bit of wealth, I promise you . . . But here, there are no bakeries; there is only the army bread. My portion is too big for me; I do not have too much of an appetite . . . from tomorrow on, I will divide my bread with you, as a good friend."

They shook hands, and laid themselves on the ground to sleep.

Around midnight, John Vittoria awoke; maybe he was still hungry. He looked at his friend who was fast asleep. He felt a deep gratitude for the good words he had heard from him, and for the promise that was so easily made to him from this stranger.

A little later, the sergeant called five soldiers who had to stand guard; but Duramonte, who was sleeping heavily did not hear.

"Duramonte, get up, let's go," repeated the sergeant. John Vittoria got up and said,

"Sergeant, if you don't mind, I would like to substitute for Duramonte. Let him sleep. He is a very good friend. He's very tired."

"To me, it is all the same; you can go."

The five men went out into the night, while the other soldiers went back to sleep.

Half an hour later, the alarm rang out and everybody bounced to their feet. A third attack was coming from the enemy lines, and the soldiers ran to the defense from every direction.

The detonations and explosions woke up Duramonte.

"What is happening?" he asked, "What time is it? I was to be on guard tonight. How is it that I am still sleeping?"

A Bit of Bread

A soldier answered,

"John Vittoria took your place. He didn't want the sergeant to awaken you."

At this same time, a group of soldiers were running toward the tents from down the road saying,

"We have to move back, the French are there in the woods, we cannot withstand their attack."

"And the guards?" asked an officer.

"Where are the guards?"

"They are coming, running . . . only Vittoria was left down there . . . killed . . . instantly . . . through the head!"

III

Two years later, on an icy and clear January night, Duramonte was leaving a theatre with a friend.

"Let's go on foot," proposed the friend. "The night is so beautiful."

"Why yes, let's go on foot. We will warm up walking."

On their way, Mr. Duramonte's foot hit something on the sidewalk; he looked to the ground and saw a bit of bread. He bent down to pick it up and, with a silken handkerchief, cleaned it as best he could, shaking off the dust and the mud. Then he left it on a window sill.

His friend was looking at him surprised and asked, laughing:

"What on earth are you doing? Have you gone crazy?"

"I pray you, don't laugh," said Mr. Duramonte, and his voice was trembling in his throat, as if closed by a burst of tears, "Don't laugh, it would hurt me very much. I am thinking of a poor young man who died for me, for a bit of bread."

