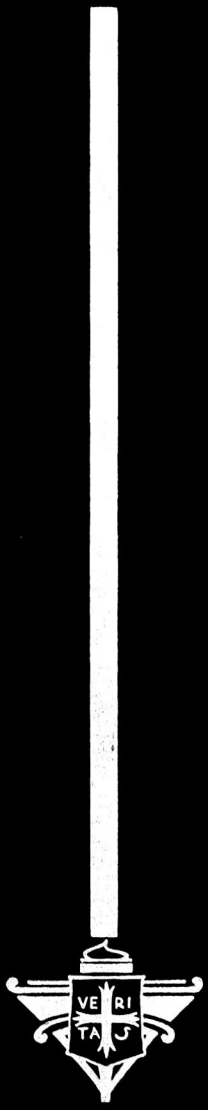
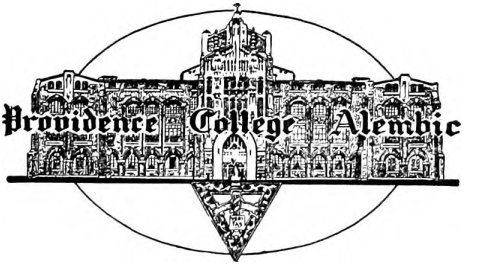
THE ALEMBIC



MAY, 1950

THE ALEMBIC



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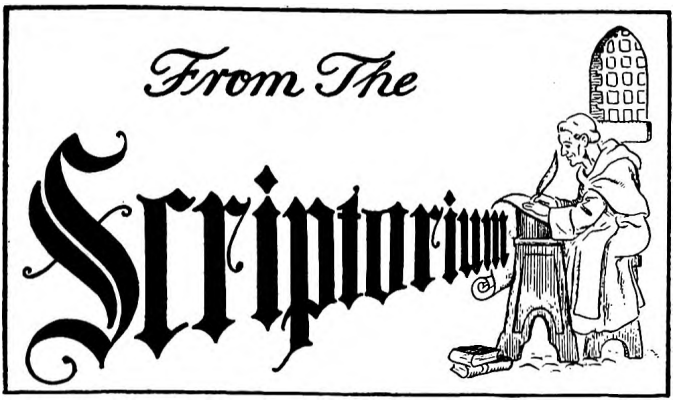

ANOTHER academic year is rapidly drawing to a close. Within a few days, nine months of books, bulletin boards, classes, late slips, and examinations will begin to fade into the dimming realm of "time past". For some it will have been a nightmare; for others, a rather pleasant intellectual and social sojourn; for all it will have been a year abounding in opportunities for participation in extra curricular activities. A handful of students has made the most of these opportunities; the vast majority has remained content to look on apathetically from the sidelines and to criticize and vilify what is being done or attempted whenever and wherever possible. Anti-school spirit seems to be the order of the day. If the energy expended daily on this, apparently the favorite indoor sport on the campus, were diverted to channels of constructive thought and action, ours would undoubtedly be the most active college in New England, if not in the country.

Before continuing, however, let it be well understood that our contention is not with the married students. The grave and time-consuming obligations of family life, needless to say, do and rightly should take precedence over everything else. Nor is it with those who find it necessary to work long hours in order to finance their education. They are, rather, to be admired and complimented for their realization of the value of a Catholic college education, and their desire to acquire it at any cost. The problem, then, is with that body of students, and it is a large one, which attends classes, does a

minimum of work, and spends the rest of the time doing nothing or practically nothing.

In the field of campus publications, the *Cowl* is horribly under-manned. A look at its masthead would seem to contradict this statement but when it is remembered that the *Cowl* is a six-page weekly, one can easily understand the tremendous burden which is placed on the shoulders of this small group. The *Veritas* is the work of perhaps a dozen men, and this is an optimistic estimate. The ALEMBIC, supposedly the organ of the creative literary thought of the two thousand members of the student body, is actually the organ of the creative literary thought of twelve or fifteen students. Appeals have often been made during the year for new contributors to the quarterly. The net result of this constant pleading has been one lone freshman contribution.

The Student Congress and its partner, the National Federation of Catholic College Students (N.F.C.C.S.), are no better off. The Student Congress has been heartily denounced and called every name in the book, because of its "never doing anything", an average of seven times an hour every day, including Saturdays, Sundays, and vacations, since its inception last year. Anyone who had enough interest to inquire of a member of the Student Congress or stop in at the office for a few minutes would very quickly have become aware of the many tangible benefits which have come about directly through the efforts of this body. With all the passionate feeling directed towards the Student Congress, one would naturally be inclined to believe that the election of its officers would be a strong issue on the campus, and that the voting would be heavy. In point of fact, only forty-two percent of the present Junior Class (next year's leaders) voted, and the vote of the Sophomore Class was approximately seven percent lighter. In the Freshman Class, only four men (the number to be elected) even bothered to take out nomination papers. Nevertheless there will be without a doubt, vociferous denunciations and self-righteous indignation regarding the elected officers on the part of many of those who did not bother to cast a ballot. The members of the Student Congress in reality represent somewhere between one-third and two-fifths of their fellows. And yet, by its very definition the Student Congress is principally an agency of liaison between the administration and the *entire student body.*

The Pyramid Players is functioning with a bare skeleton crew. Meetings of the sectional clubs are well attended only when their respective annual dances or parties are announced. Class officers are elected by the votes of less than half of their classmates. The list is a long one, and if extended it would include practically every voluntary student organization on the campus. To rationalize on how this condition got here and what caused it would be, at this

late date, a waste of time and energy. The important thing is that it is here and that we've got to get rid of it. We have been wallowing far too long in the quagmire of lassitude and indolence. It's time we took a hot shower and woke up to the fact that there is more to college than fourteen or seventeen hours of lectures a week and an occasional term paper.

From the earliest days of this institution the administration, with a wisdom born of mature years, has recognized that the classroom is only a part of the life of the man in college. The aim of college is not to turn out a profound philosopher, a theologian, or an eminent historian; there are graduate schools and studia for that. The Catholic college is concerned with turning out a true Christian, a man of character, who will be a credit to his school, his family, and his God: a man who will someday be a leader of men. Since qualities of leadership must of necessity be developed, student organizations, set up and run by students, have always been fostered and encouraged.

Actually, the solution to the problem is a simple one and can be summed up in two words, interest and action. Interest, of course, already exists: everyone criticizes the *Cowl*, the ALEMBIC, and the Student Congress. This spirit of negation needs only to be transformed into positive interest to make the final step, action, a reality. How this transformation is to be accomplished rests principally on each individual student. It might be well for those who will return in the fall to give a few moments' consideration to extra-curricular activities off and on during the vacation months. The satisfaction of having contributed materially to their own and others' campus lives and the wealth of experience to be gained will be ample recompense for their expenditure of time and effort.

It might be well, in closing, to attempt to dispel a couple of the ill-conceived rumors which have been circulating through the cafeteria, the corridors, and the lounge. The first is that the student organizations are hopelessly hamstrung by their respective faculty advisors. This is not the case. A faculty advisor does just what his title states. He is always ready to give sound advice; but he does not, nor does he intend to dictate policies and otherwise interfere with the smooth functioning of an organization. It is only when the bounds of prudence have been overreached that he steps in.

The other rumor maintains that these organizations are run by cliques and that membership is restricted to the officers or staff and their close friends. Nothing could be further from the truth. The various presidents and editors will gladly welcome anyone who will volunteer a part of his spare time to help out. If you don't believe it, just ask one.

H. E. V.

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The Safe Side

By George L. Eagle, '50

As the bartender poured my drink, I asked him if there was another phone besides that booth in the corner which someone had been using for the last ten minutes.

"That's the only one in the bar, sir, but there are others in the lobby and the men's lounge."

Perhaps a trifle tired from the train, and settled now at the bar, I decided to wait a moment longer. There was, after all, no rush about calling Lloyd. It was hardly five-thirty, I had the whole evening in Saint Louis, and even if I met Lloyd for dinner, there was time yet to idle over drinks.

Here in the bar, paneled in dark wood and hung with photographs of actors and boxers, I glanced about at the men having a drink after work. It was that smoke-filled, talkative, rather wearied pattern that repeated itself wherever you found yourself at five o'clock. I lighted a cigarette.

Unwilling to separate the voices all about me, I gave myself instead to lassitude and ordered another Martini. Why I happened to be passing through Saint Louis has nothing in itself to do with this story, but the fact is that my train was not to leave until midnight and I resolved to spend the evening pleasantly. Since my first moment in Saint Louis, some years ago, it has always seemed to me a dreary and cheerless city, a place where one needs company to distract oneself from the grayness and banality of the town. It happened that I did know someone in town, Lloyd Pierce, and I remembered, in

fact, a remark he had made to me, four years before, on a balcony in Germany.

"Remember, Curt, if you're ever in Saint Louis, look me up."

The phone booth was still occupied, that same face still framed in its lighted window. But there was no hurry about calling Lloyd Pierce.

It occurred to me I had not seen Lloyd since that day we said good-bye in the hotel, when he was leaving Germany and the army. For a time I missed him. Of course I did: after all, Lloyd was interesting, and if he vexed you sometimes with the things he said, he was nevertheless amusing to watch. We were sergeants in the same headquarters, the chief clerks of our respective sections, and we had come through England and France together, and finally to Germany, to share a room in that hotel on Parkstrasse.

"Remember, Curt, if you're ever in Saint Louis, look me up."

Though I had begun to feel the cocktails, but only slightly of course, I ordered another. There was no need to call Lloyd right away, but it was pleasant to realize that he was somewhere in this city, that I could get him in a moment on the phone. I could tell him to meet me for dinner and we could spend the evening together, talking of the army and of Europe and of that whole ambiguous experience which now seemed in my mind so remote.

I lighted a cigarette. The bar was crowded now, and over the conversation and the laughter I could hear the five-thirty melody of drinks being shaken and stirred.

"Remember, Curt, if you're ever in Saint Louis, look me up."

Always bright, always alert, and quite amusing—you

had to say that about Lloyd. So many of the things he said came back to me, so many of the things he did, and now here I was in Saint Louis. The phone was still being used, but there was no need to call him just yet, and anyway I kept thinking of that autumn in Germany in forty-five, and the winter. And now the bartender was saying something, and from the way he spoke I knew I must have been deep in reverie.

"I said, sir, the phone is available now."

"Thanks," I said, "but I won't be needing it."

II

From the Rhineland we moved near Frankfurt, to a small resort city, charming and green in September, with its sedate hotels and its shops which must have been, before the war, quite modish. Headquarters was established in the Grand Hotel, with the men billeted in smaller, rather faded hotels throughout the town. Lloyd and I had a room on the third floor of the Koenig on Parkstrasse, a gracious European boulevard with shops and hotels on one side, the park and a lake on the other.

In the room French doors led to a balcony which overlooked the boulevard and the park.

"I'm going to like this," said Lloyd, dropping his duffel with a thud, "I'm going to like this quite well."

With a khaki handkerchief he wiped the perspiration from his face. He was sensitive about his pitted complexion and the slight trace of acne on his face. His hair was brownish and fluffed at his forehead in a manner I had once called affected, whereupon he had asked me, in his high, clipped voice, why I had never partaken of the enormous satisfactions of minding my own business. In height I should say he was

medium, and very slender, with narrow hands and fine long fingers.

"I've always said," he went on, "this is how they ought to treat the boys."

"If any of our outfits discover how we're living, we won't be safe."

He told me, in rather exact terms, what the outfits could do.

I worked in a busy section, seldom returning to the Koenig before five-thirty, usually to find Lloyd shaving, washing his socks, writing a letter, or lounging in a chair on the balcony and reading a novelette. One afternoon, early in October, coming in tired and perhaps a bit vexed, I found him on the balcony with a book.

"Don't you ever work?" I snapped.

He looked up, cocked one brow, and gave me that tight, twisted little smile of his. "Work, dear boy, is an effect of Original Sin. At no time do I feel more moral than when resisting it."

Lloyd, I should mention, was a Catholic. I had a few times troubled to wonder how seriously he took his religion and how extensive his knowledge of it was. I knew that he attended church each Sunday. While I have never felt attracted to the faith they profess, it has often stirred me to notice the dogged way in which most Catholics, even the most superficial and illiterate, strive to keep their souls in tidy readiness for another life. I suspected there were certain things which Lloyd would never do, or if he fell, repent at once and confess.

He came in from the balcony and tossed the book on his bed. "And anyway, you might practice the virtue of minding your own business."

I was at the basin washing my hands and face. "You

sound piqued," I said, but of course I did not say *piqued.*

"Not really, but Elsa's been in here for an hour, gibbering in that outlandish English of hers."

Elsa was the girl who cleaned the rooms on our floor. Coming up to the room I had run into her on the stairs, with an exchange of *Guten Abends.*

"Why don't you learn German?" I asked him. "You're the foreigner here, she isn't."

"Me learn German? I'd rather grunt. And anyway, she says she wants to learn English. She'd stay in here all day if I'd let her."

When I had dried my face and brushed my hair, I felt better. I lighted a cigarette. "What're you doing tonight?"

"The club, I guess. What else? A movie? I'm fed to the teeth with Rita Hayworth."

I laughed. It seemed to me that Lloyd was all right if you understood him, and in his company it was not wholly unpleasant to spend an occasional evening in the Noncom Club. "Mind if I tag?"

He was at the mirror, putting on his khaki tie for dinner. "Not at all, but there's something you should know. I've got a new man in my section, and I told him I'd take him to the club. He's a private, so we'll have to fix him up with stripes."

"A private?" I must have sounded a bit astonished: there were not many privates in headquarters.

"He's new, just came over from the States. He can't be much more than eighteen. A child. The club will do him good."

I was sufficiently informed on human nature to suspect that Sergeant Pierce was interested not so much in entertaining a newcomer for the evening as in introducing an inexperi-

enced boy to the suggestive, alcoholic atmosphere of the Noncom Club. I could see he would relish the rôle of the knowing guide and at the same time would practice just enough condescension to make himself appear the private's benefactor. He would win two ways.

I had strolled onto the balcony and now I turned to face again into the room. I raised my voice a trifle so Lloyd could hear me. "You could entertain him, if you wanted to, in a dozen other ways. You could show him the city on his afternoon off."

"You imply there's something wrong with the club."

"I've been trying for a month to find something right with it."

"Well, he'll get there sooner or later," said Lloyd, "and there's no reason, with you and me around, why he should go with the wrong people."

It was one of those statements of Lloyd's so outrageously absurd they silenced you. I knew it would be futile to ask him who the wrong people were.

He was standing now in the French doors, facing me. The towel had brought an unaccustomed color to his usually sallow cheeks. "It's time for dinner," he announced, "and I'm starved."

III

The Noncom Club was a requisitioned German cafe with a low ceiling, faint orange lighting, and alcoves for the small circular tables. The floor had been cleared for dancing, with a dais at one end for the German orchestra. When we arrived with Private Rand, the club was already crowded, oppressive with body heat and the smell of cheap perfume, stri-

dent with blasts of music, choked with cigarette smoke. The orchestra was playing something very American by Irving Berlin. We found an alcove and sat down.

When the German waitress appeared, Lloyd and I ordered cognac and turned to Jim Rand for his choice.

"All right if I order Coke?"

"Don't you want something more interesting?" Lloyd asked him.

He gave us an uneasy smile and though the light was bad, I think he blushed. "Coke's fine."

With the waitress gone Lloyd, having given Jim his amused, compressed smile, remarked, "We'll make a *Soldat* of you yet. Just keep your eye on me and Sergeant Atwood."

"Curtis,"I told Jim. "Curt. And don't let me hear you say sergeant."

Jim chuckled in a rather embarrassed way. I was sorry, for his sake, that Lloyd had brought him. I was sorry he should witness so soon the vaguely sordid spectacle of all these girls with their counterfeit, tired smiles, their faded, prewar dresses, their stringy blond hair and scuffed pumps. I was sorry he should glimpse so soon their overpainted faces and their greedy sucking on cigarettes. He would be in Europe for a time and I was sorry he should hear so early their flat, coarse voices and their steely laughter. He must have wondered, as I did, if these men would dance in precisely that way with their girls at home. Even while dancing, some of the men wore their caps, peaked at the ends like gondolas, set rakishly on the backs of their heads, their ties and collars loosened; some even held cigarettes in their grinning mouths.

The waitress brought our drinks and I turned again to look at Lloyd and Jim. Lloyd was saying something and while I could not persuade myself to listen, Jim, perhaps out

of some compulsion, did. It gave me a chance to get a more complete impression than had been possible at our meeting in the Koenig.

I found nothing in his appearance—no amusing trait, no characteristic expression, no peculiar mark—from which I might fashion an interesting portrait of Jim Rand. Sitting there at the table, he was, physically at least, entirely commonplace. He was rather short, with straight dark hair and small eyes, and his teeth, though white, were crooked and a few of them broken. Perhaps the only thing to distinguish him from any of the other soldiers in the cafe was his fastidiousness. Before seating ourselves I had glimpsed the lustre of his boots, and now, when he lifted his glass, I noticed the impeccable grooming of his nails. His uniform, snugly tailored, was freshly pressed, the buttons on his jacket polished and lacquered. These things seemed incongruous with his boyishness. There are a few military expressions which the vulgar might have applied to Jim's meticulousness, but I suspected they would all be unjust.

Lloyd leaned across the table toward me. "Shouldn't we tell Jim that most of these boys and girls don't stop at dancing?"

This time I was quite certain Jim blushed. I smiled at him, trying very hard not to be avuncular. "Jim knows that, Lloyd; he's no fool."

"The boys don't spend their marks for nothing," Lloyd went on. "Where the hell's that waitress? She must think we're camels."

"Do you come here often, to this place?" asked Jim. It was the first time he had spoken voluntarily.

"If we had any sense—" I began, but Lloyd interrupt-

ed: "Almost every night. We generally come here with women. You can usually find the kind you want."

"Lloyd, after all—"

"After three years in the army," Lloyd was saying, "you can get pretty damned sick of virtue. You'll see what I mean, Jim."

I wondered if Jim believed the lies Lloyd told. He passed the tip of his tongue across his lips. "I hope not," he said, quite guilelessly.

Lloyd was scrutinizing him with that twisted, amused smile. "Say, boy, you're staunchly virginal, aren't you?"

"Lloyd," I said, perhaps too sharply, "why don't you get the waitress?"

But he was still considering Jim. "I bet you've never —"

"You bet your boots I haven't."

" 'You bet your boots'—can't you put it more vigorously than that?"

"Tell the kiddies, Sergeant Pierce," I said, "how you ever learned to be such a—"

"Silence, dear boy."

"And quit saying 'dear boy'. I wouldn't blame Jim for calling you a pansy."

Lloyd arched his brow with insinuation. "I should say, offhand, that the opposite has been true."

Jim asked where the men's room was, and when he left the table, I faced Lloyd squarely. "What the hell's your racket tonight? Why are you taunting that kid?"

He lighted a cigarette and cast down the match with impatience. "Why do you take everything so seriously? I'm just having some fun."

"You can have it some other way. You don't have to

embarrass him, you don't have to make him feel like a child."

Lloyd muttered an obscenity which until now I had never heard him use. "He'll be here when we're gone. He's got to find out sooner or later what it's like. Don't you think he knows what those dames are? He's not *that* young."

I drained a glass of cognac and it must have given courage to my thoughts. Though not in the habit of criticizing Lloyd to his face, I knew for once I would. "I know what you're up to, Lloyd, and any idiot could see it. You get a nasty, cheap little satisfaction out of making Jim think you're quite the man of the world, quite the rogue."

Lloyd chuckled, a bit sardonically, I felt. "You know, Curt, in your own damnable way you're right. But if I can't deceive Jim, who *can* I deceive?" He looked at me then with an unwonted candor. "I've lived such a rigidly chaste life I'm a little sick of being considered a saint."

"Preserve us."

From the expression on his face I inferred that my remark, especially coming from an unbeliever, had not been entirely discreet. At least I should not have rolled up my eyes. It had offended and perhaps even hurt him.

"You may not realize it, Curt, and I don't usually admit it, but I've never in my life gone too far with girls. In all my life I've never—"

He was making me feel like his confessor. "You don't have to tell me these things, Lloyd. All you have to do is shut up with Jim. But I suppose no one can make you do that."

He seemed to have become suddenly grave. "As a matter of fact, Curt, I can tell you how I feel—about morals, I mean, and conscience. I'm dead serious about it, I don't believe in fooling around. I may not be very holy, very religious and all that, and I guess I'm pretty flippant sometimes, but

when it comes to conscience, I make pretty damned sure I'm on the safe side."

It made me uncomfortable to hear him talking like this in the Noncom Club, and I was relieved to see Jim making his way toward us across the floor.

"By the way," he said, when he was seated, "where can I find out about Masses?"

Brotherhood flickered across Lloyd's face. "We use the civilian church," he said. "It's a beautiful little church, Saint Boniface, near headquarters, by the river. A sort of moderate Gothic, I'd say, with functional overtones."

I suspected that to Jim it mattered naught if the church was Gothic, Romanesque, or nothing much at all. I suspected he had different uses to which he put a church.

"What time is Mass in the morning?"

"You mean Sunday?"

"No, tomorrow."

"Oh. Seven, I guess. Seven-thirty, something like that."

The waitress came to see if we would have another drink. Jim read his watch. "None for me."

"We've got plenty of time," said Lloyd. "They don't close for an hour."

"But it's after midnight, and I'm receiving."

IV

"*Guten Abend,* Elsa."

"*Guten Abend,* Herr Atvood."

I entered the room, sank onto my bed, and started to take off my boots. Lloyd was at the basin shaving. "Busy day?" he asked me.

"About the same. Club tonight?"

"Might as well."

"Jim going?"

He was splashing on his shave lotion, filling the room with a pungent fragrance. "He's making the mission."

I had been looking on the floor for my low cuts but now I glanced up at Lloyd. "The *what?*"

"The mission. You know—at the church. Three nights of pious platitudes."

"What about you?"

"I'm not the type."

V

Late in January, with Lloyd on furlough, the room, though for the first few days I had enjoyed the solitude, was a lonely place. One evening I put down my book, got into my overcoat, and passed through the dark streets to the Noncom Club. I took the only alcove that was empty. Though the orchestra was playing, only a few couples danced, the rest sitting amorously at their tables. The waitress appeared.

"Sekt, bitte."

"Bitte."

I lighted a cigarette and relaxed in the warmth of the club. Presently I saw Jim approaching my table, unsteadily. Once or twice he staggered and lurched. He had spilled something down the front of his jacket, his shirt was unbuttoned at the neck, his hair tousled. He looked ten years older than he had that evening of our meeting in October.

"H'ya, sarge." His voice was swollen and furry.

"Good to see you, Jim. Sit down."

"Can't. I've got the dame here. Where's Lloyd?"

"In London. He left on furlough a week ago."

"Hell of a swell guy."

"Hell of a swell guy," I said.

"Do anything for you. Sure shows a guy the ropes."

Suddenly his eyes became watery, as though he were going to cry. Aware of how conspicuous he must be, I tugged his sleeve and he tumbled into the chair beside mine. The waitress came with my drink, and rather to my surprise Jim reached for it clumsily and swallowed it in a gulp. We had said nothing since the panegyric on Lloyd.

"How are things at church?"

It was a disarming question, under other circumstances a joke. I did not know what to say. "I don't know, Jim."

"That's right, you're not a Catholic, are you?"

It seemed somehow heartless just to say no, such a naked word, about something which meant so much to Jim.

"But you could go to church, couldn't you, if you wanted to?" He looked at me with something I could recognize only as envy.

"I suppose I could. So could you."

He snapped out a little bitter laugh. "What good would it do, with her, with the way I'm living?"

I did not know how to be adequate. Perhaps Jim needed a word from me, perhaps just a word would help, but I could not put myself in the rôle of a moralist. The idea of my suggesting to Jim that his Mass might strengthen him struck me as incongruous and even a trifle grotesque. Moreover, he might resent it.

I noticed his woman watching us across the floor, a painted, sullen girl with lanky streaked hair and square shoulders. She was dragging deeply upon her cigarette.

Turning to Jim again, I contemplated the rent in his

life and the two hungers which opposed each other so fiercely. "You could give her up," I suggested.

The look he gave me, I cannot describe it, told me the answer.

The waitress came with more champagne and this time I lifted the glass and held it in my hand. There was no point in Jim's drinking any more. However selfish it was, I wanted him to leave; I wanted him to return to his alcove with the girl, if that was the only place he could go.

A string of saliva had spilled across his chin and onto his tie. He was looking at me with his small liquid eyes, streaked with little flashes of red. "How did everything get so damn' loused up? Curt, how the hell did everything ever get so damn' loused up?"

VI

Lloyd returned in time to sort the effects of Jim Rand. He threw all of Jim's personal things into a helmet and brought it into our room. I knew he was being careful to avoid sending to Jim's mother any memento of his recent life, any provisions from the Post Exchange which she could not, if she received them by accident, regard with indifference.

"I wish you'd tell me exactly what happened," he said.

"I've already told you twice."

"You must know something more."

I had been writing a letter at the table and now I stood up with annoyance. "I told you. He took a jeep and drove to Frankfurt—to see a girl, I suppose. He must have had a lot to drink, and I figure he left Frankfurt about midnight, and coming back on the Autobahn . . . when they found him they hardly could tell who it was."

For a time Lloyd said nothing. He was looking at

everything in the helmet, the fountain pen, the identification tags which Jim had hated to wear, the lacquered buckle for his belt. I saw Lloyd take up a small olive Bible and turn it over in his hand, and then a photograph. "Must be his mother. —You know, Curt, I feel awful about Jim, but he *had* let go of himself, hadn't he?"

Just then I could not stand looking at Lloyd another moment. I turned about sharply and stood for a time at the doors to the balcony. The sky was slate, and beyond the Parkstrasse the trees stood naked and gray with February. They were stripped and senseless things of lead. I could not believe they had once, on our arrival, been so verdant and alive.

When I turned back, it surprised me a little to see Lloyd standing at the mirror, examining the pits in his face. He swung about and faced me with a smile.

"London is almost gay," he said. "Rather different from wartime, dear boy; really quite lively and bright."

VII

A week later I was in the Louvre, contemplating the *Winged Victory*. I was glad to be away from headquarters and from Germany and glad mostly, I suppose, to be away from Lloyd. I was content now to linger in the gallery for as long as it pleased me; there was something in its vastness and its stillness which freshened my perspective and helped me to rearrange my thoughts.

As I stood against the wall, at a distance from the *Victory*, a soldier passed before me whom I knew. He was a man from headquarters, in Lloyd's section, and so slight was our acquaintance there seemed no need at all to say hello. But he turned and saw me.

He smiled genially. "Hello, sarge. How long have you been in Paris?"

I told him I had arrived the night before.

"Lloyd with you?"

"No. He had a furlough last month."

"Too bad he couldn't make it. But he's pretty conscientious and I guess it's hard for him to get away."

I said nothing. I am a man of but one talent, a capacity to face the facts, and it would have to be proved to me that Lloyd was ever too conscientious to take a furlough.

"Lloyd's okay," the man went on, "a hell of a swell guy."

His words reminded me of my last conversation with Jim Rand, and I must have smiled in that wry way which I have tried from time to time to overcome.

"What's so funny?"

"Nothing," I told him. "Nothing's ever quite so funny as it should be."

VIII

"*Guten Abend,* Elsa."

She mumbled a *Guten Abend* and came clattering down the stairs past me. When I entered the room Lloyd was writing at the table.

"Busy day?" I asked him.

He looked up and smiled. "A wonderful day."

I wondered what he meant.

When I took up my soap I noticed in the basin a bottle, lying on its side and covered with water. "What's this?"

Lloyd looked up again from his letter. "Oh—cham-

pagne. The colonel gave it to me. I thought we might have it before dinner."

He crossed the room and lifted the bottle from the basin, wrapping it in a towel; then took from the bureau two of the stemmed glasses he had filched one night in the club.

As I washed my face and hands I remembered Elsa. I took a towel, and when I turned to Lloyd he was struggling with the cork in the champagne. I did not offer to help him, experience having taught me that he resented it as a reflection upon his vigor. He told me once that when it came to his opening bottles, I could just mind my own business.

"By the way," I asked him, "what's wrong with Elsa? I just met her on the stairs and she looked like gloom itself."

"Elsa," he said pettishly. "You know, of course, when she comes in to clean up, she always stays longer than she has to. I must be a complete idiot, but I never caught on, until today." He gave a little, tired laugh. "Lord knows why, but the poor girl likes me, and just before you came she tried to seduce me."

I dropped the towel on my bed and, for something to do, crossed the room to the table. The cork popped. "And what did you do?"

He was about to pour the champagne when he looked at me with surprise. "I told her no, of course. You remember what I said that night in the club, about staying on the safe side. I thought I explained it to you."

"Is that all you said—just 'no'?"

"I was quite honest: I told her it's against my conscience."

For a moment I stared at Lloyd, then turned quite abruptly and opened the doors, welcoming like a benediction the draft of cold air.

"Hell, Curt, it's cold. Shut those damned doors."

I stepped onto the balcony and shut the doors behind me. It was cold, but for a moment, at least, I did not want to go inside. A few people hurried along the street below, and the park and the sky were bleak and gray and heavy. I felt a very fine mist against my face. My hands were clenched on the rail of the balcony. Presently the doors opened and Lloyd came out with the champagne, handing me one of the glasses.

"Is this your idea of sport?" he said.

There was nothing for me to say, nothing clever, nothing bitter, nothing wise.

"Curt, this is the perfect time for champagne. I'm celebrating. Remember I told you it's been a wonderful day? I'm going home. I got my orders this morning."

I looked at him. "Congratulations, Lloyd."

We lifted our glasses and drank.

"Remember, Curt, if you're ever in Saint Louis, look me up."

A Prayer

By Wales B. Henry, '50

Jesus, touch Thy Fingertips
To my invective laden lips
That they should praise and not defame
The utter beauty of Thy Name:
That I may feel Them always there;
That They may make each word a prayer.

Jesus, touch my sinful eyes
That I, through You, may realize
The worldly things that I behold
Are made of brass and not of gold:
That my eyes may earn the right
To view Thy Beatific Sight.

Lord, clasp Thy Fingers to my ears
That They may muffle out the jeers
Of those who urge me on to sin,
And only let Thy Whispers in,
That I may learn the Way from Thee
Of Love and Faith and Purity.

Jesus, take me by the hand
And guide me to Thy Holy Land.
God, sustain me on the way;
My Jesus, do not let me stray.

For when my goodly purpose fails,
Indeed, I deeper drive the nails
That pierced Thy gentle Hands for me,
That loved my soul and set me free.

Lord, let me kiss Thy Bloody Hands
And wash Them with my tears
That They may be as Golden Bands
To bind me through the years.

And when I leave these earthly strands
To learn Thy Plan Divine,
Then may my trusting, human hands
Be firmly clasped in Thine.

Afternoon of a Cashier

By Paul F. Fletcher, '51

I sit here in a cashier's booth
For the afternoon show;
From twelve to five, and then some more:
And I watch them come and go.

I watch the clouds on a windswept day
Skip over that dirty building,
And sometimes a gull flies over that way,
And the sun sprays its wings with gilding.

The dampness gets at my curls sometimes,
And the winter gets fresh with my legs;
And sometimes a woman complains of her change
And sometimes a poor kid begs.

I read on lazy afternoons,
When the children are quiet in school;
And fellows and girls are off at work . . .
Except when the manager fools.

But I have dreams and dreams and dreams
Of quiet country brooks,
And maybe a dream or two of *him* . . .
And how he laughs and looks.

The Big Ugly Man

By Richard R. Hartung, '51

SUDDENLY I left the street window of the café and ran to the open doorway, and stepped in. I caught the sharp odor of wine, and the atmosphere was hot and close and noisy. I stared hard through the cigarette haze and confusion. Chairs were being pushed back, people were jumping up and waving their arms and shouting, and I couldn't see his face any more.

But then they scattered quickly, as the fighting men lurched forward from the bar and crashed against a table. The big ugly man was twisting, kicking, lashing out with all his force, but he didn't have a chance against the five Frenchmen. Three were trying to hold him from behind, and another was pacing his face, and a fifth was kicking violently at his groin. Then I saw his face again, ugly and wet and smeared with blood and—yes, I was sure of it! That livid scar across the cheek and that crooked beak nose.

In spite of myself I was edging forward through the jeering crowd, which had formed in a circle around the six men. I stared intently at that face, and began to feel the same old, consuming hatred all over again. I watched that face, loathsome and bloody and contorted with pain, snapping back and forth and sideways from the Frenchmen's blows; and visions of the past that I'd tried hard to forget seemed to blend with the face and become an ugly part of it.

The big ugly man suddenly wrenched free and dashed over to a table, and picked up a chair. He held the chair

poised over his shoulder and waited, his jaw thrust out and his full lips twisted in that repulsive half-scowling smile. He could have made for the door, but he didn't budge. The people stopped jeering, and there was hardly a sound.

And it was as if I were again on watch in the bridge-house, that raging hellish day off the capes; when I stood braced on the heaving deck with my face pressed hard against the hatch window, transfixed and shocked and awed at what I saw outside. The picture of the captain out there had stayed with me for long after. And my dreams had been haunted by the big ugly man on the sea-swept bridge wing, leaning far out over the rail and silhouetted against a dark overcast sky; thrusting out his jaw toward the white mountain of sea and foam, and his ugly face twisted in hatred, and mockery, and defiance.

That picture had grown old and stale with time. But now it was vivid again as the man stood there in the cafe—defiantly, mockingly—and waited, and smiled. I stood at the edge of the crowd and watched the five Frenchmen move in, and watched him; and I wondered why I gave a damn, and what the sam-hell I was about to do.

Then suddenly there was a short metallic scraping noise, and a woman screamed, and something glittered in the tall Frenchman's hand.

All at once I picked up a chair and heaved it hard at the tall Frenchman. And before I realized it I was beside the ugly man, and bracing myself, and swinging a broken bottle with all my might. Everything converged, and I was caught tight in the midst of bobbing heads and twisting bodies and swinging fists and gouging fingers. I got free and lashed out hard, and was caught again, and then free again; trying to

stay free, shifting, turning, kicking chairs in front of me, swinging and slugging with all I had.

I was mad, mad as hell, and the blood on the jagged end of my bottle made me madder. I knew I was backing up and could feel people trying to get out of my way. Something was gripping at my arms, something else was smashing upward and knocking my head back, and I had quick painful glimpses of shadows on the ceiling.

I backed against something hard and even, and I knew it was the wall. I could feel *him* slugging it out beside me, and heard him cursing in that guttural tone of his, and I could almost see that smile, still on his battered face.

My arms grew tired and I felt numb all over. I clutched at the strong hands gripping my throat, and brought my knee around to block the kicking, and grabbed at the fist that kept slamming into my face, and tried desperately to keep my head down. I could see faces close in the background, smiling faces and laughing faces and bearded faces and pretty faces, with red lipstick and platinum-blonde hair and black berets and black pipes. And then everything blurred together, and all the noises merged in a far-off din.

* * * * *

Outside it was cold and damp, and the narrow street was dark. I told them I was all right now, so they let go of my wrists and got out from under my shoulders. I was bleeding badly, and shivering, and the chill air bit into the open wounds on my face. I hurt all over and couldn't see out of one eye. The man in a police uniform spoke to me in broken English and asked where my ship was. I said Pier 16, and another man said something in French to the cab-driver. I got in and sprawled on the back seat.

point your finger at and say, we'll do this or that and then everything will be all right. She was a safe ship with safe cargo, riding a safe sea to a safe destination. But she was guided by a big ugly man.

And as I lay there on the floor of the cab, I pondered what there was about the man that kindled such an odd mixture of fear and hate and—respect; about a man whom one can detest, and at the same time risk his life for in a filthy barroom fight; a man you can hate and fear and yet—not really know.

He was a big powerful man. But although he wasn't deformed, every bit of his power seemed to blend with an ugly disproportion of frame. He was always hunched way over like an ape, as if his massive chest were too much a burden, and his long, thick hairy arms added to an impression of unleashed animal strength. But this impression was offset by his face. For although it was twisted and scarred and centered with full sneering lips, it was ruled by a pair of intelligent eyes; deep eyes that penetrated everything they saw, that spoke of a capable but brooding intellect, and seemed to guide and temper every motion of the man's animal-like body.

But it wasn't his physical ugliness that struck fear into the hearts of mature men. I used to watch him pace the bridgedeck; he'd slouch back and forth from wing to wing, hours on end, and it was as if every muscle of his body were being inwardly withheld from some act of passionate violence. He never talked to anyone on watch, except to mutter an order, and he was always staring intently out to sea and at the sky. He'd glare forever at the sparkling ocean beyond the rail or across the heaving bows, or up at a brilliant sun above the swaying crosstrees, or a clear heaven flaked with stars in the tropical night; and no matter where he looked, his face

The car lurched forward and clattered over the cobblestones. My body was tense, and I gritted my teeth against the seatcover. What the hell had I done? *Why* did I do it? *Why, why*?—in heaven's name! The cab-driver said something and I realized I was saying "Why?" out loud.

I closed my eyes, but it was no good. I covered them with my swollen fists, but that didn't do any good either. It wouldn't shut out the memories. Vivid memories of a ship in tropical waters two years ago.

The jolting taxi slanted upwards along a crude bridge leading to the dock area across the Seine, and I heard the mournful wail of a ship's whistle somewhere in the distance. We reached the summit of the bridge, and then I was thrown to the floor as the car lurched down toward the opposite bank of the river. I just lay there on the floor with my fists clenched, staring up into the darkness of the cab and tasting blood as it ran down my face; and trying hard not to think about that ship two years ago, and its ugly detested captain.

That ship. Outwardly just like any other freighter at sea—holding steady course with her cargo hatches stuffed black with coal; changing watch every 4 hours, day and night, to the regular piping of a mate's whistle; washing down fore and aft each day under a blazing tropical sun; and the ceaseless throb of her engines blending softly with a sizzling of sea past the waterline, like any other ship. Clean and well-disciplined, too.

But she was too quiet and uneasy, and smouldering with fear below decks, as she slid on through the tropical sea. A strange kind of fear—one that couldn't be easily explained or traced to normal causes. There was no impending menace or threat, or even remote danger; anyway, nothing you could

was convulsed with the most horrible expression of bitterness and hate and defiance I have ever seen in man.

The 3rd Engineer said the captain lost his shirt in the depression and had never lived it down. Others would tell, from hearsay, about the time he watched his only son lashed to a stanchion and slowly drawn-and-quartered, by pirates off the China coast; he did all that drinking in his cabin, they said, because often at night the boy's screams would echo still in his ears. And men whispered in the fo'c'sles that the Old Man was possessed by the Devil and hated all creation, and that he was "getting back" at God for making him ugly.

As long as I live, I'll never cease to wonder at what the skipper did that day off the capes. We'd just been lashed hard on the starboard by 80-knot winds—I had the late afternoon watch with him in the bridgehouse—and mad hell was breaking loose all over the ship. She was already swinging at 40 degrees, and a hurricane sea was roaring in on the wings outside. I stood braced on the shaking deck with my arms clutched around the engine telegraph, yelling at the two wheelmen and waiting desperately for the crazy fool to order "reduce speed".

The Old Man stood unsupported at the bridge-window, hunched over and bracing himself easily against each slanting lurch of the ship. His long, hairy arms hung down limply from a wet undershirt—he never wore foul-weather gear or a life jacket—and he was like a gorilla ready to lunge through the window. Every time we pitched forward, a mountain of sea would come thundering against the thick glass before him, and his ugly face was contorted in a sneer.

I waited and waited for the order to reduce speed, wondering just how much the damn fool thought she could take at this pace; and it maddened me to see him standing there so

strong and steady without any support, when I had all I could do to hang on. The two helmsmen were falling all over each other as they strained frantically against the wheel, and our compass scale took a holiday. The heaving deck shook hard and there was a hollow pounding all over the ship, as she slammed this way and that into the raging ocean. He just stood there by the window, weaving back and forth and sneering at the hurricane, and finally I could hold my tongue no longer.

"1/3 speed, cap'n?" I yelled.

The next moment he was hovering over me by the compass, legs wide apart and fists clenched. He looked awful, standing there before me in the grey dimness of the bridgehouse.

"Full ahead," he said.

I thought I was hearing things. But the order was clear enough—clear and emphatic in that guttural tone of his.

"Captain! What the hell——"

He took a step towards me, and his face was ghastly in the dim light of the compass scale—ugly with crazy hate and defiance.

"Full ahead." This time he whispered it, barely audible.

Above all I remember his eyes, deep and strong and defiant, and staring right through me as I hesitated over the engine telegraph.

I said a prayer as I shoved the lever to top speed, and the r-r-r-ring of the telegraph could just be heard above the roaring din outside. Presently the engine room phone rang urgently, and I knew that down there they thought I'd made a mistake, but I couldn't look away from his eyes to answer it.

That evening the Chief Engineer stumbled into the bridgehouse, yelling that two of his men had been injured be-

low and what in the name of hell did we think this was anyway. But he suddenly stopped short when he saw the big shadowy form at the window; and there was a strange fear in his eyes, as he turned and groped his way back into the lighted companionway. The Chief Engineer had sailed with the captain before.

Bless that ship. She took a constant, terrific beating all night, and well into the next day, as she plunged on wildly through the towering seas. She seemed to be under water most of the time, lurching frantically for air and screaming in protest to the merciless 120-knot winds that lashed her on all sides. The wheel watches tried desperately to put the sea on our quarter and keep it there, but under such speed it was no use. Davits were smashed and the starboard boats carried away; boom rigging was crushed and scattered up forward; and throughout the night, there was a terrible splitting all over the ship as heavy sea crashed against metal plating. We all knew that her steady full headway, in such a sea, was suicidal. But nobody said anything.

For sixteen long hours, the old man hardly budged from his position at the bridge-window. Once during the night, shortly before my relief, he came out of his trance and left the bridge for fifteen minutes. When he returned there was a revolver on his hip, and I caught a strong odor of whiskey. He relapsed into his strange spell by the window, swaying back and forth and staring insanely into the pitch blackness beyond, and no one went near him all night.

And I loathed him for it. For what? He never harmed me as an individual, or anyone else I know; he seemed to be above personal malice. True, he almost killed us all by

diving that ship through a hurricane sea at top speed—an unheard-of, fantastic thing to do. But he didn't intend maliciously to endanger anyone's life. His malignant defiance, or what you will, seemed to be against the hurricane—absurd and unreasonable as it sounds; against the hurricane on the other side of the bridge-window.

Yes, I loathed him. But what is it that might accompany hate for such a man? Fear? Awe? Respect?

I'll never forget those endless nights in a hot, stagnant sea off the equator. Lying awake on a sweat-soaked bunk and hating the captain, and hopelessly wondering why. Lying awake one night, tense and staring hard into the sultry darkness of my cabin, and hating the captain with all my soul and being; suddenly a dim flickering light in the cabin from heat lightning outside, the dark contour of my 45 revolver on the bulkhead; and then—lunging out of bed, wrenching the gun off the wall and pitching it with all my might through the open port; hearing it splash in the smooth sizzling sea below and standing there in the darkness, shaking all over and horrified at the thought.

And so, aboard that ship in the middle of nowhere, I had learned what it really is to hate and fear, without knowing exactly why it was that I hated and feared. It had nothing to do with any personal ties between me and the big ugly man, because none existed. I never knew him—nobody could possibly know him—and he didn't care to know me; except as his 3rd Mate, that is, without name or personality. And it couldn't have been his physical, natural ugliness, for that was merely repulsive.

There was an inner ugliness about the man. It could be seen in his eyes—in his deep, brooding eyes—which

penetrated everything they saw with mockery, and defiance, and contempt.

But I think it was sensed, or felt, more than anything. I could feel in this man an ugly, pent-up bitterness against all that existed—something unreasonable and terrible inside him, and controlled only by his strong intellect and will. A bitterness against the world.

The big ugly man seemed to have a kind of hatred and contempt for everything. For his ship and the men aboard her; and the sea which I love, with its strange beauty and charm and power, and its thousand different moods; contempt for the winds that rule the sea, and the sky above it, and the sun and moon and stars. For God.

* * * * *

And yet I'd helped the big ugly man in need. I had fought for him—right at his side—in a dirty French café on the other side of the world, against five Frenchmen I'd never even seen before; fully aware of the odds, and knowing that I would probably never see him again or be thanked by anyone. Why?

The cab had stopped, and the driver was yelling to someone in French. I was on the floor still bleeding, too weak to look out the window, and I didn't care anyway. I was still muttering "Why?", and the word had a gargling sound as I spit blood.

Then there were quick footsteps and the loose rattling of gangway chains, and voices. They were familiar voices, friendly and American, and I tried hard to lift myself off the floor. The door opened, and suddenly I was gripped by strong arms. Somebody growled "Easy!" as they lifted me out of the car.

I was being held up in front of a bright lighted gangway, and friendly faces were all around me. Then the faces and gangway lights all blurred together.

When I came to, on the bunk in my cabin, the friendly faces were still there. I'd been stripped to the waist and bandaged all over, and there was an odor of merthiolate and alcohol. The purser was ripping adhesive tape, as Sparks put the finishing touches where a knife had knicked my left arm. Others smiled down at me, inquiring how I felt. They asked me what had happened—where, when, how—and I told them briefly about the fight in the café. They asked more questions, and I told more of the fight.

Then came the damn question I'd been frantically asking myself. They waited in silence for an answer, and there was a steady, slow dripping of water somewhere outside. Finally, I said I didn't know why.

Debut

ROBERT BECK, '53, whose story, "The Bronze Candlestick", appears on page 46, is a graduate of La Salle Academy. Mr. Beck is an arts major, and is concentrating in social science.

Clarke's Green, Clarke's Summit

By Paul F. Fletcher, '51

Clarke's Green, Clarke's Summit,
One a little township, one its satellite;
Willows, willows, heartstrings strum it!
Through the joys of Spring to the quiv'ring Northern Lights.

Aeons past when earth was younger,
Giants roamed its maiden strands.
One called Pocono wooed her, sung her,
Died and lay on Penn's fair lands.

Maiden earth this giant loved dear,
Lavished with kisses and hot tears,
Even kept his body whole here;
The Pocono range of modern years.

Nestled close to hear his sleeping,
Set upon his nether lip,
Clarke's Green, Clarke's Summit
'Neath his murm'ring gently dip.

On Summer nights when parched deers venture
To the watershed's algae shore,
Pheasants whir and peepers censure,
And lightning summons the giant's snore.

Clarke's Green, Clarke's Summit

Pocono, I've seen your quilt-work,
Down the valleys, on the hills,
Threaded by a patchwork clever . . .
Proven fences closer still.

I have watched at night your valleys,
Stared down at the blackest voids,
Then a light would cross a threshhold,
Light the orchards blossom-buoyed.

Glimm'ring green of hemlocks silvered
By the beeches and the birch,
Rivulets and hawthorne's crimson
Skirt the hillocks, lone hearts search.

Clarke's Green, Clarke's Summit,
One a little township, one its satellite;
Willows, willows, heartstrings strum it!
Through the joys of Spring to the quiv'ring Northern Lights.

Request

By Wales B. Henry, '50

A bit of sadness, a bit of gladness,
A house and a bed and a pot of peas,
A shaggy dog and a burning log—
Most people are content with these.

A nice long twirl with a loving girl
And a Buick complete with anti-freeze
And a nip of rye and a roving eye—
That's my order, if you please.

Centennial Communion

By Charles F. Wooley, '50

1849—And into the hills of California came a race of men with mud-covered boots, shining picks and shovels, a feverish look in their eyes . . .

1949—And down from the hills of North China came a race of men with mud-covered boots, shining American rifles, and a feverish look in their eyes—tramping into the fourth largest city in the world . . .

Advertisements in bold type announced, "103 days to San Francisco, aboard the elegant and famous clipper ship 'Reporter'," while other ships, the "Atlanta", "Midnight", "Creole", and the "Aurora" made like claims. Men of all professions, and men of none, dropped their duties, and formed companies that were California bound. Some 90,000 persons answered the challenge in '49 alone—The challenge contained mockingly in the cries of "Gold!", and "California Ho!"

The scene soon became one of thousands tracking across the plains and mountains, with ox-teams and on foot; while other thousands crossed the isthmus, with tropical disease and heat-drenched jungles as added hazards. Around the horn, in Magellan's shadow, and up the coast of South America passed a steady procession of ships, on past Mexico to the new El Dorado.

Time's glass lost its sand in 1849, and it was easily replaced with gold. Yerba Buena became San Francisco (officially), and while Gen. Zachary Taylor was being inaugurated, the Apache and Navajo nations rose in defiance against

adduce all the contingent evils that have resulted from the matter, but forget that they cannot divine the hidden purpose of Divine Providence, that has revealed the hidden wealth of the earth to man's eyes. It seems to have been reserved till this day, as one important auxiliary in bringing the whole world under the influence of civilization and religion." This was 1849.

One hundred years is a long time, simply because a lot of people have lived and died, their lives separate or interwoven, as their destinies would have it. History tells much, conceals, or fails to know much more—We know of disasters and social upheavals, war and carnage, births and deaths. The slave is free, Lincoln is dead; so too are Gandi, Edison, and millions of other men. The airplane is a reality, just as a labor union, the Communist, the State of Oklahoma and the two-piece bathing suits are realities. Kipling has written, along with Tolstoy and Mark Twain—a thousand other pens have cried out for recognition, hatred, humor, love, and a good five-cent cigar. Freud has established his pattern of internal conflicts, Marx has been content to develop the external social conflicts; both have left indelible stigmas upon society. Pershing and Rommel fought wars, so did MacArthur and Admiral Dewey. The Nobel Prize, the Iron Cross, the movies' Oscar, —all became coveted awards, and now electricity darts through the world's veins, psychiatry probes the world's mind, Spam feeds the world's belly.

And this much we know; but what of that we do not find in history books? Mine is a young mind, and it has questions—and this is a challenge to the age and the wisdom of our world, our exalted civilization—questions that, like an aged blind man, search gropingly, hopefully, pitifully,—for the answers, in terms of truth.

Where are the new worlds to conquer? Can't a man look for new horizons to explore without a Ph.D. in Bacteriology, a command of electronics, or a knowledge of Einstein's Physics? Where are the bold, new faces, jutting jaws protruding into the bright and glorious future—or wasn't there ever such a thing? Who will command Magellan's crafts, climb Pike's Peak, rededicate the field of Gettysburg? Who will stand trial for the millions of Chinese who were to wallow in plenty, while Europe and Asia starve—lying hungrily in a thousand gutters, searching vainly through a thousand garbage dumps?

We've built our walls; from Jericho to the subways of today; enclosing, tunnelling, limiting, protecting, reserving, blocking; the Great Wall of China, the Dikes of Holland, high-walled Boulder Dam. But where can we build new walls, what is there left to block off? You can't wall people—Hitler tried with the Jews; by 1949, he had returned to the slime from which he came, his Jews had formed their own nation. You can't wall off ideas, not while man has a free will, with which to burrow under these walls. We've walled in everything worth having—give a man a plot, and immediately up goes a hedge, a fence, a wall. We've walled in our cities, our principles, our treasures—what else is there to enclose, to isolate and let die—where will you go now to build your walls?

The Interview

By Richard R. Hartung, '51

"COME in."

I opened the door and went in. The captain was hunched over in a swivel chair, and the cabin smelled of liquor. He looked up, and his head swayed slightly.

"Sit down, Mr. Hartung."

I dropped some papers on the desk, and sat down on a settee under the porthole.

"The 'Deceased' forms," I said.

"When d'it happen?" he murmured tonelessly.

"Last night."

"Where?"

"Café de Paris."

"Knife?"

"Yeah."

There was a long silence. The captain was staring at the deck, and his arm hung limply over the back of his chair. His face had a queer, sort of tortured, expression, and his eyes looked blood-shot. I crossed my legs uneasily and looked away. I heard the rumble of a cargo winch back aft, and the cabin vibrated a little.

"Seen the Agents?" he asked hoarsely.

"Yeah."

"Take care of everything?"

"Everything, Cap'n."

"The body?"

"The coffin'll be on the dock at 2:00, just before we let go."

"Tell 'em to use #1 winch; I want it lashed way up forward."

"Right."

There was another pause. His head had dropped forward and his chin was resting on his breast, and he seemed almost unaware of my presence. There was a loud sliding sound outside on the pier, and some coal dust flew in through the open port and fell on the settee.

"See about a replacement?" he asked.

"Yeah. American Consul sent one over. I saw 'im at the Agents' this morning; signed 'im on as 2nd Mate."

"Okay," he sighed.

He straightened up, and swung the chair around, and put his elbows on the desk, and covered his face with his hands. I got up and went toward the door.

"Uh, Mr. Hartung."

"Yes?"

"Got his gear together?"

"Yeah."

"Bring it up to me," he said softly.

"Yes, Sir."

He glanced down at the papers. "Where does the 'next of kin' signature go?"

"At the bottom," I said.

"Got a pen?"

The Bronze Candlestick

By Robert J. Beck, '53

IN the living room of the Peterson farmstead is a huge, stone fireplace. The fireplace is topped by an equally huge mantle in the center of which stands a bronze candlestick. This candlestick is unique in design, a pig standing on its hind legs and holding a yellow candle in its mouth. Not a usual pig, but a fantastic and grotesque impression of a pig. It is obvious that the candlestick is not one of a pair or a set, but is complete in itself. And there it stands, the sole occupant of that huge mantle, like some kind of pagan idol holding the most prominent place in the household.

More than one person has "Oh'd" or "Ah'd" upon entering the living room and seeing the pig candlestick for the first time. And on such an occasion Mrs. Peterson usually smiles, seats herself in an overstuffed chair by the fireplace and looks up at the candlestick.

"That's Johnny's" she says, with just a hint of motherly pride in her voice.

Johnny is the youngest of Mrs. Peterson's four boys, and is different from his three brothers. Somehow he doesn't seem to fit in with farm family life nor farm routine.

Farming is hard work. It requires a great deal of physical energy on the part of everyone concerned, from the father down to the last youngster. The operation of the Peterson farm is in no way different from that of any other farm. Every member of the family has his alloted chores to do. Johnny, being the youngest in the family (he is sixteen), has lighter chores than his three brothers. But even the lesser work of farming is hard for Johnny. Not that he is physically unable

to do the work nor that he is lazy. He just can't seem to keep his mind on work long enough to finish a task.

Of course Johnny's brothers resent this trait in their younger brother. He is a constant target for their rebuke because they have to finish his work for him. His father, too, loses patience with him and privately to Mrs. Peterson, calls him an "adle-pated lazy-bones". Mrs. Peterson defends Johnny mildly, saying that he's not lazy, he's just different from the other boys, to which her husband says, "Fiddlesticks".

For a short time last fall Johnny's father and three brothers thought that he had at last learned to "stir his stumps" as they put it. It was at harvest time and the Petersons were making preparations for the annual Fair. Mrs. Peterson was canning peaches and small fruit for exhibition at the Fair; Joe, the oldest son, was grooming his purebred heifer to enter in the cattle exhibit; Peter and Paul were working together on a poultry exhibit; Mr. Peterson was making ready an exhibit of garden produce. Johnny had no project. The rest of the family urged him to do something and his brothers heckled him about being too lazy.

So Johnny decided he *would* enter something at the Fair. He hunted around in his mind for something to do and decided to enter something in woodcraft. Mr. Peterson, upon learning of Johnny's decision, got the material for him and even loaned him his best tools. Johnny started to make a fancy smoking stand. He laid out a piece of wood ready to cut. A spider dropped down from a rafter and began to weave a web in the angle of a two-by-four stud.

Fair day arrived. The Petersons were up early and loading their exhibits into the truck. Johnny was in the workshop and when everything was about ready, Mr. Peterson went to hustle Johnny and his exhibit along. But Johnny had no

exhibit. Mr. Peterson hustled Johnny to the truck in disgust. Johnny felt bad about the whole thing.

At the Fair while the rest of the family were setting up their exhibits, Johnny wandered around the grounds looking at all the other exhibits being set up. At the 4-H section he looked at the handiwork of the other youngsters. He didn't think any of them remarkable—nothing he couldn't do himself if he wanted to. That bird house, for instance. Or that model birch-bark canoe. Simple. Anybody could do that.

He thought of his own project, the fancy smoking stand. If he had only finished it. He thought of the spider and the fascinating way in which it had put together the network of its web. He thought of other things which he had intended to do but never got around to doing. Even his everyday work. Yesterday for instance, he had left the hen mash half mixed when he saw a flock of geese flying south, and Paul had to finish the job. Maybe, he thought, his brothers were right. Maybe he *was* lazy. Maybe he *couldn't* do anything. But he *could*—if he wanted to.

Johnny found himself at the booth where applications were being taken for one of the contests to be held that day. He didn't have an exhibit but he could enter a contest.

Late in the afternoon Johnny approached the rest of the family gathered at the truck making ready to leave for home. In his arms he had the pig candlestick. The family wanted to know where he had got it.

"Won it," said Johnny.

"Won it?" they exclaimed in unison.

"Yup. In the greased pig contest."

Mr. Peterson and Johnny's three brothers were incredulous. They had to go to the contest office to find out if it was true. Johnny, left alone with Mrs. Peterson, said:

"I did, Mom, honest."

Mrs. Peterson looked knowingly at Johnny and smiled, and with a hint of motherly pride, said:

"I know you did, Johnny."

So the candlestick occupies the place of honor on the big mantle over the fireplace in the living room of the Peterson home. Mr. Peterson and Johnny's three brothers insist on it being there "as a symbol of the only darn thing Johnny ever did in his whole life."

Mrs. Peterson smiles and tells visitors:

"That's Johnny's."

Barfly

By WALES B. HENRY, '50

"My friend, here, will have a bracer;
A double scotch, with a cold beer chaser.
My friend's name? Oh, I don't know.
I think he said his name was Joe.
'What's in a name?' I always say;
I meet a new friend every day.
As for myself, I'll have some gin
With a dash of salt and some mint thrown in.
So here's the bill! Well curse the luck!
Hey, Joe! Give me another buck.
You know, bartender, it's awful funny
I should forget to bring my money.
Oh no, Joe hasn't gone too far.
I think he just fell under the bar."

"Two Angels Fought with Bill-Hooks for His Soul"

A Critique on the Work of Robert Lowell

By Wales B. Henry, '50

THE sum and substance of thirty-year old Robert Lowell's poetic work might well be expressed in the sentence which I have chosen for my title; the closing line of his gloom-ridden poem, "The Soldier". Perhaps one of the most outstanding themes of this newly arrived poet is his deep meditation on the uncertain position of mankind caught between the Eternal reward, on the one hand, and the Eternal damnation, on the other. The recipient of the Pulitzer Prize Award for Poetry in 1947, Lowell comes from a venerable Boston family to whom the plaudits of the *literati* are no unfamiliar echo. He can claim James Russell Lowell as his great-grand-uncle and the well-read Amy Lowell as his cousin. Educated at Harvard University and Kenyon College, he developed an acute literary interest which was to be reflected in his later work. Lowell has more than a passive hatred for war and this resulted in his being a conscientious objector during World War II for which he was sentenced to five months in prison. His works have appeared in *Partisan Review, The Sewanee Review, The Kenyon Review, The Nation, Common Sense, Portfolio, Foreground, The Commonweal, Poetry, The Virginia Quarterly* and in a small, limited volume published by the Cummington Press entitled *Land of Unlikeness.* His only major work is a collection of forty-two poems under the title *Lord Weary's Castle* for which he received the aforementioned Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1947.

Lowell is not easy to read, but he is conducive to study for he presents subjects and matter that one feels are worth while "digging out" even though the digging may be a laborious process. However, it becomes impossible to read his work without becoming ingrained with some of the pessimism and desperation with which the author views his mode of life. This may render the total result of a knowledge of Lowell distressing and lessen the vigor of the final reward. To share his desperation would be fatal, but to know it for what it is and to understand the reasons behind it offer a goal that might be well worth attaining. If we were to feel that man is but the lineal descendant of a Cain glorified by modern society and that Abel remains forever the forgotten victim of his brother's duplicity we might well appreciate the theme of Lowell's work. But to feel that Abel is entitled to the just retribution of an Almighty God, as we do believe, gives us a safe perspective from which to view the work of this gloomy young poet. The realization that man is not the evil beast that he might be, only the occasional transgressor of the law of God and certainly destined for an Eternal Reward gives us a bulwark against which to brace ourselves when we read the shrill invective which Lowell hurls at humanity in general and his own Boston milieu in particular. One is reminded of the apprehended culprit cursing society, not so much because he is caught by the law, but because the law is the representative of all he rebels against. Lowell is not alone in his cries against contemporary society, yet he is unusual in that he cries so loud and so long.

The critic, Randell Jarrell, says of his work:

> "The poems understand the world as a sort of conflict of opposites. In this struggle one opposite is that cake of custom in which all of us lie embedded like lungfish—the stasis

> or inertia of the complacent self, the satisfied persistence in evil that is damnation. In this realm of necessity the poems place everything that is closed, turned inward, incestuous, that blinds or binds: The Old Law, imperialism, materialism, capitalism, Calvinism, Authority, the Father . . . But struggling within this . . . is everything that is free or open, that grows or is willing to change; here is the generosity or willingness or openness that is itself salvation; here is accessibility to experience, this is the realm of freedom, of the Grace that has replaced the Law, of the perfect liberator whom the poet calls Christ."

It is because of these two opposites that the poems have the structural necessity of moving from the "open" to the "closed" or from the "closed" to the "open". Since Lowell believes that his world is composed of a constant battle, as it were, between the human will and the desire to free one's self from the constrictions imposed by a superficial society, on the one hand, and any kind of solid faith, on the other, this form comes of necessity. The people, events or currents of Lowell's poems move in a constant pattern between constriction or breaking forth into self-assertion. In "The North Sea Undertaker's Complaint" we find evidence of the movement from the open to the closed inasmuch as the immediate desire for good and the freedom symbolized in the movement South comes to an abrupt and unforeseen closure with the introduction of the cripple and

> . . . the martyrdom
> Of one more blue-lipped priest . . .

"In Memory of Arthur Winslow" depicts a steady movement from closure to openness signified by the release of the once young Arthur from the trials of this earth through the medium of death by cancer. It is fortunate that many of the poems of Lowell move from the closed to the open structure, else we might find the air of tragedy and depression al-

most insufferable. Notwithstanding this fact, the constant theme of death, despair and hopelessness constitute a burden to the reader which is seldom alleviated.

If it is, indeed, true, that the Cabots speak only to the Lowells and the Lowells speak only to God, young Robert Lowell must have a ready access to the ear of the Deity, for he displays a remarkable comprehension and knowledge of the spiritual and bespeaks more than an ordinary interest in the supernatural. His themes are divided between New England and Catholicism, Calvinism, Puritanism, and the stern Father of the Old Testament. Always there is some representation of his native environment; always there is reference to God. Lowell is a Catholic. He is a convert to the faith which perhaps is most radically opposed to the stern tenets of his Calvinist forefathers. His God, *now,* is the merciful Deity rather than the all-Just. But throughout his poems we can find the constant reference to the Calvinist God and the hell-fires that burned so brightly in the not too-distant past. He is influenced in his Catholicism by the background of Calvinism. God the Son is the benevolent God of the New Testament—God the Father is yet the violent and just King.

Of his Puritan ancestors he stands somewhat aghast, seeing through their smallness and feeling their tight-fisted religious ways:

> Pilgrims unhouseled by Geneva's night,
> They planted here the Serpent's seeds of light;
> And here the pivoting searchlights probe to shock
> The riotous glass houses built on rock,

Cannot one almost see these erstwhile "Children of Light" living in their glass houses, hurling stones, practically defying any manner of retribution whilst they hypocritically condemn and deride their neighbors. Let us follow Lowell

hypocrisy. Boston can be frozen, frozen to the extent that even the "serpents whistle at the cold".

Lowell finds in his city a Puritan people that are a hardy but outbred stock. He has little of emotion for his ancestors. He analyzes them, he does not sympathize with them. We wonder if this lack of sympathy shows any real poetic substance after all, any justification for using the poetic form for the use he has put it to. Is the loss of the New Englander's source of power, their faith, a fitting subject for the poet's pen? Yet even when Lowell chastizes his Bostonians in "Where the Rainbow Ends" he finishes with a note of hope:

> . . . What can the dove of Jesus give
> You now but wisdom, exile? Stand and live,
> The dove has brought an olive branch to eat.

Lowell hates war. It is that same hatred which made him a conscientious objector in the past war and which is reflected in his poems on or about the war. They are numerous and for me they were among his best. "The Exile's Return" depicts conditions under which almost all hope must be abandoned. It tells of the sordid mechanications concerned with war and the void they leave behind. It makes war empty and unkind:

> The search-guns click and spit and split up timber
> And nick the slate roofs on the Holstenwall
> Where torn-up tilestones crown the victor . . .

and again:

> . . . guns unlimber
> And lumber down the narrow gabled street
> Past your gray, sorry and ancestral house.

It is a place where you will not see,

> Strutting children or meet
> The peg-leg and reproachful chancellor
> With a forget-me-not in his button-hole
> When the unseasoned liberators roll
> Into the Market Square . . .

"Two Angels Fought with Bill-Hooks for His Soul"

Lowell tells of his cousin, Warren Winslow, whose ship was torpedoed in the North Atlantic, and this is perhaps one of the best poems in the book. Lowell describes the recovery of the body:

> Light flashed from his matted head and marble feet,
> He grappled at the net
> With the coiled, hurdling muscles of his thighs:
> The corpse was bloodless, a botch of reds and whites,
> Its open, staring eyes
> Were lusterless dead-lights
> Or cabin windows on a stranded hulk
> Heavy with sand . . .

And as we read on into "The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket" we find the burial at sea of this unfortunate sailor:

> . . . We weigh the body, close
> Its eyes and heave it seaward whence it came,
> Where the heel-headed dogfish barks its nose
> On Ahab's void and forehead: and the name
> Is blocked in yellow chalk . . .
>
> . . . ask for no Orphean lute
> To pluck life back. The guns of the steeled fleet
> Recoil and then repeat
> The hoarse salute.

And then, through the rest of the poem we find the reference to another Nantucket sailor, another tragic figure of the sea, Ahab, the whaler captain of Moby Dick—and we see an influence of Herman Melville (who is mentioned by name in "Christmas Eve Under Hooker's Statue"):

> . . . Sailor, can you hear
> The Pequod's sea wings, beating landward, fall
> Headlong and break on our Atlantic wall
> . . . where the bones
> Cry out in the long night for the hurt beast
> Bobbing by Ahab's whaleboats in the East.

In "Salem", Lowell returns to the sea again with a loud lament for the dead sailors and for the past greatness of Salem. There are three main pictures in this poem, each interrelated and yet each separate and distinct. In the first four lines Lowell pictures for us a sailor, asleep and dreaming as he holds the knitting needles in his hand and half-automatically works them. Then, as is Lowell's way in many of his poems, the scene suddenly shifts and we see a drowned seaman floating in the oil slick around his torpedoed ship. Lowell then passes, in the same vein of death, into the image of Charon dumping his damned goods, the "sewage which sickens the rebellious seas" (the bodies of dead sailors) and finally swings back, in his final image to reminisce on the past glory of Salem. It is a poem of great imagery, but it is disjointed, unrelated and thoroughly morbid. Also, the words "British Lion" in the last line of the sonnet have a tendency to be trite.

In "The Dead in Europe" Lowell injects a real Catholic feeling. In a highly graphic and suggestive order and with interspersions of such good radical figures as "hugger-mugger" and "jellied-fire", Lowell tells of the trapped victims of the bombing raids, telling how the dead ask the intercession of Mary, not now, because they are dead, but at the day of Resurrection. The line, "Our sacred earth in our day was our curse" can be accorded two interpretations; either the fear of the dead that they will be denied Heaven because they were not buried in sacred ground, or a more plausible explanation —they were finally crushed and died by and in the earth they valued so much in life (temporal things). And in his last stanza Lowell gives his own offering and expresses his fear that the world is the worse, not only for the chaos of war, but for the immorality and lack of religious aspiration. Once again the individual soul has lost his battle against the inertia and

complexities of the world gone mad. We are left with the distressed feeling that perhaps there is no hope and our sacred earth in our day *is* our curse.

There are places where Lowell departs from the allegorical and faces life with a stark realism that is somewhat apart from the general tone of the rest of his poetry. If it is a venture into the school of stark realism it is one that he had best be done and over with for it detracts from the general tone of his work and drags it down to a level that might be called sensual or at least amoral. Consider these lines in comparison with the rest of his work:

> It must have been a Friday. I could hear
> The top-floor typist's thunder and the beer
> That you brought in cases hurt my head;
> I'd sent the pillows flying from my bed,
> I hugged my knees together and I gasped.
> The dangling telephone receiver rasped
> Like someone in a dream who cannot stop
> For breath or logic till his victim drop
> To darkness and the sheets . . .
>
> I sat at a gold table with my girl
> Whose eyelids burn with brandy. What a whirl
> Of Easter eggs is colored by the lights,
> As the Norwegian dancer's crystalled tights
> Flash with her naked leg's high-booted skate,
> Like Northern Lights upon my watching plate.
>
> The whiskey circulates, until I smash
> The candelabrum from the mantel's top,

Certainly this is not the stuff of which great poetry is made; it is more the superficial rantings of a poet like Thomas Benton, well read in a "slick" like *Esquire* and on the best seller lists for his cheap pornography, especially that "master-

piece" *This Is My Beloved.* Its inclusion adds nothing to Lowell, but in my estimation takes away much, inasmuch as it stood out as being out of context with the tone of his writing.

To say that Lowell is difficult is an understatement. His imagery and allegory do more to hide his message than they do to reveal it. If the themes he is trying to express are difficult, he does nothing to lessen the difficulty by clouding the issue to such an extent that the reader is forced to concentrate on two or more supposed ideas and still be left wondering if he has approximated the original thought of the author. His allegorical method becomes immediately evident to us even as we read the title of his book for this too is allegory. Some of his poems, "Winter in Dumbarton", "Mary Winslow", "The Soldier", "The North Sea Undertaker's Complaint", and the poem "Salem" which I have endeavored to explain are clearly the product of an entirely allegorical method. He has a certain subtlety, to be sure, but sometimes I am convinced that he has overdone it and his subtlety has become a curtain which completely hides the message he is trying to effect. We also find, when we read Lowell, that the total effect of a single allegory or a single image has a tendency to strike us with an impact that is out of keeping with the tenure of the poem. In line with this we find also, that this emphasis on allegory, this constant production of picture-detail comes at the expense of the total effect. We are distracted by the constant brilliance of the poet in hurling before us a conundrum which must be solved before we can appreciate what he is trying to say. In his "Colloquy in Black Rock" we are met with the following opening lines:

> Here the jack-hammar jabs into the ocean;
> My heart, you race and stagger and demand
> More blood-gangs for your nigger-brass percussions,

> Till I, the stunned machine of your devotion,
> Clanging upon this cymbal of a hand,
> Am rattled screw and footloose . . .

The reader is immediately lost. He has to think and ponder the question, often never knowing whether he has achieved the right answer and altogether too often basing his conception of the poem on an erroneous interpretation. Now I am not saying that the inability of the reader to grasp the allegories of Lowell make the poetry any the less effective as each reader has only his own measure of perspicacity to judge by—but the overall effect is to make the reader feel lost once he has the unpleasant experience of delving into Lowell and coming out with nothing concrete. Here is Lowell's rendition of death by cancer,

> "Your people set you up in Phillip's House
> To settle off your wrestling with the crab—
> The claws drop flesh upon your yachting blouse
> Until longshoreman Charon come to stab
> Through your adjusted bed
> And crush the crab . . . "

Were it not for the title of the poem, I honestly do not believe that I should have been able to ascertain the meaning of this allegory. This sort of image making detracts from the emotional drive which could be present if Lowell would tone down the extent of his allegory. His erudition often defeats the very emotion I imagine he is trying to describe. The two are not always compatible, especially as Lowell strives to express this erudition constantly in a medium which in itself is difficult of comprehension. As one reviewer, Mr. William Elton, describes it:

> "The question, nevertheless, is whether Lowell has not too often merely a jeweled frame for his verse, whether his superlative strategies are not sometimes Phyrric in their results . . . In his imagery, one misses the subtlety as well as the shock of life, his rhetoric hampering his wit."

Lowell is undoubtedly clever with his phrases and he seems to have trimmed away all excess verbiage and every unessential detail until the completed whole seems to dovetail effortlessly but in so doing, it seems that he has lost much of the connection with reality which would bring his poetry down to an understandable level. It is not up to the reader to fathom the working of the writer's mind—that is the writer's task, to present his work in such a manner that there will be no vagueness or obscurity concerning the message that he is attempting to put across. Lowell's vivid, but far detached flashes of scene and his intricate description of character, coupled with his faculty for switching his train of thought add up to a general feeling of unintelligibility which hardly compensates for a very occasional but undefined snatch of meaning, lofty as that meaning might be. John Frederick Nims says of him:

> "Lowell's manner is a sort of baroque, a great collection of allusion and detail, but its motive is not so much exuberance as it is harsh ratiocination, which tends to analysis rather than sympathy."

As yet I have said nothing of the form into which Lowell condenses his poetry, but at this time I might mention that the application of his far-fetched allegory into strict poetic forms such as he uses approaches the height of poetic ability —but inextricably complicates the reader's mind.

Lowell is a contemporary writer reverting back to the classical forms. He introduces many of the old Biblical characters, many historical references and many of the names of mythology. King Herod, Stephen, the Furies, Troy, the red eagles of Ares, Lazarus, Atlantis, Charon, Cain, Abel, Caesar, Babel Tower, Jericho, Sodom, Aeneas, Helen, Apollo and Laomedon. These and many others are mentioned. He also

mentions places apart from his own New England, connected with the Civil War: Hooker, Gettysburg, Chancellorsville. The Pequod and Ahab come to the reader direct from *Moby Dick*. Yet, with the incongruity which is often characteristic of Lowell, he associates Mars and Charon in the same poem with strip-teasers; places Brooklyn and Manhattan in the same verse with the Pax Romana. Contemporary names are used indiscriminately along with the names of the past in very incongruous associations. The net result of this usage is that his contemporaneity is apt to strike the reader as having degenerated into some odd form of journalism and even, sometimes, makes his images fall into bathos.

Most of his poems are set in pentameter—the sonnet is the predominant form. His rhyme schemes run an elaborate pattern from the simple rhyming couplet to more involved poetic patterns. His great failing in much of his work is his constant use of the "eye-rhyme". This consonance expresses itself in such rhymes as "house" and "cows", "stove" and "love", "God" and "blood", "Greece" and "grease" and countless others. Lowell's work finds at least two or three of these "eye-rhymes" in every piece. Of course, this does not necessarily detract from the work inasmuch as there can be any combination of end and internal consonance with end or internal rhyme in the same poem, according to modern practice. Emily Dickinson is lavish in her use of consonance. The poet himself must be the judge of what form is most pleasing to his readers and to his own inner sense of music. Perhaps, this strikes Lowell in this manner. Certainly the perfection of his form is an indication that he is also capable of producing the desired rhyme if he wishes to. However, rhyme has been used and over-used to such an extent that the tendency

toward consonance is a marked feature of most contemporary poetry.

Randall Jarrell says of Lowell's poetic technique:

> Lowell is an extremely professional poet, and the degree of intensity of his poems is equaled by their degree of organization. Inside its elaborate stanzas the poem is put together like a mosaic; the shifts of movement, the varied pauses, the alternation in the length of the sentences, the counterpoint between lines and sentences, are the outer form of a subject matter that has been given a dramatic, dialectical internal organization; and it is hard to exaggerate the strength and life, the constant richness and suprize of metaphor and sound and motion, of the language itself. The organization of Lowell's poems resemble that of traditional English poetry —especially when compared to that type of semi-imagist modern organization in which the things of the poem seem to marshal themselves like Dryden's atoms—but often this is complicated by stream of consciousness, dream, or dramatic monologue types of structure. This makes the poems more difficult, but it is worth the price . . . Lowell's poetry is a unique fusion of modernist and traditional poetry, and there exist cojoined in it certain effects that one would hitherto have thought mutually exclusive . . .

I believe that Lowell is sincere in his work, he has a fine grasp of the hard, clear and concise rhythm which he incorporates onto the framework of classical pattern. His diction is erudite and he has a mature and effective technique. But his objective correlative fails with his inability to translate image and event into an allegory that does not defy solving.

The Harvard Professor, John Ciardi, recently requested fifteen American contemporary poets to contribute specimens of their work to his new volume of poetry, *Mid-Century American Poets.* In the general consensus of opinion which

was current after the publication of this book, Robert Lowell and Delemore Schwartz were the only two of the contributing poets who successfully broke away from the influences of such recognized literary masters as William Bulter Yeats, T. S. Eliot and W. H. Auden and wrote with individuating character. If this mark of individuality now separates him from his contemporaries, it augurs well for his poetic future. Indeed, time and maturity may find Lowell the equal to if not better than Yeats, Eliot and Auden.

With his enormous sincerity and his desire to find a reconciliation between peace and God on the one hand, and the weary reflections of his probing mind, on the other, I am sure we will see much good work coming with time from this particular author.

Excerpts from Robert Lowell's *Lord Weary's Castle* have been reprinted with the permission of the publisher, Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.

The deadline for the next issue of the ALEMBIC will be October 16. Those who intend to contribute to this issue should work on their manuscripts during the vacation in order to have them ready before the deadline. Manuscripts submitted during the summer months should be sent to: Harold E. Vayo, 118 Wentworth Avenue, Lowell, Mass.

Nantucket Light

By Paul F. Fletcher, '51

A giant hand all em'rald and pearl
Struck the length of the sea
And whacked the sentry, cement and steel,
And the rock shore shook under me.

Thwack! and it struck again—staggering blow;
The sentry stood stoic and still;
The spume fell away like lifeless tears,
And the sea demon reared for the kill.

A-ee, A-ee! the terns careened,
Caught in a maelstrom of air,
Dizzying, dizzying, down towards the sea,
And the sea-thing loomed from its lair.

Shafts of murderous, sword-hued light
Cleaved the raw pearl skies:
Its scimitars pierced the lighthouse through,
And the sea shrieked its blasphemous lies.

Nantucket Light

Churning, churning, sickening green,
Like the depths of hell,
Churning from Nothing to Nothingness,
And retching a noisome smell.

Here as I stand on the chalky cliff
Watching the ocean swell,
I know a step forth would plummet me down . . .
The sea casts a luring spell.

Arise, Arise! the legions arise;
The sea-king revels wild;
Thus breeds his fertile giantess
Each wave a storm-tossed child.

The forces gather, the heaving now
Is awful to behold;
Like Fujiyamas row on row
The waves their peaks unfold . . .

O futile passions, Nature bred
That rush forth, smash, are rent . . .
O'er the lighthouse bursts the sun . . .
The sea lies worn and spent.

Old Jim

By Richard R. Hartung, '51

We'd been at sea for a long time, our destination having been changed twice in deep waters, and I had come to know Old Jim pretty well. Of course, I don't say I really knew him, because I'd seen him in only one environment, and life at sea on a tramp can be deceptive in so many ways; moreover, this was our first trip together. But a close, if not intimate, friendship had formed between us, and with it a mutual understanding.

From New York to eastern waters, and then back to the Big Rock, and from Gibraltar to our present position in the English Channel, I had never known Jim to change. He couldn't have been more than forty, and yet he was known to everyone as "Old" Jim. Maybe it was his easy-going manner and the way he kept smiling all the time, even after a dragging two months at sea when the rest of us were on edge. Or the way he'd casually lean over his table in the chartroom and point to a position on the chart, and tell a quaint little story about something that happened there on a ship in the middle of nowhere.

Or maybe the way he acted once in a hurricane off the Capes. We'd been battered constantly all day, and the starboard boats had been carried away, and our hull was slowly cracking up forward. The steerage had been smashed, so that we couldn't head her into the sea, and she was taking a terrific beating. We were huddled together in the darkness of the bridgehouse, waiting for the bow to give away, and we could hear the splitting of metal planks whenever the sea came crashing down on the forward maindeck. Old Jim was leaning over the compass, smiling and puffing his pipe, and telling a sea yarn in that casual good-humored way of his. The aroma

from his pipe was strong and sweet in the closeness of the bridgehouse, and his quiet voice could barely be heard above the roaring din outside. Everybody was listening to him, and staring at his shadowy form, and watching the little light of his pipe bowl as it moved with his gestures, and nobody gave a damn about the bow.

I used to walk the flying bridge with him when he had the watch. He would pace back and forth, from wing to wing, back and forth for hours on end, stopping only to relight his pipe or drawl out an order to the helmsman. And all the time he would talk—of ships at sea, and men at sea, and the sea itself, of its strange beauty and charm and power and its thousand different moods. I was never quite sure he was talking directly to me, because he was always gazing out at something beyond the wing railing, or beyond the swaying masts and boom rigging, or across the heaving bows. Until I knew him better I thought he was searching for something—a ship perhaps, or a strip of coastline. But he wasn't looking for anything, he was just looking at the sea.

Sometimes the sea was smooth and quiet, and just smiled back lazily when the sun danced and sparkled on its face. At other times it was angry and menacing and all puckered up with foam and spray, and it leapt up over the bows and thundered on the deck. But no matter how it was, Old Jim just smiled and gazed at it with that sad, devoted expression in his eyes. One time when we were taking on heavy seas all over, I saw him knocked down by a wave and washed abeam and smashed against the wheelhouse. Instead of cursing to high heaven as most men would have done, he just stood up and grabbed hold of something and peered through the mist at the towering water, and smiled.

Jim loved the sea and everything that went with it. He

loved ships and could see beauty in any part of them, from masthead to bilge. Often, on the flying bridge in the midnight watch, he would suddenly stop talking and stay quiet for a long time. I'd wait and wonder why he didn't say anything, and then I'd follow his gaze to a running-light far off on the night horizon, a little green speck, now dipping from sight and then coming up again and bobbing all around in the darkness.

And one night in the Mediterranean, when we were riding heavy ground-swells off the heel of Italy, he looked up at something and then suddenly came to a halt and braced himself on the rolling deck, his feet wide apart and his head thrown back and a sort of rapture on his face. I looked up and saw the moon making a wide arc through the mast rigging, a cradle of light racing upward through the port stays, then beaming along the crosstrees, and then arcing downward through the starboard rigging.

But it wasn't only bobbing running-lights and moonlit riggings and sea-swept decks that took hold of Jim. He saw beauty in anything at sea—a cargo hatch stuffed black with coal, or garbage thrown over the side and trailing in the wake, or even a pair of dividers plotting position on a navigation chart.

One night on the boatdeck he broke off in the middle of a sea yarn, and craned his neck, and asked me how I liked the music.

"What music?" I asked.

"Listen," he whispered.

"I don't hear any music."

"Listen."

"Jim, you're hearing things."

"Shhhh! Shut up and listen."

I cupped my ear and listened for faint notes of a harmonica down in the crew mess, or maybe the soft strumming of a guitar from the 2nd Mate's cabin; but all I heard was the muffled throb of the engines and a monotonous creaking of the midship house and laughing voices trailing downwind from the bridge, and I knew what Old Jim meant. Wind was strumming through the taut wire rigging, and light spray pattered along the bulwarks, and canvas covers were flapping gently at loose ends, and somewhere in the night the mournful cry of a seagull.

When Jim talked to a man, he had a way of looking at him that made him feel like a little kid. His sad squinting eyes were set deep, and they peered right through you, and it seemed there was something in back of them that knew everything about you, and you wouldn't dare be anything but your natural self. At first I didn't like to talk with him, because I was afraid to look him straight in the eye or say anything I didn't mean; but I got to know him better and then it made no difference. I felt I was talking to a man who knew every fault in my character but didn't give a damn, and so I didn't care either.

One time the new 2nd Engineer was in my cabin telling me, at much length, about his combat experiences in the Navy during the war. Jim happened to walk in and quietly sit down, smoking his pipe reflectively and waiting to speak to me. And then suddenly the other man seemed embarrassed about something. He broke off in the middle of an exciting story and changed the subject, spoke the business he had come in about, glanced nervously at his watch and then left the room. I knew he wasn't in a hurry to go anywhere. And he couldn't have held anything against Jim, because he'd just signed on and they didn't even know each other. But

maybe, somehow, he could feel a presence in the room of somebody who knew him exactly for what he was, someone who sensed perhaps that he hadn't even been in the Navy. That's the way Old Jim affected people.

I learned a lot from that man, and realized in myself what I saw in him. It began to sink in that the main reason I kept sailing wasn't to lead a lazy life or make quick money, or see faraway places or tell people where I'd been. "In the blood" is what some men say, and I can't think of any better way to put it. Something that takes hold and becomes a part of you and then you've simply got to have it. You don't always appreciate that something when it's there. You may resent it for taking you away, and rebel against those days and nights of endless monotony, and curse when it knocks you around, and fear its treacherous moods and unleashed violence. But just try staying away from it and before long you're craving for the saltness in the air, and the unceasing movement of everything around you, and the ever-present sights and quiet sounds you know so well. And then when somebody wants to know why you're going back, you talk about a two months' rest or that final installment on the car, or maybe something nice you have lined up on the other side; but if you're smart, you realize you're only making excuses.

Yes, it took Old Jim to make me know these things. But in this man I recognized something more than a healthy love of the sea. Exactly what it was, I can't say, but I saw in Jim something unnatural, extreme. I still don't know why he never mentioned anything to do with dry land. He talked a lot about his past years at sea, about all sorts of ships he'd sailed and the men aboard them. Often, at chow, he used to monopolize the talk with a sea yarn, or discuss at great length the ship's daily affairs; but whenever the others would start gabbing about things back in the States or what to do when

we hit the beach, he'd shut up like a clam and finish his meal quickly and leave the saloon.

And something peculiar happened the afternoon we had our first landfall. I was topside with Old Jim, he had the 12 to 4, and as usual he was pacing the deck and smoking his pipe and talking a mile a minute. It was a clear sunny day, and in the distance two beautiful shades of blue met in the straightest line I ever saw. The wind and sea were roughing us up a bit, just enough to make us feel good, and Jim was as happy as I've ever seen him. He halted out on the port wing, gazing ahead with binoculars, and said he liked to watch the sea when she was knifed by the bow and got white with rage and slapped our hull on the way back and finally shied off in a cloud of spray. And then suddenly, for no apparent reason, he became silent and glared hard at the deck, and continued his walk. I thought it was rather odd, because he'd been in such a good mood. There was some yelling and commotion below on the maindeck, as several men ran to the port side and cluttered around a seaman who was peering through binoculars. I looked through mine in the same direction, and 3 points off our bow the peaked capes of San Vicente had broken into the clear sky and now blurred lazily over a sharp horizon. Old Jim kept looking down and didn't say a word for the rest of the watch.

It seemed as if that voyage would never end. We were more than two months out now and had covered plenty of ocean—over the wide swelling expanse of the sunny Gulf Stream, then south along the black hulk of Africa, up again and across the blue waters of the Mediterranean, and then back through the narrow straights and bearing North-by-Northwest.

And now we'd escaped the treacherous winds of Biscay and were feeling our way slowly through the English Channel.

A thick veil of fog floated in across the bows and curled around the rigging and settled gently over the hatchcovers, hiding from view everything forward of the mast. Decks and railings were slippery, and the lifeboat covers were dripping with moisture.

At last we were nearing port and the spirit aboard was high. We were all hiding our cigarettes, and hoping the Customs were on strike in Cherbourg. and boasting about what we'd do in Paris. All except Old Jim, that is. He'd been acting funny lately, ever since we hit the Channel and held our course toward the Cherbourg Peninsula. He wasn't smiling any more and didn't seem himself. On watch he was quiet and sort of nervous and spent the entire four hours inside the wheelhouse. He never said a word at chow, and when he drank coffee the cup would shake in his hand. We hardly ever saw him when he was off watch, and his cabin door was always locked. I wondered what'd gotten into him, but I had too many things on my mind to give it much thought.

Toward evening the ship bustled with activity. Boom rigging was unlashed and cargo hatches uncovered, and the gangway was made ready to swing. There was a loud rumbling noise all over the ship, as winches were being tested, and the sound of heavy objects falling on steel decks. And then it became dark and the deck crew knocked off for the night. The fog thickened so that we couldn't see the mastlight and there was a sort of tense quiet on board, broken only by the sizzling of calm sea past the waterline and the screeching blast of the ship's whistle every few minutes.

It must have been long after midnight when I awoke, and instantly I could sense there'd been a loud clattering of chain way up forward. I didn't feel any motion or hear the steady thumping of the engines, and the fog whistle had stopped blowing, and the whole ship seemed dead. Outside the drone of a launch engine became louder, and then there

was a sudden whirring noise as a boat came alongside, and a man yelled something in guttural French. I got up and went to the porthole, and saw the long shadowy form of a breakwater jutting out into the darkness. Somebody on the boatdeck was pointing a flashlight over the side, and a black beret just disappeared as the pilot eased his way down the Jacob's ladder.

I got dressed and went topside. Sea watches had been stopped and everything was quiet in the bridgehouse. The wheel had been secured and a canvas cover was draped over the compass. The captain was leaning against the bridgewindow, staring out at the long line of harbor lights that twinkled in the distance and lit up the sky. I walked over to him.

"Good morning, Cap'n."

"Morning," he muttered.

"Where's Old Jim?"

"Locked in his cabin."

"What! Doesn't he have the security watch?"

The captain didn't answer, and I wondered if anything was wrong.

"Cap'n."

"Yeah?"

"What in hell's come over Jim lately?"

There was a long pause.

"He's always this way when we hit port," he murmured.

"What way?"

The captain straightened up and turned around and walked toward the door.

"He'll be this way till we sail," he said. "I wouldn't go near him if I were you."

I went out on the wing, and down the ladder, and walked aft along the boatdeck. As I passed by Old Jim's porthole I caught a strong odor of whisky, and a drawling singing voice came from inside.

Acis and Galatea

By William H. Plummer, '51

WHEN Alessandro Scarlatti, revolting against the narrow classicism of his contemporaries, perfected the *Da Capo Aria* and gave it as important a place in his operas as recitative, he established opera as a permanent art form, while at the same time opening the way for the decay of *Opera Seria.* He was the founder of the great (also called "the beautiful") Neapolitan School of Opera, which enchanted the world from its founding, in 1684, until Gluck's reform, in 1762. The *Da Capo Aria,* containing a first and second part followed by the *da capo,* allowed of such variety and outpouring of lovely sound—it could continue indefinitely—that recitative became a mere appendage of the aria, a convenient link between melodies. Drama was forgotten while audiences waited expectantly for each succeeding aria and the singers waited impatiently to display their skill. It was as though Italy had burst into song, and with her all the world. Each day began with an aubade and ended with a serenata. The king's mistress—or the queen herself—sang in the palace and her song, wafted out of the great windows, was answered by a fisherman on the bay.

It was an age of sopranos, and natural limitations were no barrier to their heavenly music. For somewhere, somehow, the art of manufacturing male sopranos had been learned, whether from an earlier Constantinople, where they sang in Santa Sophia, or later when the splendor of Suliman the Magnificent had captured the imagination of Europe. One

realizes how necessary they were when he learns that *Opera Seria* required a cast of six persons, three men and three women: the first man a soprano, the second either a soprano or contralto, and the third a tenor (occasionally a fourth male role, for bass voice, would be included).

The opera was divided into three acts and each member of the cast had to sing at least one aria in each act. The aria itself was divided into five classes: *aria cantabile; aria di portamento; aria di mezzo carattere; aria parlante;* and *aria di bravura.* Convention prohibited the singing of two arias of the same type in succession and duos, trios, quartets, etc., were not allowed. The third act terminated with a chorus and ballet.

The magnificence of these productions taxes the imagination: the avenues converging in the center of the stage, formal gardens, fountains, palaces, grand staircases, and clouds from which gods and goddesses sang before decending in golden chariots. When Domenico Freschi's opera "Berenice" was produced a book of attractions was published in which were listed: "choruses of 100 virgins, 100 soldiers and 100 horsemen in iron armor; besides 40 cornets, on horseback; 6 mounted trumpeters; 6 drummers; 6 ensigns; 6 sackbuts[2]; 6 flutes; 12 minstrels playing on Turkish and other instruments; 6 pages; 3 sergeants; 6 cymbaleers; 12 horsemen; 12 grooms; 12 charioteers; 2 lions led by 2 Turks; 2 led elephants; Berenice's triumphal car, drawn by 4 horses; 6 other cars drawn by 12 horses; 6 chariots, for the procession; a stable containing 100 living horses; a forest, filled with wild boar, deer, and bears—etc."

All the gods and heroes of antiquity told their tales, wearing heroic Roman dress, each possessing the divine soprano of the *castrati.* Orpheus sought Eurydice among the shades, singing more sweetly than she, and Apollo serenaded

Daphne with a voice to defeat a hundred Marysases. "Nero", "Florindo", "Dafne", "Aggripina", "Rinaldo", "Radamesto", "Tolemeo", "Floridante", "Giulio Cesare", "Tamerlano", "Alessandro", "Ezio", "Ariadne", "Ariodante", "Alcina" are some of the numberless operas sung. The skill of the singers was boundless. Every ornament, every method of enhancing their art, was known to them. They worked years until perfection was attained. It is said that Niccola Porpora kept one of his students on the same exercise for five years and that he kept Farinelli on the same scale for twelve years. Among the greatest were: Giovanni Francesco Grossi, called *Il Sifacio;* Baldassare Ferri, singer to the King of Poland for forty years, (opera was sung in Italian in Poland, as it was everywhere else, and the theatre in Warsaw was nightly turned into a miniature Italy, with fountains, ruins, peasant cottages *a la Calabrese,* and the bluest of Italian skies), and to the Emperor Leopold for ten more; Nicolini Grimaldi, upon whom the *Serenissima* bestowed the title of *Cavaliere;* Senesino, who had the honor of being cursed by Handel, an honor he shared with many; and the great Farinelli, the nightingale whose singing kept the spectre of madness at bay in the palaces of Spain.

And when the last aria was sung and the story ended all the characters reassembled (those who had died returning from the wings) and a ballet closed the entertainment. Saraband, Gavotte, Minuet, Gigue, Allemande, Courante, Galliard, Pavan, Canaries, Hornpipe, and Ground followed one another until the harpsichord sounded its last note and, with a skirl of violins, the music ended. The company bowed, the curtain fell, and the guttering candles were snuffed by footmen, one by one.

[1] Some historians claim this custom originated because the Greeks considered the *Basileus* to be the living representative of Christ. Since Christ is surrounded by angels, who are sexless, His representative must also be surrounded by sexless beings.

[2] The sackbut was an early form of slide trombone.

THE transition of circumstance and action into the written word often results in a product similar to our ingenious dried eggs, insofar as comparison to the real thing goes. This process may be considered under the aspect of the Art of Communication, and its mastery is a problem which has faced authors since the days when man had his first thoughts. Always present are the two extremes: the crudity of form which signifies the failure to make a person or an idea come alive, and still worse, the state that is reached when a thing is too good, and takes on a sort of sterility from which everyone gets the same idea, and can go no further on his own. It becomes easy to see that the communication of our thoughts constitutes a peculiar art, the acquisition of which finds many on the short end of an adequate phraseology with which to determine their respective form of expression.

There is a segment of our present day authors whose mastery, or semi-mastery, of this process has earned for them the right to be heard—the almost compulsory obligation on the part of the so-called discriminating readers to hear them, and more important, to ponder for a while their content. Of course this last part entails thinking, a most laborious pastime, and necessarily reduces by two-thirds the number of per-

sons interested; for we are a generation that leans heavily on pictures, condensations of condensations, and the osmotic properties of television and the tabloids.

There is a common denominator among these aforementioned authors: for the most part their themes revolve around the tremendous clash of ideas that characterizes life among thinking and non-thinking men, and the innumerable conflicts that arise in the clash which accompanies the existence of various patterns of life; one always finds the immense sympathy that a cause elicits in the reader, all too often to have it interred when the covers of the book are closed. Here we are dealing with a few such authors, and the respective recommendations are based on the assumption that a reader must at times add a bit of his own thought to the author's efforts.

Among the more recent and readable volumes, one called *Top of the World* (Hans Reusch) provides a peephole on the top of the world, with a sometimes searching, sometimes awkward portrayal of the Eskimo's contact with the White Man. In tones that ring of Jack London, habits and customs are integrated into a story paralleling that of the American Indian, insofar as it tells of the external destruction of a regulated society by the White Man, who manages, by a reverse Midas touch, to reduce everything he contacts to a state of contamination, for want of stronger phraseology. The whole business, related by the competent Mr. Reusch, is vaguely reminiscent of the feeling one experiences standing in front of the lion's cage at the zoo, trying to justify the confinement and destruction for another's satisfaction.

Two war novels are next, providing a change of pace, plus some very worthwhile reading. Exhibit number one—*The Strange Land* (Ned Calmer), which in our humble opin-

ion is the best war novel to date, cuffing the brass about a bit, and on the whole, resisting the tendency to make the heroes escape from a local rabbit warren. The story itself bridges the gulf that inevitably separates the front lines from the warm, safe rear, and does so with a facility as to make most of the characters involved stand on their own, rather than lean on the story for support. Handled superbly is the feeling of futility that war brings as its accompaniment, that so dominates those caught in its pattern; the inanimate oppression expressed throughout makes for a story both extremely readable and, quite possibly, a commercial success. *Call It Treason* (George Howe) is of a different vein, and should establish Mr. Howe's position at the head of any story-telling class. Concerned with captured Germans who become agents working under Army G-2, he is dealing with an unsung group that the Germans paid with terror and savage revenge and the Americans ignored. In the penetration of their individual motives, either "riches, risk, or faith", the author manages to muffle the screaming terror of modern warfare while dwelling on the intricate mechanism that is a human placed in these circumstances. You might even change your present definition of the word *treason*.

Inasmuch as *Call It Treason* is a Christopher Award winner, this might be a good place to mention Fr. Keller's *Three Minutes a Day*. It is one of those books that shouldn't be talked about, but read, for it is a collection of twentieth-century parables that have sprung from the timeless soil of the Scriptures. It comprises a good prescription for a world which has forgotten that the merciful God is also just and that there are sins that cry to heaven for vengeance.

Probably the label of a contemplative essay would best fit *Here Is New York* (E. B. White), for in its short, stylized

form there is ample evidence of reflection in the modern Colossus that is New York. As the twentieth-century Babylon, the city will always be a target for writers, but this is an unusual approach worthy of consideration. One section caught our fancy: "The city is like poetry: it compresses all life, all races and breeds, into a small island and adds music and the accompaniment of internal engines. The island of Manhattan is without any doubt the greatest human concentrate on earth, the poem whose magic is comprehensible to millions . . . but whose full meaning will always remain illusive."

In passing it might be well to note one or two other efforts along most dissimilar lines: *Life of the Queen Bee* (Louis Sutherland) is nothing less than a breathless fantasy of nature's splendor, resulting in an almost perfect crystallization of the life pattern of the amazing, almost intellectual, bee. Another probe into the much discussed, little acted upon "Negro Problem" comes in *Without Magnolias* (Bucklin Moon), but it differs radically from its associates in that the author has a deep understanding of his subject, rather than the satiric, hypercritical style that such novels often carry with them. There is a sort of wisdom in the way the people and subject are handled; it should suffice to say that the story is good enough to stand on its own.

Following the age-old custom of saving the best till last, we come to the most beautiful book we've yet read, a sort of personal introduction to Our Lady called *A Woman Wrapped in Silence* (John Lynch). Our daily ventures in this valley of tears of necessity block our concept of beauty with a thin mist, and it takes a book like this to illustrate just what real beauty is. Its tones are like the caress of a nun's dust cloth across an altar, its author knows Mary. What more could be said? C. F. W.

Going Ashore

By Richard R. Hartung, '51

THE portholes were open wide, and the small fan made a soft whirring sound as it turned slowly on the bulkhead; but still it was hot and close and stuffy in the dim-lit cabin, and my khaki shirt stuck to my wet back as I stood waiting by the captain's desk. The Old Man sat hunched forward over some ship's papers, and sweat was dripping from his chin and blurring the ink of the signatures. His vein-knotted finger traced slowly up and down along the neatly typed paper.

There was some laughter and singing outside, as several of the crew lurched down the gangway on their first night ashore. I leaned impatiently against the desk and stared at the veins on the captain's finger, as it moved slowly through drops of sweat and left a line of smudge on the paper behind.

And then the men were gone, their voices trailing off down the pier, and I could almost feel the hot sweet stillness of the night through the portholes. I watched the finger and thought of what lay beyond the ports, beyond the gangway, beyond the pier, somewhere in the foreign night; and again I felt that maddening rush and surge of blood within. But it wasn't so bad as it had been many times before, when there'd been nothing but endless waste of sea beyond the portholes; nothing but emptiness and loneliness, and a feeling of being lost from the world. Now there was a gangway, and a pier, and ——

The finger stopped moving. The captain leaned way

back in his swivel chair and wiped his face with a wet handkerchief.

"That all, Cap?" I asked.

"Yeah, guess so. Everything secured below?"

"Everything, Cap."

"You've had a tough day, son. Going ashore?"

I nodded and opened the door to leave, and said, "If the mate on watch reports a streak of lightning on the gangway in the next fifteen minutes, you'll know it's me."

"Don't be too eager, son. Better be choosy."

"That just went out my other ear, Cap," I laughed, closing the door behind me.

I walked quickly down the silent companionway, and thrust open the door of my cabin and went in. Everything in the room was dimly visible in moonlight, and beyond the porthole a bright yellow sphere hung low in the blue sky and lit up a broken line of hills. I stood for a moment gazing out at it, and at the mirrored path it made across the smooth water of the harbor. Then I switched on the light and tore off my sweat-soaked clothes.

The shower was nice, and also the feel of clean dry khakis against the skin. I loaded my small revolver and stuffed two cartons of Chesterfields down the back of my shirt, and went out.

The air outside was still and warm in the quiet night, and the whole ship seemed dead. I swung down the after ladders and ran across the steel deck, my footsteps echoing sharply from the midship-house.

The rickety gangway swayed and creaked as I groped my way down, the loose chains felt good in my hands, and then I was on the dock; the solid dock. It was filthy with coal dust and littered with rotten hawser lines, and it stank of melted

tar and ship's garbage; but it was solid wonderful land, and I was on it.

Sweat was already trickling down my face but I kept walking fast along the dark silent pier, coal dust crunching under my shoes and flicking in at my ankles. The ship's hull loomed black and menacing above, hiding the moon from view; but here and there was a shaded glow reflected on white superstructure, and high up in the rigging a small mastlight mingled brightly with the stars.

And then the ship was in back of me—the dark, empty, lonely hulk was behind me; and the moon had come out from behind the bow, dimly lighting the dock and glistening faintly in the coal dust.

Close up ahead was a small guardhouse, and a guard leaning on his rifle by the open gate. The cigarette cartons scratched against my back, and I suddenly remembered the Customs fine on American cigarettes and wondered if I'd be searched. The guard straightened up as I approached, and I tried to assume a casual air.

"Comment ca va, m'sieur," I hailed, in the cheeriest tone I could.

He just grunted and fingered the butt of his American M-1, and eyed me as I strolled nonchalantly through the gate and onto the dirt road.

The countryside was quiet, and here and there a firefly made its little pattern through the darkness. Some farms lined the road, and there was a strong smell of wet manure and dry hay. The distant lights of the town twinkled and lit up the sky in a hazy glow; and a faint, sort of musical, din of many noises came from that direction. I had a warm ticklish feeling in the pit of my stomach, and I walked faster.

The road narrowed considerably and became cobble-

stoned, and presently I was hemmed in by high walls that shut out the light of the moon. Here and there arches hung overhead and it was very dark. I stuck to the middle of the street and kept my hand on the revolver in my pocket, and kept shifting my eyes from side to side.

I walked on, and on, between the walls. Again I felt lonely and empty inside, and sort of lost from the world, and I wanted the street to end.

But the narrow street seemed to have no end, or meaning, as it wound this way and that in silent darkness. I walked on through the night, and the only sensation was a hollow echo of my footsteps against the brick walls.

Uncertainty

By Wales B. Henry, '50

I must confess, I'm in a mess,
A woeful state of dire distress,
For never does a problem vex
Like one that's founded upon *sex*.

My girlfriend's a burlesque queen,
The prettiest thing you've ever seen.
But I can't take her home to mother
So I think I'll get myself another.

And when I get myself another
And bring her home to meet my mother,
Mom will say, "She's not your kind."
Oh for the girl I left behind.

Byron and Keats

By Wales B. Henry, '50

Here's to Byron, Keats and Kunkle;
Kunkle is my grocer's uncle.

Here's to Byron, Keats and Sawyer;
Sawyer is the family lawyer.

Here's to Byron, Keats and Boner;
Boner is a tavern owner.

Byron and Keats set my lyric mood
But I like Kunkle's nephew's food.

Byron and Keats; both I hail;
But Sawyer keeps me out of jail.

Byron and Keats; I hold them dear;
But also Boner, for his beer.

I married a girl and her name is Nellie,
So now I've taken to reading Shelly.

Mist

By Richard R. Hartung, '51

I WAS walking through mist, and wondering where I was and how I'd gotten there. It couldn't have been ordinary mist because it was too white and billowy, and it didn't come above my knees; and it was undulating all around me and curling gracefully in and out between my legs. But beyond this opaque whiteness on either side I could see dark blue water and light blue sky, and an unbroken line of horizon dividing them in the distance. It was a very familiar line, one I had often seen, a meaningful line whose every mood and variation I knew by heart. It had always been far away and often obscure, and yet I had lived with it intimately day in and day out.

But the thick mist below me was strange and meaningless, and as I walked it heaved and fell gently and enveloped my legs and pressed me onward. I didn't try to turn back because there was nothing to go back to, and so I just kept walking through the white mist. And presently I began to feel there was something up ahead that I wanted very much; that I not only wanted but needed, because it was almost a part of me.

I was walking in something wet and sticky, and I reached down and tried to part the mist; the white billows simply closed over my hand and I couldn't see or feel anything below, but I knew I was walking on melted tar. And soon I was stumbling over things, familiar things of iron and hemp and wet canvas, but the mist kept me from falling and pressed me ever onward. The strangeness was gone now, and I knew where I was and what lay beyond. I walked faster and faster,

and I could feel coal dust crunching under my feet and flicking against my ankles.

And then the black hull of the ship shone up ahead as if it had risen out of the mist, and I trembled all over with joy and excitement. She loomed above the rolling mist in a wide graceful arc, her masts towering majestically against the light blue sky.

Suddenly the mist was rising all around me, and I broke into a run. It rose higher, and higher, until it was billowing overhead and caressing my face and all I could see was a dark shadow of the ship. My eyes were smarting as I ran toward it and I had a choking feeling in my throat. And then the shadow faded away and there was nothing but the mist in front of me, engulfing me on all sides and above.

I was groping frantically for something as I ran, and I could see the mist curling through my stiff open fingers. I clutched and clutched, trying desperately to catch hold of something in front of me, beyond the mist.

And then I felt the chains in my hands and pulled on them, and I could feel the gangway swaying beneath me. As I groped my way up through the mist I could hear a faint, sort of musical, din of many familiar sounds above. They were quiet sounds that I knew and loved. They creaked monotonously, and throbbed softly, and flapped gently. There was the whistling of wind through rigging and the patter of spray on decks. And there were voices too, I knew them well, voices that blended with the other sounds and seemed a part of them.

I pulled and pulled on the gangway chains; climbing upward, ever upward, and straining my wet eyes through the mist, for sight of something or someone. Groping and clutching over the chains, swaying back and forth with the gangway, climbing higher and higher through the mist.

Spring Fever

By Charles F. Wooley, '50

THE steady drone of the professor's voice, discussing the beneficial effects of alternating currents, merged with the muggy air that lay heavy across the desks and helped induce a state of mental equilibrium.

"Curly" Jameson slumped at his desk—the laxity of his position allowing the well-padded shoulders of his sports jacket to droop, ever so slightly, over the edge of his not-so-broad shoulders. His smart, yet quiet tie, led one's gaze all the way down the sharply creased trousers to his neatly-kept tan and white sport shoes. All in all, "Curly" gave the very natty, yet casual appearance that he sought—even though the effort was not as casual as one might be led to believe.

The period was but ten minutes old—and the class called for forty minutes more of this endless tirade. "Curly" slouched slightly deeper in his seat—and the glaze that came over his eyes became the screen behind which he and his day-dreams were hidden from the factual, droning world on the outside:

The pennants hung limply on their poles high above the sweltering crowd below. The shirt-sleeved bleacher fans, with their protective score cards shielding their eyes from the blazing sun, gave indication of the heat of the day, even though this was September.

Here was the ball game of the season, and you could feel the eager expectation that ran through the stands as the fans watched the expected duel unfold before their eyes.

Here was a game to tell your grandchildren about, one that the official score book would record in a unique fashion. The regular season had ended five days before, and when it did, the two pennant contenders had been deadlocked; the Beavers and the Braves tied up in a nice tight package, thus necessitating the playoff that was now in progress. Two games had gone by the board, each team winning one, leaving one game to settle the issue in a typical photo-finish. On this game rode fame, glory, and a World Series share.

For this reason, "Stubby" Reynolds, cigar-chewing Beaver manager, had selected his ace, "Lefty" Jameson, to quiet the big Brave bats. "Lefty" Jameson, whom the sport scribes had tagged another Hubbell, had justified their faith by notching twenty-five wins during the regular season. The same "Lefty", only three days before, had hurled a nifty five-hitter to clinch the first playoff game.

And now, here it was the seventh inning. The sun seemed no less stronger than it had an hour and a half ago, and up till now the invincible Jameson had given but one scratch single, that in the second inning. The big Brave guns looked like water pistols against Lefty's deceptive motion, his high hard one, and remarkable change of pace. In the top of the seventh the middle of the Brave batting order took their feeble cuts—and returned to the field. This was repeated with the tail-end during the eighth. In the ninth, the fans moved to the edge of their seats; for, although the Beavers had threatened constantly, and battered three pitchers rather freely, they had amassed only one run, and that on an error.

Top of the ninth, top of the batting order, and "Lefty" Jameson goes into his motion. A high pop behind first, which Holcomb lost in the sun; a sacrifice bunt which the kid third baseman threw into the stands; and a walk by the tiring

"Lefty", filled the bases. The stands buzzed with excitement —then quieted as Jameson got Stewart to pop to the catcher, caught Roberts with a called strike; and prepared to face the hard-hitting Durfee.

"Lefty", ever the object of attention, stalked around the mound, looked Durfee over cautiously, almost with contempt. Into his full motion with base runners prowling and breaking falsely, coaches screaming shrilly, fans both silent and uproarious, the World Series went riding on the next few pitches. "Lefty" rocked in the box and fired hard and high —too high, Ball one; he tried for the inside corner and missed in his eagerness, Ball two! Out came Burrows, his catcher, not with advice—but rather to still the excitement as much as he could. After a few words he returned, and signalled for a curve, which in turn broke inside to the right-handed Durfee for strike one.

Away from the plate stepped Durfee, dusted his hands, wiped the handle with his pants leg, then strode in again, digging in firmly. Jameson watched cautiously, then into his motion, fired with a hook breaking down and away. The man at bat lunged and missed. Strike two!

Forty thousand fans took a deep breath—into millions of homes came the low voice of the announcer—"top of the ninth, two away, count two and two—Jameson as cool as an iceberg—bases F.O.B.—full o' Braves—"Lefty" into his motion—full windup . . ."—and down below on the field Jameson pumped—kicked, and fired—and Durfee swung . . .

"Jameson, William Jameson", came the voice from out of nowhere. "Curly" Jameson blinked once or twice—then felt a tremor pass through his body and end at his red-hot ears, as he jumped to his feet and tried to focus his attention on one Mr. Franklin Haverford, Ph.D., and Professor of Physics.

"Would you explain, Mr. Jameson, the plausibility of the use of either alternating or direct current, from an economic standpoint?"

"Lefty" Jameson's pitch never reached Durfee's swinging bat—the screams of triumph or despair never left the fan's throats—and Curly Jameson never did answer Professor Haverford's question.

Resolution

By WALES B. HENRY, '50

There's lots of sin
In this world we're in
    But I will try to shun it.

Yes, I'll be good
Like a good boy should
    And the world can't say, "He dun it."

Oh, I'll be nice
And avoid all vice;
    I swear I'll keep me from it.

'Cause bad don't mix
With my bag of tricks
    And I will reach the summit.

But the summit's high
And that shot of rye
    Went through me like a plummet.

Skin Deep

By Charles F. Wooley, '50

ACROSS the years, I remember him well. The cold wind with stingers in its tail scurried up and down the waterfront, every now and then sending a whiplash scout or two flitting between the docks and the ferry. The hustling commuters had long since made their way from ferry to trains, hurrying to catch the 5:18 and get in from the cold.

On one of the platforms overlooking the yard that the commuters had swarmed through earlier, a handful of men were busy sorting, throwing, and carrying bundles and packages of varying sizes. The object of their attention was the baggage car of the 11:15 express to Chicago, and its loading was a fast and precise affair.

Two of us had just come in from the tracks, where it was windy and bitter, and were glad to be away from the monstrous box-cars, which seemed to take an eternity to unload. "Peanuts", the little Mick who was section boss, told us to grab a cup of coffee, and then to high-tail it to the Chicago car for the rest of our evening, which ended at twelve.

Coming back from our coffee, we stopped at the platform, waited till we got the drift of things, and started in. The big mail sacks came whirring down the chutes which overhung the platform, their metal tags clanking till the bags scudded to a halt on the wooden boards. From the alley-way leading into the yard came huge hand-drawn trucks loaded with packages and boxes, these also to be sorted and loaded.

All this was more or less bewildering, and to us, baffling. As I was about to drag the wrong sack to the wrong sec-

tion of the car for about the twelfth time, a firm, restraining hand came down on my shoulder. I turned to find a well-built, fine-featured Negro fellow, who proceeded to explain to me the system of geographic location in respect to sections of the car, plus the meanings of the stamped cards on the mail sacks.

This was my first meeting with "Jackson", the boss of the platform; a quiet, unassuming, and industrious worker, who had gained the respect of the whole outfit, including the ever noisy "Peanuts": a recommendation in itself. If he had a first name, I never did hear it—to every one he was Jackson, or just "Jax".

We worked well with him, in turn he relayed this to Peanuts, and the garrulous section boss assigned us to work with him every night, starting at seven. From then on we worked every night 7-12 shift with Jackson: the easy-going, always-going Jackson. Late afternoons on the tracks always dragged until seven came, when we could then work on a job where we enjoyed the responsibility that "Jax" was soon to send our way. Of course we made our mistakes, like the night that "Jax" left early and the rest of the packing fell to us. Four nights later a trainman back from the Chicago run complained about the entire load collapsing while rounding the first turn they came to. Precious minutes were spent correcting our mistakes and, as the Express was the pride of the road and was in turn late that special evening, much "buck passing" was in order so that the crime was progressively traced.

But as time went on our mistakes became fewer, our work faster and more proficient. Jackson was a good boss who tolerated no loafing, worked harder than any of us, and was always sure to reward us with "coffee time" when things began to drag. He was probably the strongest person I've ever

met, for despite his catlike way of walking his arms and shoulders generated the strength of a bull moose. The usual stolid expression that covered his fine features occasionally lapsed into an easy, meaningful grin which heightened the contrast of his dark skin against the whiteness of his teeth.

Though ordinarily very laconic, now and then he spoke at some length to a favored few, but only after he had carefully mulled over what he was to say, as though rationed in his use of words. During one such conversation, he spoke to me at some length about his wife and six months old daughter; how her birth, and the ensuing sickness of his wife had sent him into unaccustomed debt, which must have been a blow to his independent nature.

So now during the pre-Xmas season, he took another job both to clear his bills and insure a plentiful holiday in his home. The strain of an additional eight-hour stint must have been terrific; yet he had been doing it for several days before confiding in us. This too, without ever a noticeable "easing off" in the terrific pace he set for himself.

So there you have "Jax"—a man in anyone's language —a good guy to work under, work with, and to know. And yet it was amazing how the office-bound higher-ups treated his case, with the same inconsistent sheer blindness that men of their type exhibit so often. To them he was just another "Nig", to be treated accordingly; give him so much room, but no more—not because of his actions, nor his personality, but rather because of his skin, and the inherent characteristics which *intelligent* men deem a necessary companion.

"Jax" was no personification of all that was good in the world, neither was he the personification of all that is evil. Like the night before Xmas Eve, when "Jax" came in carrying an unaccustomed "load". Men who work hard do go off

the deep end occasionally. But he had made (without realizing it) preparation in advance—two of us that he had befriended hustled him off into one of the storage shacks, where he slept off the noticeable effects in four hours or so. In the meanwhile his training paid dividends so that he was never even missed during his absence.

So, as I said before, there you have "Jackson"; you probably know a Jackson yourself, his skin might be white, yellow or brown; his religion any one of the hundreds that dot the universe. But let that hold you back and your case will only be one on the long list of narrow, inconsistent minds; minds that forgot to leave notches on their measuring rods for a man's guts, his character, his ability, and most of all the potentialities that are nascent in every human being.

What happened to "Jax", you ask? Oh, the usual I guess. I really don't know. Probably he was banged from pillar to post by his "superiors". Who knows? After all, he was only a Negro!

IT'S often interesting as well as amusing to look back on old issues of magazines and see what went on in those days. To make a short story even shorter, the other day we took a broom to the cobwebs surrounding Volume VI of the ALEMBIC, removed it from its accustomed resting place, blew a rather substantial cloud of dust from its top, and settled down to peruse its slowly yellowing (no kidding) pages for items of "lasting interest". The results of this literary journey through the 1925-26 ALEMBIC are herewith and forthwith presented.

* * * * *

THE JOURNEY SOUTH

Despite our attempts to laugh away this bugaboo it is becoming more and more evident that our mills are moving South. Only a few weeks ago this fact was brought home forcibly when one of the largest concerns in Rhode Island located in the southern part of the state closed its large factory for an indefinite period to re-establish its industry in a southern state. The industrial migration is affecting not only our own state

but all of the other New England states as well . . .

EDITORIAL

October 1925

Gee, the way they've been hollering about it lately, you'd think it was something new.

CHANGES OF CLASS ROOM

The many improvements in the college building were greeted with expressions of approval by the upperclass men on their return. In order to provide for additional seating capacity due to the larger registration of this year . . . The museum has been moved to a small room on the first floor . . .

COLLEGE CHRONICLE

October 1925

Do you suppose he's referring to the bookstore?

CONVICTED

They found a bottle beside his mangled body—a broken bottle, and what is more, a broken whiskey bottle; his right hand still clutched the neck of it when they found him; after prying it from his death-like grip, then took the cork off its head and smelled it—whiskey—yes, undoubtedly that odor was whiskey—to be particular, moonshine. Thus the conclusion was that he was drunk—everyone said he was drunk—everyone believed he was drunk— . . .

THOMAS F. O'NEILL

November 1925

Normal reaction to any senior after taking the Graduate Record exams.

THE DAILY DOZEN

I stood one day to watch the fray,
As the students went to eat,
When a senior said with a shake of his head,
"This has all football beat."

"I've seen many a fight that sure was a sight
And murders, holdups and crimes,
But this — is the one that can't be outdone
As the boys start spending their dimes.

"With a wolfish look they claw and hook
To get to 'Ed' and his gang,
Poor 'Ed', instead, just scratches his head
And curses the bell that rang.

"For to feed this bunch that is calling for lunch
Is sure a he-man's 'ride',
'Cause to feed them all he'd need a hall,
And a ten-acre lot on the side."

H. T. KAVENEY
November 1925

Times never change, do they?

THE COUNTRY DOCTOR

. . . Smiling sweetly, she countered, "And, Francis, you dance so beautifully."

Still glowing from the pleasure of her nearness he led her out—away from the blare of the orchestra, from the foolish laughter, and from the crowd. Slowly they walked along beneath the sorcery of a moon which was shining down with all the golden glory of July. They were chatting aimlessly when suddenly the doctor stopped, "There is a time in the life of every man, Alicia, when the soul that is within him cries out for companionship, for tenderness, and for love. There is a time when the heart—Oh, Alicia, I love you." He halted and with hanging head awaited the outburst which he expected would come.

Shyly she looked up at him and said, "I have been waiting so long for you to say this. Francis, I love you, too." Tenderly her little arms creep around his neck and she drew his head down and down until his lips met hers in the first, sweet kiss of love. Passionately he crushed her to him and sought her honeyed lips again and again until she pushed him away breathlessly.

Softly he murmured, "My own—now and always."

Shortly after, their engagement was announced . . .

E. GEORGE CLOUTIER

December 1925

I should hope so!

BITS FROM LIFE

Some unknown tool for petty gain,
Amid the Senate's bluster.
Dropped a bomb of chlorine gas,
To end the filibuster.
It ended.

JOHN W. MURPHY

December 1925

Don't believe it. One of the reporters in the balcony took off his shoes.

CORRECTION

The editor of this department wishes to correct an error made in the November issue of the ALEMBIC. In the Providence starting line-up for the Syracuse game the name of Bride should be substituted for Triggs at the right halfback post and Triggs should be substituted for Spring at fullback. In

the Boston College contest the name Bride should be substituted for Triggs at right halfback.

ATHLETICS
December 1925

Are there any questions?

COLLEGE PUBLICATIONS

Providence College ALEMBIC
Providence, R. I.
W. HAROLD O'CONNOR, Editor-in-Chief
DEAR SIR:

Copies of your November and December issues came to my desk today en route to our checking department, and inasmuch as I find myself pleasantly affected by the literary and news contents, it occurs to me there should be no harm in my saying so . . .

Cordially,
GEO. W. DANIELSON, *President*

EDITORIAL
February 1926

We wonder where Calvin Coolidge was during all these carryings on.

THE PERFUMED LETTER

. . . Mrs. Lane strolled into her husband's office and with a glance through the mail on his desk she passed on to his chair. Suddenly her delicate little nose went up as she detected the odor of roses.

"Warren, have you any roses around here, I smell them?"

"Why no, dear, you know I can't bear flowers about my desk."

"Well, querilously, I smell roses."

H. EDMUND O'CONNOR

February 1926

Well, querilously, I don't smell a thing.

LOVE

He met her in the parlor
As the moon was rising high,
She acted sly and bashful,
He dared not to come nigh.
He waited until eagerly
His proffered sweets she took,
And then he hung his battered hat
Upon the well-known hook.
He came up to her closer now,
For all was fine as silk,
She started in to chew her cud,
And he—started in to milk.

HENRY J. KAVENEY

October 1925

Sounds like that movie that made the rounds a couple of years ago, "The Udder Love."

WISTFUL

A mystic bell is ringing
In my heart is always bringing
Memories of other days.

The stars in their gleaming
Shine sad in my dreaming
With visions of other days.

My heart always yearning
For the lost one's returning
A pal of other days.

In my garden plot
Sweet Forget-me-nots
Lift perfume of by-gone days.

AUSTIN A. SHEEHAN

May 1926

We know how you feel, Austin. Maybe a dose of sulphur and molasses would help.

H. E. V.