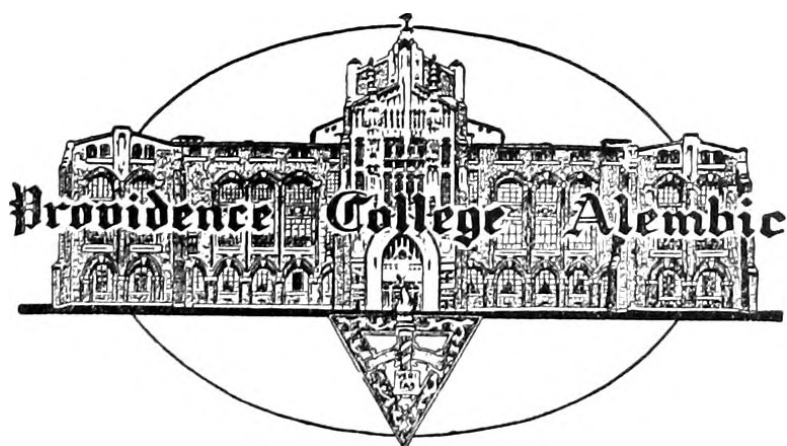


THE ALEMBIC



NOVEMBER, 1950

THE ALEMBIC



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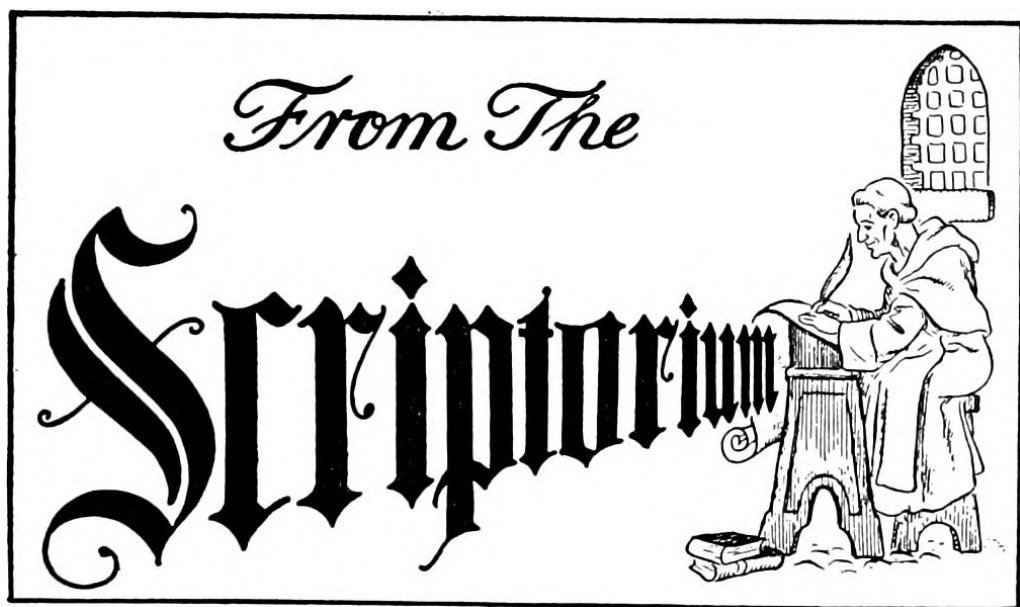
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The native intelligence of the American public has hit a new low in the minds of the politicians, if we are to judge by the tactics their campaign managers and state central committees have used during the recently concluded gubernatorial and senatorial races. It is common knowledge that they have never given the voter credit for having much more sense than an imbecile, but this latest move has proved beyond all doubt that he has dropped in their estimation to the status of a blithering idiot. Never before in the history of our democracy has the populace been subjected to such bold-faced insults to its collective intelligence. We are referring, of course, to the use of comic-books as integral parts of a major political campaign.

There are two sides to every question, and this is by no means an exception. One possibility is that the American public has become so infantile in its thinking that it can no longer be reached by syllogistic reasoning. To peruse the few paragraphs setting forth a party's main planks and the qualifications of its leading candidate may have become too exhausting an effort for the voters' minds. The day of the example-embellished major and minor and the earth-shattering, world-promising conclusion is long gone. In its place has settled the proof of an old pedagogical principle which runs, in effect, "If they can't understand it, explain it. If they still don't get it, draw pictures."

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The alternative is that political tales have become so tall that nothing short of a publication of the Superman, Captain Marvel, Buck Rogers genre could possibly do them justice. It is with this latter alternative that we are inclined to agree.

A highly representative dose of this intellectual gruel begins with a full-page portrait (in heroic pose) of the candidate for governor. He is the choice of all good, thinking (sic) voters. He is the hero. Turning the page, the viewer finds that the people's choice was just one of a large family supported by a brick-laying father and an over-worked mother whose hair, notwithstanding, is always at the height of fashion. So much for his childhood and youth.

The next big event is his graduation from college at the top of his class and the solemn vow, made in the privacy of his own heart, that he will devote his entire life to ridding his fair State of all scheming politicians.* Immediately heads begin to fall. As alderman he routs the crooked bosses from their smoke-filled dens and, for the benefit of the local W.C.T.U. undoubtedly, overturns their round table laden with bottles marked "XXX". It might be interesting to note that the bosses, as well as anyone else he has ever opposed and vanquished, are all corpulent men wearing scowls and black suits in the accustomed manner of villains. About this time he gets married and, in a tender domestic scene, tells his chesty wife of his burning desire to serve his fellow man.

Soon comes the inevitable call to Washington, where the President asks him to head a commission to study a problem on which hangs the fate of all Europe. He modestly accepts, and takes leave of his home, wife, family, and thriving business. He arrives in Europe and is immediately acclaimed by all the widows and orphans in sight as the savior of mankind. What he actually does is never quite explained; but he loves the widows and orphans and they love him. After completing his mission, he shakes the hand of the President and hurries back to his family. (Besides, the primaries are only a few weeks off.)

One night he is visited by a committee of humble citizens who beseech him to become a candidate for governor and save the State from

*Scheming politician—any member of the opposite party.

From the Scriptorium

ruin. A look of benign astonishment floods his ever-smiling face. After the initial shock has passed he shakes each by the hand, tells them how they have taken him completely by surprise, and then proceeds to expound a seventeen-point program of sweeping reforms which will lift the clouds of doom and cause the sun to shine again. The citizens leave, and he is left alone with his thoughts and two million readers. This is too good a chance to miss; so he turns, looks them square in the eye, and gives them the inside dope on the coming election.

The next page is calculated to be the biggest vote-getter of them all; for there, in all their glory, is the hero and his family in a smiling group portrait. The hero is smiling. His wife is smiling. His children are all smiling. His pet cocker spaniel is smiling.

Due to space limitations occasioned, no doubt, more to lack of funds than by lack of material, only two pages remain. These are artfully taken up by unsolicited endorsements of the hero by a bevy of fictitious persons from all walks of everyday life. There are barbers, bakers, steeplejacks, mill-hands, housewives, street cleaners, nurses, and teachers. Each is firmly convinced that his only hope of salvation lies in the hero's being elected. After a final admonition to elect the greatest American of them all, the story ends. They used to do it with free beer and cheap cigars.

It occurs to us that the coming of age of these picture-stories will bring to an end a host of time-honored political institutions. Soon we will have only nostalgic memories of the old general store with pot-bellied old men sitting around a pot-bellied old stove and debating the relative merits of their favorite candidates; and the proprietor sitting judiciously on top of the cracker barrel to keep the disputants from spoiling their suppers. The old general store, the pot-bellied stove, and the pot-bellied men will remain; but instead of engaging in daily spirited debates they will meet weekly to swap comic-books.

H. E. V.

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The Black and Tans

By PATRICK J. JOYCE, '52

THE town had never seen such a sight as long as anyone could remember. Every man, woman, and child was out on the street. Even poor ould Biddy Burke, who hadn't moved from her bed in five years, now managed to put her head out the window. The poor creature thought the world was comin' to an end, for try as she might, she couldn't see around the gable-end. All she could see was the smoke; heavy black clouds of it carried by the wind. She blessed herself with every blast that seemed to come from within a stone's throw from her hole-in-the-wall of a window.

"Oh God save us from all harm!" she muttered as she pulled her black shawl around her head.

"What in the name of all the saints in heaven is goin' on the blessed night?"

Over in the trees a dog barked back at her, and somewhere around the gable-end, probably in Noonan's henhouse, the fowl kept up an awful racket, scared stiff, no more than Biddy, by the thunder-like blast and the red flashes in the sky. Biddy closed the window and fell back into bed thinkin' it was doomsday and wonderin' if it was Gabriel's horn that was ablowin'.

Her bed was an old couch, its shape indistinguishable under a mountain of discolored blankets that draped down to the earthen floor. Biddy lay there lookin' over at the flickering light from the turf fire which sent dancin' shadows across the whitewashed walls of her thatched kitchen. Blessin'

herself with her beads, she closed her eyes and prepared for the worst. She didn't notice the halfdoors open and close as Denny entered the room. He walked over to the hob and began to rake the fire with the tongs. Biddy, startled from her drowsed state, looked over at her grandson with relief in her eyes.

"Denny, me darlin', will ye tell me is it the devil himself that's loose this blessed night? What's happenin' at all—at all? I'm here, out o' me mind with only me beads ta protect me."

"And didn't ya be hearin' it yet?" replied Denny.

"Well now, if I did would I be askin' ya? Yer muther is out lookin' fur yer father, and God only knows where yer bruther Thomas is. Imagine, at this hour o' the mornin'! Will ya tell me afore I lose me mind!"

"Oh Granny, sure isn't the Castle burnin' like a haystack. It's ruined and everythin' in it is gone."

Denny's face showed pain with every word. Helpless anger flooded his eyes as he hung the tongs on the crane.

"Last night the Tans raided Welshes' pub, and carried off all the stock. They had a drinkin' party all night, and a few hours ago Tinker Roach saw them empty petrol all over the place, and then set fire to it.

"The whole thing was on purpose I tell ya. They burned it on purpose! They're all drunk, and singin' English songs and shootin' their guns up in the air. Colonel Blake hi'self is like a madman."

"Denny, 'tis the truth yer tellin' me?"

"Yis; 'tis our grand Castle that's gone."

"'Tis a sad day fur us all. They've somethin' up their sleeve, they have. When a Johnny Bull burns the house he's livin' in there's somethin' wrong somewhere."

The Black and Tans

Denny clenched his fists and looked away from his grandmother.

“ ’Tis a bad thing I’m sayin’, but I’d like ta kill every one o’ them; they’re all a bunch o’ murderers, and t’d be like killin’ maggots in the sight o’ God.”

“Hush! Hush! with ya, there’s enough blood shed in Ireland without such talk as that out o’ a gairsuin* like ya. ’Twas surely a bad day when the blackguards landed. The curse o’ God will be on them for burnin’ the Castle. Sure ’twas the holy monks themselves that laid every stone of it with their own blessed hands. Tell me, Denny, did they save the insides?”

“No; not a shtick is on the road, nor ne’er a book was saved.”

“What will we be doin’ now, Granny?”

“Oh, nothin’ child, we’ll just wait fur our time. Thank goodness no one was hurt. We should be grateful for it.”

“But there was, Granny. They shot someone. I don’t know who, I couldn’t find out, they had a blanket over him.”

“Musha no? Oh Lord have mercy on his soul, and God forgive them, Denny, God forgive them.”

“Where are ya goin’?” asked his grandmother as Denny made a move over to the door.

“I’m goin’ out lookin’ fur me muther,” replied Denny.

“Och, she’ll be in. Will ya stay here like a good boy? I’m feared out o’ me wits. Sit down at the fire.”

Denny hesitated for a moment.

“But—I—oh all right. You go to sleep, Granny. The mornin’ air is bad fur ya when yer awake.”

“Thank ya Denny, yer a good boy, ya are.”

*Young boy.

"Go to sleep Granny, I'm right here."

"I will, I'll say me beads and pray fur us all." Biddy eased her head onto the pillow, and with her lips moving rapidly, she closed her eyes.

Denny stared into the fire, his thoughts all confused. Oh if Tom was here—I wonder where is he—Granny'll soon go to sleep—tomorrow I'll join the I.R.A.—now is the time to make an ambush while they're all drunk—Tom will get me in—he's a leader—I could help a lot—I'm sixteen—Kevin Barry was only eighteen—I hope I can join up—she's asleep by now—I'll leave.

The sun was quietly breaking through the trees on Knuck Mauve as Denny hastened towards the Castle. Groups of people were moving along the street, but Denny didn't notice the direction of their movement until he arrived at the scene and found it deserted. Turning back towards the square he shouted after old Seán Flaherty, who hobbled along behind the rest.

"He, Seán, Mr. Flaherty, what's goin' on at the square?"

"What ye say boy?" said Seán, cupping his hand behind his ear.

"I said: What's goin' on at the square, d'ya know?"

"Musha laddie. 'Tis another wake we'll be havin' t'night; and 'tis thanks to Colonel Blake."

Denny broke into a run, and soon reached the edge of the crowd. A hushed silence prevailed as he edged his way through.

When anything important happened in town, Colonel Blake preferred to use the pomp and dignity of a formal ceremonial proclamation. Considering himself quite the elocutionist, he had erected a public address platform in the

The Black and Tans

square. He would assemble a guard of honor around this platform, and by these means he would inform the natives of new laws and regulations.

"What will it be this time?" thought Denny. As he neared the inner edge of the gathering, he saw Colonel Blake, surrounded by three of his officers. The guard of honor was standing with their rifles at ease. Suddenly, Denny heard the wailsome moan of a woman, but, from where he stood, he was unable to see her. Moving to the left of the platform, the prostrate form of a man met his gaze. A woman with a black shawl over her head knelt beside him; weeping bitterly over the dead man, she stroked his hair, and kissed his pale face. Denny froze at the sight. With his face twisted in agony, he rushed towards the dead man screaming, "Father! Father!" as he fell on his knees beside his mother. "Oh Daddy."

The woman with the shawl threw her arms around Denny's neck, and wept.

"Denny, me darlin', they've killed him! They've killed him! Yer father is dead. Poor Denny, me son, me child."

Denny raised his head from his father's face, and, with a deadly calm, looked at his mother.

"Who did it, muther? Who did it?"

"The Colonel, 'twas him. Oh, for no reason in the world. He—at the fire last night."

Denny stood up and walked towards the Colonel, who, seemingly ignored the whole affair. Without any warning Denny leaped at Blake, and, gripping him by the throat, he shouted, "Ye murderer. I'll kill ya! I'll kill ya!"

The heavy, ponderous body of Colonel Blake fell under the impact of Denny's blow. A second later Denny's fingers lost their grip as four of the Tans tore him away from

the frightened Colonel. A blow on the head knocked all the fight out of him as he fell limp, with his arms twisted behind his back by the four guards. Colonel Blake stood up, his bloated face broke into a smile which showed a monstrous set of yellow teeth. Rubbing his red neck he reached to his side and drew out a revolver. A few yards away a woman shrieked.

"Don't! Don't touch me child!"

Colonel Blake drew his arm up to his shoulder and lashed at Denny's face with the metal weapon.

Denny fell unconscious, his face a mass of blood, at the feet of authority.

* * * * *

"Denny! Denny! Can ye hear me?"

Denny opened his right eye, and saw the face of his brother, Tom. The pain in his head felt like a knife as he spoke.

"Tom, me eye! me eye! I can't open me eye."

"I know Denny. It's cut badly."

"Where is Mom?"

"She's in the kitchen, Denny."

Lookin' out from the little room, Denny saw the body of his father laid out on four chairs, his mother knelt beside it.

"Are ye all right?" asked Tom.

"Sure," said Denny as he raised himself up from the bed.

"I'm all right, take care of muther. I'll take a run over to Doctor Reilly."

Denny walked out to his mother.

"Mom, put father in the bed."

The Black and Tans

"Och, Denny darlin', are ye all right?" wept his mother.

"Mom, I'll be right back. I'm going to the Doctor."
Denny went back into the room.

"I'm getting me cap," he said.

He reached for his cap from a peg on the wall. He looked around the room and on the dresser he found a pencil. Taking a piece of paper he wrote:

"Tom—I'm goin' to get Blake—take care of mother."

Leaving by the back door, Denny ran across the yard and disappeared into the hayloft. A moment later, with Tom's gun in his pocket, he headed for the square.

The crowd was still there as before. Colonel Blake was now mounting the platform as Denny eased his way towards him. The Colonel held a sheet of white paper in his hand, and looked down at the sea of faces before him.

"People of Cloonee, I have here before me a communication which I have received from London."

Denny was now within a few yards of the Colonel. One step to the right and his target would be in full view.

"I'll wait until he reads it," thought Denny.

Colonel Blake continued.

"The communication is dated, December sixth, nineteen hundred and twenty-one. It reads: 'By order of His Royal Majesty's Government in London, as from this date . . .'"

The words of Colonel Blake were cut sharp. The silence of the gathering was shattered by a sudden cry that came from behind the crowd.

"Denny! . . . Denny! . . . Wait! . . ."

All eyes turned from the Colonel and searched for the speaker whose voice had so daringly interrupted his words. Down the street the form of young Tom Burke appeared, as

he ran wildly towards the square. Denny didn't have to look, he knew it was Tom. A sudden terror gripped his whole body, fear and bewilderment prompted him to run. But only for a moment.

"'Twill be now or never," thought he. He made a quick step to the right of the man who stood before him. The Colonel had lowered the paper to his side. His thick eyebrows raised as he blurted through his thick lips: "Blazes; what the damn's goin' on 'ere?"

Denny raised the gun to shoulder height, and squeezed the trigger twice. Four shots rang out, and the lifeless body of Colonel Blake crashed over the rail of the platform to within four feet from where Denny slumped to the ground with two rifle bullets in his chest. The white paper floated to earth and landed near his head.

Tom reached the scene as Denny's eyes closed and the last breath of life left his young body. Reaching down, Tom lifted the body of his brother up in his arms, and without a word walked towards his home.

At the platform old Seán Flaherty stooped down and picked up the paper that had fallen from Colonel Blake's hand. Through misty, tired eyes he read: "By order of His Royal Majesty's Government in London, as from this date, December sixth, nineteen hundred and twenty-one, all members of His Majesty's forces will withdraw from Ireland. Under the provision of a treaty signed this date, between Mr. Michael Collins, Representative of the Irish people and Mr. . . ."

The Bellbuoys off Nantucket

By PAUL F. FLETCHER, '51

The bellbuoys dip their eternal dip
And cry their warnings from lifeless lips,
And seagulls swim at their fingertips . . .
Their heavy eyes towards me.

The breakwaters clutch at the incoming boats,
And stretch their claws like cats after stoats;
And the bellbuoys peal their discordant notes . . .
Like rings on the fingered sea.

The clank and the clank and the fog green and dank;
And a heron grates like a rusted crank,
And juts off a bellbuoy like a corpse in a tank
That a friend saw in Normandy.

The bellbuoys cursed New Bedford's smug shore
And wheezed at me of green sea lore,
And I heard then at aft and again at fore . . .
And they railed in their lunacy.

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We passed Fairhaven and Phoenix Fort,
That the waves idly pound in their mocking sport,
Yet I fancied I heard the old cannon's report . . .
And the land waned in reverie.

The bellbuoys pointed the far off Cape,
And the Canal bridge hovered like a full-blown cape
And a cloud held it up like a cat by the nape . . .
Still the bellbuoys' cacophony.

Then Wood's Hole offered us warm embrace,
A genial smile from its old stone face,
And we docked at the wharf for a moment of grace . . .
Still the bellbuoys called from the sea.

Then off again to Edgartown,
And an hour's cruise to Nantucket Sound;
And the sea lies swollen like fertile ground . . .
And the bellbuoys' kree-kri-kree.

Wherever my life shall carry me
Like a bubble of salt or a blanched debris,
I shall hear the bellbuoys guiding me . . .
As I plow through the elbowed sea.

Above and to the Right

By PATRICK ARTHUR, '52

ON this particular morning, as on all the others, Mr. St. Clair stood on his porch watching the early morning sun drench his fields with sunlight. He stood still, hardly even breathing, passively enjoying the waves of damp warmth which rolled up from the dewy fields. His enjoyment was of that purer form which only a man of the city can have when he is finally through, and can find a wider, cleaner-smelling place in which to piece out the rest of his life.

He stood this way for several minutes, and then, as if just waking, he shook his head slightly and walked down the steps. His clear blue eyes looked at everything as if he was seeing it all for the first time. The cultivated fields on the left and the straggling order of the apple orchard on the right; the sagging barn and the cluster of small sheds around it. "They look like an old sow with her litter," he thought lovingly. The old wagon path that he was following was wide and clear and his steps became longer and even jaunty.

He followed the wagon path to its end, at the end of the cultivated fields, and was about to turn back when his eye caught the flash of something moving on a ridge several hundred yards away. He stopped and watched the spot for several seconds, but the only movement was that of a small bird which was sliding violently among the thick branches of the underbrush. As he watched it, he realized that he had never ventured out as far as the ridge. There were no paths in that direction and Mr. St. Clair was not curious by nature, but the energy of the morning made him feel adventurous.

He stooped down and rolled up the cuffs of his well-pressed tweed slacks and then started gingerly into the brush. As he walked he held one hand in front of his face and with the other he parted the branches. It took him several torturous minutes to arrive, panting and wet, at the ridge. When he pushed away the last branch he lowered his hand from his face and looked down into the small valley before him. His eyes widened in astonishment as he took in the scene at his feet.

The slopes of the hills on both sides of the valley were perfect, without a bush or tree to mar them. The ground was covered with a thick blanket of dark moss that did not seem to have any roots. There were no rocks on the slopes and everything seemed to be softly rounded. The light in the valley was soft and dark as if the almost blue moss absorbed all the light, refusing to reflect it to the atmosphere.

Mr. St. Clair, having overcome his initial amazement, began to wonder about this strange valley. How had it come here? Why did he not know about it? Surely it must be on his land. He took a few tentative steps forward and then stopped. There was something missing. He puzzled for a moment and then it struck him that he could not hear the birds or the monotonous undertone of the insects that had been with him before.

The strangeness of the place began to impress itself on him more and more as he listened to the impenetrable quiet of the valley. As his senses became attuned to the disturbing serenity around him, he felt a single finger of fear play along his spine. Without realizing that he was moving he walked slowly backward until he felt the reassuring tangle of brush behind him. He felt a little better then, and once again tried to understand the strange, ethereal air of this place.

Above and to the Right

As he thought, his eyes traveled down the slope in front of him. He noticed that the moss did not glisten the way the growth behind him had. "No dew," he thought, and the new discovery did not seem at all unusual to him.

After a few minutes, he began to feel a tension growing inside of him. It seemed to be transmitted to him from the blue, intense atmosphere and the electric quiet. He was breathing at shorter intervals now but he did not notice it.

His hands were beginning to quiver almost imperceptibly, when his still wandering eyes fell on the man who was sitting on the opposite slope.

When he saw him, he gave a little start and he felt some of the tension go out of him. "Another man" he thought, and his hands stopped shaking. He found a comforting reassurance in the fact that he was sharing this strange experience with someone else. He scrutinized the man closely.

The man sat on the slope with his body hunched forward, his elbows on his knees and his chin cradled in his hands. His hair was long and grew down over his ears and completely covered the collar of his tattered and shredded shirt. His beard was long and matted and dirty. The pants that he wore were cut and torn, and from the knee down were merely strips of cloth that fell back from his legs, exposing shins which were brutally lacerated and bruised.

At first Mr. St. Clair thought that the man was looking down into the valley but when he looked more closely he saw that, although the fellow's head was down, his eyes were fixed on a point above and to the right of where he stood. Instinctively, he turned his head and looked in that direction. He could see nothing there that was unusual so he turned back to the apparition across from him. The man hadn't changed his position a bit, and indeed it did not even seem

that he was breathing. St. Clair noticed that the fellow's eyes were wide and staring, as if hypnotized. "Probably a little demented," he thought, and without knowing why he sank to the ground and assumed a sitting position with his elbows on his knees and his chin cradled in his hands.

For several minutes he watched the immobile figure across from him but, look as he might, he could find no sign of life in the man except in his eyes. He soon found that the longer he looked at the fellow, the harder it became to keep his eyes from following the other's gaze. It became like an almost magnetic pull on his optic nerves, until finally, with relief, he allowed his eyes to slide along the path of the other's intense gaze and intercept it at a small patch of blue moss above and to the right of him.

When his eye finally came to rest on the small tuft he sighed gently and his body seemed to relax into the position he had chosen.

He had watched detachedly for several minutes when he realized that his gaze had centered itself on two small, limp tentacles of moss which stuck up several inches from each other. They were leaning toward one another and it seemed that in some seductive manner they were striving to join and twine themselves together. This thought fascinated him, and his gaze became more intense. For several seconds the two strings remained as they were and then he gave a slight start. They were moving together! Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the two limp strands seemed to move toward each other!

He was staring hard now, and his whole body was tense. The two strands moved closer and closer, leaning out at an ever increasing angle to each other. They were close now but they were slowing, as if the effort was too great to consummate the action. His eyes were aching now and he

Above and to the Right

was trying to impart his energy to the weakening vines, through the intensity of his now violent stare. They were closer than ever now but they seemed much weaker. He felt a rage of impotency as he watched the two, straining and pulling, only a fraction of an inch from each other. They were motionless now, only the vibrating tension of their yearning ends indicating the terrible energy that was being expended in their voluptuous design.

Suddenly, as though they had not started, the two were back in their former position and the same obscene distance hung between them.

He felt a bitter acid of frustration run through him as those few inches leered back at him, mocking him, and laughing at his impotency. He wanted to run to those barren vines and knot them together. More than anything, he wanted to see those two vines twined around one another and lying flat on the ground like the rest. He was staring at them with a fixity that was almost hypnotic when he suddenly realized that . . . yes! they were moving again! Those game, voluptuous little tendrils *were* drawing closer!

* * * * *

Mr. St. Clair came out of his house on this particular morning and hurried to the edge of the porch. He hesitated there for a moment and then made his way quickly down the steps to the overgrown wagon road. He did not seem to notice the sharp frost in the air, indeed he did not seem to notice anything but the road. He arrived quickly at the end of the road and, without hesitation he plunged into the brush. As he walked rapidly toward the ridge several hundred yards away, he used both hands to clear away the thicker brush that obstructed him.

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When he arrived at the ridge, he burst through the last bush and hurried forward a few steps on the blue-tinted moss. He stopped abruptly and sat down, placing his elbows on his knees and resting his chin in his hands. Then his eyes swung to a point above him and to the right.

His hair was long, covering his tattered collar, and his beard was matted and dirty.

DEBUT . . .

PATRICK J. JOYCE, '52, whose story, "The Black and Tans", begins on page 7, is really a son of the "auld sod". He was brought up in Tuam, County Galway, Ireland, and prepped at the Christian Brothers School there. Pat is an Education major.

Downtown

By M. HOWARD GLUCKMAN, '52

THE Third Ave. El mixed its screams and grunts with the street noises below as it came to a grinding stop. The doors sprang open and from the glarily-lighted enamel and steel interior emerged a thin, late evening crowd. A moment later the train rumbled protestingly into the night, leaving its passengers, like huddling sheep, to grope their way on the dingy, shadowy platform.

One of the passengers, a man in his middle thirties, stopped to light a cigarette. His appearance was tall and ragged, but his deep blue eyes gave his gaunt face a quiet, sincere look of intelligence. His hands were leathery, and his arms long. There wasn't an ounce of fat on him and the shoddy clothes seemed to cling to his body. He took his last cigarette from a crumpled pack, straightened it a bit, and put it between his lips. Throwing the empty package over the railing into the street below, he reached into his shirt pocket for a match. When the cigarette was lit he drew deeply on it and started down the splintery stairs to the street.

Third Ave. in New York City is a poor street, close to the Bowery. By day it bears the heavy traffic of trucks and vans, by night the countless cafés, gin mills, and night clubs blare forth, their voices echoing in the narrow, crowded street amid the blinking of the colored neon signs.

Down into this street walked Sam Fisher. Sam hadn't been born in New York but he had spent most of his life there. It was a long way from his home in Split Rock, Oklahoma,

and it had taken the city a long time to grind its dirt and corruption into him. But as he slouched along, with his beaten cigarette sagging between his big fingers, it was quite evident that the city had won.

Sam never had too much money, and now he was too broke even to buy a drink. So he hurried along to his flat over a grocery store. He climbed the crumbling stairs, lighted by a single dirty bulb at the top of the landing, and walked along a narrow hallway to his rooms. The rooms were not the type occupied by retired millionaires or honeymooning couples. Everywhere was a rancid odor of filth and decay. Across the tiny window of the room hung a pair of ragged curtains with dirty edges blowing in the breeze. There was a barely recognizable horsehair sofa, covered with torn magazines, soiled clothes, particles of food, and ancient cigarette butts. The warped, uneven floor was covered with a thready rug that, without a doubt, had never been swept. Near the window was a large table littered with pencilled notes, typewritten sheets of paper, and more cigarette butts. And plunged into the center of this confusion was an old grimy typewriter.

His bedroom was shabby, with vintage furniture and filthy bedclothes. The floor was bare and in the closet was an old suit, a smelly shirt on a hanger, and an old pair of sneakers. The bureau drawers were not filled with clothes, but with manuscripts, fifteen or twenty of them. All were neatly typed, covered, and separately sealed in manila envelopes.

After a small supper Sam sat down at the table and began to type. He worked for three or four hours intermittently, reading the typed pages, then either destroying them or putting them aside. This work was his only happiness. This

Downtown

was his food, wealth, and comfort. From his fertile imagination, planted deep with the tempo of the city, grew stories of its people, its streets and houses, its rivers and highways. Sam never showed these stories to anyone, and he never attempted to sell them. But when he finished a manuscript he put a cover on it and slipped it into a manila envelope which he sealed, titled, and dated. Then it went into one of the crowded bureau drawers with the others.

Exhausted by now, Sam clicked off the desk lamp and groped in the dark to his bedroom. He undressed and crept into bed. He didn't go to sleep right away, but with his hands behind his head he liked to listen to the tugs tooting to each other up and down the East River. He could also hear the late evening breeze rustling his papers on the table. Then he turned over, pulled the covers over his shoulders, and began to fall asleep. The thing he heard last was the El train pull into the station then rumble out again into the distance.

DEBUT . . .

M. HOWARD GLUCKMAN, '52, is a graduate of Cranston High School. He is enrolled in the School of Arts as an Economics major.

Acting Captain

By RICHARD R. HARTUNG, '52

I almost wish, sometimes, that I could be—
Up on the deck of that bridge again
In the still, tense darkness one night far away;
With the captain below in a drunken sleep, drunk-asleep
in his cabin below,
And the ship secured and cleared and ready for sea—all
ready for me.

Yes— I *would* like to pace the bridge again
In the strange, moody quiet of that foreign night;
Tensely waiting in lonely darkness, for the pilot
Whose boat I can already see in the distance;
Her red and green running-lights shine in the darkness
And slowly get nearer, and nearer.

To hear the far-off, sort of musical din of many sounds
Where harbor lights twinkle and lend a soft glow to the
midnight sky;
To be frantic, yet thrilled; for the captain's drunk below
And the mate in charge on the bridge is I!

I strain to hear voices, hushed and murmuring
In darkness up forward; cigarettes glow
Where men, invisible, wait by the chains;
Where the men stand by to heave-to on the chains,
And talk and smoke, as they wait for a yell from me.

They know that the captain is dead-drunk below—he gets that
way, now and then,

Acting Captain

And stays that way for several days, locked in his cabin;
They know I've never skippered a ship;
True, the Old Man has faith in me—this too they know,
But to think—they're trusting in me.

Somewhere forward a man laughs faintly,
Somewhere aft a guitar strums softly, a few idle notes,
In the strange, waiting solitude of this night;
And my own nervous footsteps here on the bridge,
Way up here in a world of my own,
Even apart from the wheelman and the lookout
Who stand over there by the wheel and stare at me
As I pace to and fro, from wing to wing and back again;
Awaiting the pilot whose launch I can hear now—
A steady drone, low and ominous, coming closer and
closer,
His red and green running lights gliding through dark-
ness, closer abeam of us;
God! but it's lonely up here.

The pilot's launch is silent now, coasting in softly on the star-
board beam;
And then her engines kick with a sudden whir-r-r-r-r-r,
As she slides alongside and brushes our hull with a
s-s-s-s-queak;
Something is shouted in guttural French,
And the pilot is easing his way up the Jacob's ladder.

The boat shoves off and drones away into darkness,
Her running-lights tracing a wide arc in the pitch dark-
ness
And moving off slowly into the night;

The Alembic

The pilot comes to the top of the ladder and onto the
bridge, and walks toward me;
The pilot's aboard—the man I've been waiting for,
anxious for,
Yet almost hoping he would not come.

He greets me here by the ship's wheel in the very dim light
of the compass,
Smoking his pipe and casually speaking of weather fore-
casts ashore;
He's a funny old man with a black beret, and he calls me
Captain—right to my face;
The little light of his pipe bowl moves with his quick
gestures,
While he talks and shrugs about nothing, as Frenchmen
will often do;
While he looks up at me and talks and calls me "*mon
capitaine*".

This is indeed a strange old man that stands here in the night,
Talking to me about the weather;
I can't look away from his wrinkled eyes
That peer at me, intently, in the faint light of the com-
pass scale;
His eyes are deep and strong with a sort of—under-
standing,
That seems to penetrate my very soul with calm assur-
ance;
Why, it's really as if he knew!
And suddenly, as he speaks and looks up at me that way,
I have a feeling of confidence I've never had before;
I'm no longer afraid.

Acting Captain

And now he smiles and shrugs and says, in broken English,
 "Shall we go?"
And suddenly my own voice is roaring orders into darkness;
The megaphone shakes in my hand as I hear the commotion up forward,
Of relayed orders and running footsteps on the steel deck;
And then I thrill to the music that every seaman takes
 for granted,
As winches grind and the anchor chains rumble a dull,
 plaintive tune to the peaceful night.

The pilot tells me the course in a quiet tone,
And I sing it out quick and proud to the man at the wheel;
Soon he mutters, "Ahead one-third",
And there's a loud r-r-r-r-ring as I slide the stick of the
 engine-order-telegraph.
Now it is very quiet—a tense, waiting quiet in the darkness.
And then, all at once, the ship comes alive beneath my
 very feet,
As the engines begin their steady, ceaseless throb,
And I have a feeling I've never had before.

We ease her out through the harbor, the pilot and I;
Down the lane of buoy lights,
And past the drab, silent hulks of ships at anchor;
And soon there's a kind of lazy quiet on board,
Broken only by the sizzle of calm sea past the waterline
And the proud, vibrant tone of the orders I call, up here
 on the bridge in the night.

Juana's Miracle

By RAYMOND D'AMBROSIO, '51

ONE day, little Juana, sitting beside her mother who was kneeling patting some pasty meal into round, flat tortillas, asked, "Mamacita, could it ever snow here?"

Mamacita, without looking up from her work, smiled; wrinkles, like fissures in brown earth, cutting her round face. "Foolish Juanita. Of course it can't snow here. It's too hot. Only in the South, near the mountains, does it snow. For it to snow here would take a miracle."

"A miracle?" Juana frowned. "What is a miracle, Mamacita?"

Mamacita stopped her steady, monotonous patting and reflectively rested on the back of her legs. For years, she had used the word miracle frequently and loosely. When Pepe, Juana's younger brother, had been sick with an obstinate fever, Mamacita had cried that only a miracle could save him. Pepe had lived. Once, when the sky had grown unwontedly angry and the earth had shaken with rage, so that Mamacita had thought all her misery over, she had embraced her two children and beseeched God to save them. And, that she and her family had survived the fury of nature was, as Mamacita had put it, a miracle. Now, if the truth be known, Mamacita, although she used the word fifty times a day, couldn't think of an explanation to give Juana, who had heard her mother use the word so many times that after a while it had no meaning for her. But, Mamacita's making snow dependent upon a miracle jogged Juana's curiosity, so that she had to know what a miracle was. Perhaps she could "make" a miracle to bring snow.

Juana's Miracle

"A miracle," explained Mamacita, slowly, testing each word mentally before uttering it, "is God's making something happen that could never happen without Him." For a second, Mamacita thought over what she had said; then, satisfied with her definition, repeated it and resumed her patting.

"How do miracles happen, Mamacita?" Juana asked.

"By prayer and God's grace, Juanita. That's how a miracle happens."

"By prayer," Juana repeated softly to herself. And, suddenly her heart swelled with an overflowing gladness. If a miracle could be caused by prayer and if the miracle could bring snow, then all she would have to do to see snow was to pray for a miracle. To bring snow was very easy. After all, she knew how to pray.

And so she prayed. However, Juana's was not just a mechanical prayer, repeated as quickly as possible, as if to pray were an arduous task which, since there was no way of escaping, must be borne and rapidly finished. The simple words that formed her prayer came slowly from her heart, as something precious that she would give only to one Person. No one ever prayed with a more humble confidence in the fulfillment of her prayer than did Juana.

As time went on and her miracle was not forthcoming, she did not despair; but only prayed with greater fervor. Never for a minute did she doubt that this miracle, for which she prayed with complete faith, would take place. If she hadn't been so young—only eleven—and, as yet, uninitiated in the ways and beliefs of the world, she would have ceased her praying for a miracle as something useless. She would have convinced herself that miracles do not occur every day; and that when they do happen, they happen to other people or for other people—saints and those chosen before the first sun. She

might even have called herself a fool for ever praying for a miracle. But, fortunately, Juana had neither the sophisticate's skepticism nor the wise man's ignorance. She didn't realize what power she prayed for. She only knew that she wanted to see snow and feel its coldness against her chestnut skin.

Perhaps Juana was too young to notice or perhaps her eyes were focused on the distant heavens too much and too intently for her to observe the change in Mamacita. For many months now Mamacita had been losing weight. Oddly, and for apparently no external reason, her plump body had withered, like an atrophied thing, down to thin flesh. Her face, round and full, had grown gaunt and angular, so that her eyes were sunken and lifeless. At first, Mamacita was puzzled about her loss of weight; she ate as much as ever; her work was no more gruelling than it had ever been; and yet she lost weight. Then, the pain started. An eating, hungry pain that gnawed ravenously at her breast. Day by day, the pain grew in sharpness and intensity, so that Mamacita could hardly breathe.

"Mama," Papa asked one night after he had returned from work in the cacao fields, "what is wrong with you?"

"Nothing," she lied.

"You have grown thin. You look tired. Something is wrong. There is a doctor in the town"—the only doctor—"perhaps he should come to see you."

Mamacita forced a smile. "I am all right, Papa. Believe me. I am all right."

Papa said no more.

It was night, and the heat lay ponderously on the roof of the hut, making the interior insufferably hot. Juana lay

Juana's Miracle

tossing on her straw mattress, her brown face shining dully with perspiration. Suddenly, she sat up in bed, her eyes wide, her head tilted, listening. Something had wakened her. But what? The night was quiet, with a preternatural quiet. That strange, unnatural quiet that precedes some happening, great or small: a death, a birth, or, perhaps, a miracle. It was a tangible, almost human quiet, as if it were an entity of itself. And Juana, sitting listening to the quiet, which had called her from her sleep, was overcome with an understandable fear, so that she ran for the sanctuary of Mamacita's arms.

Mamacita was not asleep. She lay next to the soundly-sleeping Papa, staring at the blackness of the ceiling, her rosary in her weak hand.

"Mamacita, Mamacita," whispered Juana, unevenly.

With seeming effort, Mamacita turned her head and saw Juana, who had approached soundlessly, kneeling beside her.

"What is wrong, Juanita?" Mamacita asked, concernedly, in a raspy whisper.

Placing her arms over Mamacita's waist and her head on Mamacita's breast, she said softly, shivering from the fear that was still in her, "I'm afraid."

"Afraid? Of what, *niña mía*?" Mamacita said, languidly lifting her hand and stroking Juana's smooth black hair.

"I'm afraid of the night, Mamacita. It's so quiet. I'm afraid!"

To Mamacita, Juana's voice seemed to have the muffled force of the voice of a person standing a long distance from her, shouting to her. "There is nothing to be afraid of, Juana. Nothing at all." And the light touch of Mamacita's hand on her head reassured Juana.

For a long time mother and daughter lay silently. Then, Juana, who couldn't fall asleep, spoke softly, "Mamacita, do you think it will snow? I have prayed so hard for it to snow."

Despite her pain, Mamacita smiled. "Poor little Juana. You do so want to see snow. Some day you will see it."

But, Juana didn't want to see it on some distant day in the faraway future; she wanted to see it tomorrow. So, in an impatient whisper, she told Mamacita, "I want to see it now. Not later on."

Was it because Juana was whispering that she seemed so far away? To make sure her daughter was by her side, Mamacita moved her weak fingers over Juana's hot face.

Juana, sensing that something was wrong, said, "What is the matter, Mamacita?"

Her voice was like an echo flowing with dying strength across the cosmic world that was slowly, but steadily, separating them.

"Mamacita," Juana said in a raised tone, "what is wrong?" Papa stirred in his sleep.

With the static breathing of one dying from suffocation, Mamacita hoarsely gasped. "Juan—Juana go an-and g-get the priest."

The priest! Juana didn't understand why her mother wanted the priest. "The priest, Mamacita?"

Almost inaudibly, Mamacita said, "Mamacita is going to die."

With the slow, stiff movements of a mechanical toy, Juana rose to her feet, staring at the wasted body of Mamacita. Did Mamacita say she was going to die? Mamacita *couldn't* die! She *mustn't* die! Violently Juana shook her head, to drive out the frightening, unwanted thought that

Juana's Miracle

Mamacita might die. No, no. She hadn't heard right. Mamacita *will* live, *must* live. She must always be there with her. Death would take Mamacita from her forever. She would never see Mamacita again; never embrace her. She would be gone; and there would be nothing. And suddenly, the full awfulness of the word death struck Juana so that she cried loudly, wakening Papa.

"What is wrong, Juanita?" he asked, wide awake immediately.

Unable to control her sobbing, Juana didn't answer, but just gazed at Mamacita, who lay deathly still. Papa looked at his wife with a peculiar horror.

"Run for the Priest, Juana! *Prisa, prisa!*" he commanded.

For a minute she did not move, as if she had not heard him.

"Juana, run for the priest!" he said more excitedly.

Obediently she turned and, forgetting her fear, ran through the soundless night to the priest's home, reciting through her sobs as she ran the simple plea: "My God, don't let Mamacita die. Please! Please!" The priest, knowing from long experience why Juana had knocked on his door, took a minute to dress and fetch the things he needed. Then the two ran back to the hut.

Still praying, Juana watched the priest, in the touchable gloom of the room, prepare Mamacita for Heaven. And, as if having been granted time to receive the last sacrament, Mamacita turned her head and, as if it were the easiest thing in the world to do, died.

A deep moan, which seemed to soar with Mamacita's invisible soul to the highest region of the universe, came from Papa, who dazedly, with outstretched hands, went to the bed-

side of Mamacita. The candle that burned by the bed surrounded her calm, unfeeling face with a golden nimbus.

Juana, who wasn't fortunate enough to be young like her brother, who just watched the scene with a sleepy indifference, not aware of what was happening, put her hand to her mouth, to block her scream. In a desperate desire to leave all this sorrow and tragedy, she rushed from the hut to a rivulet, not far from her home. And the rivulet was still, not joining in Juana's sorrow. For what did it care of human grief?

Flinging herself on the ground so that her face touched the earth, Juana wept with the piteous forlornness of a lost child, her small, bony body shaking violently. The snow! The snow, she thought! Why had she ever prayed for snow? Why hadn't she, all those months, prayed for Mamacita? If she had, Mamacita, right now, would be calling her home. Oh, why, why, had she wasted all those words on something that could never happen? But what difference did it make? No one had heard her pray for snow, and no one would have heard her pray for Mamacita. God had not listened to her; no one had listened to her. No one would ever listen to her. It was futile to pray; for prayer was nothing more than hollow, powerless words. Never again would she pray. Never! Never!

Suddenly, Juana stopped crying. She had felt something cold on her warm arm. As if afraid to touch herself, she passed quivering fingers over her arm. Again, something cooled her flesh. Then, with a heart beating with a joyous fear, she lifted her eyes to the sky. From the serenity of the far heavens the snow fell with a celestial ease, looking like sparkling pieces of crystal against the black velvet night.

The Battlefield of Loss

By RICHARD A. AUDETTE, '51

Seoul, Korea
June 27, 1950

“THE enemy will soon be here. But before he arrives, I will no longer hear the sharp, persuasive accent in his firing—or has the throbbing hurt at my side affected my hearing?—which resounds along the hills to the north of the City. The monotonous drizzle seeping through the canvas ceiling, like a sprinkling over a porous sepulcher, will become imperceptible. No more will my flesh be receptive of the moist caresses which the fetid air offers. And when my pen stops and my hand grows numb, only silence will be waiting at the gates of the City to play host to the uninvited.

“Here, on the outskirts of the City, a jaundiced light bathes a crowded hospital-tent. The musty smell of blood-soaked dressings and ether is outdone only by the faintly sickening incense that burns to dull the pungent odor. The buzzing of flies is drowned by the noisy children who wave large paper fans to stop the pests from feasting. (Even in death, one prefers not to face reality—and often chooses a worse alternative by not doing so.) Altogether, we are about thirty wounded. Who knows how many are already dead! To take care of us there is one doctor, enfeebled by age and work. Two old women perform, almost trance-like, his muffled orders. The children, having made quite a sport of pilfering the bodies of valuables and trinkets, eagerly watch the dying men. These youngsters are not skeptical towards death: she has been their

wet-nurse through life. Something akin to sadistic pleasure comes from knowing they will get nothing from me but the cheap pen with which I am writing this account.

“There is a closeness, a co-operation among the Koreans that was not noticeable before. Those who once would not even look at each other now communicate in a language only the heart understands. A Korean with a little knowledge of English explained it to me before battle. ‘When the Americans were here, they threw us grain and we hated one another. Now we are building a tower. And even if we are consumed in our activity, constructing it has made us brothers.’

“In this tent I am the stranger, and they acknowledge the fact by letting me alone. I did not understand the words of the doctor, whose small, apathetic eyes displayed only tiredness as his crooked fingers prodded my wound; but I knew what he meant when he shook his head. So, to forget the pain and to while away time, I took to scribbling these notes. Terrible paradox: the pain is persistent and time is all too short to while away! Dick would have quipped, ‘A journalist to the end.’ What is it he said regarding the profession? . . . ‘Newspapers do to news what the Notre Dame laundry does to clothes: they shrink, stretch, or discolor everything they get a hold of.’ I am surprised at the smile which springs to my lips, prompted, maybe, by the laughter that comes when tears cannot.

“If this record be found—and the chances are heavy against it—those capable of reading these scraps of paper will no doubt comment on my unjournalistic tone, on my unobjective viewpoint. But who can be journalistic when pain and death lurk all about? Who can be objective when all he sees are dry, thickened lips; bulging, sightless eyes; faces set with the contortions of too costly an hour spent along the

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sharp line separating the mortal from the immortal, the transient from the eternal? One dies neither as a journalist nor as a soldier, but always as a man.

"Now I see how superficial was the article about the Koreans which I wrote from Seoul in 1949, two years after I graduated from Columbia. How could I have studied the man without even looking into his heart? When he received the last part of the article, the editor wired me to stay and see what turned up, since no position was open at home. He had thought it cheaper to leave me here. Renting an apartment close to Bong Chong Street, I met Dick Lupton, who lived in the next room. Subsequent to two years in the Army and two at Notre Dame, he had come to this purgatory, as he would call it, to work for an American engineer. We quickly became good friends and, in order to save money, moved into one apartment.

"Yesterday, having been told that Americans were ordered out of the city, we returned from Mass at the Cathedral. It was not odd that I should accompany Dick, since, as he would so candidly put it, I must help him pray for my conversion. We sat in our chairs, staring out the window or at each other until I finally asked, 'You're staying?' He nodded. 'We're staying,' I corrected. What a brief courtship we paid death! At present, I see that had I said more I would have talked myself out of remaining. Before assigning us weapons, the South-Korean officer (another of Dick's many acquaintances) briefed us on the dangers we faced. Grinning somewhat nervously, he assured us that this was not going to be a football game. Not knowing why, Dick and I laughed until smarting tears filled our eyes.

"Later, as we lay bivouacked along the ruins of the wall which once surrounded the city, the mood more serious

because of the enemy's defiant artillery, I asked Dick why he had decided to remain. 'I felt I had had a part, no matter how small, in the Koreans' betrayal'; he said, averting my gaze, 'and I wanted at least to be here for the burial.' Afterwards, his rosary-crucifix clanging on the metal of the gun, he said—it was the last time he spoke to me—'I wish I had learned to fight as well as I'm learning how to pray. . . . It must be true: the only career with a future is the Army, even if war does punctuate that future a bit abruptly.'

"The strand of rosary lies at my side. I cannot explain why I removed it from the grasp of the headless cadaver. Probably I thought I had spent too much on that battlefield and wanted to take something back with me. But this . . . a trifle! Reason must be the greatest deserter in battle. The cross is stained with blood. Would it be his? or mine?—this blood that does not so much testify to the bravery of our hearts as to the frailty of our humanity.

"Back home, life will go on as usual. I doubt that my parents will spend much grief on him who in life gave them so little joy. They don't have to worry about a burial. . . . It is best this way. Strange that I should worry about this; but then, reflection might be a full-time occupation with the dying. I can sense a vague anxiety wanting me on the other side of death's door and a sort of peaceful fear detaining me before it. Yet, my memory races back to those Sundays when I was young. The ringing of the church bells would bring me to the window of our home to gaze longingly after Father, generally sauntering off down the street to (what I later discovered) Mass. Mother never went and told me I was too young, too frail to bother with these things. She always tried to protect me from everything. As I look back, it does not surprise me that I grew to be a shy, thin, inert boy, secretly

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envying the energy displayed by my college mates, though the end to which they brought their vigor was false. In me, no matter how close the imitation, it was forced, spiritless. How can I say, Father? Mother? How many times did they show me, their only child, that I was in their way? The thought pains more than my side . . . I want so much to love them! . . . At least, if they did not experience then the love and joy of rearing a child, they will now have the cold satisfaction of knowing they produced a soldier.

“The boy brings me a cup of hot water, but it does little to relieve the dryness of my throat. Swallowing becomes more and more difficult. I can still write—illegible as that is—but I cannot speak . . . I cannot love . . . ! The nakedness of the bothersome children merely increases the awareness of my stripped soul. Too often I have quenched my thirst with more than flat water, I have satiated my hunger, I have had all to my comfort. No wonder it was so easy to be passionate. But to love—that is given to the poor, to the hungry, to the thirsty. With a profusion that did not make me rich but soft, with a tolerance which did not bring charity but indifference, I was like one of the puddles forming on the sodden earth about my cot, evaporating at the first burst of heat, freezing at a chill wind. Is it not best to run whether it be in dung or over Carrara marble? Then there is movement, there is direction. . . .

“As I write I can feel myself growing weaker. The page dims before my eyes. The darkness closing in upon me from all sides holds me like a conquest yet unconquered. The enemy is waiting . . . and . . . and He is here also. I was so sure He would not come. I did not want Him to come! Could He not grant me the peaceless peace of this worldly hell! But then, He was always closest to me in my sins. I

can hear Him whispering to me, begging, supplicating. Must He remind me that, in my sins, I tried to fill a chalice of pain with a thimbleful of pleasure! The enemy seems distant now; but He is close, as if wanting to embrace me. It is the Loving Conqueror Who stands all about me, and my flesh is disarmed. Embrace me! Men of faith have asked for triter goals than mine: O, that I had never been! O God! O God!—the utterance of Your Name brings light to my soul—I can ask only for mercy, not justice. But whatever the punishment for my life, at least, it will be lessened by recalling this moment . . . of . . . love. . . .”

At the bottom of the page a blotch formed where the pen, falling from the limp hand, wept a tear of black.

DEBUT . . .

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The Abandoned Invisible World

By WARREN DENNIS, *Special Student*

THE French historian, Taine, in the introduction to his great book on English literary history, compares a work of high literary merit to a sea shell. The shell is that which remains after the live animal has died, just as great books are the remains of a past civilization. An examination by a scientist of the shell will give him a key to enable him to reconstruct the composition and habits of the dead animal; so too, a historian can examine a past culture through a careful survey of the significant books of a particular period.

It is with this kind of examination that this critique will be concerned. I have chosen two works for this purpose, Melville's *Moby Dick* and Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*. I shall point out certain characteristics in *Moby Dick* which are not in *The Sun Also Rises*. It is my contention that these differences are not primarily the differences between two individuals as isolated personalities. The differences arise from the differences of the respective ages which influenced each author. From the time of Melville's *Moby Dick* to the 1920's, profound changes had come about in this country. The Civil War and World War I had come and gone. The industrial expansion and the development of the West had been completed. But more important, for our purpose, than these events, which, after all, are mere outward manifestations of deeper problems, have been the changes in our way of thinking and feeling.

Comminger, the Columbia historian, states in his recent book, *The American Mind*, that by 1890 Protestant theology in this country had gone bankrupt. Among the major causes for this loss of influence were the then startling scholastic discoveries of Spencer and Darwin which, coupled at a later period with the new doctrines of Marx and Freud, hit the American intellectual scene with such an impact that almost a complete secularization of intellectual thought resulted outside of Catholic circles. With the breakdown of these intellectual assumptions which primarily centered around the Bible came the great cry of the younger generation of the 1920's against the "outdated" morals of their Puritan and Victorian ancestors. H. L. Mencken led his smart young men down the somewhat ridiculous path of iconoclasm.

Between Melville and Hemingway then, were historical events of first importance. The reader should remember that I have chosen only one book by each author, and thus these books do not represent the final or full development of the authors concerned. But these particular books seem to me to have the most material for my purpose of comparison, and they are books which show the temper of the ages in which they were produced.

"Hark ye yet again,—the little lower layer. All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event—in the living act, the undoubted deed—there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If man will strike, strike through the mask!"

These words of Ahab, the protagonist of *Moby Dick*, are justly famous because they point the way towards Melville's

The Abandoned Invisible World

embodiment of a dual world. "All visible objects" of the world on the whaling vessel serve Melville as jumping-off places for illustrations of the invisible universe. Thus the book is an excellent illustration of the sensation of *levels* of experience. The world of visible objects gives way again and again through the medium of symbols to the probing of the invisible world of the spirit.

When a book has multiple meanings the key, not only to the discovery of the presence of, but also to the unraveling of these meanings is found in the use of symbols. A writer uses symbols as tools of the imagination to bring before his readers the worlds that are important to him. These worlds are worlds of the spirit or the mind or the emotions or the imagination. He takes the plausible, concrete reality of experience and uses these in such a way as to suggest the presence of the invisible worlds.

It is the use of these symbols which makes us realize that this is much more than a story about a half-mad captain who goes in search of a white whale. The large amount of critical interpretive material published each year are new attempts to unravel the mystery in the book. Is the whale a symbol of fate, evil, nature, or abstract idealism? What is the ship and what is the sea? Even the long middle section which is devoted to a minute discussion of the parts of the whale, its history and uses, has symbolical reference to the rest of the book.

But it is not the interpretations of these mysteries that concerns us here. It is rather the overwhelming realization that they are there. It is the presence of the invisible world, sometimes personified by God and sometimes embodied in a sense of evil, which serves as the conflict between the will of the ego-centered Ahab and the forces outside of him which

eventually bring his downfall. The metaphysical problems of time and eternity, material and spiritual, the good and the evil, is the broad, breathless canvas upon which Melville paints his drama.

Because of this background the characters emerge as great individuals. It is important to recognize the relationship between the *presence* of the spiritual world and the stature of the characters. In our country there is much talk of the dignity of the individual and the equality of man. These concepts have meaning, however, only if they are understood against the background of God and the reality of the human soul. Melville understood this relationship: if not philosophically, at least artistically. It is his prayer-like appeal to God, "thou just Spirit of Equality", which gives impact and dignity to his appeal for human equality. Ahab is so terrifying because he dares to defy the invisible world and unlike the Christian concept of Dante, "In His Will is our peace," misses the meaning of true humility and is thus destroyed.

The contrast between these giants in *Moby Dick* and the characters in *The Sun Also Rises* is startling. The group of expatriates pictured in this novel are operating in a world entirely devoid of spiritual values. The only thing that matters to them is living the present moment. They try to escape from their past, and generally do not want to talk about it. As for the future, they do not even stop to think about it. They seem to operate within a vacuum, with no roots or interests or values. The brutal exterior world is pictured as being *around* them. They do nothing but watch it go by even though they are affected by it. Their lives are not measured according to any standards other than a vague feeling for certain rituals—rituals that are more poses than meaningful symbols.

The Abandoned Invisible World

The whole tone of the book is disillusionment and nihilism. Since there is no interest in the development of the characters, the interest shifts to the conflict between the outside brutal world and the efforts of the characters to escape from its influence. Of course, the task is futile from the very beginning and it is because of this that the irony and pathos comes through to us. It is this that makes it a really terrifying book.

This portrait of a lost generation seems slightly adolescent to us now, and the question arises as to how representative was *The Sun Also Rises*? We have a curious paradox here. It was only in a novel that a lost generation could feel its plight with such intensity and live it out with such magnificence. Yet the novel was so real that it took us another generation to realize that being lost was a delicate art in itself; and our own Lady Ashleys, so beguiling in literature, were apt to be boring in life. We see, in fact, that the lost generation is much more than lost. Just as none of us could live up to the disillusionment of Hemingway's people, none of us, or few, could be so overwhelmingly ineffectual. But that Hemingway gathered together the disillusioned feelings of the twenties, exaggerated as that portrait might be, there can be no doubt, because Hemingway himself was a part of it, and he harvested these feelings and created a system of social habit, poses, conversations of calculated bravado which were to be the passports of recognition of this generation.

What explains these sharp differences? Why the changes from a deep conviction and faith in the dignity and action of man as seen in *Moby Dick* to the bewildered living without consequence in *The Sun Also Rises*? The answers, of course, are multiple and complex, but the correlation of

the lack of a meaningful spiritual world in Hemingway with the nihilistic actions of his characters is all too evident. Literature is full of examples of the distress and chaos which comes from a world based on sensation alone. It is to Hemingway's credit that he was honest enough to portray this in its logical consequences. Ahab was great as an individual because of his keen insight into the forces of the invisible world. His tragedy comes from his defiance of this world. The characters in *The Sun Also Rises* have no knowledge of the worth of the spiritual world and it is *because* of this fatal lack that their stature is so pathetic and meaningless. In this they are allies with many modern intellectuals:

"Insecurity is their portion, and doom and death are to them familiar neighbors . . . There is very little in them of that lust for life and experience, of the joy of living for its own sake, of a sense of wide horizons, or worlds to conquer, or much of that early curiosity that drove their older brothers expansively over realms of knowledge."



Uptown

By M. HOWARD GLUCKMAN, '52

IT WAS five-thirty on the Wrigley clock tower on a gray October afternoon. In the Loop the rush hour was at its height as thousands of working Chicagoans fought their way home for the week-end.

Bill Marden, fifty stories up in the McCormack building, was unaware of the street currents below. The only light in the office was that cast by his desk lamp as he finished the last of his paper work. This done, he clicked off the lamp and, silhouetted by the huge double window behind him, stretched all the way back in his chair. It had been a long and tiring day. He rubbed his tired eyes and rested his head in his hands for a few moments. Then he got up and went over to the window behind him and looked out.

With the change in traffic lights the crowds spilled across the streets, crushed themselves into overcrowded buses, and poured down the stairs into the subways. Fifty stories up they looked infinitesimal, and the traffic toy-like.

Hands thrust deep into his pockets Bill studied the changing scene below him, then shifted his gaze upwards to the darkening sky. It had been promising rain for two days and it would not be long before the promise was fulfilled. He should get home as quickly as possible.

But the gloom of the day had worked on Bill and, added to his monotonous work, had brought on a mood of depression. He had had many such moods before, but today it had a stronger hold on him. This climax of disturbing thoughts had been building up for a long time and he could no longer dismiss them from his mind.

He knew he wasn't getting any younger. He had been working at his law practice for twenty-one years and had gone as far up the ladder as was possible for him. The time of retirement was so close it frightened him to think of it. Where had the years gone? What had he accomplished? Had he provided for his family as well as he should have done? Did his life have meaning?

Deep in thought he turned from the window, buttoned his wrinkled vest and jacket, and hurried into his worn overcoat. Locking his office, he took the elevator to the street. Hurrying along the jammed sidewalk he worked his way toward his bus stop and, with many others, pushed aboard, looking for a seat. Shoved into a corner of the crowded bus, he again lost himself in thought and began to reconstruct his life since he finished law school, so many years before.

Bill had graduated from law school in June of 1922 and married two weeks later. After the honeymoon he joined his father-in-law in a prosperous real estate business. He made money quickly and built a fine house in the suburbs where there was plenty of growing space for the girl and two boys who joined them in the following years. When the crash came in 1929 the business was ruined and his father-in-law died of a heart attack. Almost penniless, Bill took up law practice. But the shock of depression and the care of a family had proved too much for him and he never regained the comfortable wealth he once had.

The lumbering bus jolted and jarred its passengers as it wove in and out of the heavy traffic of the city streets. The passengers, long used to this necessary ritual of everyday life, remained unconcerned and carried on in conversation, or read their evening papers, or just stared out of the steamy windows in silence. Outside the city limits traffic thinned

Uptown

and the bus was able to pick up speed. It pounded along the wide and quiet suburban streets, rhythmically swaying its occupants to and fro as it dodged the little traffic there was, until it snorted to one of its stops, where Bill Marden got up to leave. He paid his fare and stepped off the bus into the damp, cool air of the early evening. All alone now he walked along the dark, tree-lined sidewalks toward his home. As he approached it he saw his car, freshly washed, standing at the curb and gleaming in the light of the street lamp. His youngest son, Fred, no doubt had a date tonight. The boys had been pressing him for a new car, but Bill knew it would be a long time before he could afford the thousand or more dollars. He walked up to the side door, picked up the evening paper, and then stepped into the house. As Bill entered the warm kitchen, his wife gave him a tender greeting, kissed him, and then took his hat and coat from him. His sixteen-year-old daughter, the youngest, was just setting the table. She excitedly ran over to him and, throwing her arms around him, smacked him with a wet, lipsticky kiss. Fred came into the kitchen, greeted his father as one man to another, and proceeded to take his place at the table while his father went into the lavette to wash.

The small talk bubbled warmly while Bill soaped and sloshed himself in the basin. Still talking, Bill dried himself and then joined his family for dinner. The conversation was continued by Bill and the two women. Fred only grunted as he nudged his sister to pass this or that. With a sister just a year younger he had long ago given up trying to get a word in.

The dinner finished, mother and daughter quickly cleared the table. Bill walked into the livingroom to relax and smoke, and Fred went upstairs to dress.

The Alembic

Although now relaxed in his easy chair, with a good meal under his belt, Bill was still troubled. He realized that his family was content: his wife and daughter reflected this. But what had he accomplished in life? Could this house, or his old car, or his four suits be the extent of his material wealth? Of course he had some money put away, but it was being used for Bill, Jr.'s education at college, and more of it would be spent educating his two younger children. The rest was for his retirement. What had he given his wife in all these years? She, who deserved so much.

The dishes done, his wife and daughter came into the living room. His wife went over to the radio, turned it on, and picked up her novel. His daughter arranged the socks she was knitting and began to count stitches. From the top of the stairs came a sound like a charge of the American Second Cavalry. The charge rumbled down the stairs, paused for a brief skirmish in the hall, then galloped out the front door. No one in the living room moved. It was only Fred going to pick up his date.

The evening proceeded quietly and uneventfully, and at eleven o'clock the two women left Bill alone and went up to bed. Bill sat to smoke another pipe.

Now that he was fully relaxed, his depression began to lift. The contentment of his family soothed him. Knocking out his pipe, he shut off the lights and went up to bed.

The mist that drifted slowly past the street light was cut now and then with falling drops of rain. The rain thickened and the streets grew blacker. The ground was criss-crossed with rivulets of water which ran into quickly forming puddles.

Dressed in his pajamas Bill pulled up the shade and looked out. He casually rubbed his face, opened the window a crack, and then quickly got into bed.

Ocean Grove, Mass.

By PAUL F. FLETCHER, '51

The vomiting sea spews the sand with refuse:
Dead and stenchful seaweed baked and blackening in the sun,
Limbs of crabs, their meat long festered out,
Dead fingers of sponge and horse-shoe crabs, and garbage from
the cottages.

Where is the cleansing wind today, and the clouds of foam
That far outleap the waters and race the terns to the heavens
And there lie, billowing body to body with the heaven-
created clouds?
Gone today and all is murk above and murk below and retch-
ing everywhere.

The sun is there and yet it is not there:
Not the clean, heat-giving ball of browning, rubbing fire
That smarts the skin and rubs the berries in;
No, today a sickening, blurring wafer sends the sea vomiting
and me brooding.

My sneakers scuff the clammy, flaccid sand,
Heavy as the lids of that gull dozing on the quay where that
old salt sits . . .
I wonder does he hate the sea today and curse like the Ancient
Mariner of old?
Damn Whitman's blades of grass, the seagrass cuts and stings!

Paeon

Thanks I give for books,
And books and books:
For Hardy's olived pain,
And Trollope's hope-cooled rain,
And Frost for wood-bark pink.

Thanks I give for sea,
And sea and sea
That foams the sherbert sun
And salt and spume to one,
And sprays the gull.

So triumph now my God!
And God! and God!
And see my heart to rest . . .
And spare the warbler's nest . . .
And my storms lull.

millenium

By PAUL F. FLETCHER, '51

the video and the radio and the phono—you know
all in one—and so?—why, I don't know—the dealer says so
(outside's a green and satiny sheen) —blue velveteen
(outside, the clouds, great livers, spleen) this danderine
and prell shampoo, endorsed by fath, la rue,

It tries one's soul to see the well-loved ocean
Spewing up garbage like Leviathan's viscera
Torn by the harpoons that flash from thunderclouds . . .
O sea, O sea, retching on and on—the maddened sea!

Paeon

By PAUL F. FLETCHER, '51

Thanks I give for this,
And this and this;
The greening springtime mist;
The throsted wood I list
In sun-gold thanks.

Her fragrance lost to wraith,
And wraith and wraith;
The music of her locks;
The rustle of her frocks
Fill mem'ry's bluing blanks.

Thanks I give for love,
And love and love,
That silver maples whisper low,
Alive to life's wine-flow;
The which I deeply drink.

Paeon

Thanks I give for books,
And books and books:
For Hardy's olived pain,
And Trollope's hope-cooled rain,
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and prell shampoo, endorsed by fath, la rue,

The Alembic

and this for me—ophelia too—the highbrow view—

sinatra, of, in lieu.

there once was a day
when a moon on the bay
or a maid in may
or a serried bouquet
moved hearts . . .

but that was before video took them apart.
the head on this beer—like a cloud by demeer—luckies'
chanticleer

the truth is, this seer, lest it later appear, smokes not—
drinks root beer

(the green'ry tonight throbs with woodbined delight) yet
the tv light

suits us all right, the wrestling—the fight—naw, the light's
not too bright—

tv knits, you'll find, family life like a vine (parasitic) it finds
life outside such a grind—and we've already dined—you'll
find, and wine . . .

the millenium's here
stay at home for your beer
family life, have no fear
hand in hand, drear in drear
life starts . . .

and mind is replaced by a videoed heart.

