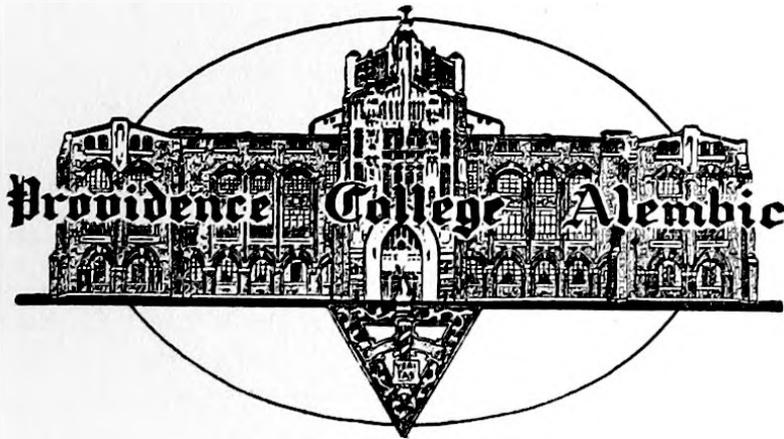


THE ALEMBIC



JUNE, 1951

THE ALEMBIC



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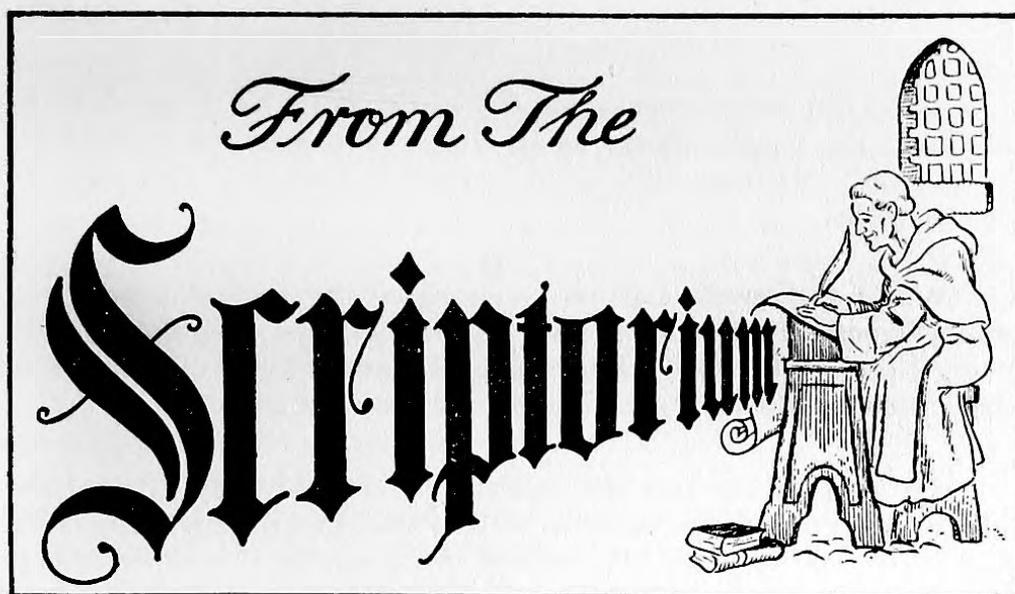
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I HAVE found, in the past few weeks, that no matter how distantly removed a collegiate organization may be from the realms of personality, it will eventually be forced to recognize and treat with the political forces which exist within the institution to which it is affiliated. That this is not an ideal circumstance is immediately obvious since we are not all politically inclined and may very well come out on the well-known "short end" of any encounters we may be forced into.

I realize fully that a literary organ such as the ALEMBIC, by its nature, is expected to remain aloof from the more mundane considerations of college life and restrict itself to more or less esthetic topics. This view is justified . . . in most cases. This view is justified; when the mundane considerations do not seriously affect the operation of the literary organ; when the mundane considerations do not seriously affect a majority of the literary organ's readers. When either of these situations arises I think it is the duty of the editor to recognize and comment upon that fact.

The Cowl, the other publication in P. C., has aroused considerable comment and criticism by publishing a series of editorials concerning the corruption of our school politics by cliques and favor-seekers. It has made it quite clear that it believes that something akin to machine politics is being used, successfully, in our student government organizations. Popular opinion declares that there is graft, fixed ballots, collusion between candidates and other flagrant misuses of the franchise.

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The men most concerned, the politicians, have, in their turn, condemned the whole matter as an ill-founded attempt to shed a bad light on public figures. They cry "yellow journalism" and other similar accusations.

When the student stops to consider the problem he will undoubtedly come to the logical conclusion that one or the other faction is using him. Somebody is wrong and somebody is right, but *both* groups are attempting to convince him they are right.

To go further into the matter (having already given himself good reason to do so) the student, to be just, must inspect the evidence. And here he is stumped. Of positive evidence there is none. Of men who will say "I know definitely . . ." there is none. And so the student is left holding a very frustrating bag. Having decided that there is something wrong, he must either content himself with the dilemma or inquire into the matter in an entirely different way.

And so, I ask, as everyone should, is it possible that these accusations could be true? Could selfish politicians use the student body to their ends? Is the structure of the student government so weak and flexible that it could become an instrument of personal advancement rather than the voice of the student?

The answer categorically is yes.

And the next question is, Why?

There are as many theories of good government as there are interested parties. Their are proposed amendments and projected systems which purport to patch the leaking boat.

Patching a leaking boat has ever been a temporary measure.

I took a tour of the polls during the recent elections and found the primary flaw in the structure of the student government. One of The Student Congress members who was officiating showed me around and explained the mechanics of the balloting. I was amazed.

Needless to say the difference between the number of eligible voters and the number of actual voters was great. There were enough holdouts in some instances to have nominated and elected another candidate. And this, I found was the expected thing, nothing unusual at all.

From the Scriptorium

But this was only the beginning. When I asked about the attitude of the voters I was told quite candidly that the average voter does not know anybody on the ballot, has probably never even seen the candidates' names except on ballots, and will most probably mark his ballot on the basis of which names seem most agreeable to him at the time. In this I speak more particularly of the "day-hop" since the Dorm students, through continuous association seem to have achieved at least a nodding acquaintance with each other). While I stood there, two juniors, supposedly intelligent men, walked up and decided to vote for a man because they thought his name sounded like that of a "hot sketch". Need I go on?

The student body will rise in righteous indignation at the idea that they are being victimized. We will cast aspersions in all directions, except the right one, because when we stop and accuse ourselves we know that, in conscience, we must do something; and there is nothing more inimical to the student body of P. C. than the idea of doing something — whether it be for the school or itself.

If a blind man stands on a corner for any length of time holding a one-hundred dollar bill loosely in his hand, it is inevitable that sooner or later someone is going to walk up and take it.

I do not wish to imply that there is anything wrong with the politics in P. C. right now, but I know that even the men in our college who are most interested in political aspiration will admit, in fact will declare, that there is no good reason why there could not be, in view of the lax political potential of the voters, flagrant violations of the authority of school office.

E.A.K.

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A Canary

By ANTON KOCHER, '53

A CANARY escaped from its cage in the pet department of a large five and ten cent store.

My attention was first attracted by the peculiar conduct of a small, common-place man, wearing a tan office coat of the type usually worn by minor clerks. He was carrying a broom handle, and, extending it in front of him like a lance, was alternately stalking furtively, and scurrying, taking quick womanish steps. That he was agitated was obvious, for he frequently turned from his business to glare at the passers-by who stopped to stare and giggle at him.

I had been searching for shoelaces through the long counters laden with notions, but I had been unable to find someone who could guide me. Since I could see that the man was an employee of the store, I was about to seek his assistance. As my hand touched his arm, however, he whirled viciously and gave me a glance full of fury. Startled, I drew back. As he slunk past, a flutter at the end of his pole caught my eye, and I saw that he was pursuing a tiny bird—a canary.

At first the canary seemed to have the advantage, for, though it could not get out of the store, it could at least avoid capture. And, at first, it did that well. The little man's efforts, though persistent, were inefficient and almost futile. It was apparently his intention to induce the canary to perch on the end of the stick and thus carry it safely back to its cage. But each time, as the stick was thrust cautiously forward, the bird invariably flew away and lighted upon a convenient perch

where it rested until the man once more approached. While I watched, this continued for several minutes.

The canary's facile evasions and the derisive laughter of the customers (it was almost closing time, and there were about two dozen late shoppers present—all avidly interested in the entertaining spectacle) soon roused the little man to an uncontrollable rage. His face, neck, and ears became brilliantly red, and, with his jaws ground together in furious determination, he chased the tiny bird up and down the aisles without stealth, or caution, flailing the air wildly with his stick whenever the canary was within reach. So blinded was he by his fury that he charged through the store like a maddened beast, knocking the merchandise off the shelves and bruising himself against the counters, unmindful of all but his quarry.

It was apparent that the canary was tiring, for its flights were shorter and it beat its wings faster than previously, but with less effect. Escape was becoming more difficult. While the canary was now nearly exhausted, the man seemed to be gaining in strength. He ran faster and swung his pole with more venom than before. And his laborious efforts had aroused the sympathy of some of the other clerks on duty with the result that they, too, were pursuing the canary, waving their arms when it attempted to light on the display counters, and striking at it with whatever implements happened to be within their reach; some even neglected their duties so far as to leave their positions behind the counters and rush through the aisles in wild pursuit. Each one carried, as a weapon, some handy article of merchandise seized from the display counters.

Soon the customers joined the chase; women fought with purses and umbrellas; men used rolled-up newspapers and hats. Grim, purposeful, deadly, working like a trained team, some twenty of them surrounded the canary while others

A Canary

posted themselves at the places where it would be most likely to perch. As usual, the canary eluded them, and the little man—who was everywhere at once—dashed from the center of the circle, knocking some of the others down, and sped madly down the aisle, while those left behind hurled their weapons at the retreating bird. One of the thrown weapons struck the canary while it was in flight, knocking it to the floor and stunning it for a moment. As the little man was about to pounce on it, it recovered and flew off, just brushing the man's fingertips. The incipient smile on his face changed to a look of unspeakable hatred, and he beat the floor violently with his stick. By now tears were rolling down his cheeks and he was sobbing audibly with rage. However, he did not relax the chase for a moment.

The canary's piteous efforts became more frantic. In a final heroic attempt to escape it darted the length of the store and back, hovering for an instant near the doors and then blundering confusedly against the long mirror behind the lunch counter in an effort to get through, while below a busman harassed it with a long knife.

Finally, giving up, it landed on the counter directly before me, and remained motionless. Slowly I reached out my hand and grasped it gently. Its soft body quivered with fear, and I could feel its tiny heart beating violently beneath my fingertips. Its head, sticking out of my fist, darted wildly about. Its black eyes glittered fiercely. Just then the little man came rushing up to me, still clutching the broom handle. His red face was shiny with sweat and his eyes glowed with a light of evil joy. Gasping for breath, he extended his hand and said, "Thank you, sir, I'll take it now. It's been a terrible nuisance. Some horrid little boys let it out of its

cage. It's the second time it's happened this week. But it won't happen again," he added.

Reluctant to give it to him, I hid the canary behind my back. For a moment I watched his greedy eyes searching for the canary, and, suddenly, I decided he wouldn't have it. "Is this for sale?" I found myself asking.

He seemed quite startled and the smile faded quickly from his face. "Why—yes—of course. But surely—surely you don't want *that* one. I have several more downstairs that are in better condition. You may have your choice of them."

"No. I want this one," I insisted.

"But—"

"This one," I repeated.

He became rather humble. "If you will just follow me—," he said.

I followed him downstairs to the pet department where I paid with a bill and waited while he fussed about, making change and writing a receipt.

"Would you like to see some cages?" he asked from behind the cash register.

I shook my head. "No."

"Then if you will give it to me, I'll put it in a box for you."

Suddenly I hated this little man. "No!" I shouted, and grabbing for my change, I turned and ran from the store.

Out in the street it was getting dark, and I hurried to the depot and boarded a bus. The ride home took only a few minutes. I sat in the rear of the bus holding the canary carefully in my lap. The passengers stared at it and muttered among themselves, probably wondering what I was doing with a canary. A small child noticed the bird and insisted on stroking its head. "It's so pretty," he said, and going back to his

A Canary

mother, begged her to buy him one. The woman bade the child hush and for the rest of the ride she glared at me across the bus.

At my stop I got off and walked toward my lodgings, wishing as I walked that there was some way of concealing the canary from my landlady, an elderly, narrow-minded Irish woman who hates pets and refuses to allow them in her house. Before I got halfway home, however, I realized that there was no point in going any further. I knew she would not allow me to keep it for five minutes. Reluctantly I turned back.

At the corner I paused under the street light and regarded the canary. It had begun to quiver again. There was only one thing to do; I opened my hand. For an instant it hesitated, then flew quickly to a twig in a nearby tree where it perched, shining goldenly in the glare of the street light, and burst into beautiful song. It sang joyously and sweetly. Its music was that of a free spirit.

Then it beat its wings and flew for perhaps ten feet—and stopped. It fell to the pavement and lay quite still. The headlights of a heavy trailer truck illuminated the tiny body for an instant. When the truck had roared past, a dark red pool glinted in the light of the flickering arc lamp.



Carlyle and the Prevalence of Witches

By PAUL F. FLETCHER, '51

WITCH hunts are ideally organized in times of stress when people rely more on sheer volume than on any appeal of logic. Such witch hunts can be classified. There is one type that is out and out malingering, aiming at the destruction of the individual. Then there are various shadings—for example, the literary witch hunt, a form of debunking which is often inspired by nothing more, or less, than the need of doing a research-paper. It is often evident that the writer is trying awfully hard to screw round covers on square boxes. Some literary figures can be thus dealt with quite safely. But when one tries to do this to Thomas Carlyle—look out! The outrage will groan to the heavens, the moans of Teufelsdröckh will sound from his old garret, and the thunder of Sham! and Quackery! and Ism! will reverberate through the heavens. The man from Ecclefechan is not one to be trifled with.

Now I have read several articles and a book or two on Carlyle's Prussian, anti-democratic tendencies. I can even understand an editorial or two on "Carlyle and the Kaiser Worship" in World War I—although it is hardly fair to Carlyle who died in 1881. But when some of our over ambitious researchers blithely speak of "Carlyle and the Rise of the Reich" and "Carlyle Rules the Reich," one must pause to laugh at least a little. Such attempts are to me the final perversion of the thaumatrope fallacy: the bird fits the cage, but one had to wring its neck to do it.

Carlyle found it difficult to adjust himself to the social

Carlyle and the Prevalence of Witches

theories of his age, but one cannot jump from there seventy years forward and label him Fascist, Nazi, or some sort of totalitarian. In the setting of Lamb's "Dissertation on Roast Pig" there were, I am sure, some honest citizens who were very leery of succulent roast pig because of the need for consigning whole dwellings to the barbecue fire. Carlyle's misgivings were very much along these lines. It was an age, as he saw it, which tended towards abstract theories of mixed groups. Probably the most significant phenomena of the last fifty years had been the transference of popular interest from individual to group problems. In Carlyle's early days no one had heard of the psychology of crowds. Charitable and benevolent organizations and other works actually were in the first fragile stages of growth. Political and economic science was also a newcomer. Adam Smith may be given credit for beginning it, and its intricate ramifications were virtually unknown. Thus there is no feature of the Victorian time more characteristic or more striking than the enormous influx of committees, organizations, companies and parties, which propose to manage on a larger scale the various businesses.

Carlyle stood up in protest of the whole movement. He believed that by the habit of dealing with classes and masses of men we get out of touch with reality, and soon lose ourselves in the unreal verbiage of mere abstractions. It was against all this sort of thing that he rebelled so vigorously in his individual studies of *Heroes*, his lives of Cromwell and of Frederick, and much else that he wrote. History in Carlyle's understanding of it is the essence of innumerable biographies. "Great men are the inspired texts of that divine book of revelation which we name history."

Stuart P. Sherman in his provocative chapter, "Carlyle and the Kaiser Worship" laments the indiscriminate burning

of German textbooks in some of our western states during the period near the end of World War I. Most of the stories were merely sentimental folk-tales. Actually, he tells us, it is the Prussian militarists going back to Frederick the Great who are sending a ghostly cheer to the General Staff and the tottering William II. It is a clearly drawn conflict between "those who are clearing the people out of the way of kings and those who are clearing the kings out of the way of people."

The English and the French are more or less generally agreed on "clearing the kings out of the way of the people." However Sherman points an accusing finger at Carlyle and his pupil Ruskin:

The burden of their lifelong message in the social and political fields was distrust of the common people, derision of democracy, inculcation of popular servility, laudation of aristocratic and oligarchic government, and glorification of kings. On the whole, they fought and prayed on the side of Frederick the Great.

But let us give Carlyle a chance to speak for himself. This is his opinion of modern England:

There is no longer any God for us! God's Laws are become a Greatest-Happiness Principle, a Parliamentary Expediency; the Heavens overarch us only as an Astronomical Timekeeper; a butt for Herschel-telescopes to shoot science at, to shoot sentimentalities at: in our and old Jonson's dialect, man has lost the soul out of him and now, after the due period — begins to find the want of it! This is verily the plague-spot; center of the universal Social Gangrene, threatening all modern things with frightful death.

One can appreciate the truth of many of his contentions. The English had become utilitarians or sceptics. They accepted only the tangibles of observation, statistics, gross and

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concrete truth; they had no moral convictions; indeed, all they had left were what Taine calls "floating convictions." They had lost the mainspring of action, no longer considering duty. They delighted their senses with all kinds of pleasures, well chosen and arranged. Everyone was a dilettante or an egoist. The gospel of gold had replaced the gospel of God. Hell had become the dread of making a bad speculation, or of violating the forms of the table.

Carlyle had something to say regarding the modern attempts to whittle down moral distinctions or explain them away. A conversation is related by Bishop Wilburforce as having taken place at a dinner party in 1847, to the following effect.

Carlyle was very great. Monckton Milnes drew him out. Milnes began the young man's cant of the present day — the barbarity and wickedness of capital punishment, that, after all, we could not be sure whether others were wicked, et cetera. Carlyle broke out on him with — "none of your Heaven and Hell Amalgamation Companies for me. We do know what is wickedness. I know wicked men, men whom *I would not live with*; men whom under some conceivable circumstances I would kill, or they should kill me. No, Milnes, there's no truth or greatness in all that. It's just poor, miserable littleness."

England had for its aristocracy greedy shopkeepers, who reduced life to a calculation of costs and sales; and idlers whose great employ of life was to preserve the game on their estates. They were no longer governed. The laissez-faire government had no other ambition than to preserve the public peace, and to get in the taxes, as Carlyle would have put it, the English Constitution laid down as a principle that, in order to discover the true and the good they had only to

make two million imbeciles vote. The English Parliament, to Carlyle had become a great word-mill where plotters out-bawl each other for the sake of making a noise.

Nothing can save England, ruin-bent, unless the notion of the Divine and of Duty brings them around to the worship of heroism: until it has discovered the means of calling to power the most virtuous and the most capable.

Carlyle himself had experienced a tremendous inner struggle set down in *Sartor Resartus*. Carlyle believed that he lived in "an epoch when puffery and quackery have reached a height unexampled in the annals of mankind." Thus this book is a protest couched in his own whimsical language, that is a new philosophy of clothes, in which clothes stand for the coverings, appearances and the shams which man present to their fellows, and with which they conceal their real selves. From first to last insincerity was his *bete noire*, both in speech and deed.

Carlyle's disillusionment with the social ills and excesses of his England attracted him to the absolutist monarchs who had ruled sternly but with order. Taine says of his theory of heroes:

We have here a German theory, but transformed, more precise, thickened after the English manner. The Germans said that every nation, period, civilization had its *idea* that is, its chief feature, from which the rest were derived so that philosophy, religion, arts, and morals, all the elements of thought and action, could be deduced from some original and fundamental quality, from which all proceeded and in which all ended. Where Hegel proposed an idea, Carlyle proposes a heroic sentiment. It is moral, palpable and moral. To complete his escape from the vague, he considers this sentiment in a hero.

Carlyle and the Prevalence of Witches

He must give to abstractions a body and a soul; he is not at ease in pure conceptions, and wishes to touch a real king.

Carlyle tells us at the very beginning his conception of the importance of the King:

The Commander over men; he to whose will our wills are to be subordinated, and loyally surrender themselves, and find their welfare in doing so, may be reckoned the most important of Great Men. He is practically the summary for us of *all* the various figures of heroism Priest, Teacher, whatsoever of earthly or of spiritual dignity we can fancy to reside in a man, embodies itself here, to *command* over us, to furnish us with constant practical teaching, to tell us for the day and hour what we are to *do*.

Hero-worship to Carlyle is a precious fact, "the most solacing fact one sees in the world at present." In it he sees an everlasting hope for the management of the world. If all traditions, arrangements, creeds, societies, that men ever instituted sunk away, this would remain. Every Great Man is furthermore "a son of Order," not of disorder. It was the chaos and terrible disorder of the French Revolution that repelled Carlyle and many another Englishmen. In his section "The Hero As King" Carlyle selects certain representative types which are not acceptable to all.

Cuthbert Wright writing in *Commonweal* says:

The real key to his reconstruction of the heroic in history is a certain self-deception, not so unscrupulous as naive . . . He had the verbal knack of twisting his idol into a shape that satisfied him. Cromwell, for example, was certainly a hero on the

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Doric mode (a Puritan killed a king against the Puritan code) but Carlyle distinguishes; he did this against his personal will, according to a Heroic Will.

It is true that Carlyle was not always fortunate in selecting particular examples; not that Cromwell is the case in point. Carlyle had a strong Calvinist background and it is natural that the crude, rough, yet somehow awe-inspiring Lord Protector would appeal to him. We should not judge Carlyle on the basis of his antipathy to Catholicism. In his background one can appreciate such sentiment.

But there were times when Carlyle was carried away to the glorification of a thoroughly unsound character. This is especially notable in the case of Frederick the Great. One remembers the passage in *Sartor Resartus* where he describes Teufelsdröckh's "father" Andreas. Andreas the sentinel boasts that the mighty Frederick once spoke to him, and goes on to tell the tale. The only words we have of Frederick's conversation with Andreas are "Schweig Hund!" But Andreas adds in a glow of reverence, "there is what I call a king."

While it is true that he was sometimes carried off by the sense of mere greatness, it is also true that for Carlyle the real "king" was the "canning" one, the man that can. To be able, competent and adequate to life and to its task, that is for Carlyle the indefeasible badge of royalty. Regardless of garb, whether royal purple or the plainest homespun, he who is master of the situation is indeed a king and should receive homage. Few will take exception to the principle but many may object to his examples. Somebody has written: "If Carlyle made a scoundrel or a brute into a hero it was because the supposed hero was a creature of his own imagination."

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He passionately insisted that, in the long run, righteousness would prove the mightiest force in the universe, and he vehemently repudiated the charge that he maintained the doctrine of "might is right." In principle he never departed from the views expressed in his essay on *Chartism*, where he says of conquest that it "never yet went by brute force and compulsion; conquest of that kind does not endure. Let us know, therefore, that the Good Alone is deathless and victorious."

This is an all important matter for the understanding of Carlyle. It explains a great deal of the opposition he met. In his day there was a great deal of philanthropy, the child of sentiment without common sense, which tended to produce only a race of parasites. This and all other kinds of valetudinarianism, Carlyle could not bear.

Carlyle also saw countless persons placed and upheld in positions for which they were unfit, on the plea either of their personal liberty or personal necessity. Regarding personal liberty, he had no patience with the idea that any man is free to do what he likes, apart from all consideration of the value or danger of the deed to the general well-being. Looking around him upon the world he pronounced that such liberty is often fatal to men as they are, because they are not fit to use it.

For this reason Carlyle turned to a sort of exalted imperialism, spiritual rather than political. He saw all around him great numbers of Englishmen characteristically muddling through, upheld by society in positions for which they are not fit, or who were pushing in to attempt great tasks to which they were not called.

Of course, Carlyle's misapprehensions have not been realized. But there are those who take his statements out of

the perspective of the times and call him a Nazi and what not. For example, as recently as 1943, an article indicting Carlyle as a mentor of the Reich appeared:

After Robespierre who preached centralization for France (and incidentally did quite a little blood-letting on his own) came Bonaparte who practised centralization for all Europe and turned the very ocean bloody. After Nietzsche and Gobineau and Houston Chamberlain and, last but not least, Carlyle has come to that to which their whole creation moved, the Nazi State.

In 1933, Joseph Ellis Baker, in an article in *The Saturday Review of Literature* maintained in his title that "Carlyle Rules the Reich." The article is rather forced and one gets the impression Mr. Baker has not decided whether to condemn Hitler *in toto* or not.¹³

Professor Kelman treats of Carlyle and his possible implication in the Great War stated previously. The refutation is also a good one against these more recent accusations.

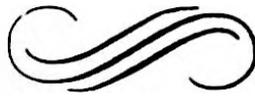
It has become the fashion in these latter days to connect Carlyle's name with the Great War, and to accuse him of importing much Prussianism into English thought. This in both true and false. The Prussian error, which led to such lamentable disaster in recent years, was not its effectiveness or its thoroughness, but the fact that it had allowed these virtues to run wild. In themselves they were only excellent: they supplied elements which it would have been well for us all to have learned better than we did. The trouble was that in the selection of her rulers and of her ideals Prussia did not exercise along other lines. You may follow a bad ideal all the way to destruction, and in that following you may find that you have to put forth great strenuousness, self-denial, and nobilities of many sorts. The nobilities remain noble, though their directions may be

¹³x (November 25, 1933) 291

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hideously bad. It may be said without fear that Carlyle's German heritage was such as to enrich, not impoverish the world, to enlarge and not enslave it. It must also be remembered that the Germany he knew so well was not the Germany that fought the Great War.

Thus we see what Carlyle thought and why he thought it. We also appreciate the danger of the indiscriminate mixing of ideas and dates. Much of Carlyle's opposition to democracy was topical and in the light of many of the abuses of his time quite plausible. It is another matter to hold him accountable for two Great Wars and the Nazi ideology. This smacks of witch-hunting and Insincerity and Sham . . . and Carlyle would not have it.



The Grass

By BERNARD BOUDREAU, '52

How green the grass has grown!
Like a scylla above Charybdis risen,
Broken out of their earthly prison,
These blades of terra quick have sprung
To answer the sound of spring, rung
Like a scylla above Charybdis risen,
A challenge to the trod of feet,
A carpet for the picnic treat,
A craven green that's craven by
The sidelong glance of an Irish eye.
A forest high for insects neigh,
A pitcher green for water from high,
A proper base for any tree
That struts above with proud decree.
A meeting screen for foe,
A witness to the battle woe,
A splashing here of blood
That may a cleaning be by flood.
A mere faction of a tale,
A mere blade amidst the wale,
A mere breeze in a gale,
What more, you say?—a whale!

Family Matter

A Melodrama in One Act by NORMAN D. CLARK '52

CHARACTERS

LEMUEL BAXTER, 40, Sheriff of Tucson County, Arizona.

SHEILA, his daughter, 18, a student.

AMELIA PERKINS, a widow, 38, a fading beauty.

CHARLIE O'ROURKE, 20, a renegade.

The action takes place at exactly 7:45 on a Friday evening in spring, in the living room of the Sheriff's home in Tucson.

(AT RISE: Discovered are LEMUEL BAXTER, in shirtsleeves, slippers, and spectacles, puffing his pipe and reading newspaper in armchair left; and SHEILA, his daughter at least we know she is there, although all we can see of her is one bobby-soxed and sneakered foot attached to a rolled-up-dungareed leg, which is dangling over the lower arm of the sofa right.)

LEM: *(comfortably)* It's good to have an evening off, spend the time quietly at home, with you studying—. What *are* you studying, She?

SHE: I'm not studying, Pa; I'm reading this month's WESTERN ROMANCES.

LEM: Why do you read that trash? Haven't you any homework? Don't they give you enough to do at the University?

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SHE: (*swings to a sitting position; now we see that her dirty plaid shirt harmonizes perfectly with the rest of her costume. Banteringly*) Well, sure, Pa, I've got homework. But I don't feel like doing it. What's the use of studying? What'll it ever get me? This girl in the story wasn't a college girl, but she seemed to do all right for herself.

LEM: What do you mean, "all right for herself"?

SHE: She got her man.

LEM: There's nothing realistic about such tripe. You've got to be realistic.

SHE: Are *you*? For instance, the sheriff in this story. At least *he* isn't a political appointee on the level of dog-catcher; *he* justifies his employment by aligning himself *against* the forces that flout law and order.

LEM: Well, don't I?

SHE: *Not* kow-towing to a gang of politicians to hold his job.

LEM: Neither do I. I'm against crime as much as anyone.

SHE: You? Hah! About the most daring assignment you've ever been on is driving out to El Conquistadore and slapping an attachment on a hotel waitress' pay.

LEM: How about all the evenings I work?

SHE: Office work—nothing more dangerous than pushing a pencil.

LEM: That's what you think. Let me tell you, I've put more than one bad actor behind the bars.

SHE: Don't I know it? Like last fall, when you framed Charlie O'Rourke and got him six months in jail. That was brave—.

LEM: You're always bringing that up. Don't go on about it any more. You know darned well that O'Rourke was

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guilty. He was caught red-handed.

SHE: Oh, Pop, who are you kidding, for heaven's sake? You know very well you had Charlie locked up because you didn't want him hanging around me.

LEM: How can you say that when they caught him out in Sabina Canyon with my car?

SHE: And me with him? How about that? You knew the only reason he took your old car was to take me for a ride. I asked him to do it, and if you'd let me say so at his trial, he'd never have been convicted. I've never understood why he allowed you to keep it quiet.

LEM: As a matter of fact, I did everything I could for O'Rourke. I spoke in his favor. Of course I didn't want him to drag you into the case. At least he had that much decency, not to involve you. I'd like to of got him off, but the County Attorney knew well enough he was not good, and I couldn't talk him out of pushing the prosecution. Why, O'Rourke didn't have any defence. He couldn't deny he stole the car.

SHE: You've always been that way about anybody who ever liked me, haven't you, Pop? Ever since Mom died, I haven't ever had a boy-friend but what you'd go picking on him.

LEM: Sheila, you don't really believe that, do you? I promised your Ma that I'd see that you got along all right. It hasn't been easy for me. You sneer at me for holding down this job of sheriff. What more could I do? I'm lucky to have it, even though the pay is small, and it takes all I can get to keep you in clothes and let you continue at the University. I should think you'd like to see me at home once in a while.

SHE: Well' gee whiz, Pa, don't cry about it. I don't see the necessity at all of getting me educated. The way I look at it, I'm not going to be a school-teacher, so what differ-

The Alembic

ence would it make if I just got married now?

LEM: (*startled; sitting up*) Married? To who?

SHE: There you go. To nobody, of course. You fixed that for me. All the fellows who might have wanted to take me out have left me strictly alone since what happened to Charlie.

LEM: If your college education don't do no more good than to let you see through guys like that dumb mick, it'll be worthwhile.

SHE: Dumb mick? Charlie O'Rourke is the only All-American Tucson ever had, and he wasn't in school just because he could play football. His marks were as high as anybody's. You ruined him. What chance has he of getting back now?

LEM: You talk like you think I was persecuting him. But you got me wrong, Sheila darling. Didn't I give him a job right in my own office down at the jail-house, the day he got out?

SHE: You did, but why? Knowing how you hate him, it smells fishy to me. Whenever you pull something like that, I start trying to spot the gimmick. Why *did* you do it, Dad?

LEM: Well, you know I never was entirely convinced that he should have been used so rough. It's well, I sorta thought this way I might be able to make amends.

SHE: Then you don't really hate him?

LEM: Of course I don't hate him. But I knew his father. There's as big a skunk that ever putrefied the desert air. But if Charlie deserves a break, I'm willing to see that he gets it.

SHE: Is that true, Pa? You're not up to something?

LEM: What would I be up to? He's not responsible for his old man.

Family Matter

SHE: (*getting excited*) Then, if he works out all right in your office, you'll see that he gets back into school?

LEM: I don't mind promising, that if nothing goes wrong before next fall, I'll do what I can for him.

SHE: (*happily*) Oh, Dad, that's swell. It makes me feel a whole lot better.

LEM: That's good. I want you to be happy. I promised your mother—.

SHE: Then you don't really hate Charlie at all?

LEM: Does what I did for him make it seem so?

SHE: (*sudden resolve*) I think I'll go up and put on a dress.

LEM: Good Lord, you mean that finally some of the clothes I bought you are going to be put to use? All I've seen you wear lately is that disgraceful outfit. What is the occasion for this sudden femininity?

SHE: Well, don't be sore, Dad, but you've made me so happy I think I'll have to tell you. You see, I was down at the office today—.

LEM: (*suspiciously*) At my office?

SHE: Yeah, and I was talking to Charlie. I asked him if he was sore or anything about what had happened, and he said, no, he guessed it was his own fault; so I asked him if he was mad at me, and he said of course not; then we got to talking about one thing and another, and the whole thing wound up with my asking him if he wouldn't like to come and see me tonight—.

LEM: (*explosive*) What? What are you saying? You asked him—?

SHE: Slow down, Pop. We're not going out anywhere; he's just coming here, and we can sit and talk about old times. Besides, we didn't know you planned to be home.

The Alembic

LEM: You told O'Rourke to come—here?

SHE: Well, what's wrong with that? He's not on duty tonight. What's wrong, if you're not sore at him or anything?

LEM: (*strangling*) He—he can't come here. He can't come here. You've got to stop him.

SHE: Don't be ridic, Pa. He'll be here in a minute. I've just got time to change. Let him in if he comes while I'm up, hey Pop? (*She starts for stairs*).

(*The door-bell rings.*)

SHE: You lose, Pop— that's him now. Don't be too rough on him. Beseenya. (*She flits upstairs*).

LEM: (*moving to foot of stairs*) No, darn it, you can't—. Come back here—. (*The door-bell interrupts him*) Now why do I always talk myself into something like this? If that's O'Rourke I'll make him sorry he ever left the jail-house. (*Opening door; relieved*) Oh, it's you, Amelia. Thought it might be.

AME: (*enters bustlingly; she carried a parcel; sprightly*) Who else would it be? You expecting other visitors, Lem?

LEM: I wasn't but that consarned girl of mine's got me all upset. (*Greedily*) Whatcha got? (*He takes the package from her and opens it while she watches him benevolently as she speaks.*)

AME: I do believe if it weren't for things like that you wouldn't have the slightest interest in me—.

LEM: Apple pie. Gosh.

AME: With cinnamon. Like it?

LEM: Amelia, it's only your pies and cakes that have kept me alive this past year. It's made working evenings enjoyable. Now the first time I have you over the house, looks as if the evening'll be spoiled.

AME: How come, Lem?

Family Matter

LEM: Oh, it takes away my appetite. That new assistant of mine, O'Rourke—.

AME: (*remembering*) Nice boy.

LEM: Don't you start taking his side. For once I thought I could get away from the office and spend an evening at home, and that silly daughter of mine has to invite him to come and call.

AME: Now don't tell me that the Sheriff's office in Tucson is so important it'll be a catastrophe if someone's not there.

LEM: Ordinarily, no. But tonight of all nights—.

AME: You know you only stayed downtown evenings because your office was right handy to my bake-shop, now isn't that so?

LEM: (*seriously*) Well, for the most part, that is true. But tonight is a special instance.

AME: How so?

LEM: You see, Amelia, it's like this. Once a month the Bar Nothing Outfit pays off its help, on Saturday night, of course, and old J. D., not being able to get into the bank on Saturday, leaves the cash in my safe overnight. It's safe as a church, being connected up to the city alarm system and all that, but I do like to feel more sure in having someone there to keep an eye on it. This is Friday night.

AME: Well, of course, if you've left Charlie in charge, he won't simply go off and leave it.

LEM: I hope not. That dratted girl—.

AME: What are you so nervous about? Sheila's all right, considering she hasn't had a mother around for two years.

LEM: But what shall I do if he does come here?

The Alembic

AME: The sooner you find out he can't be trusted to stay on a job, the better, so's you can get rid of him.

LEM: The thing I'm afraid of is, it won't work out that way. You see, I didn't tell O'Rourke that he was to be guarding anything valuable. I just sort of hinted to him that if he wanted to stay around the office tonight, I wouldn't mind.

AME: Good Lord, Lem, you ought to have your head examined. The only thing for you to do now, is to hike yourself right down there, and if he hasn't left, to tell him what he's guarding.

LEM: I can't do that. Suppose he comes here? I can't take the chance of leaving him alone here in the house with my daughter.

AME: Don't be so absurd. Why ever not?

LEM: (*distressed*) Lord, what a dilemma. Amelia, I've got myself into a pickle. The truth is, I don't trust that young man. Six months ago he was sent to jail for automobile robbery.

AME: (*incredulously*) And you gave him a job in your office?

LEM: I didn't want him on the loose. No telling what he might do if I left him to roam around free.

AME: And you've got him coming here and calling on your daughter? Sounds strange to say the least. Not to run you down or anything, but as a friend, it sounds as if you might be cracking up. Can't you call him up?

LEM: (*relieved*) You know, I think you've got something there.

(*He heads for the telephone. The doorbell rings.*)

LEM: If that's O'Rourke, at least this won't take long. What time is it, Amelia? (*He goes to door.*)

AME: (*consulting her watch*) Five minutes to eight.

Family Matter

(LEM opens the door and CHARLIE enters, blinking and graining foolishly)

CHA: Hello, Sheriff. Oh, howdy, Miss Perkins. Where's Sheila?

LEM: Never you mind that stuff, O'Rourke. Sheila's upstairs, and she don't want to see you. I tell you what you do, kid; you just get back to the office as soon as you can. I'll tell Sheila you called. Nice seeing you. Now good night.

CHA: (*puzzled*) Hey, I don't get it.

LEM: You were supposed to stay at the office, remember? What kind of dereliction of duty do you call this, deserting your post?

CHA: (*aggrieved*) Now look, nobody told me—.

AME: Hadn't you better tell him about the pay-roll Lem?

LEM: Amelia, why don't you learn to keep your big yap shut?

AME: (*outraged*) Lem Baxter, you can't talk that way to me. You're not doing me any favor, eating my pies. Maybe I did want to get the job as cook at the county jail, but to put up with your abuse is more than—.

CHA: What's that about a payroll, Sheriff? Beg your pardon, Miss Perkins.

AME: I swear he must be losing his mind. To leave the pay-roll in his safe, and never to say a word about it—.

LEM: Think I want to advertise a bundle of cash with jail-birds all over the place? All right, so now you know. There's a thousand dollars in my safe. I'd go to the office myself, but I don't doubt the moment my back's turned you'll come sneaking back here forcing yourself on my daughter.

CHA: What do you take me for? That's a funny thing to say. It sounds as if you don't trust me.

LEM: Should I?

CHA: I don't know where you get your opinion of me, Sheriff, but you're wrong. If you had told me about the cash, if you'd even told me you wanted me to stay at the office, I wouldn't have left. As it was, I had a date with Sheila. Now you tell me she doesn't want to see me. I don't believe it. I ought to wait and hear that from Sheila herself. But I'll go back to the office and watch the safe until you relieve me. Then you can find someone else for your old job. Say good-night to Sheila for me. *(He slams out)*

LEM: *(yelling after him)* You'd better hurry, if you know what's good for you. *(To himself)* Five minutes. He can make it.

SHE: *(coming down stairs)* Isn't Charlie here? I heard voices. Oh, hello, Miss Perkins. Wasn't Charlie here? *(She has on her prettiest dress.)*

LEM: Sheila, the sooner you forget about that young man the better. He isn't the sort of person I want you to associate with. I've told enough times before. Stay away from him.

SHE: Oh, for crying out loud. Dad, have you been shooting off your mouth to him? What did you tell him? Why did he leave?

AME: It was a matter of business, dear.

SHE: You know, Miss Perkins, sometimes I get quite worried about Dad. Why don't you—marry him or something, before I have to have him committed?

AME: That's no way to talk, child. Your father does the best he can the way he sees it.

SHE: He'd better get new glasses.

AME: You like that boy very much, don't you?

LEM: *(shouting)* Go to bed, Sheila.

Family Matter

SHE: (*astounded*) *Go to bed?*

LEM: (*impatiently*) Go somewhere, and keep out of my hair.

SHE: (*defiantly*) Miss Perkins, will you help me handle him if he gets violent?

AME: Simmer down, you two. (*They glare at each other; sternly.*) No, I mean it. You're both behaving like a couple of idiots. It's about time someone came along who would restore a little law and order into this household. You both are making mountains out of ant-hills. In all my life I never saw two such nice people let their nerves get the best of them. What's the matter with you? Each one of you separately is a nice person, but together you're like cats and dogs. I swear I don't know why I bother with you. Gracious sakes, I know I'm no psycho-analyst, which I think you both need, but I do have a little common sense, which is more than I can say for either of you. Now sit down and be quiet, and we'll talk this over calmly.

LEM: Amelia, you are a very good friend, but these family matters—.

SHE: Miss Perkins, if you really want to help, why *don't* you marry him so maybe *I* can have a little peace?

AME: Shut up, Sheila. But it's not a bad idea. (*Coyly*) What's stopping you, Lem? Asking me, I mean. You can see your daughter needs a mother more than anything.

LEM: (*explosively*) Amelia, don't be silly! This is neither the time nor the place—.

AME: I'll grant you that. If either of you can explain this ungodly feud, I wish you would.

SHE: Miss Perkins, can *you* make any sense out of such unpredictable behavior? For some reason he's got it in for Charlie. I like Charlie. What's so wrong about his coming

here to see me? Is it that you two want to be alone? If it is, we could have gone out somewhere.

AME: If you've never explained the why of it to Sheila, Lem, I think this would be the time to do so. I should like to hear it myself.

LEM: (*tired*) It's a long story, Amelia. I can't go into it now. The important thing is, I've got to achieve Sheila's happiness, with or without her consent. I promised her mother on her death-bed that I would never rest until I saw Sheila settled and happy—.

SHE: In the State Mental Hospital? Dad, if you are holding anything back that I should know, for heaven's sake, spill it, because the way you're going on is just plain torture.

LEM: No, I can't tell it. (*Sincerely*) Only this, that there never lived a man who so deserved to be shot as Pat O'Rourke.

SHE: PAT O'Rourke?

LEM: Charlie's father.

AME: What'd he do?

LEM: Don't ask me now. It was part of my promise to Alice—to Sheila's mother. It almost broke my heart to see her and the young scamp meet at college. I kept my eye on him, waiting for him to make one slip. I'll keep on watching him as long as is necessary to assure that Sheila is in no danger from him.

SHE: (*unbelieving and impatient*) Dad, you're *exasperating!* Why don't you tell us what he's guilty of?

LEM: No, no. When the time comes, but not now.

AME: I think you owe it to the child, Lem, to explain fully. Don't you realize, she's grown up. You can't keep her in the dark like this. Some day she'll have to learn to make her own decisions.

Family Matter

LEM: (*determined*) No, Amelia, I know what I'm doing. You wanted to know why I didn't ask you to marry me. Believe me, it's the thing that's been in my mind these past months. I wish I could. But don't you see, I want to be in a position to offer you more than I have at present? I just simply haven't got a dime in the world.

AME: What difference does that make? Just because you have a grown daughter it doesn't mean that you're old. I'll bet you're not a day past forty.

LEM: I've had a hard life. These gray hairs—.

SHE: Tell you what, Pop: when Charlie and I are married, we'll buy you a rocking-chair at our house—.

LEM: How dare you talk like that—?

AME: Sheila, why don't you keep quiet. You know you excite him terribly.

SHE: I was only trying to be pleasant. Goodness knows, there's nothing I want so much as to get clean away from this madhouse. It isn't easy, to be burdened with an irresponsible parent. Duty compels me to be as generous as I can. The offer was made in all kindness. If Pop is so old and feeble I'll stick by him—.

LEM: (*savagely*) Now not another word out of you, do you hear? Not so much as a peep.

SHE: Peep.

AME: Well, it's good to see you aren't serious. The way you go on, you had me believing you were.

LEM: I give up. Amelia, you've got me convinced. We can't afford to wait any longer. If my daughter will do us the honor of retiring to a decent interval of distance, there is something I'd like to ask you.

SHE: (*mocking*) Oh, Pop, if you're going to propose, I'll go right upstairs.

The Alembic

(*SHEILA starts for the stairway. The telephone rings. She stops on the stair to listen. LEM answers the phone.*)

LEM: Hello. Yes, speaking. What's that? Did you catch him? *WHO???* Why, young O'Rourke, of course. Look, get onto it right away. Broadcast his description. Get every available man on it at once. Give them orders to shoot on sight if necessary. I'll be right down.

SHE: (*running across; excited, alarmed*) Dad, what's the matter?

AME: Wait a moment, Sheila.

LEM: Good-bye. (*Hangs up; in a hard voice.*) Well, this thing's out of my control now. For better or worse, the fate of your young man seems to rest in other hands.

SHE: (*pleading*) What's the matter, Dad? What were you saying on the phone? Who was that?

AME: Tell us, Lem. It sounds serious. What's happened?

LEM: I'll tell you what's happened. Young O'Rourke has just cleaned out my safe and has disappeared.

AME: (*incredulous*) Are you sure? How could it have happened?

LEM: That was the city police. The burglar alarm went off at eight o'clock. When the police investigated they found the safe looted and no one on the premises. But they'll catch him. Inside of five minutes they'll have thrown a cordon around this town that no one will get through. Then it'll simply be a case of tracking him down.

SHE: But what was that you told them about shooting?

LEM: I haven't time to go into it now. I've got to get down to the office. But I'll say this. If they do shoot him, it'll be a good thing all around. (*During the next few speeches,*

Family Matter

he is lacing his shoes, strapping on his revolver, struggling into his coat, etc.)

SHE: *(tearfully)* I'll come with you.

AME: We'll both go.

LEM: Neither one of you will stir from this house. I tell you, this man is dangerous. Keep the door locked in case he doubles back. I wouldn't put it past him to try something desperate.

AME: But what shall we do when you're gone?

LEM: I don't really know, Amelia, but it might help if you'd both just sit down and—have a piece of pie. *(He bolts out.)*

AME: It might be a good idea at that. It's a good pie. I baked it myself. Sheila?

SHE: *(looking out window; not hearing)* What?

(Sound of Sheriff's car leaving is heard.)

AME: *(reassuring)* Don't worry, dear. I feel sure there's been some kind of mistake.

SHE: *(without hope)* Why do you say that?

AME: Oh, I don't know. Because it sounds good, I guess. I felt that I should say something comforting. Silly, isn't it?

SHE: Very.

AME: *(reasonably)* But, Sheila, if your young man is really the way your father says, isn't it better that you should know the truth?

SHE: Lies, all lies!

AME: Whatever do you mean, dear?

SHE: There's more in this than you know. Dad has had it in for Charlie ever since I met him. Why?

AME: I don't know, but everything will work itself out.

The Alembic

SHE: What do you mean by that?

AME: (*non-plussed*) Well, it always does, doesn't it?

SHE: One way or the other. I feel that if I could only get at what is bothering Pop, I'd have the key to the whole business.

AME: Well, try to forget about it now, and I'm sure that when all this blows over, your father will explain everything.

SHE: Amelia. Do you really want to marry Father?

AME: (*surprised at the familiarity but responding with a light note*) Why not?

SHE: (*serious*) I mean, doesn't he impress you as being, well, sort of queer? As if he were really losing his mind, I mean?

AME: That's not a proper way to talk about your father.

SHE: I've got to know. Golly, if he is, I have to know about it, don't I? I mean, so I can take care of him, and everything.

AME: Don't you worry about it. You'll see. It'll be all right.

SHE: (*pondering*) I can't see why he should always be after Charlie. Maybe I'm an unnatural daughter or something, but ever since he railroaded Charlie on that automobile theft, I've a funny feeling that he wasn't being exactly—honest.

AME: (*reproving*) You must try to rid your mind of these notions.

SHE: Oh, it's true, all right. Charlie didn't do a single thing that was wrong. You have a right to know about it, if you're going to marry him. I tell you, Dad was just gunning for Charlie ever since the day we first met.

Family Matter

AME (*impatient*) Why do you insist on crossing your father? Why can't you just accept what he does for you in the best frame of mind? It is just possible that you don't know everything. You must realize that at eighteen there must be plenty of things that you don't know. (*Remembering to be light.*) Although, goodness gracious, maybe I'm wrong. I seem to remember that when I was eighteen I hadn't anything to learn. What a lot I've forgotten since then.

SHE: When you get through kidding I'd like to talk seriously. There must be something—. There was an old album somewhere—. Look, Amelia, will you do me a favor? Get on the telephone, call the police station, try to find out what you can about this business. I've got a vague uneasy notion stirring in the back of my mind, and there's something I've got to get. (*She hurries upstairs.*)

AME: These children now-a-days. I guess I was born too soon, or something. (*Picking up phone*) Operator, give me the police station, will you? No, nothing important. I want to report a lost dog. Thank you. Let me talk to Captain Guinness if he isn't too busy? Mrs. Amelia Perkins. Thank you. Captain Guinness? Hello, Ed. I'm at Lem's house. What's the story on what happened tonight over at the county jail? Oh, go on! Don't you think I would ask him if he was here? Out chasing over the countryside, I imagine. Ha, ha. Yes, he sure needs a rest, and I'm just the gal to see that he gets it. Sure, go ahead. (*Pause*) Yeah. (*Pause*), Oh? Well, what do you make of it? You think so, too, do you? Have they caught him? (*Pause*) But you do have your patrols out? Course it wouldn't. Well, thanks a lot for letting me know. Bye.

(*She hangs up as SHEILA comes downstairs carrying a Bible.*)

The Alembic

SHE: (*excited*) Take a look at this, Amelia. On the fly-leaf: "TO ALICE, THE SWEETEST ANGEL THIS SIDE OF HEAVEN, PAT O'ROURKE." This was my mother's.

AME: (*their heads together over the book*) Then Lem's grudge against Pat O'Rourke involved your mother.

SHE: I think we'll crack the mystery now, with this as a lever. What did you find out?

AME: I'm not quite—sure. I called Ed Guinness at the station. He and I are old friends. What he tells me I don't understand. He says that when the alarm went off at eight o'clock, it rang in the station, and he and a patrolman went right over to Lem's office. When they got there, the office was locked and dark. One of them called Lem here. Ed stayed right there by the door, and swears nothing moved inside that office. When Lem came down with the key and let them in, he was foaming at the mouth and swearing to shoot O'Rourke on sight. The safe was locked. Lem opened it. It was empty. But Ed says, how did Lem know the money was gone, and how could he tell it was O'Rourke got it, when nobody else knew it?

SHE: (*excited*) You see, Amelia? I knew it must be something like that. I knew it couldn't be Charlie, because it was only five minutes after he left that they called Pop.

AME: And he didn't even know the money was in the safe.

SHE: (*crying again*) I know it must sound pretty awful for me to say that I'm glad, but that's how it is. I feel awful sorry for Pop, but I couldn't have stood it for Charlie to have done it.

AME: You love the boy, don't you?

SHE: I wouldn't deny it to anybody.

Family Matter

(Unseen by the women, CHARLIE appears at the kitchen door, draws back quickly, closing door.)

AME: (with sudden determination) I'm going to go out. Will you be all right alone?

SHE: (wiping her eyes) I suppose so. Why?

AME: I feel that something should be done. I want to talk this over with someone I can trust. You realize your father is a pretty sick man?

SHE: Oh, Amelia, I trust you to do whatever you think best.

AME: (putting on her wrap) I hope we will be able to cover this up. Why don't you lie down, get some rest if you can, while I'm gone? If Lem comes home, be nice to him, won't you?

SHE: Of course I will, Amelia.

(AMELIA exits. SHEILA switches off lights, starts for stairs. CHARLIE opens kitchen door, silhouetted against strong light behind him. She cries out.)

CHA: Please don't be afraid, Sheila. It's me, Charlie. I had to see you.

SHE: Why did you come here? Please go away.

CHA: I can't. The town is full of cops. There's nowhere I can go.

SHE: Then you know they're looking for you?

CHA: Sure I do. For robbing the safe at the county jail.

SHE: But you didn't do it, did you?

CHA: Of course I didn't. You know that. I heard you talking. It's your father determined to get me.

SHE: He's sick, Charlie.

CHA: I know he is. I've seen it for some time. I hoped he would be all right. Loving you, I wanted to string along

The Alembic

with him. But tonight was the last straw. I thought he had me. I came back here to tell you, that it had to be either him or me.

SHE: Oh, no, Charlie.

CHA: It's all right now. I don't want to hurt him. I would like to take you away, if I could.

SHE: I'll be all right. You must look after yourself. How did you get away?

CHA: When I left the house I went straight to town. A block away from the jail, I heard the alarm ringing. I went to see what was the matter. There were a couple of cops. One of them said, Baxter wants a dragnet out for young O'Rourke. I ducked until I could think it over. It came to me what it was all about. I knew then why your father had given me the job in his office.

SHE: Poor Charlie.

CHA: I knew he hated me. But I thought he had more sense than to try something like this. Do you know why he did it?

SHE: I don't even know why he hated you. Do you?

CHA: I think so. He hated my paw. Paw hated him too.

SHE: But why?

CHA: It had something to do with Alice McGuire.

SHE: My mother?

CHA: Yeah. Paw was in love with her at one time. He used to tell me to look out for Baxter, because he would try to get my scalp. I didn't really believe him.

SHE: Oh, darling, we mustn't stay here talking. What are you going to do?

CHA: I'm not sure. I'd try to get out of town if I thought I could. But they've got road-blocks up. There

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isn't a chance in the world I could make it.

SHE: The police know you didn't rob the office.

CHA: Yeah? Like they knew I didn't steal the car, eh? How could I take a chance?

SHE: I don't suppose you could. I think, though, that you'll be all right if you can stay out of Dad's way. I think you should go armed.

CHA: Against your own father? How can you say it?

SHE: I'd feel better if you had a way to defend yourself. Wait here. I'll get a gun. Pop keeps a spare in his room. I'll just be a minute. Stay on guard. *(She slips upstairs.)*

(The only light is falling through the kitchen door. CHARLIE prowls nervously from door to window. He lights a cigarette. LEM appears in kitchen door, revolver leveled. CHARLIE sees him, doesn't move.)

LEM: *(softly)* This is better than I expected. We don't have to spend too much time on this. A perfect set-up. All I have to do is put a bullet through you, and when they find you no one will question why I had to do it. Obliging of you. I thank you.

CHA: *(playing for time)* Is this what Alice would have wanted?

LEM: Shut your mouth. How I wish I could make it last! I'd like to see you suffer the way your father made her suffer. Get down on your knees and beg me.

SHE: *(from above)* Drop the gun, Pa. *(She appears with revolver leveled.)* Come on, Pop, drop it. You don't want me to shoot you.

LEM: *(crying out beseechingly)* No, Sheila, no. Get back. You don't know what you're doing. Give me a chance to finish this snake now. Please.

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SHE: (*her gun in his back*) Get the gun, Charlie, quick.

(*CHARLIE disarms the Sheriff.*)

LEM: (*desperate*) Sheila, you don't know what you're doing. What have I ever done to you to make you turn against me this way?

SHE: (*choking*) Pop, we're not going to hurt you. We're only trying to stop you from hurting yourself.

LEM: Why are you taking up with this thief against me?

SHE: We know about that. Lucky for you we do. The police know about it too. They'll be here in a minute. They know Charlie didn't rob the safe. What are you going to tell them?

LEM: (*incredulous*) The police know? How could they? You mean, they found the clock?

SHE: What clock?

CHA: I think I know. It's an old alarm clock your father has been fooling around with the last few days. I wondered how the burglar alarm was set off. He must have found some way to tie the timing device into the system. What a crazy idea.

LEM: I still don't understand why it didn't work. Where were you?

CHA: I didn't get to the office until after the alarm went off. Then I kept out of sight.

LEM: (*broken*) Are you going to turn me over to the police? You might as well. I don't care now, anyway. All my work, all my planning, all for nothing. Sheila, let me make one last appeal. No matter what happens to me, don't get yourself involved with this hoodlum. It's the one thing I've

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tried to keep you from. Don't make the same mistake your mother did.

CHA: I don't know what he's talking about, Sheila, but at least I can tell you this. I never knew your mother. I only met *you* after we started at the University. Until then I had never been to Tucson. So I couldn't have done anything against your mother.

SHE: If you'll tell what it is you're holding against Charlie, then perhaps I'll be in a position to judge for myself.

LEM: Twenty years ago Pat O'Rourke and I first ran across each other, and from that day to this my life has been blighted by him. Everything I put my hand to, everything I wanted, he ruined for me.

SHE: Including Mother?

LEM: Yes. After I married Alice I found she had been married before—to O'Rourke. He wanted to build an empire in the south of Arizona. A few months after they were married, Alice became ill. The doctor said he was bad for her. When he found that they couldn't have any children, he deserted her, sick as she was, sneaked off to New Mexico, hired a shyster to get the marriage annulled, and never sent word to her from that day to this.

CHA: But what has all this to do with me? Even if you had good cause to hate my father, he died five years ago. What do you hope to gain by pursuing your revenge upon me?

LEM: His blood is in you, boy, and it must be stamped out. Otherwise it will be the ruin of me and all of mine.

SHE: Is there anything in what he says, Charlie?

CHA: Of course not. Remember your biology at school? No one has believed in that theory now for thirty-five years. Mr. Baxter, you have spent years under a delusion. There is no reason why Sheila and I cannot be married in an

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entirely normal way, and have perfectly healthy children. You could have found all this out merely by asking me.

(AMELIA enters.)

LEM: I only hope what you say is true . . . Amelia, I've made a fool of myself, and all for nothing. What is going to happen to me?

AME: That depends on you, Lem. I've been talking to Ed Guinness. He understands that you have been working under a strain lately, and if the money is returned, he won't take any official action. Of course you will have to resign your job. I would suggest that you enter a rest home and catch up on yourself. Then when you come out, if you feel up to it, how would you like to start in on the bakery business?

LEM: I'll do it. And in my resignation I will make a clean breast of things to clear Charlie of all suspicion.

SHE: While you're away, Dad, it'll be lonely in this house without you.

LEM: Maybe my assistant wouldn't mind if you took some much-needed cooking lessons from my future wife.

SHE: You're all right, Dad. Come back quickly. We'll all be pulling for you. Don't forget we need you to give the bride away and make it official.

(LEM and CHARLIE shake hands and the women embrace as the curtain falls.)

Deus ex Machina

By WILLIAM PLUMMER, '51

I HATE machines. And when I say "machines," I mean practically everything that has been developed since the Industrial Revolution. Whenever I make this statement of what my friends know to be fact, eyebrows are raised and some of the less polite members of the group—there are always less polite members in any group—indulge in titters and guffaws calculated to bring home to me the absurdity of my stand. Since these *defensores fidei* show in their every action either complete vacuity or a state of nerves beyond which it would be dangerous to go their opposition convinces me of the soundness of my views.

No doubt the disciples of Freud would find antipathy toward machines a happy hunting ground for proofs of all their theories. Let me assure them, before they go off the deep end, that I had no unfortunate experiences in childhood, unless they would so consider the time I chased a cow into a swamp and nearly drowned in a bog hole. The fact that at the age of five I saw a ghost in broad daylight can have no bearing on the matter. An hallucination which occurred somewhat later did have railroad tracks in it. But surely that was not the beginning of it all. There was one thing of course. I attended what was perhaps the last Dame School in New England and that may have planted the seed which has grown to such a tree, an Eighteenth Century attitude of mind.

As you may well imagine, attempts to avoid machines, like attempts to avoid sin and its near occasions, have never

been entirely successful. Take the matter of writing for instance. The rules demand that essays submitted to THE ALEMBIC be typewritten, so typewritten they must be. I tried to get around this particular dilemma by writing essays in long hand and having someone else type out what I had written. An uneasy compromise at best, it proved completely unsuccessful because no one is able to read my writing but myself, and I can only read it on the day it is written. What was there for me to do but submit to an ordeal than which there are few greater in my happily uneventful life. I am not completely cowed, however. If I have to type, I can at *least* type badly.

Another difficulty, which I have not been able to overcome completely, is that of avoiding elevators and escalators. In some of the older buildings in the city the stairs are in a prominent position and I can get on with my business without too great a loss of time. But in some of the newer buildings it is not so easy. I once walked up to the fourteenth floor of a building (having sneaked through the stairway door when no one was looking) only to find the door on the fourteenth floor locked. I had to walk down again and when I arrived at the ground floor I discovered that some over-zealous janitor had locked that door too. It took quite a bit of banging and yelling to get someone to let me out. Another time I ran up the stairs to the fourth floor of one of the older department stores in which I thought I was safe, only to find myself in some kind of warehouse. Since I had been looking for the china department, I was rather nonplussed to find myself among what appeared to be automobile parts. An employee, or a person who looked like an employee, finally came along and put me on the right track again. He seemed to think I was up to no good in that warehouse. If he had only known my

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mental attitude he would have had no fears for his automobile parts.

Even in my own house I am not completely safe from the enemy. I can stand electric lights because candles are too expensive and too apt to burn holes in the furniture. Plumbing is unavoidable and the fact that it is antiquated helps make it bearable. But central heating I cannot abide. Whether or not it is all in my head, I cannot breathe when the heat is on. The only solution to this problem is to leave all the windows open while the furnace is going. This, however, would seem to be at cross purposes. A better way would be to rip out the heating apparatus, which is singularly ugly, and to install a decanter of port wine in every room. Then, whenever a member of the household felt chilly he could give his blood a fillip with a "beaker full of the warm South." Our rooms would be much prettier and I would be much happier. So far, however, the logic of my argument has made no impression on what I can only consider the invincible ignorance of those around me.

But the greatest cross for one of my turn of mind, one from which there can be no surcease in this workaday world, is the modern omnibus. Morning and evening I am at the mercy of that monster and day by day it extends its dominion. Sometimes I fear there is no escape. It would not be so bad if I were able to maintain an attitude of complete distrust. But unfortunately one cannot touch pitch without being blackened. Now and again the sanguine faith in these contraptions manifested by those around me penetrates my shell of reserve. The result is disastrous. Let me, as I have too often done, put my trust in such conveyances, let me for the moment think, "this morning the bus will get me there on time," and it is all up with me. Whether these contrivances sense my dislike I

should hesitate to say. But this I know: *they never get me anywhere on time.* If I am early the bus is late and if I am late the bus is early. Or if I arrive on time and it arrives on time the motor goes dead, or there is a traffic jam, or an accident. When nothing happens to the bus it is usually driven by an operator who is recovering from the night before and is afraid to go fast for fear of bringing on an attack of vertigo, or one who stops at every lunch counter to get a cup of coffee, or one who is just happy and ambles down the street at a daring five miles an hour enjoying the air and scenery. He has no place to go.

Someone may someday convince me that hatred of machines is unreasonable. But not until there have been some changes made.

Debut

GERALD PATRICK HANRAHAN, '52, whose story, "The Old Man Knows Best", begins on page 53, has been prominent in amateur sports in and about Rhode Island for several years, and took part in the intramural boxing events sponsored by the Athletic Association last year. He attended St. Mary's Seminary and Hope High School. He is a Political Science major.

Ecce Homo

By AUSTIN P. NAGLE, '52

How often in the welling pang of love,
The searching soul seeks moorage in its thought;
And casting mind and heart and eyes above,
A vision of the earthly past is caught.

O would that time had sooner called
So in the Saviour's earthly span,
The soul in holiness enthralled
Would make a Saint of man.

To have been Simon when HE waved
For help along the way;
Would we behave as he behaved?
What words of comfort would he say?

And on throughout the Bible tale,
The thoughts surmise in thrilling light;
What heights of glory there to scale,
What depths so humble to alight.

But can we not as yet partake
In all that passed those sacred days?
Do we not hear what Jesus spake,
Are not all joined in human ways?

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And then we spit upon the face,
And down our thumbs that HE shall die,
And judas Him with our embrace,
And then the King we crucify.

But still He lives as He lived then,
In light of whose eternity,
All earthly time has never been
And years to come shall never be.

So still we lend the helping hand,
And still we comfort those that need;
And living close in Christian band,
Our aspirations still succeed.

And yet immersed in evil things,
We tightly press the thorny crown;
And those our spikes the soldier brings,
And that our push which knocks HIM down.

“The Old Man Knows Best”

By GERALD PATRICK HANRAHAN, '52

THE Old Man knows the angles all right. He ignores the rookie hanging around just as if he were part of the bench or a blade of grass on the field. The vets take their cue from him and never say a word to the new rookie as they are too busy concentrating on practice for that stretch drive with the Sox.

Vin D'Iorio, the rookie, takes his turn in batting practice but his hits are just liners and grass cutters. He is a chunky-legged, sawed-off guy, but doesn't look like much of anything to me except maybe a misplaced gorilla.

He traps what comes his way in fielding practice at third. There, he doesn't remind me of anything either, unless it's a fireplug. All in all, the man they sent up to fill our hot corner looks like another dime-a-dozen busher who will soon be hurried back to the minors.

That third base problem had us all worried. Patty Dolan, our regular, was out for the season with a broken leg. Glenn Russell, his sub, was a flashy fielder, but his hitting wasn't so terrific. This is the year the Shamrocks were supposed to cop the pennant. We never would, with that big hole at third.

“Bucko”, I says to Sullivan, the fourth day the rookie is with us, “the hot corner's too much for Russell to handle.” The Old Man nods. He bites his big lips and there is just a shadow of worry in his usual smiling blue eyes. Sullivan has been a long time putting this ball club together. Many of the regulars are past their peak. It would be a long time before

he would form another club as good as this one. This may even be his last chance to nab a championship.

“I got the same impression,” he says. He sits there quiet and somehow the years of hardship don’t show anywhere except in those penetrating Irish eyes, which now reflect great worry. “I thought for awhile D’Iorio would do, but—.”

“But what?”

“Well, Jerry, I can overlook his .279 batting average in the minors and his fair fielding but a man’s got to have the fire and spirit to stick up here and I don’t think D’Iorio has the drive.”

“Yeah,” I gulped. I felt sorry for the rookie then. I guess because he has been up twice before with different clubs and is twenty-seven years old. And then, maybe it was because I like the way he keeps his mouth shut and goes about his business—the same sympathy you have for dumb animals.

Sullivan goes into the clubhouse and I tag along. Most of the men are dressed, ready to take the field. Sullivan walks over to D’Iorio near a corner locker and says with a wave, “Men, this is Vin D’Iorio. He’s gonna play third today.”

For the first time, the Shamrocks pay some attention to the rookie. They stare as if it is the first time they see him. D’Iorio nods and keeps dressing. Sullivan goes out as Glenn Russell walks up to the rookie. “Well, you better enjoy it because tomorrow you will be back in the bushes.”

The rookie buttons his shirt and says nothing. The whole team is watching now. It’s very important to get any line you can on a rookie who could make or break a club in the pennant scramble.

The Old Man Knows Best

“What’s your name again?” sneers Russell. That surprises me because you can see Russell is looking for trouble and usually he’s a nice, quiet guy. But, losing out to a busher would make anyone sore.

“D’Iorio, Vin D’Iorio. What’s yours?”

“Did you say D’Iorio?” sniffs Russell.

“Oh! a relation of Mussolini.”

Someone guffaws. Others grin. Russell smirks. The rookie’s face turns red and Russell continues. “A wop, huh?” He eyes D’Iorio’s chunky frame in contempt. “Come to think of it, Phil Rizzuto is a _____.”

What happens looks like a buzz-saw swinging into action. There is a quick shuffle of feet and movement of hands and splat! biff! Russell is sitting on the floor looking as if he doesn’t know what hit him. I wouldn’t know, either, except I see the raging rookie standing over him with clenched fists. The poker-face is gone now and those calm brown eyes are spitting fire.

“Anybody else want to say that?”

His eyes sweep the team.

No one seems inclined to take the challenge. As we help Russell to his feet, he is shaking his head and rubbing his jaw. The rookie sees that he is in no condition to fight so he walks out. I watch him taking his cuts in batting practice with new interest. And I see something I missed before. On five pitches he rides the ball five times on a line between the fielders. Now that I am looking for it, I see in infield practice, some of the speed that he used to hit Russell so fast.

Those chunky legs of his get him around plenty fast: he’s got a bullet arm and a sure pair of hands.

It’s the same way in the game with the third place Redskins. He gobbles up everything that’s hit his way and, while

he doesn't get any hits at the plate in three trips, he rides the ball solid each time. The game goes into the last of the ninth with the Redskins leading, 4 to 3. The stands are very glum because the Sox have a half game lead on us and the Redskins are just one game behind. The Shamrocks' bench is glummer.

The Old Man watches the diamond action through slitted eyes set in a tight face as if he's praying for some kind of a miracle to pull this big one out of the oven. The first man fans and the stands groan. The next hitter blasts out a tremendous wallop, but the left fielder takes it with his back to the wall. The fans start shuffling out of the park as the third hitter steps to the plate. The batter blooms one over the infield for a single and revives a faint spark of hope. Then Vin D'Iorio comes up.

He squares away in the batter's box and it is so quiet in the park that a loyal rooter yells for a run and it echoes around the field and dies out gradually. I know what everyone in that park is thinking. If only Patty Dolan was up there now! The loss of our regular third sacker is going to cost us the pennant.

The pitcher takes his signal and cuts loose with the white bullet. The ball streaks for the rookie's head and my heart is in my mouth as D'Iorio stands there as if he's frozen. He jerks his head back at the last instant. The ball thuds into the catcher's glove, and with a sigh of relief I breathe again.

That took nerve, plenty of nerve, even for a veteran. They would waste no more dust-off pitches trying to scare him away from the plate. This rookie just didn't scare.

The next pitch bullets straight for D'Iorio, he stands fast, and the ball darts for the outside corner of the plate. The rookie's bat flashes and it cracks. The ball screams between

The Old Man Knows Best

short and third and bounds into a corner of the field. The crowd is on its feet. One run scores and D'Iorio rounds second and breaks for third. The left fielder whips the ball in and his hurried throw is high and D'Iorio slides in safe at third.

The fans go wild and give him a big ovation. That wallop unsettles the pitcher and he makes one too good for big "Moose" Donovan. Donovan tees off and blasts it far over the wall and that's the ball game. The crowd gives him a hand, too, as he trots around the bases but everyone of us is pounding the rookie's back. We know who pulled that game out of the fire.

I fall in beside him as we go down the runway towards the clubhouse. I said, "You sure came through with the chips down that time, Vin."

"I always play better under pressure." He said it as if nothing at all had happened.

He was an odd guy, but he was in after that game-saving wallop and it's up to me to see he gets along with the men now.

I turn towards the manager's office and as I do, I bump into him.

"Rather aggressive when he's aroused, isn't he?" chuckles the Old Man. He walks away with a knowing smile.

I stand there scratching my head. The more I scratch, the more I think I see Sullivan's point. After all, Glenn Russell is not the type who goes out of his way looking for trouble. The Old Man knows the angles all right. He even knows the one thing that's going to make a rookie sore at just the right time!

Debut

BERNARD BOUDREAU, '52, who enters our pages for the first time with his poem, "The Grass". Bernard comes to us from Willimantic, Conn. Here at P. C. he is known as a member of the Glee Club and as the Associate Editor of the VERITAS. We hope that this will be the predecessor of many contributions from Mr. Boudreau.

Debut

NORMAN D. CLARK, '52, whose one act play begins on page 23, is a native of nearby Pawtucket, R. I. and is engaged in theatrical production here at P. C. He is a veteran player, and a member of several theatrical groups in and about Providence.

