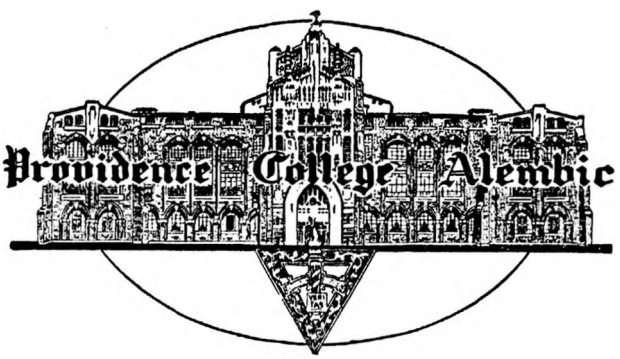
PROVIDENCE COLLEGE

Alembic

October, 1953

Vol. XXXIII No. 1

THE ALEMBIC



PUBLISHED QUARTERLY

BY THE

STUDENTS OF PROVIDENCE COLLEGE

PROVIDENCE, R. I.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

VOLUME XXXIII OCTOBER, 1953 NUMBER 1

The Great Enterprise

By Martin W. Sandler, '54

"An age will come after many years when the Ocean will lose the chain of things, and a huge land lie revealed; when Tiphys will disclose new worlds and Thule no more be the ultimate."

In these words can we best describe the great dream and ambition of Christopher Columbus. It is always interesting to look back on the famous admiral; and this being the month in which he is most often brought to mind, it should well be appropriate to consider the various influences which sent him on his epoch-making voyage.

There are many erroneous beliefs connected with Columbus. The most popular and absurd of these is the idea that he had to convince people that the world was round. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Every educated man in his day believed that the world was a sphere. Every European university based its geography on this theory. It is reported that Aristotle wrote that one could cross the ocean from Spain to the Indies in comparatively few days, and Strabo, the Greek geographer of the first century A. D., once hinted that the crossing had actually been tried. Thus the theory of Columbus, great as it was, certainly was far from a new one.

It is, of course, impossible to say when the idea that one could reach the Indies by sailing west first came to Columbus. In the words of one historian, "Sailing west to

the Orient may have come to Columbus in childhood as he pondered the story of his namesake; or in youth at a season of fasting and prayer, which makes the mind receptive to inspiration; or in manhood as he watched a glorious sunset from the deck of a ship. It may have come silently, like the grace of God, or in a rush and tumult of passionate and emotional conviction."

The main ambition of Christopher Columbus was to reach "the Indies" by sailing westward. This and this alone was his main objective. He expected to obtain such riches as gold, pearls, and spices once he reached "the Indies," but this was at best a secondary thought within him. Columbus did expect to find other islands while on his voyage. He believed that these islands would be of great value to him as ports of call and perhaps might even contain resources of value. Most important, Columbus did not expect to find the continent of America. There is no doubt that he was without a single notion of its existence. America was discovered by accident, and Columbus did not even as much as admit that he had found a new continent until his third voyage in 1498.

One of the greater influences on Columbus was the famous Marco Polo. It was from this Venetian traveler that Columbus formulated his ideas regarding the accessibility of Asia. Early in the fourteenth century, Polo had brought home wondrous tales of the island kingdom of Cipangu (Japan) which lay off the Chinese coast. "The Book of Ser Marco Polo," which was written before the invention of printing and which had to be spread around in manuscript copies, was read time and time again by Columbus.

Probably an even greater discoverer of America was a book written by a Cardinal of Cambrai, Pierre d'Ailly. His book, *Imago Mundi,* was a comprehensive world geography composed about the year 1410. From all indications, *Imago Mundi* was the book that Columbus read more than any other. Columbus' original copy, still in existence, is filled with marginal notes which the admiral continually made and many times corrected. It is from these notes that one can see Columbus' geographical philosophy being formed. It seems important that a few of these notes should be quoted here.

"The end of the habitable earth toward the Orient and the end of the habitable earth toward the Occident are near enough, and between them is a small sea.

"An arm of the sea extends between India and Spain.

"India is near Spain.

"Water runs from pole to pole between the end of Spain and the beginning of India.

"Aristotle says that between the end of Spain and the beginning of India is a small sea navigable in a few days.

"Esdras says that six parts of the globe are habitable and that the seventh is covered with water.

"The end of Spain and the beginning of India are not far distant but close, and it is evident that this sea is navigable in a few days with a fair wind."

Thus one can see the important role the *Imago Mundi* played in shaping Columbus' theories.

Perhaps the greatest single influence on "the admiral

of the ocean sea" was a Florentine by the name of Paolo dal Pozzo Toscanelli. A physician and humanist, Toscanelli was also a mathematician and geographer. Eventually he became the day's great authority on estimating the size of the globe. In 1474, he had made an important map showing the course from Portugal to "the Indies."

Toscanelli, unlike many other geographers of the day, accepted the stories of Marco Polo. Thus in his description of the route from Portugal to "the Indies" did he say: "In the next province, Cathay, resides the emperor of China, the Grand Khan, which name in Latin means 'king of kings.' "

Columbus became involved in a great correspondence with Toscanelli. From the Florentine geographer, the admiral learned many things. Above all else, Columbus obtained from Toscanelli the prestige of having an eminent scholar approve his enterprise. Said Toscanelli to Columbus in one of his letters: "I observe thy great and noble ambition to pass over to where the spices grow, wherefore in reply to thy letter I send thee a copy of another letter which some time ago I wrote to a friend of mine, a servant of the most serene king of Portugal, before the wars of Castille, in answer to another which by command of his highness he wrote me on this subject; and I send thee another sea-chart like the one I sent to him, wherewith thy demands be satisfied." Thus Columbus was completely familiar with Toscanelli's famous sea chart.

What may have been the final influencing factor on Columbus took place in 1488 when Bartholomew Dias

rounded the Cape of Good Hope. Columbus was in Lisbon in December of 1488 when the Dias fleet came sailing proudly into the Tagus. Columbus notes the importance of Dias' journey in one of the margins of his copy of d'Ailly's *Imago Mundi.*

Thus we have briefly sketched the main factors which led Columbus to attempt his great experiment. Christopher Columbus was far from correct in many of his theories. He was entirely wrong in his concept of the relation of earth to water in the world. He greatly underestimated the distances between such then-known places as Cipangu and Canaries. As we have pointed out, he was far from the first person to hold the theory that the earth was a sphere. Yet Christopher Columbus holds a unique niche in American history and most justifiably so. For Christopher Columbus was the first man courageous enough to put his theories into practice. He became the greatest navigator of his age. The ease with which he eventually conquered the terror-laden ocean led countless other men from all European nations into adventure and exploration. In the words of Samuel Eliot Morison, "The whole history of the Americas stems from the four voyages of Columbus; and as the Greek city-states looked back to the deathless gods as their founders, so today a score of independent nations and dominions unite in homage to Christopher the stout-hearted son of Genoa who carried Christian civilization across the Ocean Sea."

Essay On Enthusiasm

By THOMAS F. SMITH, '55

THERE is an ingredient in human action that can mean the difference between drudgery and the labor of love, between joy in living and the despair that comes with the facing of endless days of toil. This precious flavoring we call enthusiasm.

The pages of history offer many instances of the triumph of enthusiastic effort over almost hopeless odds. For example, the perilous, yet successful voyage of the *Mayflower* cannot be satisfactorily explained by attributing it entirely to economic, political or religious motivations. True, her courageous passengers were first inflamed to an enthusiasm for freedom by these circumstances. But intangible and distant hopes such as these could not actually sustain them within the frightening confines of a creaking, tortured hull—itself adrift upon unknown and hazardous seas. The horizon was black with storms and uncertainty; little there was to encourage an enthusiastic spirit in any fearful heart. Yet, their every concerted undertaking, from the drawing up and signing of the Compact to the organization of the first civil government, bore the indelible brand of a vital enthusiasm. Such indomitable zest cannot be superficial or affected without at once betraying itself as folly.

This same contagious fervor in the face of great odds spelled the difference between defeat and everlasting

victory for Saint Augustine. His adversary was the most cunning and, perhaps, the deadliest: self. When the human spirit turns the blade of its sword, not out to the enemy, but in upon its own weaknesses, there is the incredible fact of enthusiasm where before there was lethargy. Perhaps, however, this is a cold-blooded abstraction of enthusiasm from its circumstances, for here the role of supernatural grace and love can hardly be ascribed solely to human zeal. Yet the preparation for sanctifying grace is just such an ordering of motives as enthusiasm implies.

We have seen this seemingly miraculous alchemy of spirit operate in our own time; in our own lives, in fact. We have all known the real happiness that springs from dreary work to inspire our hearts and hands when we are able to see beyond the details of this fragment of menial labor to the reason for its being in our way at all. It means that we must see things as they really are—(a goal, by the way, toward which man has stumbled since death and sin were first born into his world!) We must understand that this acre of soil be made flat that a hospital might one day become useful in a world of sickness and infirmity. We should realize that our one free evening in the week can be devoted to the Charity Drive, for only by first relieving the fundamental needs of men can we hope to help them along the path to Heaven. Again, this monotonous session of homework has reverberations which sound right into eternity. We ought to stride bravely into all such tasks, knowing, with comforting certitude, that all does not stop with the sweat of labor; that there is no good work, either humble or exalted, that does not carry its inevitable reward.

The truth must be accepted, however, and to insist that enthusiasm can always be breathed into our actions simply by wishing it so is failing to face facts. It is never easy to change essentially the first reaction we register when confronted with distasteful work. In a sense, it is natural for men to dislike toil, yet the natural and the Divine law dictate that we must seek always to overcome this aversion if the sublime names of "Catholic" and "child of God" are to have real meaning in our lives.

The Divinity of Christ does not eradicate in Him the distinctly human inclination to avoid physical evil whenever and wherever possible. True, the perfect subjection of His human powers and appetites to the Divine Reason and Will precludes any possibility of a rebellion of the body. Yet, Our Blessed Lord's agony in Gethsemani points to a Divinely-inspired quest for the strength of will to embrace the awful ordeal of His crucifixion and death. Christ knew from all eternity the priceless reward for His suffering; but nonetheless the Son of God prayed for strength to face what would be, for enthusiasm, if you will, to make His sacrifice truly the labor of love.

It remains, therefore, for us to analyze this magic ingredient and make it an integral part of all that we do.

Enthusiasm may be divided into two broad types: first, that which arises naturally and instinctively when the task is pleasant and neither stings pride nor disturbs leisure. What man, for example, sits at a freshly set table burdened with meats, wines and the finest silver and does not eat with enthusiasm? Such zeal is almost reflexive, however, and there is nothing of merit in it except that it be a proper

and lawful appetite. Again, we seldom measure the enthusiasm of an artist, whether he be musician, sculptor or author. This is true simply because the delight he takes in work is too intimately woven with the very fiber of his life to lend itself easily to abstraction; we only marvel at his devotion and see his enthusiasm identified with his existence. Yet, while this ardor is more voluntary than automatic, it nonetheless arises in some degree from an accident of birth; for even the proverb states that poets are born.

Secondly, there is that type of enthusiasm which, because it is gained only through deliberate pursuit, we can call "acquired." It is that which must be cultivated and taught to flourish in ground not immediately conducive to it. If we can abstract natural enthusiasm from its circumstances and dissect its elements to some degree, we can better understand how to acquire it in all of our actions.

In the first place, the work of an enthusiastic man involves the faculties of both body and spirit; one is never divorced from the other. Man is a creature of many diversified pursuits, yet if they are to be truly human in nature, they must represent a cooperation of these two orders of being. In enthusiastic effort, therefore, there is a constant concurrence between mind and body which is both natural and profitable.

Secondly, the enthusiastic man is a visionary whose task, however small or insignificant, is seen always as an important part of the whole. The ditch digger carves not simply a furrow of earth but also the subterranean support for a cathedral. The scrub woman washes an endless road of marble corridor. Yet she cleans the shavings of another

day's work in joyful preparation for a new and better tomorrow. Such hands are rather guided and inspired than whipped to action.

Finally, enthusiasm resides primarily in the mind, and its effect upon action must arise from the proper ordering of our motives. One duty does not inevitably command hate and another joy; for drudgery has its foundation, not in the work, but in the worker. Else how explain a triumphant St. Francis living with Lady Poverty, or the unmarked saints of our day living and working in abject want, yet loving God and turning their toil into joy? Perhaps the perfection of enthusiasm then becomes charity whereby labor that is dismal and unpleasant and hopeless becomes bright with promise, invigorating and a stepping stone to true and everlasting happiness. Whether or not our own actions bear this mark of enthusiastic effort depends entirely upon ourselves. It is for us to begin the transformation by leavening each day's activity with the yeast of genuine enthusiasm. Enthusiasm becomes the elixir by which misery is turned into contentment, despair into hope and earth into Heaven; for the etymology of "enthusiasm" is "inspired by God."

Cafe Society....

By Rene Fortin, '54

SINCE I had just left a particularly inspiring history class, the thought struck me that the hordes which daily invade Harkins Hall for that barely potable liquid, cafeteria coffee, can find their parallel in history. As I walked through the crowds, I witnessed the re-enactment of scenes read about in history books.

I observed in one corner, our own arm-chair philosopher, a pseudo-intellectual whose greatest virtue lies in the fact that he is harmless. By the time I got to him, he had already seduced St. Thomas into heresy, and was currently converting Aristotle to Platonism. Now these were accomplishments to be proud of and this profound thinker was justifiably smug as he paused to let his thinking processes catch up with him.

Totally oblivious to these cataclysmic pronouncements, the military clique, a necessary evil in every civilization, discussed its own problems; I noticed a distinct change in diction, the warriors dropping the formal vernacular of metaphysics for a more colorful and emphatic language. Closer observation revealed that a few of them were out of uniform: all had suntans on (without cuffs, of course) but their shoes were not all double-soled and, glory be to John Wayne, one did not even display the globe and anchor on his lapel; however, it was obvious that they were marines because of their military manner. The leader of this stal-

wart company was engaged in winning the battle of Quantico for his audience, which consisted of other members of the corps, and a few skeptics from a rival outfit which holds maneuvers every Tuesday afternoon. Those cynics, equally renowned for their spartan qualities, listened patronizingly to details of what must rank as a mere skirmish compared to the Battle of Fort Eustis.

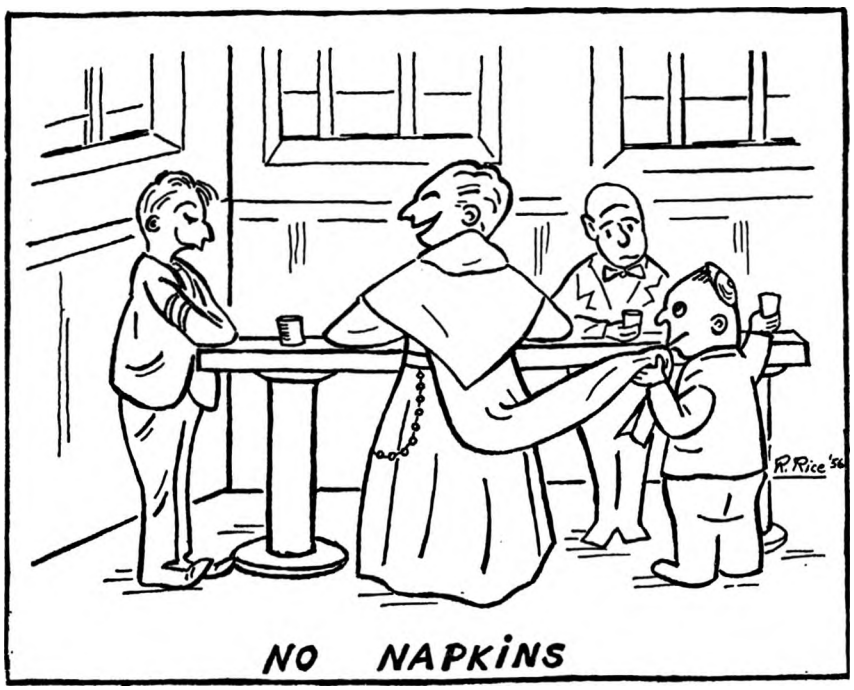
But there are those who will fight for nobler ideals. A battered group discusses a recent brawl at a popular Admiral Street battle-ground. It seems that a raiding party of college-boys, in the strict (and therefore derogatory) sense of the word, barged in, voicing their belief that all men are created equal, and that they, coming from an exclusive cross-town institution, are a bit more equal. Thus, our "Crusaders," taking exception to the philosophy and *bear*ing of their antagonists, tried to prove that *they* were the most equal of all.

Explorers too have their place in our society: modern Ponce de Leons, they think nothing of cutting classes to search for the Fountain of Youth, or, for that matter, any fountain that will bolster their "spirits." Their home base is the cafeteria and, between expeditions, they limit their activities to scouting for new methods of beating the pinball machines. These blessings of the machine age now offer much stiffer competition; since forks and wires have suffered a fate similar to that of the two-platoon system, the feeble minds of the gamesters are sorely taxed to outwit the nickel-consuming monsters.

The lowest rungs of the social ladder in the cafeteria are occupied by English and biology majors. These lepers

are universally condemned as "scholars," "students" and other terms quite as vile. The miserable condition of these martyrs of knowledge is recognized by Bacon who said, "Whosoever is delighted in solitude is either a wild beast, a god," an English major or biology major.

My observations were at that point interrupted by barbarous shrieks: as in the past, swarms of vandals streamed down from Antoninus Hill, refugees from some domestic turmoil (no doubt, a scheduled lab period). From the savage mutterings of "debits," "credits," and the like, the civilized world sought refuge, retiring to the sanctuary of the classroom. Both because of this invasion and my need for sleep, I myself decided to go to class.



Alma Mater

By Joseph Reilly, '55

SOME P. C. students fall in love with Alma Mater immediately; others succumb almost unwittingly, hardly realizing what is happening to them; but in time all of us respect and love our college. Some of us minimize our affection as juvenile emotionalism; others treasure it secretly as if it were too personal for display.

None of us, proud of P. C., should cloak our esteem and love. On the contrary, we should burst forth into a paean of reverent praise. The words are at hand; so is the music. To the lovely melody of "Finlandia" has been adapted a lyric worthy of memorization, realization and appreciation. Sing out the thoughts which will inspire you with enthusiasm and pride. Voice the ideals of P. C. and resolve to live them. Glow with the knowledge that you are being nurtured by the "Mother of Truth."

Mother of Truth, we proudly pledge to thee
Undying love and steadfast loyalty

Our education is the most important single factor in our life, for it is developing our intellect and will, and directing us toward our goals. The more we know about these goals and the means of attaining them, the more likely we are to be successful. As students at Providence College,

we should be particularly grateful and appreciative for the educational opportunities presented to us so that we may live a happier and more fruitful life. In conscience, we have an obligation of love and loyalty to our Alma Mater when we consider her aim and the results that we naturally expect from our days here. We hope to garner all the knowledge and guidance available so that we may go forth into the world bravely, knowing that we are better men both intellectually and spiritually. We wish to acquire confidence that we will be equipped to overcome all the obstacles in the course towards our end in life. Keeping this in mind, consider how fortunate we are to have been given our opportunity.

On campus is an outstanding example of appreciating higher learning. John McLaughlin, a fellow student, had been away from college for eleven years when he finally decided that he had to "stop day-dreaming . . . and really do something." Times have changed somewhat, and John faces the task of adjustment. It is never too late, though, as Mr. McLaughlin—eleven years and a family later—will tell you. He knew he had to supply that missing treasure in his life and he had the courage to will it and seek it. Most of us, on the contrary, have merely fallen heir to the privilege of our schooling and do not fully appreciate it.

To show our love and loyalty to our Alma Mater, let us apply ourselves with zeal to our work and accept with eager minds the benefits proffered to us. Providence College, dedicated to the education of young men, provides us with

a broad cultural background and aid in choosing a career. It is our duty to capitalize on this opportunity.

From thee we learned the wondrous work of God,
His goodness, grace, and holy power;
Clear hast thou shown what pathways must be trod;
All fearless now we brave life's hour!

In its essence, education is a preparation for what we must be and what we must do here on earth in order to fulfill our duties and obligations and thereby to assume our true position in the Divine Plan. Accordingly, true education must be directed to the last end for which man was created. We have been treated to the ideally perfect education founded on the seven-century tradition of the Dominican Order. We know our goal. Nothing is more reassuring than to be shown the objective that will bring us true happiness and the means of obtaining it. Providence College is our guide. If we follow the formula given by her, we will gain happiness eternal. We may be sure that, for as long as she is remembered, the most praiseworthy compliment that Providence College can receive will be that above all she produced Christian gentlemen.

Though failure frown, though kindly fortune smile,
Firm our advance, naught can us e'er beguile.

In our search for knowledge and truth, we face a challenge. It is the task of today's youth to build for the future in the face of the appalling condition into which a country subordinating the spiritual to the material has fallen. If Catholic students today, who are Catholic leaders tomorrow, succumb to this disorder, much will be lost. It

is imperative that we brave our obligation and not try to pass it to someone else. None of us is exempt from this duty, for there is in the world today a hunger bordering on famine for truth. Today's world is atomic in its potentialities. There is a desperate need for leaders to guide people through threatening dangers. Ours is a challenge and a crusade. There is nothing vague or misty about it. It stands before us, formidable and fierce. Our part in the drama is outlined. The cues are given; the action is ours to perform. We know that we are being rehearsed well at Providence College, and it is our responsibility to know our rôle, and to have the courage to enact it.

Every age has its aura, its atmosphere. Ours is one of impending danger, overcast with fear. The future is so uncertain that the tendency is to fold our hands and fret. However, it is the time for action, not passivity. The threat must not dull our minds. It is a battle not yet over; it is not lost. The outcome rests with us. We are indeed a minority, but the strength of this organized minority lies not in numbers, but in spirit. We can attain our goal by marching forth with zeal, under the banner of Truth. Through individual and united effort, success can be assured. We, individually, as students in a Catholic college, must absorb that which is given to us here and apply it in our lives for our own good and for the example of others. Therefore, as we have often been reminded, we must strive to surpass mediocrity and to put forth our best effort.

To honor bound, to love and virtue sworn,
Lift we our voices in full acclaim,
Thy sons shall thee with noble deeds adorn.

Thus we see the meaning that education has in the life of each of us. We also see how well Providence College is accomplishing its goal and proffering us a guiding hand. When we stop to think, honor and respect for the institution—of which it is so worthy—grow on us and we feel the urge to express them. Make our Alma Mater proud of us by showing our appreciation to her in the form of our accomplishments. Remember that we are part of a tradition and that we should be proud to uphold its ideals and join the ranks of the noble alumni who have garnered glory and praise for our Alma Mater. We must strive to imitate them and to duplicate their achievements.

When we realize what Providence College offers, do we not feel the urge to sing out the praises of our Alma Mater? Her song should be sung now and not reserved for class reunions twenty years hence. Sing it often now, with loving reverence and joyful heart. Sing now the praises of Providence, our light, our guide, our hope.

Hail Providence, We praise thy name!

Dear Mike

By Phil Griffin, '56

Sept. 2, 1953

DEAR Mike:

Things aint much better with me. When the gongs go off I think of the old days. This here trainning camp stuff aint so bad as I figured when I came down here. As ya probably already know, I useta do all my trainning in a gym up in New York City. Even did a few stints in Stillmans couple a months ago, but this here has got that beat all hog. My manager Marty got the whole place for us alone. Not bad for a guy that was fighting four rounders out in Boise several months ago huh. This mornin I ran about five miles up the lake and back then sparred about ten rounds with a few local boys from Newark and Jersey City. I suspect that I will be in the best shape of my life in about a month. Ill really take this guy over the hurdles Mike champ or no champ. He aint so hot anyway.

Well it looks like the Yankees are in again. How can you beat a team with Ruth, Gehrig and Lazzeri and guys like that?

Dynamite

Sept. 17, 1953

Dear Mike:

Sorry I aint written in so long, but I really been busy as you can probably figure because you fought for a while

yerself you know. Today a bunch of guys from the Mirror News and Trib came down to see me and they said I looked real sharp. Im tellin you Mike Im goin to knock this guy into next week. I watched some movies of his last fight today and hes easier to hit than that big bag I punch every morning. I sure am in great shape. Marty told me that I could go twenty rounds right now but you know Marty, Mike, that guy will tell you those things all the time just ta keep your confidence up and never even mean a word he sez. I believe him partly though. Right now I could go fifteen an never even feel it but I still gotta sharpen up my right an when I do this guy better look out cause Im gonna belt him out in less than five. You can bet on that Mike.

President Hoover was in Jersey today they tell me but he didunt come up to see me train. Guess he isunt a fight fan or maybe hes too busy.

Dynamite

Sept. 28, 1953

Dear Mike:

Hey, those newspaper guys really know their stuff. Yes sir theyre all right. Today that guy from the Post said he figured I might just turn the trick in less than ten. Course hes a little bit off the mark Mike. As I already told you Im goin to chill this guy in less than five. I saw some more of his movies today an he is really awful, just lousy. He took nine rounds to finish that bum Lou Savin an Id be up for manslaughter if they ever let me in the ring with that bum for more than a minute. I tell ya Mike this thing is going to be a joke. I kinda hate to win in a way cause nobody

likes to lose the championship specially after they held it so long but I think its time for a change. Don't you?

A guy down here tole me to put all my dough in stocks. Said something about the market being high so I guess there must be a lot of cash in groceries or somethin.

Dynamite

Oct. 2, 1953

Dear Mike:

Well Mike two more days an Ill be back in the big town an I certainly am rarin to go. Some guy from a big sportin goods company came down today to offer me fifty grand to sign a few things fer his concern if I win Friday. If I win! Thats some laugh aint it Mike. Today was my last day of sparrin and I decked Collins twice an we wus wearin the big gloves. I sure do feel sharp, even sharper than the night I won in the Garden an I wuz plenty sharp that night Mike. You know that cause you wuz there. Marty sez I better start taperin off. He dont want me to go stale or go in the ring past my peak an you cant blame the guy. After all after Friday Ill be worth a million bucks to good old Marty. But I dont mind. He sure is a great guy. Glad to hear you bet all that dough on me. You coulda picked a better book than Loco Louey, though. He likes to collect you know an he dont care how he collects. But dont worry bout that Mike cause all you have to do is get up bright an early to pick up yer cash. Those books sure are crazy though. Magine given you two ta one odds. I almost couldunt stop laughin when I read that in yer letter

Mike. How bout cuttin me in on a little of yer winnins Mike. Ha, ha.

Dempsey is fightin about two weeks after me so Ill be able to wish him luck from one champ to another by that time.

Dynamite

Oct. 5, 1953

Dear Mike:

Haveunt got much time so thisll have to be short. Gotta take my nap now you know. Tonights the night. I sure hope the ref doesunt allow any ruff stuff cause they say this guyll but ya to deth if he gets half a chance. Glad to see you put down another grand but watch that Louey and his hoods. They play for keeps an you aint got that kind of dough. Member that swell doll I tole you about. Well she dropped in today ta wish me luck an she wants to see me after the fight. Im travellin first class from now on kid.

Dynamite

Oct. 7, 1953

Dear Mike:

I sure think you got yer nerve sendin me a telegram like the one ya sent me after the fight. So I lose one fight an Im a bum. I tole those crummy sportswriters an I tell you, the guy thummed me in the first round an I couldunt see a thing outta my right eye after that. An a punch didunt open that cut up in the second round. He butted me just about thirty seconds before he knocked me out. That butt was really the thing that turned the trick cause

it stunned me. By the way that doll never showed up after the fight. I guess you know who yer friends are after yuve had a tough break. Well I dont feel so hot so Ill sign off. Gotta bathe my eye then the doc is gonna set my nose.

Too bad I wont have all that dough to invest in groceries. Couple other guys have tole me the market was high too.

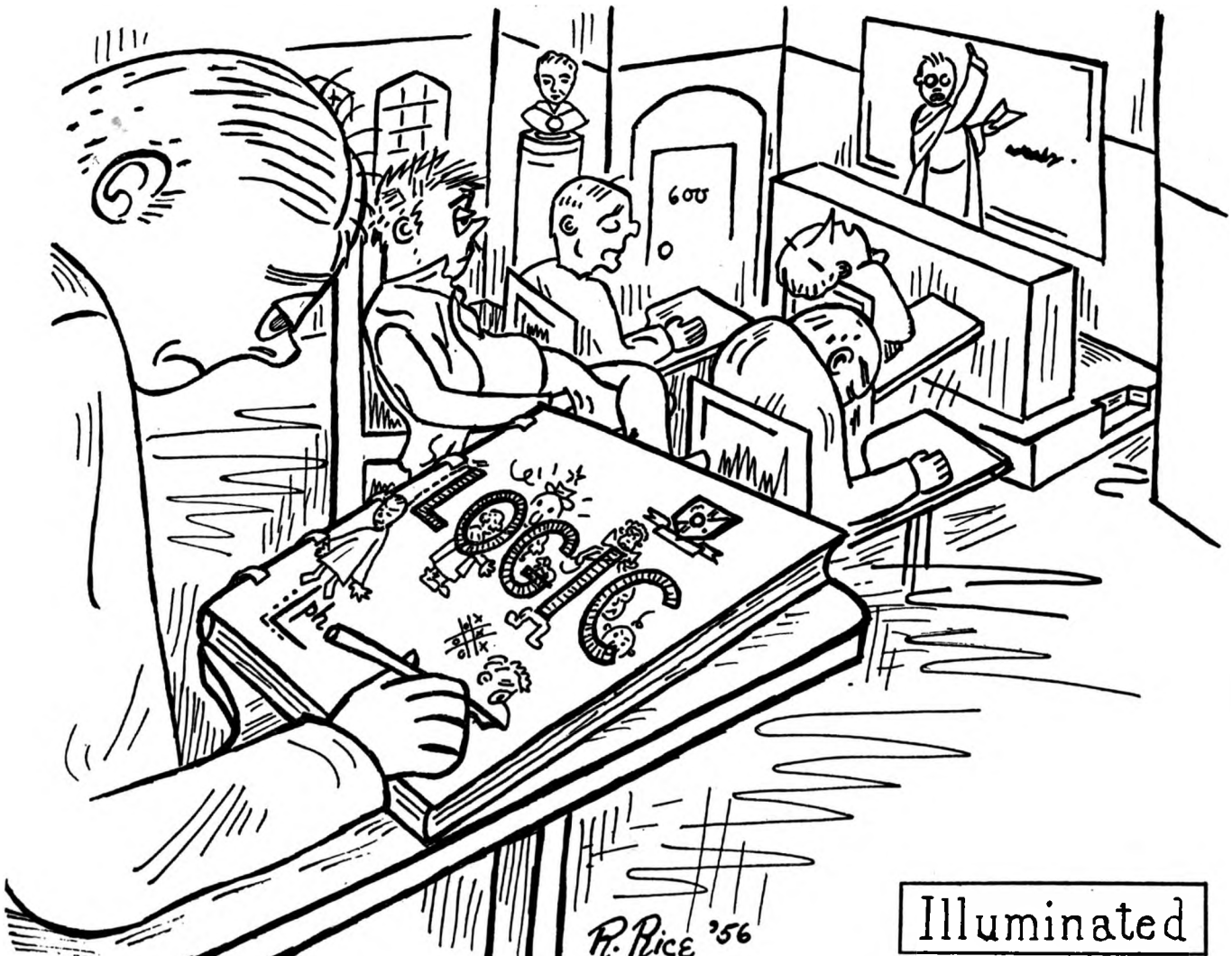
Dynamite

Nov. 2, 1953

Dear Mike:

Hope yer still not mad. How are things in Argentina? Course you wouldna hadda go that far if you hadunt bet with Louey like I tole you not to. But dont worry. Heel never fine ya down there in Africa. Dont believe a word you read bout me retirin. Im still plenty young yet an I got plenty a fight left in me yet. Those crazy writers dont know nothin anyway. I hope ya like yer job although I cant picture ya as a banana picker. Speakin of jobs Ill haveta end this now. The boss tole me if I didunt get the gym cleaned up by six heed fire me an even a heavywate contender cant throw forty two fifty a week down the drain. Besides I need it to pay fer that fancy new docter Im goin to now. He sez he can stop me from hearin those bells all the time.

Dynamite



Illuminated

Functions of Fiction

By Henry Griffin, '54

OF the many and varied functions of any body of fiction, there are two that stand apart from the rest. The first of these functions is universal in character, and is to be found in its fullest flower in those works which are termed "masterpieces." The second major function or duty of fiction is concerned with a more localized scope of interest, and is by no means confined to great works. On the other hand, it is not necessarily less perfect in its own right than its counterpart, although a more limited type of perfection is involved.

This initial function of which we speak concerns itself with the representation of situations, personalities, actions, ideas, passions, and moods that are generally recognized as common traits of the human make-up and common earmarks of the relationships among human beings. For purposes of illustration, let us take the classic example of Hamlet's famous soliloquy. In this dramatic monologue the Danish prince, struggling between despair and fear (despair resulting from the realization of his own ineptness in dealing with his father's murderer; and the fear of eternal damnation), considers the possibility of his self-destruction. Now it is fairly obvious that one need not be a suicidal maniac in order to appreciate the sheer tension of such a moment. What does cause our appreciation is our awareness that here is an artfully heightened articulation of conflicts

which, albeit far less acute (assuming we are normal), we ourselves have encountered.

So it is with all great fiction, whether it be drama, poetry, short story, or novel. By its definitive use of humanity's common denominators, it draws us into its own world, induces us to involve ourselves in its processes, compels us to live through momentarily its own skein of life. However, it must be borne in mind that men who can perform such intellectual feats are rare, and that an age or country cannot be justly indicted for not possessing such a genius. This type of talent cannot be manufactured; only God can endow a man with it.

The second major function of fiction lies, as has been stated, on a somewhat lower plane of activity, and is much more accessible to the fiction writers of an era or nation. It deals with the expression of problems, hierarchies of values, and prevailing tempers and attitudes proper to a particular time and place rather than to the wider areas of action. Dickens is an excellent example of a novelist employing it. In *David Copperfield,* for instance, he gives us an insight into the wretched conditions of the orphanages and workhouses of nineteenth-century England. Furthermore, we gain this insight, not through any remote historical sources, but with the suggestion of immediacy and intimacy which is the privilege of fiction (and, indeed, of all art).

But before going any farther in this discussion, one thing should be made clear: namely, that these functions are not completely distinct and mutually incompatible

entities. Rather, the opposite is more to the point. It very frequently happens that they overlap and complement each other, with one or the other assuming a predominant role. Thus, in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales,* we discover both a mirroring of the universal and the particular (perhaps it would be more appropriate to say the universal through the particular), the virtues and vices of all times and the character types of the late Middle Ages. The distinction between them made here is mainly one of reason.

In our own time, and especially since the last war, there has been evolving a school of fiction which, when considered in the light of traditional concepts of the purpose of fiction, is turning away from all representation save that of a morbid escapism. The movement finds its roots in the bohemianism of the last century, which attempted to substitute art for religion, and the artist for the priest. But this notion of art as the reason for life received a severe jolt from the events of World War One, and was almost finished off by the latest global conflict. However, instead of realizing and counteracting the error of the basic premise, many writers took the alternative course of retreating so far into their own cocoons that they can neither observe nor represent the major problems and their effects on today's world, much less mirror the universalities in nature.

Included among the leaders of this group are such people as: Truman Capote, Paul Bowles, Frederick Buechner, Gore Vidal, Christopher Isherwood, Wright Morris, and Flannery O'Connor. The characters they attempt to delineate are misty creations living in a never-never land where values have no value; their plots are unreal fabrica-

tions of meaningless events; the principal impression derived from their works is persistent frustration. They frequently deal in violence purely for its own sake. The climax of Bowles' latest novel, *Let It Come Down,* for instance, occurs when the hero, Nelson Dyar, drives a spike through the head of his Moroccan henchman for no discernible reason whatever. And the others mentioned here are also attracted to this element of the bizarre and grotesque, although it has to be acknowledged that their concoctions are not nearly as original as those of Bowles.

The foregoing comments might lead one to conclude that fiction is in a hopeless state of affairs. And, except for the efforts of a few men, this judgment is not far from correct. It is certainly safe to maintain that there will be no upsurge of fictional quality until the writers themselves discard this business of composing in a subjective vacuum, and begin once again to observe the world around them before committing their ideas to paper. Neither is it overreaching the boundaries of reason to opine that there will never be an end of these precious literary artificialities unless writers learn the basic fact that life is more important than art. We can only hope for the best.

The Net of Life

By ~~Richard M. Havens, '54~~ (MISPRINT)

At times ominous clouds shrouded the brilliant sun;
Finally in heat of day there was darkness.
Groping through the vacuity of time,
I paused, stumbled, and all was lost—
Down, down, down into the chasm of utter despair;
God no longer prevailed, but just an indefinite name.
Then—with speed of sight, spontaneous delight,
Came the strong arms of humanity, netting my fall
And spiralling me upward, upward, upward:
Darkness vanished, replaced by light;
God became reality and my despair hope.

R.M.R.

The Fog

By ~~Henri Roberge, '56~~

When day its sovereign rule has lent to night
And dusk holds sway with alien hand
While darkness seeps throughout the land,
Comes then the fog to clothe in wisps of white
Each object, and engulf it from our sight.
Before us a lamp post seems to stand
But then is swiftly stolen by this grand
And awe-inspiring henchman of the night.
Is fog an instrument of impish strain
Fulfilling playful Pukka's smiling whim to chide
And hide the grandeur of the stars and moon
That bless with light each quiet nook and lane
Or is it an errant cloud that left the side
Of God to enfold His world and all His boon?

E. G.F. ekk.