THE ALEMBIC

Published Quarterly
by the
Students of Providence College
Providence, R. I.

The ALEMBIC is published bi-monthly by the students of Providence College, Providence, Rhode Island. Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office, Providence, Rhode Island, December 18, 1920, under Act of March 3, 1879. Subscription $2.00 the year. "Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Section 1103, Act of October 3, 1917; authorized April 9, 1932." Printed at the Oxford Press, Providence, Rhode Island.
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**May, 1958**  
**Number 2**

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The Rivers Affair . . .
KENNETH R. DOOLEY

AFTER three days the rain had finally stopped. The sun was slowly breaking through the gray, dismal sky as Warden Elliott crossed the prison yard. “Good,” he thought. “For the first time in four days the men will be able to have their outside exercise period.” Greeted from one of the guard posts, the warden turned and faced James Murphy, captain of the guard.

“It looks like the weather is finally breaking, warden.”

“About time. You can remove the extra security guards after the men have been out in the yard for awhile, Jim. Have they quieted down any?”

“Oh, they will be all right after a few hours in the air. Four days without any yard time makes them a little restless. And they always get uneasy around—well, you know what I mean.”

“No, Jim, I can’t say that I do. You know this is the first”—he hesitated for a moment and, drawing his breath, continued—“execution for me. Although I can understand their feelings, we can’t allow them to get out of hand. God knows, it isn’t a pleasant business for any of us.”

“That isn’t quite true, warden. It is a very happy event for at least one person; but you haven’t met Thomson yet, have you?”

“No, I haven’t,” Elliott replied. “But while we are on the subject, there is one thing I’d like to make clear. When I took over this job, Warden Minner told me that I was getting the best head guard in the business. After working with you for nine months, I am inclined to agree.
He also told me about the hostility between you and Thomson. I don’t know what the cause of it is, but I will not tolerate any petty quarrels between members of my staff.”

The warden made this statement in a stronger tone than he had intended. Lowering his voice and placing his hand on Murphy’s shoulder, he continued: “Jim, I’ve been told that Thomson is a difficult fellow to like; but I’m not asking you to accept him as a friend. Just give him a little cooperation for the few days he will be here. And there might not even be an execution. The clemency board hasn’t given its final verdict.”

“Has there been any word from the governors office?” Murphy asked.

“No, but Mrs Flynn has an appointment with me this afternoon.”

A smile crossed the guard’s face. “Mrs. Flynn and her clemency crusade,” he muttered. “For the past twenty-five years she has opposed every execution at this prison. The Thomsons usually win but she has disappointed them a few times. I wouldn’t like to be in your shoes for the next couple of weeks. The old dame can be very persistent.”

“Yes, Jim, I know. She has been described to me in detail. I’d better get over to the office. Drop in to see me later today.”

The warden turned and resumed his course across the yard. Ten days, he thought. Ten days before he—as the officially appointed instrument of the state—would be forced to accompany a man up the twelve steps to eternity.

“Hell,” he said to himself, “I can’t take this. I was neither judge nor jury. A man has murdered, and society has decreed that he must pay the supreme penalty.” With this resolution the warden dismissed—at least partially—the matter from his mind.
The Rivers Affair . . .

Sims, the warden’s trusty-secretary, was already in the reception room when Elliott arrived. He stood before a small hot plate, brewing a pot of coffee.

“Good morning, warden. It looks like the sun has finally decided to return.”

“Yes, Sims, it does. That coffee certainly smells good.”

“Be ready in a minute,” Sims answered. The warden’s eyes followed the trusty as he moved across the room. What a strange little man, he thought. Alfred Sims had been an inmate for twenty-nine years. He had been sent to the prison as a condemned murderer, but his sentence had been commuted to life, with no hope of parole. For the past fifteen years, he had served as a sort of handy man to the warden. Elliott smiled as he recalled the words of Warden Minner:

“Hell, Sims is more of an assistant warden than secretary. If you have any problems, bring them to him; his advice is usually reliable.”

“I thought I’d let you have your coffee before telling you this, warden,” Sims said; “Mrs. Flynn is waiting in your office.”

“Already! I didn’t expect her until this afternoon.”

The prisoner smiled as he replied: “Mrs. Flynn doesn’t stand much on ceremony, warden. You will find that out in the next few days.”

“I’ve heard that before, Sims. Well, I’d better face the music.”

Mrs. Flynn was standing before a large window overlooking the prison. She turned as the warden entered, and for a brief moment their eyes locked.

“Warden Elliott?”

The warden was tempted to reply, “Yes, Mr. Stanley.” But the stately air of his visitor quickly changed this
mood, and Elliott found himself mumbling a clumsy introduction.

The physical appearance of Mrs. Flynn was somewhat of a surprise to Elliott. She was a small, almost petite woman in her later sixties. Her face was just beginning to wrinkle, but she was still a handsome woman. She doesn’t look like a crusader, the warden thought.

But crusading was her whole life. She had bitterly opposed the Spanish-American War and American intervention in the world war. Woman suffrage and prohibition were two of her pet projects. Before the latter had become law, more than one bar in town had been emptied by her acid tongue.

All of these other activities were mere side lines. Her main campaign was directed against capital punishment. She had bitterly opposed every execution at the state prison from 1890 until the present. If she had been an ordinary individual, she would have been brushed off as a quack; but her wealth and political influence with the women voters forced the administration to handle her with kid gloves.

“Warden, I have asked you the same question twice.”

“I’m sorry, Mrs. Flynn. What were you saying?”

“I asked you your feelings on the Rivers boy,”

“That isn’t a question for me to answer, Mrs. Flynn. He was found guilty of first degree murder. Unless the clemency board or the governor acts, it will be my duty to supervise his execution.”

“Don’t you think the fact that he is only twenty years old should be taken into consideration.”

“The girl he murdered was only eighteen.”

The Alembic
"I must say that I am disappointed in your attitude, warden. Whether you realize it or not, I was instrumental in procuring this office for you. Several members of the board considered you too young for the job. But I felt that your education and youth might aid me in removing this barbaric practice from our penal system. Unfortunately, I was wrong. Apparently the sadism of your predecessor has infected you."

Warden Elliott felt a sudden rage. He started to reply, but his tongue felt thick and the words would not come. "I need a drink," he said to himself. And then the ridiculousness of the thought, the total ridiculousness of the whole affair struck him. "Carrie Nation," he said to himself. "She's a hatchetless Carrie Nation." Regaining his composure he replied, "I do not feel that John Minner deserves that remark."

"In twenty-six years as warden of this prison he executed thirty-two men!" Mrs. Flynn snapped.

And now the anger was upon him again. It gave him courage and for the first time he was able to stare into her eyes—those deep penetrating eyes that seemed to read his very soul. "Her eyes," he thought. "She carries her hatchet in her eyes."

"Mrs. Flynn," the warden replied, "I do not have to justify the actions of Warden Minner. Need I remind you that he was acting under the orders of the court which, in turn, was directed by the people of this state. But there is one point I would like to make about the character of John Minner.

"For three months before his retirement, I worked with him. I'd like to describe a conversation we had on his last day. He was cleaning out his desk, when he sud-
denly rose and walked to the window—the same window you were looking out of when I entered. He turned and with a look that held both anger and remorse, addressed me:

"Elliott, we have discussed all of the major problems of running a prison. You are a little young, but I think you can do the job. Now I'd like to bring up a matter I have purposely avoided until this time. In my twenty-six years of office, thirty-two men have been executed. Maybe it would be easier for you if I said that the first one is the hardest—but it isn't! They are all hard. I can tell you the middle name of every man that has spent one night in death row. It's not a pleasant duty to perform, but it is an important part of the job. And if you don't feel capable of performing it, you'd better get the hell out now!"

"Warden," Mrs. Flynn interrupted, "your opinion of Mr. Minner does not interest me. I have my own views on the man, and my opinion is not easily changed. My main purpose for this visit is to enlist your support for a clemency appeal which I intend to place before the governor."

Elliott rose from his chair and walked to the window. The sun was now shining brightly, and he could easily distinguish a small, red brick building set apart from the rest of the prison; death row, the inmates called it. He paused for a moment and then turned slowly to address his visitor.

"I'm sorry, but I must refuse this request. I am neither in favor of or opposed to capital punishment. But I have been placed here by the state to carry out the wishes of its citizens. Therefore, although I have the right to a private opinion, I sacrificed my right to public expression when I accepted this position. Rivers has been
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sentenced to hang. Unless the sentence is commuted, it will be my duty to see that he does."

"That is your final word, warden?" Her voice was emotionless and her face was completely passive. She stood with the window behind her, the shadow from the bars creating an odd design upon her face and accentuating the spark in her eyes.

It's a different glow, the warden thought to himself. Not anger; not disappointment. What is it, "Yes, Mrs. Flynn," he finally answered; "it is."

"Then I will bid you good day. But this affair has not ended." She left the office before Elliott could get to his feet.

A few minutes later Sims entered, carrying a cup of coffee. "Quite a woman," he said.

"Yes, Sims, she certainly is."

The trusty did not leave, but stood in the doorway, as if he sensed that the warden had something to ask him.

"How long have you known her, Sims?"

"I came here in 1894. Mrs. Flynn already had a reputation. But I was her first success. Three times she had my execution put off and finally it was commuted to—
to this." The face of the prisoner was pale and there was a certain bitterness about him.

"You don't sound too grateful," the warden said.

The prisoner seemed to reflect. "Grateful? No I guess I'm not. At first, maybe, but not now. You see, I have come to know Mrs. Flynn quite well. Every time a man is sitting out there"—he glanced toward the death house—"Mrs. Flynn goes into her little act."

"At least you must admire her sense of charity."

"Charity, sir, charity! Do you think that she is motivated by that." Sims fought to bring his emotions under
control. "She doesn't know the meaning of the word. This whole thing is a game to her—a chess contest with a man's life as the pawn. It does not matter if she wins or loses. All that counts is the fact that there is a struggle. To put it bluntly, warden, Mrs. Flynn likes to play God."

Elliott could not speak. He was shocked when he realized that Sims was right. "That final look," he said to himself. "I know now what it held—anticipation! The challenge had been extended and she eagerly accepted it." He felt unable to be indignant or protest, almost as if the whole thing were some sort of horrible joke. "Let's drop it for now, Sims," he finally said. "Anything scheduled for this afternoon?"

"No, nothing. But it is about time for Thomson to drop in."

"Isn't it a little early for him?"

"Not for Thomson," Sims replied as he picked up the empty cup and left the office.

"Mr. James Thomson," the warden thought, "executioner at the prison for the past twenty years." He recalled Minner's description of the man:

"You will hate him, Elliott; everyone does. He is the coldest man I have ever met, and it is evident that he enjoys his work. But there is one thing in his favor, he does a damn good job. These affairs can be pretty messy when you have a novice running 'em. Jim Toomey from Illinois State Prison has told me of men kicking for two or three minutes after the trap had sprung. You don't have that fear with Thomson. I can't say that I like him but, in a sense, I came to appreciate his work."

Two days later, Elliott met Thomson for the first time. Shortly after entering his office, the warden was disturbed by a hammering noise. Glancing into the yard, he
saw a group of guards assembling a wooden structure. Although the frame was barely laid, there was no question as to what the guards were erecting. A small man stood to the side, supervising the work. Elliott pushed a buzzer and, moments later, Sims appeared in the doorway.

“Yes, warden,” he said.

“Do you see what is going on in the yard?” Elliott asked.

“I didn’t look, but then I don’t have to. Those noises announce the arrival of Mr. Thomson.”

“But does he always put—put it up this early?”

“Warden, you must understand that Mr. Thomson is a very conscientious man. No surgeon operates with more precision and finesse. Rivers is not a condemned man to him. Rather he is a patient, and for the next week Thomson will be completing his check list to insure a successful operation.”

The warden spun about angrily and, leaving the office, stalked toward the prison yard. It was in the middle of the rest period, and the men were gathered in one corner of the yard watching the gallows grow. While they hooted at the guards who were assigned to this task, no remarks were directed at Thomson. Although he was universally hated, each man seemed to fear that he, too, might dangle at the end of Thomson’s rope. And a knot improperly tied could make the difference between a quick snap and a painful standing.

The guards had almost finished the work when the warden approached. Thomson was standing in front of the gallows, evaluating the finished product. He resembled an artist who was estimating his canvas, wondering if an added stroke here or there would improve the work.

“Take this damn thing down!” the warden shouted.
The guards turned to him, a puzzled expression on their faces.

“It's all right, warden. I instructed the men to build it,” Thomson said.

“And on whose authority did you act?”

“I don’t believe we have had the pleasure of a formal introduction, warden. I am James Thomson.” He waited for the magic of his name to change the warden’s expression but when it had no visible effect, he continued: “Perhaps I should have checked with you, but I have always been allowed a free hand in these matters.”

“I agree with you, Thomson. You should have checked with me. But that doesn’t matter now. Just get that thing down!”

“But warden—the procedure!” Thomson exclaimed.

“Procedure be damned! I’d like to see you in my office a little later, Thomson.”

Sims smiled as Elliott returned to the office. “I see that you and Mr. Thomson have finally met,” he said.

“Yes, we met,” the warden answered. “I expect to see him again shortly. Show him in as soon as he gets here.”

Elliott went into his office, still unnerved, paced the room. The noise in the yard informed him that his directions were being carried out. He started to buzz for a cup of coffee but suddenly changed his mind. Opening his desk drawer, he removed a bottle of whiskey, an inheritance from his predecessor. The liquor seemed to untangle his nerves, and the fury within him subsided. Then the door opened and Thomson entered.

For the first time, Elliott took note of his physical appearance. He was a small, pale man, slightly hunched from some sort of back deformity. A young, almost boyish, face made a strange contrast with his old and frail body.
There were traces of peach fuzz on his face, and it was apparent that his skin had had little contact with a razor. Thomson looked subserviently at the warden, as he was waved to a seat. Elliott sensed his glancing at the bottle on the desk. "Would you like a drink?" he asked.

"No, thank you, sir. I don't use it."

There is something vaguely familiar about this man, the warden thought. Where have I met him before? It was something he could not quite put his finger on, and it plagued him during the entire interview.

"I'm sorry about that incident this morning," Thomson said. "Perhaps I acted presumptuously, but Warden Minner always left these details to me." His voice had a tremor in it and the man was obviously frightened.

"Maybe I was a bit hasty myself, Thomson. But I do feel that your action was a little premature. There is plenty of time left before the execution; and, until the clemency board gives its final verdict, we can't even be sure that there will be one."

"You are anticipating such action?"

"I anticipate nothing," the warden answered, not attempting to hide his displeasure. "But there is always a possibility. I do not like to disrupt your procedure; but, if I feel that it is detrimental to the best interests of this institution, I must ask you to change it."

Thomson's face remained blank, but his emotions reflected in his eyes. "Have you had any experience in these matters?"

"No. But I have been told that you are very efficient, and I assure you that I will extend my wholehearted cooperation."

This statement seemed to reassure Thomson. "Well, there is really nothing to worry about, he continued. "These things are merely a matter of correct procedure."
"You have come to me highly recommended for the job."

Thomson seemed incapable of smiling, but a slight wrinkling at the corner of his mouth informed the warden that this remark was appreciated. He dropped his servile manner, and in a bolder voice replied:

"Well, I do feel that I know the job. But in a manner of speaking, you could say it runs in the family."

"Runs in the family?"

"Oh, didn't you know? My family has been employed by the state for the past fifty years. Grandfather took over this office when the prison opened; father was appointed in 1873, and I succeeded in 1903." His hands moved from his lap as he counted on his fingers. Elliott glanced at them and realized why they were displayed so prominently. They were beautiful, almost too beautiful. The fingers were long and supple and better adapted to a Chopin concerto than a hangman's noose.

"And that isn't all," Thomson continued. My brother served the Indiana State Prison for seventeen years until"—his voice almost broke—"until they replaced him with that horrible wired contraption."

"Would you like any coffee, gentlemen?" Sims asked from the doorway. The appearance of the trusty had an unusual effect on Thomson. He glanced at Sims with un-concealed hatred. And suddenly the warden realized why Thomson had seemed familiar to him. "His eyes," he said to himself. "They have that same cold, penetrating quality as Mrs. Flynn's."

"No, thank you, Sims," the warden answered. He rose, indicating that the interview was over. "I'm glad that we have reached an understanding, Thomson. In a few days the entire affair will be in your hands." Almost un-
willingly Elliott extended his arm and the two exchanged a cold meaningless hand shake.

"Sims," the warden asked after Thomson had left, "what is there between you and Thomson?"

"Nothing."

"Then how do you explain that look he gave you?"

"Oh that! I'm so used to it now that it doesn't affect me. Thomson hates me, but it isn't anything personal. It's more of a family matter."

"Family matter?"

"Yes, warden. You see my execution was commuted during the reign of Thomson's father. The old man never quite got over his disappointment and, like everything else, his son inherited it."

The days passed swiftly and there was still no word from the governor's office. On a Monday morning, two days before the execution, Captain Murphy and Mr. Thomson entered the warden's office. It was apparent from their appearance that this was not a social visit.

"Warden Elliott," Murphy said, "something has to be done. Rivers has enough on his mind without this—this vulture constantly bothering him."

"Before answering this charge, warden, there is one thing I would like to say," Thomson interrupted. "Captain Murphy has always been hostile towards me. He opposes me in the most simple matters and makes it difficult for me to perform my job properly."

The warden rose from his chair. "Now both of you listen!" he stormed. I have 1800 men to concern myself with. I will not tolerate this petty bickering. Now what is the trouble, Jim?"

"It's this damn procedure of his. Last week he
weighed the Rivers boy. He did the same thing Saturday and again this morning. I tell you, it’s too much!”

The warden turned to Thomson. “What is the purpose of all this weighing?”

“It’s a necessary procedure,” Thomson replied. “This Rivers boy is quite unusual. He is one of the few clients I’ve had who gained weight in the death cell. Unfortunately, I must place part of the blame on Captain Murphy. It is a usual procedure to allow a man free choice of his last meal. But Captain Murphy gives them a free hand for the final two weeks. Knowing the proper weight of the subject is a very important part of this business.

“Now you take that affair last year,” Thomson continued. “The prisoner gained twelve pounds in his final week. If I had not maintained a conscientious chart, the balance of the trap would have been off and it would have resulted in a sloppy job. And—”

“Thomson,” Elliott interrupted, “the execution is scheduled for Wednesday morning. I do not want you to have any further contact with the prisoner until that time. Now get out of here!”

A look of disbelief crossed the executioner’s face. He started to reply but changed his mind and left the office.

Elliott opened his desk and removed the bottle. He poured a shot for himself and one for Murphy. Neither man spoke for several moments.

“How long have you worked at the prison?” Elliott asked.

“I came here as an apprentice guard in 1887; that makes 36 years.”

“Then you were acquainted with Thomson’s father?”
"Oh, yes, I knew him well."
"Tell me, Jim," the warden asked, "was his father like him?"
"Warden, there have been three generations of Thomsons at this prison. As a rookie I was told many stories of the first Thomson. This family is alike, both in appearance and temperament. The procedure you just heard of was formulated by the grandfather, and it has come down through the generations like some sort of sacred trust."

Elliott could not speak. Somehow he felt unable to be indignant or protest, although he felt that he should. "Why has this been tolerated?" he wondered. "Why?"

The following day it started to rain again. "Hell," Elliott said as he crossed the yard, "won't it be gloomy enough tomorrow without any contribution from the weather." I've got to get hold of myself, he thought. Instinctively his mind turned to the bottle in his office.
"Morning, warden," Sims said.
"Hello, Sims. Any calls?"
"A Mr. Plant is waiting to see you."

A figure rose in the corner of the room and addressed the warden. "I'm Charles Plant from the Daily News, warden. I guess you know why I'm here."
"I imagine that it has something to do with tomorrow," Elliott answered.
"Not directly, warden. I was wondering if you had any word on the Hedley Bill?"
"I don't even know what the Hedley Bill is."
"It has been pretty hush-hush. It's a bill aimed at abolishing capital punishment in this state. The committee spent most of yesterday debating it, and the decision should be made this morning. I thought you might have some word on it."
"No, this is the first time I have heard of it. But with Mrs. Flynn's support, it should pass."

"That's the strange part of it," the reporter said. "Mrs. Flynn has taken a stand against the bill. She says we must have something to deter murder."

"Sims is right," the warden said to himself. "She is no different than Thomson, even more diabolical, in a sense."

After the reporter left, Elliott opened his desk drawer. Only a few inches of liquor remained in the bottle. "Later," he thought; "I'd better save it for later."

He moved to the window and his eyes went almost unwillingly to the death cell. The ringing phone interrupted his thoughts and Elliott found himself speaking in a dull empty voice, "Yes . . . yes, I understand."

A short time later Thomson entered the office. If he were angry over the previous day's incident, he did not show it. His manner was cordial and his eyes—as if concealing some hidden joke—were light and friendly.

"Good morning, warden," he said. "I think it's about time to get things ready."

"Cigarette, Thomson?"

"No, thank you, sir, I don't smoke."

"You don't seem to have any bad habits at all, do you?" Elliott asked.

The corners of Thomson's mouth curled and Elliott realized that he was attempting to smile. "I was planning to erect the gallows this afternoon, if it meets with your approval."

"There has been a change in plans, Thomson. There isn't going to be any execution."

"No execution?" Thomson said, disappointment registering in his eyes.
"That’s right," the warden continued; "I received a call from the governor’s office a short while ago. It’s all off."

Neither man spoke. "Well this isn’t the first time that such an incident has occurred," Thomson said as he rose to his feet. "I will be seeing you again before too long."

"No, Thomson, it’s a little more definite than that. This wasn’t merely a commutation of sentence. Early this afternoon the governor signed a bill abolishing capital punishment in the state."

Thomson fell mute. His lips moved but no sound issued. "Abolished capital punishment?" he finally stammered. "It doesn’t seem possible." Shocked and in a state of utter disbelief, he started to leave the office. But he suddenly turned and addressed the warden:

"It was Mrs. Flynn, wasn’t it?" he asked.

"No, she was on your side, Thomson," the warden answered. "Actually she has been on your side right along. But she just went about it in a different way."

Thomson did not understand this remark and he did not attempt to. "One other thing warden," he said. "Since the state will have no further use for it, I was wondering if I could have the gallows. It has been in the family for quite some time, and there is a certain sentiment connected."

"I’m sorry, Thomson," the warden lied, "but I have already promised it to the prison baseball team. The back-stop of the ball field is a little shaky, and they are going to reinforce it with the wood from the gallows."

"I understand," Thomson answered. "I have been thinking of relocating in another state, warden, and I was wondering if you would write me a letter of recommendation?"
"That would be rather difficult, Thomson. You see, I never witnessed your work. But I would be happy to vouch for the thoroughness of your procedure."

The sarcasm of the statement did not escape Thomson. He nodded and, without replying, left the office. Shortly after, Sims entered and found the warden staring out over the prison yard, apparently deep in thought.

"Did you hear the news, Sims?"

"Yes," Sims answered, "your voice was rather loud when you told him."

"I wanted to be kinder, but it is difficult with a man like that. But I do feel a sort of pity for him."

"Just for him?" Sims asked.

"What do you mean, Sims?"

"Any man that has been behind bars for as long as I have becomes somewhat of a philosopher. Now you take this Rivers case. Actually, three people have had their whole lives affected by it."

"Three people?" Elliott asked.

"Yes, warden, three. Thomson has lost his whole purpose in life. And Mrs. Flynn has been deprived of her strange little game."

"And the third?"

"He will suffer more than the other two," the trusty replied. "A few moments of pain tomorrow morning would have ended it for him. Perhaps the news will be happy for him today but, in time, he will consider it much worse than the original sentence. Oh yes, there will be many days when he'll wish that Thomson had ended it for him."

There was no emotion in Sim's voice. He spoke as one who had undergone this ordeal and was merely reciting the facts.
The Rivers Affair . . .

Elliott did not reply. He opened the drawer and placed the bottle on the desk.

“Well, Sims,” he said, “it’s nearly gone. Let’s finish it now.” He took a pull at the bottle and passed it to the prisoner.

Sims put the neck of the bottle to his mouth and let the liquor run into his mouth. He held it there for several moments and then slowly, almost unwillingly, let it trinkle down his throat. Other times, happy times, rushed to him out of the past. “I will not remember,” he said to himself. “There is no pain without memory.” And then he placed the empty bottle on the desk.

“That finished it, Sims,” the warden said.

“Yes,” Sims replied, “it’s finished, warden—all finished.”

———

A Changeling

It was morning; the sun rose up
Bright and unbattered by storm
And ’t was certain its brightness had wrought
A “changeness” which only was mine.
The day from that vision was brightened
And heightened to feeling full joy
While that “changeness” had certainly lightened
The pack of my daily travail.

G. Brian Sullivan
"Of course I'll be there," he replied. This matter-of-fact acceptance of Edgar Allan Poe to appear before a literary guild was to bring him against a situation that was greatly to influence his life and affairs. Here's what happened, in the summer of 1845 in our city of Providence, the important change that marked the life of this American poet.

He had delivered his lecture, "Topics of American Poetry," to a small but pretentious group. Returning to his hotel, he found the heat of that July night unbearable, almost asphyxiating. He walked up a hill in search of cooler air. At the corner of Church and Benefit Streets, he stopped to wipe his brow and catch his breath. As he strolled onward, cane in one hand and hat in the other in his customary fashion, he noticed a beautiful woman standing in a moonlit garden. Poe was intrigued by her striking beauty. He stopped his wanderings to gaze; he could not speak, but watched with rapture.

I saw thee once—only once, years ago,  
I must not say how many—but not many:  
It was a July midnite; and from out  
A full-orbed moon, that, like thine own  
Soul soaring,  
Sought a precipitate pathway up through heaven.  
There fill a silvery silken veil of light,  
With quietude and sultriness and slumber—

This poem "To Helen" was Poe's memory of that night in July when he first saw his "Helen of a thousand dreams."
The lady captivating his heart was a widow, Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman, a prominent literary figure of Providence. She lived with her aged mother and sister at 88 Benefit Street.

Not until three years later, September 1848, did they become formally acquainted. The occasion was a gathering of literary devotees at the Whitman home. Little did they realize that this meeting was the beginning of one of the century’s most controversial love affairs. The lingering romance that Poe and Mrs. Whitman shared was glorified only by Poe’s characteristic impetuousness and fire. Their courtship was scoffed. Mrs. Whitman’s friends and relatives did not approve of Poe and frowned on the love affair. They did not want their Helen married to a man whose weaknesses and dissipations were so well known. Poe, on hearing this rancorous gossip and fearing that his engagement would be broken, took a large dose of laudanum, intending suicide. The opium solution succeeded only in making him ill.

The famous poet was unable to remain in Providence because of commanding work. He traveled back and forth from Providence to New York on business, yet he always kept in close correspondence with Helen. While on one of his numerous visits to Providence in September of 1848, he persuaded Helen that her influence and presence would have the power to lift my life out of the torpor of despair which weighed upon me, and give an inspiration to my genius, of which I have as yet given no token.

The wedding date was set for Monday, December 27, 1848, despite the disapproval of relatives. On the pre-
ceding Saturday afternoon, an anonymous note was put under Helen’s door. The note informed her that her beloved was drinking wine in the barroom of the Earl House. Poe appeared three nights later at the Whitman home, forgetting completely that he had missed the wedding date, the day before. There was a scene in the Whitman home—are you surprised?—and Poe was ejected. The following day he wrote a letter of apology, but in the afternoon he learned that his marriage to Helen would be impossible.

Helen was suddenly taken ill, probably from the excitement of the previous night, and lapsed into a state of semi-consciousness. Poe, kneeling at her bedside, implored her to speak. The three words she spoke were those he had longed to hear. They were followed by four more: “I won’t marry you”—the last words between the lovers. Neither of them died. Helen regained her health and Poe returned to West Virginia. There he quickly sought out his schoolgirl sweetheart. Soon another love affair developed—within weeks of Poe’s broken engagement to Sarah Whitman.

A flighty character, Edgar.
Only The Night...

JOSEPH J. VALKY

THE stars sparkled in the soft ebony bosom of the sky, but none of the countless millions as radiantly as the star being whisked in a sleek, black Cadillac down the glamorous boulevard towards Hollywood and Vine. Captivating and twice as enchanting as the summer night was Nora Hamilton, actress acclaimed as the Star of the Century. Her heart beat telegraphically beneath a dusty-green gown which accentuated every feature of her sex. Nervously she toyed with a strand of shimmering diamonds gracing her bare throat and intensifying the radiant glow of her petal soft skin.

"I haven't been this excited since my first blind date," she mused. But her musing was overwhelmed by a torrent of irrelevant thoughts that persisted in flooding her mind. They were grotesque thoughts of the squalor and the filth that once were hers. It all started with her two sisters dying from polio within weeks of each other, a tragedy prompting father to seek oblivion in the bottle. Her mother tried valiantly to bring her up properly.

"Miss Hamilton, Miss Hamilton." Geoffrey, her chauffeur, interrupted her thoughts. He was the conventional chauffeur clad in his neatly pressed uniform and wearing his cap cocked just right—the way she wanted it. He had been a satisfactory servant for a number of years now and knew very adroitly just what to say and when to say it to produce the most effective results. "Shall I take the long way down the boulevard, Miss Hamilton?"

"What was that? The long way? Oh, yes, yes, we have a few more minutes before we are due."
“Thank you, Miss Hamilton,” he replied in a somewhat sophisticated tone—a tone she loved.

Again her mind wandered back to her ordinary life before she had been placed in the limelight. How she had argued with her mother and even her boyfriend about her career, as they attempted to dissuade her from becoming one of those “corrupt actresses”—as Mother always put it. But she had got her way, even though she had to run away from reality to get it. She fooled them all, even the producers and directors who were so openly dubious of her career on the screen. “It was a long, tearful struggle, Nora,” she thought; “but here I am, renowned and famous.” The thought was soothing and complacent. She, Nora Hamilton, was about to receive the most magnificent award, the one sought by all the greats in the film world. She knew that everyone was choosing Nora Hamilton. All the critics, all the trade magazines and papers had acclaimed her as the best. The certainty of it all made her glow. She visualized herself ascending the plushly carpeted stairs to the stage to receive . . .

“We are almost there, Miss Hamilton,” announced Geoffrey, as Nora had trained him to give a minute’s notice before they reached any destination. This enabled her to primp a second and to rehearse her lines and gestures. Everything was to be Nora Hamilton and therefore was to be grandiose, perfectly executed with artistic finesse.

The car slowed. Nora glimpsed the milling crowds in front of the theater. She fluffed her golden hair, made such for the occasion, and moistened her lips to make them lusciously appealing.

The car halted next to a garish red carpet that ran from the curb to the door of the theater; it separated the encroaching hills of humanity. As the door was opened
by a starchy-looking porter and Nora stepped out, a score of brilliant spotlights dazzled her eyes. The raspy throats of the mob cheered the newborn star. She advanced towards the entrance of the theater. "Walk as gracefully as possible, Nora," she instructed herself. With each step she realized that hundreds were straining to catch a glimpse of her; the thought filled her with a pulsating joy. She waved a pert gesture with her right hand and was answered with thunderous applause.

In the lobby she bumped into all the other stars also nominated for the awards. They mattered very little to her. She was unshaken in her conviction that she would be selected.

"Norah, dahling, it's so good to have you here. It's so good to see you, dahling." She was deluged with the sham salutations.

The houselights were dimming as she started to take her place and once more she felt content that everything was working as her agent had planned. She was to be the last celebrity to arrive and thereby the one to get the most attention.

One by one all the various awards were distributed—an almost endless roster of presentations. Floating off in a bubble of fantasy she saw herself clutching the golden oscar and hearing the applause and seeing the headlines the following morning—all over the nation, all over the entire globe . . . for her performance in Morning Becomes Electr. . . . The end of the sentence was swallowed up by a thunderous applause. Nora snapped back into reality. Her gaze raced to the stage, there to see the shapely Tasmin Larnett grasping an oscar—the oscar. Nora's heart skipped a beat. The realization of what happened was
traumatic. Her head began to spin and her entire body wanted to scream at the outrage. This wasn't the way it was planned! "I was to get the award. My agent saw to that. I am the best actress. There must be some mistake, a drastic mistake!"

She began to feel nauseous. The walls seemed to be closing in on her. She gathered up her gown so as to avoid tripping and, with a compelling sense of despair eating at her heart, walked briskly up the aisle and into the lobby. People were already beginning to assemble strategically in the lobby so that they could see the celebrities passing. "Miss Hamilton, may I..." She rudely brushed aside an autograph seeker. "Miss Hamilton, may I, may I?" She heard none of their pleading voices. Her only thought was to reach the door and to get out of there.

At last she approached the door and frantically pushed it. It did not open. It was immovable. She tried again and again, in vain. She beat against it. Suddenly a sharp jolt of pain raced throughout her body. Her hands were numb and wet. The pane of glass in front of her was stained crimson. Her hands were, too. The sight of the blood terrified her. She screamed. She turned to go back into the lobby, but was met by several men approaching her. They grabbed her by the arms and held her fast, despite her struggle.

"Let me go, let me go," she protested. "I am Nora Hamilton. I am the best actress in the world."

There was a stabbing pain in her right arm, but gradually it became dull and soothing. Soon she was swimming in the blissful tranquility of oblivion.

"Doctor Warner, Doctor Warner, please report to the fifth floor," came the request across the address system.
Only The Night . . .

Soon the doctor, a gray-haired gentle- man in his early fifties, stepped from the elevator and reported to the nurses’ station. A nurse interrupted her writing, gave him a short ethical smile, and stated in a matter-of-fact tone, “Doctor Warner, Miss Crossinger has had another spell.”

“You mean the schizo in 307?” the doctor inquired, rather blandly.

“Yes, doctor. This time she insisted that she was Nora Hamilton, an actress. A few of the internes found her beating on the bars of her window. I gave her sodium-luminal as ordered and she is resting quietly now.”

“That’s fine, Miss Harrington. I rather expected this. We shall continue the shock treatment in the morning. Everything else under control?”

“Yes, doctor. She didn’t hurt herself in any way.”

“Fine. If anything else develops be sure to contact me.”

“Yes, doctor. Good night.”

“Good evening.”

Miss Harrington made a notation on Miss Crossinger’s chart, then resumed compiling her reports. Nothing moved in the dimly-lit corridor and only a muffled groan and the unrhythmical riffling of pages broke the morbid silence.
Who Said Chaucer Was Square?

Richard E. Sullivan

To Canterbury town in Spring,
Go Englishmen, pilgrimaging.
Thus Geoffrey Chaucer was found one day,
At the Tabard, along the way
To Becket's shrine, a martyr great,
Who was such a magnet at the gate
That beside Jeff were twenty-nine
Travelers of the same mind.
The wily author describes these,
The looks and dress of he's and she's.

THE KNIGHT
There was a knight of many years
Who fought from Ayas to Algiers.
A grand old soldier who loved his work,
And from a battle would never shirk.
Stained from combat were his clothes,
But not from blood, as were his foes.

THE SQUIRE
His handsome son, a youthful squire,
Whose passion was as warm as fire.
A dancer and a singer, he,
Whose main objective was a she.
He spent much time in downy bed,
But not to sleep did nod his head.

THE YEOMEN
A servant of this noble knight
Who dressed in colors, green and bright.
This yeoman armed in such fine fettle,
Who Said Chaucer Was Square?

Around his neck wore a Christopher medal.
He seemed to know the woods so well,
That in them he could comfortably dwell.

THE PRIORESS
A nasal nun of good repute,
Who wouldn’t harm a little newt
Nor dunk in coffee her dehydrated toast,
For well she knew of Emily Post.
Her forehead was wide, I must admit,
With room for many brains to fit.
From her waist a rosary did fall,
Epigrammatically engraved, "Love conquers all."
Of these same vows another dined,
Of whom a description I cannot find.

THE MONK
The woods, his cell, this monk would track
In quest for game, with his pack.
His great bulk must have been a weight
To any horse burdened with the fate
Of carrying this roaming rector,
Who hunted in 'most every sector.
From skins of booty were fashioned his clothes,
His shorts, once close to many does.

THE FRIAR
A begging friar with mouth quite mealy
Who would not sleep but on a Sealy,
A friend of all who’d buy him wine,
He dressed as if Father Divine.
He scoffed the sick and the poor,
And proves to be a downright boor.
Noted for his simony
For absolution, a petty fee,
I'm sure not a typical O.P.
THE MERCHANT
An anonymous merchant of hairy face
Who would on Wall Street find his place,
But for his dress, which I can plainly see,
Is definitely not classed Ivy.
Of gains and dividends he spoke,
It seems he dealt with simple folk.

THE CLERK
From Oxford came a skinny clerk,
Who seems to me to be beserk,
With texts at night he littered his bed,
I think I rather would be dead.
All his coins would go for books
Which he viewed with profound looks.
In knowledge was his life immersed,
But just a bit gnomic-versed.

THE SERGEANT-AT-LAW
A learned lawyer was in the crew
Who was a peer to all but few.
From times of old he loved to tell
Of precedents that he knew well.
A mortgage this man would foreclose,
As often as he blew his nose.
Twirl his moustache and choppers gnash,
And then count his hard-earned cash.

THE FRANKLIN
A bearded man who loved his wines,
Truly a medieval Duncan Hines,
This franklin knew of food and brew,
Of English muffins and Irish stew.
He filled his belly something fierce,
With delicacies from S. S. Pierce.
To caviar and shad roe
Who Said Chaucer Was Square?

He was a gastronomic foe.
Through these delights from his kitchen,
He became a politician.

HABERDASHER AND CARPENTER
A haberdasher and a carpenter are in this tale,
But of them Geoffrey did not wail.

THE WEAVER AND OTHER SUCH
The textile industry is well represented
By an arras maker, a weaver and a dyer, all well scented.
Their garments and gear were like and new,
The whole outfit cost a pretty sou.
The sound of coins from their wallet vent
Enough to pay a year’s rent.
They had money, but worked for it.
As precinct bosses they were fit.

THE COOK
In this group there was a cook
Who did not need an instruction book
He stewed and fried and baked and basted,
Better chicken than his has never been tasted.
From head to knee he was quite normal,
But on his shin oozed a mormal,
Whose juice so resembled cream sauce
That it made squeamish Jeff’s cookies toss.

THE SAILOR
A sailor, wise in ways of waves,
A simple salt and a knave,
Who pilfered cargo all the time,
At least the most expensive wine.
He came to journey from Dartmouth town,
In England, not Hanover, you clown.
Why to see Becket does he come?
To vitalize his conscience numb?
THE PHYSICIAN
A skilled doctor, a lover of gold,
Cured his patients both young and old,
Not only both with simples and potions,
But through the stars and their motions.
He studied hard, I must admit,
And took the oath Hippocratic.
He was intimate with many a tome,
Except the Vulgate of St. Jerome.
Although it seems he is a quack,
I'd hate to state it as a fact.

THE WIFE OF BATH
There was a deaf woman from Bath,
Who through the world wore a path,
A quintet of husbands had she espoused,
Now in eternity all are housed.
With visage and garments of brightest hue
She'll be forgotten by very few.
This gap-toothed ma-ma with cheek,
Considered a virgin a freak.
All the requirements she does meet
Of a sorority mother on Basin Street.

THE PARSON
Of all the cloth there was but one
Who by piety had his fun.
Living by the golden rule,
A learned man, not a fool.
Throughout his parish he would preach
But by example truly teach.
Absolving sinners was his duty
And by this act did not gain booty.
He cared not for the upper classes,
But for all said his masses.
He shrank from high society,
All in all, a good priest, he.
Who Said Chaucer Was Square?

THE PLOWMAN
A simple sort, this parson’s brother,
A disappointment to his mother,
For although he loved his God,
His talents lay just in the sod.
Maybe a master at his trade,
A man who called a spade a spade.
But just another guy named Joe,
Reminds me of the “Man with the Hoe.”

THE MILLER
There was a miller, a sensuous type,
Who blew a real cool bagpipe.
Being a mighty, stocky man
He loved to wrestle, catch-as-catch-can.
I can imagine him at a feast,
Reciting poems like a Goliadiste.
Above his mouth, below his eyes,
He had a wart of extreme size,
That sprouted hairs of vivid red,
Which likewise covered his lower head.
The way he weighed the corn and gold,
A person might as well be rolled.
An extrovert of the first rank
Who always loved to sing and prank.

THE MANCIPLE
A buyer of food, a manciple proud,
With vast intellect was not endowed,
Yet by noting the bargains of every day,
He did not spend all his pay.
He kept his charges all well fed
And never dipped into the red.
His common sense was very keen,
Too bad he never shopped Filene.
THE REEVE
There was a reeve, a mere toothpick,
Who gave the appearance of being sick.
You've seen the type in a Charles Atlas ad,
You know the bony “before” lad.
But he ran the affairs of his lord so well
That into debt he never fell.
No one could cheat this crafty man
For somehow he saw through their plan.
His steed “Scot” had trouble telling,
If in the saddle he were dwelling,
For the choleric reeve was so lean
That he weighed no more than a sack of beans.

THE SUMMONER
There was a summoner with pimples bare,
Whose face gave children an awful scare.
To converse face to face with him, long,
Was torment enough for any wrong
For his breath was so rich
You'd swear he'd supped at Moor-ditch.
To forget his pussy eruptions,
He delved in 'most all corruptions,
To cure his skin was his wish and will,
A pity he lived before Clearasil.

THE PARDONER
From Rome there came a pardon, a cleric of vast import,
Whose tallow hair straggled down his face, a very sloppy sort.
He carried pardons for violations,
To whom? There are no indications.
He also bore “relics” rare
That could be bought at any fair,
And sold them in the diocese
Who Said Chaucer Was Square?

As chips of bones from old saint's knees.
A piece of pigeon meat he'd call
The left ear lobe of Saint Paul.
In his speech he'd never blunder,
Thus many missions he did plunder.
To stem the tide of boredom great
From riding at a silent gait,
The owner of the Tabard House
Planned, with words, the silence douse.
To tell four tales they all agreed,
The prize to be a costless feed.
What topics did these pilgrims choose?
Saints and bawds, martyrs and booze.
The mincing nun spun of bloody sacrifice
While the reeve related cuckold vice.
The miller's tale of fabliau fare
Concerning a poker and a pair
Is so coarse that it drew
Boston's oscar—the taboo.
If you wish to know the rest
I'd say reading Chaucer's best.
Unto Others

"Your hey-day is gone, old man. Lie down."

Such communicate the young.
When they're too blind to see
That killing cruel the hope in him
Will stifle theirs eventu'ly.
For when they've frayed their final sleeve
And muddied their last cuff
Their oldest aged will not believe
Of life they'd had enough
And they will stretch and strain and suf'
For treatment they could give
To age when they were youth themselves—
The hope for life—to live.

Instead do fan his flame of hope,
And help him in his fight
Help him to scoff, to scorn, and shun
And help him to rage
Yes, to rage against the dying of the light.

G. Brian Sullivan
East to West

The winter holiday season impends:
The senses are impressive.
A long train trip homeward and errant thoughts stir,
Curdling in reflection upon this travel
And all that is passed.

What desolation, the countryside,
During waking hours.
Snow seems to stifle all
But few cropping-up permanences:
Bare, wire-like trees;
Stubs in fields—the harvest has taken its toll;
Telephone poles and switchbox at interval.
Houses sit like isolated dinghies on white choppy water:
Tissue monuments, barren.
An instinctively critical eye views
Wounds inflicted by Man
On the rushing land
Sullenly staring back;
Their muted cries reach out
Not through physical convocations
Bemoaning their helpless state
But, though irrational, spirited as a thought is
And plainly heard
Among the jargon of fellow passengers.
Bleak the day, yet so warm that nocturnal span;
Thoughts of that placid,
Serene dark half of travel
Cause hunger for such time now
While surrounded by complaining, even scurrilous companions in travel.
In the night,
Time suspended,
No one twisted thoughts to idle chatter
Shattering a contemplative, thrilling realm
Created by the peaceful panorama
Flying murkily, yet discernibly past. From my seat,
(A dark covy, cozy with quavering heat
Breathing up—source unknown.)
A fantasy world was concentrated though hazy
Slipping past the thick broad window in the night.
Who would resist
This pacified cinema of rolling wooded countryside
Dusted white with powder snow,
Dotted occasionally with a twinkling house,
Burdened sparsely with winking towns?
All reflected the cloud-mellowed illumination of the moon;
All radiated the calmly sparkling spirit
Of a new-born winter
Greeting the Season.

West to East

Season's Greetings have come and gone;
The concentrated travel escapes
And I am not alone among strangers.
The short train—though crowded—skips along:
Saucy, surly, its pompous attitude effuses more pungently
with every mile.
The sun comes through
Partly overcast afternoon skies,
Floodlighting a happy landscape;
Glittering evenly, the snow is lively in reflection,  
Forsaking an appearance of grey mortification,  
Here now spreads a tumbled, craggy, jumbled woods  
Companioned by a flat ribbon of water quivering coolly,  
Edges lace-trimmed with ice.  
We churn through the woods and, leaving the stream,  
Dart into a broad meadow  
Rippling with humps of snow-covered grass.  
We round a bend  
And a small factory rushes up and by,  
Displaying its dirty working side:  
A train never sees the façade.  
And there comes the stream,  
Losing the grip of another woods;  
But we pass over the shivering blueness  
And it refuses our company,  
Winding off undirected.  
Now we roll evenly into a town,  
Stop,  
And soon steal silently from town center to edge,  
Then strain, and lurch and burst  
Back into the countryside!  
A ridge, thick with deep green pines,  
Swings up and away, and curving,  
Swoops down toward us  
Veering away at the last moment like some happy bird  
Playfully greeting a stranger.

A lively spirit prevails:  
Wheels on track trip a pleasant syncopation;  
We sway with the roadbed and bounce smoothly with tired  
car-springs;  
This motion and the rhythm combine  
And leave us hypnotically oscillating;
The Alembic

But a curve disturbs the motion and we go jostling,
Rocking on unevenly.
The aging day is orange-blue,
But puffy balls of cloud return
To warn us of a cloudmass
Standing wide on the horizon.
We gouge through dipping open fields and,
Hurrying from the sunlight,
Slide under the broken overcast canopy.
Soon the day,
After briefly struggling on the dusky battlefield of evening,
Falls before the onslaught of night.

A musky-dense, grey darkness hangs,
Shattering the frail attitude of daylight;
And the star-spangled warmth
Of "Noel" and "Alleluia"
Is now truly cloaked.

CHARLES CARROLL
Father Tabb’s Poetry and Country . . .

John Williams

Dr. Francis E. Litz of the Catholic University of America, author of the standard biography of Father Tabb (1845-1909)—patriot, poet, teacher, priest—has just recently edited and introduced The Best Poems of John Banister Tabb (The Newman Press, 191 pp.). Father Tabb’s poems have for too long been out of print, and this new volume is most welcome. This book contains only the best of his some nine-hundred serious works. None of the humorous verse of his Child Verse (1899) and Quips and Quiddits (1907) are reprinted. His cleverest things were usually too local to be appreciated. Some of his jokes, though—on Negro theology, for example,—have some good sense behind them in addition to keen wit—like “The Difference”:

Unc’ Si, de Holy Bible say,
    In speakin’ of de jus’,
Dat he do fall sebem times a day:
    Now how’s de sinner wuss?

Well, chile, de slip may come to all,
    But den de difference foller;
For, if you watch him when he fall,
    De jus’ man do not waller!

This one appeared in Quips and Quiddits, for the most part, not considered to be an adequate selection of his abilities as a humorist.

In the 1956 autumn issue of the Virginia Quarterly Review—its special Woodrow Wilson centennial number—Virginius Dabney, editor of the Richmond, Virginia, Times Dispatch, contributed an article on “The Human Side of Woodrow Wilson.” On one occasion when Wilson
was president of Princeton, he was invited as guest of honor to a dinner party out West. Wilson was an impressive and scholarly-looking man, and the host and hostess arranged the affair to be very formal. Wilson got bored and asked the company if they liked limericks. The hostess answered primly, yes; whereupon Wilson told this one which is more familiar now than it was then:

There was a young monk of Siberia  
Whose existence grew drearier and drearier,  
Till he burst from his cell  
With a Hell of a yell  
And eloped with the Mother Superior.

A roar went up around the table: Wilson told some more, and the party took a different course. Mr. Dabney didn’t mention the fact, but Wilson—incidentally—was quoting a verse of Father Tabb which never was published—as such.

In practically all magazine articles on Father Tabb—which range from vignettes in old *Alembics* and *Dominicanas* to essays in the widely-circulated journals—a note about the poet-priest’s home is invariably given. It usually goes something like this: he was born at “The Forest,” his family’s estate near Matoax in Amelia County, Virginia.

In the third book of the Saint Thomas More English series—texts for Catholic secondary schools—American literature is treated and, with a short biographical sketch of the author, a few of Father Tabb’s poems are included. The editor’s misspelling of “Banister” — Tabb used only one “n”—can be overlooked; but when he calls him the “poet-priest of Maryland,” he has roused the ire of Virginians and others who so well realize that—although he was a professor at old Saint Charles’ Seminary at Elicott City, Maryland, for quite some time—there is no question that his first allegiance was absolutely always to the Commonwealth of his birth.
In the summer he would return to "The Forest." After a night trip down the Chesapeake Bay to the mouth of the York River and then up to West Point, he would catch the train to Richmond, whence he would change over to the old Richmond and Danville R. R. for the thirty-mile trip to Matoax.

The West Point line is now closed, and the less colorful Greyhounds operate between the two points. The Southern Railroad no longer stops at Matoax, and hardly ever at Chula—a few miles down—or the other little stations between Richmond and Farmville, where Longwood College is situated and, near-by, Hampton-Sydney. The office is boarded-up; the letters of "Matoax" are faded and barely visible.

The fine mansion of the Tabbs has been disappeared for a long time, and the only remaining bricks were some time ago used for a small but impressive monument on the original site. The property has been divided and has fallen into different hands. Even the fifteen hundred acres or so, which the plantation comprised at Father Tabb's death half a century ago, was only a remnant of extensive ground which came into the ownership of his ancestor (probably in her time the wealthiest lady in the whole state), the widow of John Randolph of Roanoke.

Amelia County is still the same rural, agrarian country. The atmosphere of ante bellum luxury had, of course, been ended at "The Forest" with the War. Yet with the ruin and the farm lands in waste, young Tabb—on being released from his imprisonment at Point Lookout (he had been a blockade runner on the Confederate States Steamer, the Robert E. Lee, which after twenty-one successful runs under the command of his cousin, John Wilkinson, was
captured by the *Keystone* in 1864) said, "I felt that I was in the Kingdom of Heaven."

Near the mentioned memorial marker is "Grub Hill Church where, like all the Tabbs from the time they first removed to the county, he was baptized and confirmed. Here he served as lay reader for Parke Farley Berkeley, rector for fifty-two years. His family lies in the cemetery by the side of the church (Father Tabb requested, however, that he be buried in Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond). The yard is unkept; the graves—even on this last Easter Monday—were without any flowers. The doors to the church were open; some leaves from—I suppose—last fall were on the carpet; hymn books and Sunday School attendance records were scattered about. Otherwise, in all the grace of former years, the church stands half covered with ivy and is particularly lovely in the late afternoon.

Saint Peter's Church in Richmond, established in 1834, is still an active church serving the downtown and transients. Father Tabb once taught at the parish boys' school, and—after his conversion and ordination—often preached there. On August 15th, 1893, he spoke on the Assumption and concluded his sermon with his charming little verse:

Nor Bethlehem nor Nazareth,
Apart from Mary's care;
Nor Heaven itself a home for Him
Were not His Mother there!

A narrow dirt and, farther on, a weather-worn paved road, crossing the tracks at Matoax and winding past a dilapidated general store and cannery, lead after a few "country miles" to a grove of elms and what might have been an avenue of pines, and then by a deserted church—once the fashionable parish of the neighborhood gentry—on to the
main highway. Nice scenery, indeed! To devotees of John Banister Tabb, however, it might have all been, for what they care, the Haworth parsonage of the Brontës or Stoke Poges.

Oblivion’s Abyss

A bud sprung up beneath my foot to bloom.
It wanted life
But damned it I to doom.

What arbitrary ghouls inside me dwell
That thoughtlessly
A redwood tree would fell

Before its stature e’en began to tower.
Would crush its hope
For glory in an hour.

I wonder on the myriad of things
In poetry’s
Oblivion now sings,

Yet has the stuff to sparkle with the best.
But critic’s eye
Has caused them to rest

And never were they heard by human ears.
And never were
They written on the years.

G. Brian Sullivan
Japan in Retrospect

RICHARD ALSFELD

It is both pleasant and rewarding to put aside one's tasks and obligations, occasionally, and to occupy one's thoughts with nostalgic reflections of past experiences. These reminiscences are as myriad as the colors in the spectrum; ruminations, for a precious moment or two, are not stereotyped by academic disciplines. To me, the most enjoyable of these revisitations is a mental excursion, transcending the years and miles, to the Far East and especially to Japan.

The four exotic Islands of Japan, situated roughly in the same temperate zone as the United States, stretch, crescent shaped, for three-thousand miles paralleling the continent of Asia. There are striking contrasts in these islands—especially in winter when there is abundant snow and opportunities for skiing in the Japanese Alps on the northernmost Island of Hokkaido and, at the same time, semi-tropical weather, palm trees, and swimming on the extreme southern Island of Kyushu.

Winter, in addition to emphasizing the variation in climate of Japan, is the season when most Japanese, eager to escape their rather drab existences for a while, flock eagerly to the classic, centuries old, Kabuki or Nōh plays. Although these plays are quite incomprehensible to the average Occidental, the inscrutable, though inwardly sensitive, Japanese take deep, vicarious pleasure in the riotous profusion of color, the delicate nuances of the dialogue, the redolence of pungent incense, and, above all, the grandiose gesticulations of their favorite actors. Other, more Westernized Japanese, prefer to journey to Takarazuka, a
unique town dedicated to laughter, spectacle and melody. For thirty yen (eight cents), the traveler can stare at the town’s zoo, flock through its botanical gardens, dance on its spring-mounted dance floor, or attend Buddhist services in its many chapels. But the main attraction is the flamboyant stage show in the rambling four-thousand-seat theater—a rare mixture of Radio City Music Hall, the Metropolitan Opera, and native Kabuki. For four hours the audience’s eyes are absorbed by as many as thirty settings, gaily worked in paper, while their ears are assailed by age-old folk songs in Broadway orchestrations and many Western or South-American tunes that are currently popular.

Gay as the winter season is, however, if one were able to spend only one season of the year in Japan, he would almost be obliged to choose the springtime. Japan, always exquisitely lovely, glows with a soft and subtle beauty in the springtime. Spring’s arrival warms the souls of ninety-million people who find in this season an almost religious joy. Japanese believe that a good life involves the proper adoration of the beautiful. Spring in the land of cherry, peach, and plum blossoms, with field and farm delicately aglow with the variegated hues of many plants, shrubs, and flowers, is beautiful indeed. Many people leave the crowded cities to walk placidly through the pastoral by-ways of rural Japan. A few, feeling a renewed zest for life, pick spring as the time to perfect themselves in the delicate art of woodblock printing or, perhaps, the art of arranging flowers. Others, of a more scholarly bent, read or compose unmeasured poetry which, to many Occidental ears, lacks orderliness and clarity but seldom lacks imagery or beauty. Everywhere, there is a flurry of interest in aesthetic pursuits.

The flush of spring is evident not only in nature but in the people themselves. Buddhist monks don their saf-
from yellow robes; many unpack gay kimonos from winter storage crates; and even staid businessmen furtively inspect the department stores’ latest offerings in hand-painted ties.

The cessation of spring is heralded by the vernal rains which begin in June and usually last until the beginning of July. With these monsoon-like downpours, a colorful sea of umbrellas, waxing and waning with the tides of human activity, appears on city streets, thereby imparting a small measure of brightness and vividness to otherwise somber days.

The rains, eventually, with a few last grumbling thunderstorms, abate, and the full force of the excessively hot Japanese summer, like a damp cloak, envelops the sweltering populace. Few westerners welcome this oppressive season; but the Japanese farmer, along with his ubiquitous oxen, continues his patient, plodding cultivation in field or paddy while the sun, like a radiantly glowing brass ball, blazes from the azure, delicately fleeced skies reminding one, strangely, of an early Van Gogh landscape.

During the summer, many Japanese visit Buddhist and Shinto temples. Just as Ramadan is a holy month to the Moslems, the summertime to the Japanese is a time for reaffirmation of their beliefs. There is an abundance of temples all through the country but especially in Kyoto, the ancient capital and cultural center of Japan. In the city alone, there are well over a thousand temples and shrines ranging in size from veritable Colossi to impecunious little alcoves scattered haphazardly throughout the metropolitan area. Most of the larger temples are quite similar in physical appearance. All have immense torii or gates leading into a spacious courtyard reminiscent of medieval European manors. The main buildings, usually encompassing the courtyards, are composed of large, high-ceilinged rooms, devoid of artifacts and religious utensils.
Japan in Retrospect

which are used principally by the Buddhist monks for interminable philosophical contemplations.

To me, however, the most beautiful structure was the Catholic Cathedral of Kyoto. This cathedral, one of the largest Catholic churches in the country, provides a place of worship for both servicemen and Japanese civilians.

Many Japanese, seeking relief from the ever-present heat, journey to the ocean resorts or, perhaps, take a cruise on the famous inland sea between the Islands of Shikoku and Honshu. The sea is very much a part of the daily life in Japan; for the people depend on it as their main source for food as well as a source of recreation.

The summer season in Japan, unlike its counterpart in the United States, does not gradually dissipate into progressively colder weather but changes mercurially, it seems, from warm to cold weather.

Many knowledgeable travelers consider autumn as the ideal season to spend in one of Japan’s large cities, particularly Tokyo. After the sedate pace of summertime in rural Japan, this vivacious, cosmopolitan city provides a striking contrast for its visitors. Numerically the largest city in the world, Tokyo might be considered a brand new city since the “old” Tokyo was almost totally eradicated by bombs during the Second World War. Now, just a decade later, Tokyo’s shining new face contains many large buildings, broad boulevards, neon-lighted shopping districts, and all the accoutrements of a modern city. Yet, modern Tokyo is a paradox, for in its exact center lies the Imperial Palace, moss-covered and unchanged since the thirteenth century, still the most typically Japanese structure in a city that is distinguishable from other large cities all over the world only by the blatant, winking crudity of its electric signs.

Japan is a land of contrast—from snow-capped mountains to stately palm trees, from ancient classic the-
aters to the modern “follies” type of production, from the verdant lushness of spring to the dull, somber autumn, and from the serene exquisite countryside to the garish, showy city, all in one country slightly larger than the state of California. This strange little land, once our bitter antagonist, now our staunch ally, is not easily forgotten, because its love for beauty, its sights, its sounds, and its smells are indelibly ingrained in the minds of all who have visited there.

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**Encore Finale**

If each blade of grass were a violin  
And each reed a clarinet  
Were each cloud in the sky a tympani  
Each hickory branch a flute;  
If alone I stood afar from this  
And listened I whilst there played  
Each tree a loving musician  
Whose heart were bleeding a song;

If that song were sung 'neath the sun and the moon  
For hours for days and for years,  
Still I’d stand and hearken them from afar  
’Till they of their playing were done.  
Then I’d cry out, “Once more! Encore!”  
I would shout it for ever again, “Again!  
“Once more!—Encore!—Once again!”

*G. Brian Sullivan*
Dialectical Materialism
Dialectical Materialism

Rain, Olympians’ nectarean tears,  
Honeycombs the atmosphere,  
Jams with the loam, trickles to the sewer,  
The earth gurgles infallible, the water is impure.

Though snow redeems soil by lazy absolution,  
Anthracited snowmen will soon be Lilliputian,  
Their kinetic leer stirs the hibernating cement  
While muddy-sneakered urchins for their titans will lament.

Corn-fed clouds once frolicked free,  
Prodigal bumpkins with spindrift lips;  
Now toadstool fleece wolves windily,  
Iodine junkies—cyclotron hip.

The Word for all once arrowed here  
But splintered in our ears.  
A thousand sliver tongues still search  
For what was then quite clear.

This quiver of tongues, blunt and unfledged,  
Lacked feather and flint for direction and bite.  
A Dove cooed in an olive tree,  
Was stoned down with grinning drachmae,  
Caged and plucked, (These taxophiles  
Quarried from their hearts a double edge)  
Honored with thorns like a ham full of cloves,  
Then suited to a dogwood T.

Richard Sullivan
Marines. His war experiences served as the basis for two of his later novels, *Officers and Gentlemen* and *Men and Arms*. After the War, he settled down to what he calls, "the life of a country gentleman." "I live in a shabby stone house in the country," he told a *Life* interviewer in 1955, "where nothing is under a hundred years old except the plumbing and that does not work. I collect old books in an inexpensive, desultory sort of way. I have a fast-emptying cellar of wine, and gardens fast reverting to the jungle. I am very contentedly married. I have numerous children whom I see for once a day for ten, I hope, awe-inspiring minutes." He has become somewhat of an eccentric, for example, refusing to learn how to drive and using a quill pen when he writes.

Although Waugh has said so in many different ways, he believes one fact firmly—"that our twentieth century civilization is a decaying corpse." In his earlier works, he said it with perhaps more clarity and alacrity than in his later novels, but all the time his theme has been the same. When his first novel, *Decline and Fall*, appeared in 1928, people laughed, "Devilishly clever!" they cried. "Why, he's England's Wittiest writer!" By the time his second novel appeared in 1930, however, they realized that they were laughing at themselves; and they realized, too, that Mr. Waugh had a perspicacious insight into the lives and failings of the "modern man." Those who read his novels soon saw that beneath the surface was a bitter condemnation of the human condition.

To understand just how these early novels achieved this effect we shall look at two of them more closely, rather than to skim over all of them. In *Decline and Fall*, Waugh's first work, is contained a completely negative view of life: the author denies his characters the least shred of human
dignity. In the following excerpt from this novel, the college officials are discussing the money they have taken in fines from students, who the night before, quite unrestricted by the college officials, had acted rather raucously in a demonstration:

Two hundred and thirty pounds, murmured the Domestic Bursar ecstatically, *not* counting the damage! That means five evenings, with what we have already collected. Five evenings of Founders port!

The case of Pennyfeather, the Master was saying, seems to be quite a different matter altogether. He ran the whole length of the quadrangle, you say, *without his trousers*. It is unseemly. It is more: it is indecent. In fact, I am almost prepared to say that it is flagrantly indecent. It is *not* the conduct we expect of a scholar.

From this we see that Waugh has little compassion towards his characters. Crazy accidents; cannibalism; cadavers; wild, drunken parties: these are merely the symbols he uses to demonstrate his inevitable theme—the moral corruption of our twentieth century civilization.

*Decline and Fall* was followed about a year later by *Vile Bodies*, a more crowded, more dazzling kaleidoscopic view of life among the “bright young people,” Waugh’s term for the ultra-sophisticated high society of London. The giddy whirl of *Vile Bodies* involves at least a dozen separate groups of people whose stories intertwine to provide a mad fantasy that is almost breathtaking. He deals casually with sudden fortunes and catastrophes, love, hatred, customs officers, dud checks, drunken majors who welsh, and young, ultra-sophisticated women who are somewhat, if not completely, amoral. Denys Val Daker summed up *Vile Bodies* adequately when he said, “Moral scruples
The Style of Evelyn Waugh

nowhere intrude in *Vile Bodies*. That is, no one has them except the author himself, who shows occasional signs.

To my mind, the most symbolic character in the novel is Agatha Runcible. Whirled to her fatal crash in a fantastic motor car race, she died among cocktails and chattering friends; only one of her gay companions attended the funeral (the others were too busy to go). Mr. Waugh might, with less artistic control, have had Agatha repent on her deathbed and die with a prayer on her lips. Not having done so, he denied even the remotest hope for the people Agatha represented. She died, as she had lived, in a hectic, hopeless spin.

To understand how Mr. Waugh's effects in these early novels are so devastating, we must understand his clever use of detachment. He looks at things in a pseudo-objective manner; draws no morals, provides no cures, and makes no predictions. He is not unlike the Spectator in the Sir Roger de Coverley Papers. He does not state explicitly that which he is driving at, but rather implies it by *de-emphasis*. The following is an example of this technique:

Hullo, Nina, darling, something awful's happened.
What?
Lottie presented me with her bill.
Darling, what did you do.
Well, I did something rather extraordinary . . .
My dear, I sold you.
Darling . . . who to?
Ginger. You fetched seventy-eight pounds sixteen and twopence.
*Well?*
And now I never am going to see you again.
Oh, but Adam, I think this is beastly of you. I don't want not to see you again.
I'm sorry. . . . Good-bye, Nina, darling.
Good-bye, Adam, my sweet. But I think that you're rather a cad.

Among Waugh's other "early works" are *Black Mischief* (1932) and *A Handful of Dust* (1934).

To summarize the characteristics of all these novels, we might say that Mr. Waugh exploits the art of satire to its fullest. His trenchant wit combines the impossible with the credible without offending our sense of veracity. Says Sean O'Faolain in his book, *The Vanishing Hero*, "He [Waugh] has been able to distill comedy and sometimes tragedy from the knockabout farce of people's outward behavior."

About 1935, Waugh entered into a second phase of his career, characterized by what has been called the Catholic influence. Two books are the direct outcome of his conversion to Catholicism. These are *Edmund Campion* and *Helena*. In these works, Waugh's religious faith expresses itself quite clearly. An explicit statement of his religious beliefs may be found in his biography of St. Edmund, the Jesuit-martyr of Elizabeth's time. The book received the Hawthorden prize and was dedicated to Father D'Arcy, then the Provincial of the Jesuits in England. *Helena*, on the other hand, is an interesting combination of the "old" Waugh and the "new." Although he shows himself to be a Catholic in every way, his faith is mixed with the sharp wit and biting characterizations of his earlier works. Absent, however, is the condemnation of the human race which had been expressed so forcefully before.

What are the characteristics which are seen in the work of a Catholic writer, so that we may apply them to Waugh's work? According to many critics, they are: faith, compassion, humility and love.
In Waugh's later works these characteristics become evident. As the best example of his later period, we shall use *Brideshead Revisited*, first published in 1945. Some consider it Waugh's finest work; others, his most dismal failure. Reviewer John K. Hutchens wrote in the New York Times, "*Brideshead Revisited* has the depth and weight that are found in a writer working in his prime, in the full powers of an eager, good mind and a skilled hand, retaining the best of what he has learned. It tells an absorbing story in imaginative tones."

The story concerns the degeneration of an aristocratic English Catholic family. There are three children in the family. The elder son is deeply religious; the younger, a born extrovert, but a drunkard; the daughter marries a divorced man in opposition to her family. The levity, the caricature, the humor for which *Decline and Fall*, *Vile Bodies* and *Scoop* are known are gone. More than compensating the vanishing malice is the fact that Mr. Waugh has graduated from flat, two-dimensional characters. He now has real love for those at whom earlier he had laughed. He is submerged in his characters. This love for humanity is a direct out-growth of his Catholic faith.

Waugh, since his first attempts at writing, has steadily broadened his art; those who cry for a reversion to his earlier vein ask that he stunt his talent and limit his creative sphere. The very fact that Waugh was able to write a novel of such radical differences from his early works proves that he is constantly developing, that he has talent which is not limited to only one kind of writing.

The change, however, is not altogether a final one. Many elements in the old style are still found in the new. For example, there is humor in *Brideshead*; but nowhere in the book does this humor show a detachment or dis-
interestedness of mind. Here, Mr. Waugh’s humor is always guided by Catholic doctrine. For his old bitter diatribes and inexorable condemnations, he substitutes the attitudes of a Catholic writer, especially the hope for his fellow-man as taught in the Catholic Church. A reviewer for *New Yorker* succinctly stated: “This novel is a Catholic tract.”

Mr. Waugh’s most recent novel, published in 1957, is *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*. The author does not deny that it is somewhat of an autobiography in which he gives an account of an “hallucination” which he is supposed to have had several years ago aboard a ship. Although this novel is far from being Waugh’s best work, it shows clearly what Mr. Waugh is driving at, what his ultimate aim is. We shall point out this aim in his own words later.

Evelyn Waugh’s works have been called trivial, reactionary, rude, vindictive, immature, pompous and sometimes even vulgar. Many of these accusations are substantially true, yet all this is somehow beside the point. He, unlike many authors, is absolved from such “offenses” in creating a style which is peculiarly his own. There is no such thing as an imitation of Waugh. His art belongs to him alone. One of the things which characterizes his novels and gives rise to this peculiarity of art is his use of the old device of suggestive names; for example: Mr. Outrage, the leader of His Majesty’s Opposition; Mrs. Melrose-Ape, a phony evangelist; Lord Copper, a press tycoon; Aimée Thanatogenos, a beautician in a mortuary; Miles Malpractice, a homosexual; Mrs. Panrast, a Lesbian. These are typical Waughisms.

What, then, has been the general pattern for the novels of Evelyn Waugh? We may say that his first novels were characterized by intense bitterness and cynicism. He saw nothing but doom for mankind. Human conditions,
The Style of Evelyn Waugh

he suggested, had degenerated to such an extent that nothing save absolute reaction would save him from complete moral degeneration. His “middle” novels are simply expressions of his Catholic faith. He is anxious to express his complete submersion in Catholic theology and philosophy and these novels bear witness to that fact.

His later novels are, to my mind, his best works. Here, he has tempered his early ideas. He has reached a point of comprehension and control which are so vital to the development of the really good author. Mr. Waugh is regarded today as an outstanding Catholic author, and yet his subject matter is often called by some people “un-Catholic.” His books are not pious platitudes, a type of work into which, unfortunately, many contemporary Catholic novelists fall. His novels are vibrant, forward, realistic, written by a man who knows what is going on about him. Yet his novels are pervasively Catholic. The Church needs more like Waugh so that her doctrine might be dispersed not only by aesthetical and scholarly works, but by pile-driving works as well, such as Waugh turns out.

And where is he going? What, may we say, will his future works be like? It is, of course, impossible to say with absolute certainty. For the best prediction we can use Waugh’s own words:

They [modern novelists] try to represent the whole human mind and soul and yet omit its determining character—that of God’s creature with a definite purpose. So in my future books there will be a preoccupation with style and the attempt to represent man more fully, which, to me means only one thing, man in his relation to God.
Nocturne

I

OLD MAN'S SONG
Winter freezes my heart; the winds bring only
The sound of thy rustling skirts;
Oh, mistress loved, never more shall I hear
Thy step on cobbled walks.
(Blackness, why dost thou deceive me?)
The leaves fly; all is dark; I await thee.

MAIDEN'S SONG
The winds announce thy dirge;
My lotus shivers in thy wake.
But I have loved; eternity is mine;
I fear thee not.
The leaves fly; all is dark; I await thee.

DONALD J. PROCACCINI

The Courtroom of the World

In mass Man rests, reclining,
(His to stand, to kneel)
Upon vast "judgment's throne,"
Failure's grand, true heal;
Demagogues, despotic appointments,
(His to judge, to ban?)
Sentence to be sentence next,
Failure's nudge to span
Self-proclaimed perfection.
Usurped coronets, alluring and desired,
Strike hollow chaos for naught:
True Charity leaves their verdicts unrequired.

CHARLES CARROLL
Why?

Here I am sitting on the edge of the gilded balcony
and looking down into the smoke below me.
over by exit 4 they are pushing and shoving each other
so hard so hard.
from here I can see the pain impressed on that
multitude of faces.
an old fat man in the rear is jamming his elbows
into the woman in front of him
and she is screaming and jamming her elbows into
the girl in front of her.
that's not the way no that's not the way.

In between the hemmed in forms
i can barely see a young girl's body sprawled
lifeless on the soft red carpet
while passing feet grind her further into the
dust
and her little sister or someone like that is
screaming and yelling and tugging at her arm
and someone is begging her not to make so much
noise
there's enough of a racket already and you can't
stay here indefinitely simpering so be a
good little girl and hold on to my coat.
but that's not the way no that's not the way.

An usher or a manager or something
is weaving his way trying to calm the crowd down
but a section of the praesidium arch just fell
upon a young mother
and everyone's shrieking again.
the usher in soot-covered braid is trying to carry an old woman with a cane out the door. there's a man rather well dressed who walks a little in front and tries to make room for the usher and some are actually moving away and the usher is wending his way toward the melee at the door itself. that's not the way that's not the way at all.

The ushers are organized now. to some degree they're getting the middle a little more cleared and they're trying to make some sort of order out of the screaming mob at the exit but with little success. up over here though they opened a door to the outside from one of the boxes and they're bringing all the kids up a narrow stairway and out this door. they have to jump down to the concrete i guess for they hesitate at that door for a long time and some actually have to be pushed out. they're bringing some of the real old people up that stairway.

funny they are the quietest of all the ones here. some of the older kids are giving up their turn at the door to make way for these and let them through. oh that's not the way no not the way at all.
Why?

It's spreading over the roof now
and the smoke is really getting bad.
the ushers in the middle are trapped there by
flaming smoldering debris
and their braid is gleaming and shining a bright sky blue.
one of them comes up to the loges beneath me
and asks me to jump before it's too late
and another goes to him
and mumbles something about if I'm crazy or not
and not to waste time with me.
but he still looks up and pleads and yells above the tumult
but I nod.
he throws up his hands and runs back to the hallway
in a fit of coughing
and tears down the stairs as they come down behind him in a frightful roar.
that's not the way no that's not it.

Here I am sitting on the edge of the balcony with all its paint covered with blacking.
i stare down at the mob at exit 4
and finally turn away in disgust.
i look down at my shoes and see the dainty golden flames dancing at my socks
and I sniffle a little

EUGENE J. RZECZKOWSKI
They

They came.
I heard footsteps faintly,
Felt their warm hands lift me,
Put me in a bag—clear plastic,
Yellow-cracked with age.
Blonde-head laughed as dark-hand shivered,
Startled at my cold;
For I am dead.

THEY came.
Came without appearing,
Ringing me with Presence,
Moving me along—unasking,
As one moves a child.
Lightnings blinded, thunders shook me,
And I knew The Fear;
For I am dead.

THEY CAME.
Dragging me in terror,
Writhing, yet despairing,
Hating light, and fearing darkness,
Now to darkness heir.
Fleeing what I was brought forth for,
To the ever-night;
For I am damned.

GEORGE A. RILEY
Passion's Way

Trembling quiet in silent fright
Begin the first adventings
Of the rising, swelling, passion-telling
Portents in my heart.

Night-ward seeking light
Are diving all-devo'ring demons down
And day-ward seeking night
Is surging passion's blinding wave.

Eyes sight should serve are tight
And can not guide my self
Made light and problem-free
By blinding me to all but passion's way.

G. BRIAN SULLIVAN
Last week the *Alembic* office received a letter from Mr. John H. Fanning '38, a former editor of the *Alembic* and now a member of the National Labor Relations Board in Washington. Mr. Fanning has been invited to speak this May 23rd at a meeting of the St. Thomas More Legal Society on the occasion of the annual meeting of the American Law institute. He requested a copy of an article on St. Thomas More which he wrote for the March, 1937, *Alembic*. We were pleased to forward the essay to him. We congratulate him on his recent appointment to the NLRB. It is gratifying to us that his PC essay is still of service to him.

In the meanwhile we have taken opportunity to scan through volume XX—which contains the numbers for the academic year 1937-38—and examine editorial policies. Mr. Fanning was editor that year, and for the first issue—which appeared in November—there was published an editorial which, now twenty years later, suits our purposes:

"In past years the *Alembic* may have taken a passive view of the college scene. Undoubtedly in its past appearance it was somewhat heavy, both in format and content. We have tried to remedy both defects. There is a deep and unmined field for a literary quarterly at the College and we intend to make a vital effort to gather this literary gold.

"Remember the *Alembic* is a student publication. We depend on the student support for the material which
The Alembic

is published. . . . This is what we need and are striving to develop: a finer sense of the value of thought, paper and ink. The Alembic now deserves your finest consideration."

The present Alembic may not measure up to all the expectations of its readers, but since 1920 when the magazine was founded and through the years—even when it was virtually the only medium for student writing—there was some healthy dissatisfaction.

You observe in extracts from the initial editorial of 1937 no complacency but a reassessment of standards and a promise of better publications. Moreover, even a cursory look at Alembic of twenty or thirty years ago will reveal much very fine work.

WHEN MONEY WAS MONEY

Representative of the advertisements in volume XX are Shepard’s department store selling Arrow’s oxford shirt, the “Gordon” for $2 and Manhattan’s white and fancy collar-attached style and collar-to-match style from $2.50; the Outlet presenting “for the College Man” a handsome Stoneface topcoat for $30; Thomas F. Peirce & Son showing sport and street shoes from $5; The Narragansett Hotel was a palace even then—as it was assuming that there “The Guest is King”; and the Old Colony Bank reminding prosperous P.C. men that “If you’re ‘upintheair’ you’ll need a sense of direction.”

Wilcox wrote some lines on “a sense of direction” and we think about them in looking forward to the Alembic’s firm re-establishment in a position of prominence in the College scene—

One ship drives east and another west
With the self same winds that blow;
’Tis the set of the sails
And not the gales
Which tell us the way to go.
ANOTHER LOOK AT “THE MAY QUEEN”

It seems that nowadays the anthologists never include any parts of Alfred Tennyson’s “The May Queen” and its sequels, “New-Year’s Eve” and “Conclusion.” Perhaps along with taste, text books have changed too since the 1850’s. A book of recitations and exercises in elocution was then one of the most used of the school books. In *A Young Ladies’ Elocutionary Reader*, “The May Queen” was included and selected because it was “an example of joy, as expressed in loud and lively tones”; and “New-Year’s Eve” because it was an “example of pathos, as expressed in soft, low, slow and plaintive tones.”

Even the famous *McGuffey’s New High School Readers* contained part of it. At any rate, the popularity of “The May Queen” has long been waning; some consider the whole poem terrible corny. And, granted, the metre is kind of sing-songy, and the moralizing—of which there is plenty—is as obvious as a bubble-dancer at an Amish picnic. Although generally very well liked when it came out with “Conclusion” in 1842, “The May Queen” was called—by some American critics like Lea of the old *Southern Literary Messenger*, little more, in effect, than pilfered thoughts practically smothered beneath piles of meaningless words. But there is more to the piece than that “snake-like” line closing each stanza, “... I’m to be Queen of the May.” Like an old chestnut, even now it is occasionally pulled out by comedians of the slapstick variety and parodied.

But it is a nice pastoral poem. As the title suggests, the atmosphere is a May Day. It begins the night before Alice is to be crowned May-queen: she thinks of her day of glory and festivities of the morrow. The scene is rural English countryside—the rustic cottage; meadows and streams; cowslips, crowfoots and honey-suckle. In “New—
"Year's Eve," Alice's coronation has months passed. She is very ill, but prays to see in the new year as she reminisces the wonders of her last spring. In a passage here, description of birds is not neglected:

The building rock'll caw from the windy tall-elm tree,
And the tufted plover pipe along the fallow lea,
And the swallow'll come back again with summer o'er the wave

The poem, however, is really more than just pleasing verse of a lovely landscape: it is a story—maybe too sentimental, maybe not—of pathos, the failing and death of Alice. The two elements are well blended in these stanzas:

When the flowers come again, mother, beneath the waning light
You'll never see me more in the long gray fields at night;
When from the dry dark world the summer air blows cool
On the oat-grass and sword-grass, and bulrush in the pool
You'll bury me, my mother, just beneath the hawthorn shade,

Characteristic of nearly all Tennyson's works are Biblical allusions. "The May Queen" proves no exception. In one stanza there is a nice paraphrase of the parable of the foolish virgins as recorded in St. Matthew:

He taught me all the mercy for he show'd me all the sin.
Now, tho' my lamp was lighted late, there's One will let me in.

and a direct quotation from Job-3:17, the familiar lines: "And the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are
at rest.” Alice speaks about “Him who died for me.” Although probably the line was inserted because it was an appropriate thing for the girl to say, there are some, though, who interpret it as a confession of his faith in Jesus, as especial Redeemer of mankind. If this is true, Tennyson, as a poet, was less of an unorthodox Christian than some critics may think.

About 1845 “The May Queen”—three cantos of some twelve stanzas each—was set to music by the famous Scotch singer, William R. Dempster, and, with “Sweet and Low” and the other songs from The Princess, enjoyed tremendous popularity. “Sweet and Low” is still very much of an “old favorite”; “The May Queen” proved to be ephemeral as a song; as a poem it is faring almost as bad.

“RECESSIONAL”

For the Diamond Jubilee (1897) of Queen Victoria’s reign, there were solemn religious services, magnificent pageants in which representatives of all people acknowledging the Queen’s supremacy took part, and many ceremonies. Poets from all over the nation read fine tribute in homage to the monarch. At the closing of the Royal Jubilee in June of that year was written one of the most celebrated and classic hymns of modern times: “Recessional” by Rudyard Kipling. The effect was truly impressive. “God of Our Fathers, Known of Old” should be as familiar and sweet to our minds as “Gunga Din” or “The Ballad of East and West” because it concerns that emotion generally so strong in man—patriotism, and the sound dogma of a nation’s complete reliance on God.

There are five stanzas. It is written in regular rhyme and in the meter which is the structure of many of the hymns of the universal church, iambic tetrameter. Two verses, the first and the last, have been selected to serve as
an exemplar. Notice the long vowels and solemn tone; regarding the message, witness its timelessness:

God of our fathers, known of old—
  Lord of our far-flung battle-line—
Beneath whose awful hand we hold
  Dominion over palm and pine—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget, lest we forget!
For heathen heart that puts her trust
  In reeking tube and iron shard—
All valiant dust that builds on dust,
  And guarding calls not Thee to guard—
For frantic boast and foolish word,
Thy Mercy on Thy People, Lord!

“Dominion over palm and pine”—indeed, Englishmen had fit occasion to rejoice in the glory of the empire. Britain’s lands—symbolized by these two trees—were in North and South, all over the world. And Kipling reminds the gladdened kingdom to be humble before God Who had permitted its successful conquests and its economic prosperity. In another verse, he admonishes his countrymen to remember the ruins of ancient cities, Ninevah and Tyre, which were destroyed because of pride; and to realize that, as the pomp of the Jubilee passes, so does all temporal glory. They must recognize their obligation to worship the Lord, to thank Him and to trust first in Him.

It is unfortunate that this hymn—set to several fine, worthy tunes—is as unfamiliar in the Catholic churches as it presently is. At Christmas time, we are not hesitant to use Isaac Watts’ “Joy to the World,” Bishop Phillips Brooks’ “O Little Town of Bethlehem” and Charles Wesley’s “Hark! The Herald Angels sing.” Although all may be thoroughly Protestant in their origin, the words are very sound. The hymns are used because they are appropriate in the traditions of the season and because they are in good
taste. "Recessional" (it was meant to be used as a closing hymn) is an example—actually, this one is much finer than the three mentioned—of quality hymns which, in our services, have too often been relegated in favor of something of much lower calibre.

The fact remains that a certain effect is lost when a poem—famous, though, first as a classic hymn—is simply read in a textbook with no intimacy with the moving music. Perhaps this is a poor analogy, but try reading just the words of, for instance, some well-known American Negro spiritual like "Were You There When They Crucified the Lord?" Then read the words of some less popular spiritual. There is, acknowledgedly, a difference between the effectiveness of either category. And only in their singing is the full significance conveyed.

In A Testament of Faith, a new book by Dr. G. Bromley Oxnam, Methodist Bishop of Washington, D. C., there are a few lines that deserve some critical attention: "Man . . . has learned that class, race, and nation are concepts too small to unite mankind to win world law and order." So "Man now enters . . . a world in which we are to be educated for universal living." The "international brotherhood" slogans and these "world community" messages seem to be very hazy, very vague. Some of them are just counterfeits of truths ringing clear and devoid of indistinct, indefinite implications: those bracing lines of Kipling—

God gave all men all earth to love,
But since our hearts are small,
Ordained for each one spot should prove
Beloved over all.

But Oh, East is East, and West is West, and
never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at
God's great Judgment Seat;
But there is neither East nor West, Bor-
der, nor Breed, nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face,
though they come from the ends of the earth.

NEW TRANSLATION OF VILLON

Modern Age, edited by Russell Kirk, is a new quarterly review—the only one in America, incidentally, to call itself conservative. Some representative contributors to the winter issue, 1957-1958, include Francis Graham Wilson; John A. Lukacs, professor of history at La Salle College; Leo R. Ward and Gerhard Niemeyer of the University of Notre Dame; Paul Carroll, who recently edited the selected writings of St. Jerome for Gateway Editions; and Rudolf Allers, professor of philosophy in the Graduate School of Georgetown University. The magazine could be commended—and indeed it has been by the London Times and the Chicago Tribune among other dailies, and by Wm. F. Buckley's National Review and Commonweal—for its articles and policies.

It should please many readers to find poems by François Villon (b. 1431, Paris) in a new translation by Galway Kinnell. More of Villon's work, it was announced, will be published in the next number. (In the 1957 fall issue, his Ballade to Our Lady, "Dame du Ciel, Regente Terrienne," appeared.)

In Wyndham Lewis' documented survey of Villon (Coward-McCann, Inc., 1928) we read:

This noble salute and prayer... is fore-
shadowed in English medieval poetry, so rich in
devotion to Mary; strikingly in the opening of a
Ballade by John Lydgate (1370-1451) of which
Villon's opening might almost be an echo:
Queen of Heaven, of Hell eke Empress, 
Lady of this world, O very Lodestar.

And again in the beautiful anonymous Queen of Courtesy:

That Empress all Heaven hath
And Earth and Hell in her baily.

In the preface to Lewis’ book, Hilaire Belloc wrote:

Villon, as it seems to me, attained at once the very high place he took, has increased in the scale of European letters, stands higher now even than he did in the height of the Romantic movement, and will in the future, if we retain our culture—which is a big “If”—appear as one of the very few unquestioned permanent summits in Western letters, through the quality of his hardness.

Mr. Wyndham Lewis says it in this book in three words: “clarity: relief: vigour”—and there are the marks of hardness: of the hard-edged stuff: the surviving.

Regarding the English renderings of this Ballade, even those by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and A. C. Swinburne, Lewis remarks frankly, “I take it to be axiomatic and Matter of Breviary that to translate great poetry into great poetry is impossible.” One stanza of Kinnell’s modern translation will be compared to the acrostic of John Heron Lepper (The Testaments of François Villon; New York, Boni and Liveright, 1925).

Virgin and Princess rare, you bore I ween
Jesus who rules for aye each earthly scene.
Lord of all power He took our human screen,
Like man to help us came from Heaven high;
Offered to death in beauteous youthful mien;

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No lord but Him, on no one else I lean
And in this faith I wish to live and die.

(a Lepper)

Virgin Princess, you mothered Christ
Into his reigning without rest:
Lord Almighty, in weakness dressed,
Leaving Heaven as our ally,
Offered his precious youth to death.
Now he's our Lord, and that's my faith:
*In this faith will I live and die.*

(Kinnell)

**CATHOLIC OR ROMAN CATHOLIC**

The Oxford University Press has recently added a most welcome addition to its Home University Library of Modern Knowledge: it is *Roman Catholicism in England from the Reformation to 1950* by a distinguished Catholic, Edward Ingrim Watkin. In his forward, he clarifies a point succinctly:

I do not share the objection felt by most of my co-religionists to the designation 'Roman Catholic'. It was not shared by the Jesuit, Charles Baker (David Lewis), who for his priesthood suffered a traitor's death at Usk on 27 August 1679. 'My religion', he declared at the gallows, 'is the Roman Catholic. A Roman Catholic I am; a Roman Catholic Priest I am.' In an official communication to Lord Petre in 1789 Bishop Walmsley writes: 'Let us be named, as heretofore, either Catholics or Roman Catholics.' And in a Pastoral for the New Year 1830 Bishop Bramston writes: 'You are earnestly exhorted to remember that you are ... Roman Catholics.'

Because the double designation, used exclusively, might suggest reluctance to accept the fundamental Church doctrine that the Catholic Church must of her nature be
one and undivided, and because the qualification “Roman” might, after a while, appear cumbrous—Watkin uses, for the most part, the accepted “Catholic(s)” in lieu of “Roman Catholic(s)”.

**A BRIEF LOOK AT BRUCE MARSHALL**

Several years ago Finis Farr wrote an enlightening article (for *The Catholic World*) on the brilliant Scots novelist, Bruce Marshall. Oftentimes, he stated, Mr. Marshall is compared to Evelyn Waugh or Graham Greene—and unfavorably:

In the technical mastery of his craft, Mr. Marshall may still lag behind Mr. Waugh and Mr. Greene; but as a Catholic apologist of his own unconventional and uncompromising kind, he is in some ways ahead of them because he is more of a realist. Not for him Graham Greene’s narrow concept of sin, not Evelyn Waugh’s superb satires of modern society, but instead, a broad and earthy conception of saintliness.

*The World, the Flesh and Father Smith* (1945), probably his most popular work—reprinted in paperback edition by Bantam Books and, more recently, Image Books—well illustrates this. A random selection, Father Smith’s observations on the “new hypocrisy,” may serve as an exemplar:

In the old days, says Father Smith, people pretended to be better than they were, but now they pretend to be worse. In the old days a man said that he went to church on Sundays even if he hadn’t, but now he says he plays golf and would be very much distressed if his men friends found out that he really went to church. In other words, hypocrisy used to be what a French writer calls the tribute vice paid to virtue, but now it’s the tribute virtue pays to vice.
His sincere concern for social justice and his conviction that to love men in Christ is not enough, but that we must give practical expression of our love, is—as one reviewer of *The Fair Bride* pointed out—characteristic of his works. In the same novel, he goes on, author Marshall contemptuously rejects Communism as a creed because its very nature must defeat its avowed object. Complete social equality for man can only mean complete anarchy for mankind. Only through the domination of a minority can equality for the majority be achieved. A reasonable equality of opportunity is really the best that man can hope for.

His latest novel, *Girl in May*, is delightful and is deceptive in its simplicity. In just a sentence this “love story”—as Mr. Marshall terms it—is well described by the London *Times* in a favorable review. “The story bounds along so merrily that the reader scarcely notices the erudition that accompanies it, but is conscious only of dialogue that is constantly witty and always in character.”

Even a cursory examination of Bruce Marshall’s books will confirm his wont of using provincial songs for more advantage than just atmosphere. In *Girl in May*, some college songs of St. Andrew’s in Scotland are ingeniously used—one of them running like this:

Amo, amas, I love a lass
   As a cedar tall and slender;
Sweet cowslip’s grace is her nominative case,
   And she’s of the feminine gender.

Rorum, corum, sunt divorum,
   Harum scarum divo;
Tag rag, merry derry, periwig and hatband
   Hic hoc horum genitivo.
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