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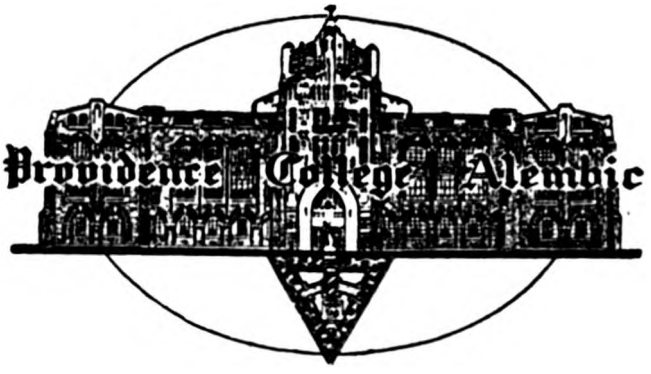
THE ALEMBIC



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THE STAFF

DONALD ARON

the squall

As the man on the dock let go the last line forward, which slid into the greasy water like an animated thing, Captain Olaf Nielson bellowed a final insult to the men who stood huddled together at dock-side. He seemed to recoil slightly at their stinging replies, which were almost whisked away by the freshening offshore wind. The remarks that came to his ears were both ribald and cutting, and they seemed to beat against him like the waves against the piling which the ship rubbed in a gently heaving motion. Although he showed very little outward sign, his heart rankled with the sting of their jibes, and it added to the burden he carried within himself.

He was a large man, somewhat over six feet, with a breadth of shoulders that emphasized his otherwise slim build. His features were as strong and rocky as the headlands that lay above the shore. His head poised proudly on a strong and sun-tanned neck that showed in the open collar of his shirt. He wore those distinctive garments of a ship's officer though faded and worn by exposure to sun, wind, and brine. The eyes that glared from beneath his cap visor were both commanding and passionate in their outlook. Here indeed was a man as strong as the sea itself.

The shore and buildings were almost obscured in the morning mist rapidly thickening into a heavy "pea-soup" fog that would lay over the shore like a shroud. It was still very early in the morning, in fact just after dawn, and

those who stood on the dock by the water's edge were the hangers-on, those of dubious occupation, who roamed the streets at night or spent the nocturnal hours in the dingy squalid "flops" and beer halls near the dock. To their ears drifted back the orders of Captain Nielson, given preparatory to getting under way.

"Port engine back one third, right full rudder," he shouted down the voice tube to the sweating, noisy engine room and then returned to his intent survey of the water off the stern of the backing ship. The vessel ground against the dock, and the wicker and rope fenders crunched and squealed as they absorbed the shock; the ship came reluctantly free of her mooring like a child frightened to leave the safety and warmth of its mother's arms. Slowly the ship swung about and then pointed out towards the grey and empty sea, which seemed to offer no welcome except to hardship and labor. The ship passed the first of the channel markers, and the shore commenced to fade rapidly from sight. Sounds and sights of land fell away and were replaced by the calm greyness of that November morning shrouded in fog.

After the *Spindrift* had settled down onto her course, and the strong pulsating beat of her engines had replaced the excitement of the sailing in the consciousness of the master and crew, they all turned to securing for the cruise. The seamen were prodded by an occasional terse order from the bridge, and the constant harassing of the bo'sun.

"Mr. Peterson," called the Captain, "will you be good enough to come up to the bridge, I have words to speak with you. This time mister, there will be no excuse for an empty hold. If we don't get the fish, the fish will have us. Is that clear? You can pass the word to all hands."

With this statement, which left the mate with his mouth agape, the Captain turned his back and returned to his contemplation of the horizon.

The throbbing vibration throughout the ship spoke of the harnessed power of her engines and in a more intangible way of the almost unbridled passions of the man who stood on the bridge deck with his feet so firmly planted. This was in truth his own private kingdom, for here he was undisputed king and ruler, lord and master, and it was his word that ruled the fate of all aboard. There was for him, Capt'in Olaf, none of the soft ways of landfolk but only the raw uncompromising reality of the sea and its life of struggle and strength. It was a strong man who went to sea in those cold and grey waters to search for the elusive schools of fish that a hungry, waiting market demanded.

His face was deeply tanned and showed the signs of the beating it had taken through the years from the elements. These signs were etched deeply into his old-young face and there was a striking resemblance of the ship, the *Spindrift,* to its master. They were similar in their sturdiness and outwardly proud exteriors. The ship had lost patches of her paint, and her forward net boom had been twisted and bent when it had torn loose in a gale and whipped against the forward mast.

Sounds of subdued talk drifted up from the crew's galley, just below and aft of the bridge, and while scarcely audible due to the muffling of the thickening fog that was commencing to lay upon the water like huge coils of greasy grey hemp it reached the Captain's keen ears. It was not the optimistic scuttlebut of a confident crew, but the subdued hopefulness of the men who had need of success to

salve the disappointment of the last few voyages. There was little aboard his ship that wasn't known to the skipper, who had an almost uncanny instinct as to what concerned his ship and its crew. His mind drifted back to his survey of the sea.

Soon he turned from his intent contemplation of the water off the bow, and uttered a few curt orders to the man at the wheel, "Mind your helm, mister, and ease her off a few points if the wind starts to take us too strongly off the bow." Thus setting things to rights above decks, he descended the ladder to the shelter of his cabin. This cubicle bore mute witness to the man who occupied it, for there were few concessions to comfort of any kind, and all was bare and trim; a few books, a lacerated, dog-eared mariner's gazette, the usual books and navigation instruments in a rack over his bunk, some extra clothing hung from a hook on a stanchion; these and one other thing were the furnishings of an otherwise almost cell-like cabin. That one other thing was the source of the solace of many strong and determined men who had become inwardly weak and crumbling like rotten wood painted over. It was a half full bottle of whiskey that lay on its side on the Captain's bunk.

Olaf Nielson's shoulders seemed to sag as he entered his cabin, for here he was not the indomitable Captain but a different man, a beaten and frightened man. He stood in the center of his cabin swaying slightly with the gentle heaving of the deck beneath his sea boots and staring at the gyrating lamp that hung in its gimbals. His gaze turned to the amber bottle whose fluid content sloshed back and forth with the motion of the ship. It had an almost hypnotic regularity. As though in a trance, he reached out for the whiskey and, pulling the cork with his teeth, tilted

it up to his lips for a great fiery swallow. He lowered the bottle with an audible groan and replaced the cork, ramming it home with the open calloused palm in a gesture characteristic of defiance and finality. His mind, as he sat in his chair and stared into space, seethed with a hatred and resentment that was consuming his soul with its intensity. The miserable crowd on the dock had been unmerciful in their cruel taunts and gibes concerning the Captain's skill as a sailor and his luck as a fisherman.

He had returned from his last few trips with an almost empty hold, his craft battered and marred by the gales and sudden squalls which had come upon him from nowhere and made it necessary to call back the small boats and hoist the almost empty nets. The rankling in his heart was heightened by these bitter thoughts, and he vowed again, as he had before, that this time he would return with more than the stench of fish in the bilge; in fact, he would load her until she almost foundered. Yes, he would throw their taunts back down their throats, the miserable scum. To accomplish all this against the terrifying odds the foul weather had imposed, he would drive himself, his crew, and his ship even beyond the limits of human endurance. Such was his fanatical resolve.

"Rotten luck," he murmured to himself as he sat and brooded; "of all the foul breaks ever to plague a man I have had my full share and then some!" Slamming the table with a heavy fist, he thundered, "Igor, you clod, come here," in a tone that was at once a command and a rebuke. The sailor who answered this summons was a huge, Baltic individual who seemed to crowd everything out of the small cabin by his presence. Igor had somehow drifted across the seas to end up in Sitka as a short order cook in a waterfront cafe and now more lately as the mess cook of the

Spindrift. "Coffee, Igor, hot and black, and mind you don't be long in bringing it," snarled the Captain. The cook regarded his Captain with a look of almost childish hurt that gave him a comic air in contrast with his stature. He retreated quickly, large man that he was, from the cabin and re-entered his galley where he spread the news of the "old man's" foul mood, foul enough to match the weather that was now closing in on the small ship. The crew did not welcome this news for they knew full well the temper and iron resolve of their captain, who could and did drive them to do his bidding, as the winds were like to drive the waves.

"The glass is droppin', capt'n, and it looks like we're in for a bad blow," was the report that Igor brought back to the captain with his coffee. Captain Olaf laced his coffee liberally with whiskey from the now almost empty bottle and settled down to brood some more. Finally, as though in a grip of some tormenting force, he addressed himself so, "I won't put about and turn back; I can't face them again. It's more than not having a good haul of fish—it's, it's, oh damn them all! They think I've lost my grip. I won't go back till there are so many fish aboard that our gunnels are almost awash." With that promise to himself he gulped down the last of the scalding brew and rose a bit unsteadily to don his slicker, for he could hear and almost feel the rain that lashed his decks. No danger, no consideration for the safety of the ship, self, or crew, would deter him.

As he reached the bridge, he was alarmed by a loud cracking noise. Glancing aft he saw that the dories, nested on top of the deck house, had been carried away over the starboard side aft, and that the deck had been swept clean of all unsecured gear. Such was the force of the waves

now coming aboard over the bow. To one less desperate this would have been ample warning of the storm that was turning the sea into a foaming, tossing terror. Would he put about ? That was the question in everybody's mind.

The helmsman looked to him in mute imprecation, waiting anxiously for the order that would put the ship out of danger, but Captain Nielson uttered not a word, and his face set in more rigid lines. A cruel and almost crazed light blazed in his grey-green eyes.

One by one, the crew appeared on deck in their foul-weather gear. They seemed to have a terror of being caught below, and they lined the starboard rail, staring in increasing apprehension at the oncoming squall which would surely engulf them soon with all its fury. A few, more brave than the rest, stared up at the captain in hopeful anticipation of a word or a sign that would send them flying before the storm to some refuge. Was it to be safety for them and ridicule and torment for the captain? Would he commit them all to sure destruction in that watery hell?

There was a struggle going on in the befuddled and tormented mind of the captain, and it tore first at his pride and then at his conscience. As if in answer to his problem he heard Mr. Peterson hail him, "Capt'n Nielson, sir, in the name of mercy will you put about and save us all from a watery grave, or must we all perish at your hands?" The struggle continued for a short while, and the contrary forces battled each other for possession of the captain's mind and then, suddenly, he cried out with a visibly great effort of will, "Now Mr. Peterson, put about and be damned, and we'll run for it." Hands flew, and the wheel spun as the *Spindrift* slowly came about. The seas commenced to pound her stern and she wallowed like a crip-

pled duck. The towering waves pursued the desperate ship as though in determined effort to catch and destroy it.

The race was on, and all hands offered a silent prayer of thanks for even this slim chance for survival as they bent intently to the task of saving themselves and the ship.

As the time passed, it became obvious that they could not outrun the squall all the way to port. Captain Nielson, sullen and belligerent, set a course for a sheltered inlet faintly visible in the distance through the occasional holes torn in the fog by gusts of wind, which were increasing in force and intensity. Slowly, against the contrary seas, the small ship with her burden of frightened human souls beat toward the rocky inlet, which seemed to grow closer far more slowly than the onracing squall with the almost perpendicular wall of water that it sucked up as it roared along.

The rocks of the inlet reached out to embrance the ship, and the engines struggled to bring them to safety; but as they approached this shelter the squall fell upon the area with stunning force and all-destructive power. The maddened wind whipped the already mountainous waves into crested towers of water that rose almost to the height of the ship's masts and then crashed back upon themselves with each succeeding gust of wind. The seas boiled and seethed as though in mortal torment.

Onward drove the ship, and on came the storm. Just as it struck, the arm of land came up to frustrate its force, and all save the captain clung to the rails or lifelines in the height of the tempest. When Igor glanced up quickly at the bridge, he beheld the captain standing like a marble form, his face a frozen mask of anguish and defeat. It was

as though Olaf Nielson, the man, was daring the very spirit of the storm to destroy him. The fates that had carried him to this point seemed to mock him.

When the ship had finally passed from the immediate danger of foundering, Igor glanced again at the bridge where the captain stood. To his shocked surprise, the deck where the captain had stood was empty. It was as though some hand had plucked him from the deck and thrown him like a broken and discarded toy into the angry seas. All hands became conscious of the same thing and stared aft in awe, realizing that in some unfathomable way the captain had made no compromise with himself.

MICHAEL FITZGERALD

song of the lark

The morning sun had pulled itself to the surface of the sea and stood like some child peering over the table-top at the feast.

The sea was vibrant with life. It rolled and rippled in delight at its own being. It caressed its fish, the sometimes cruel and sometimes benevolent children. It fed them with the plants and the life. It sustained and nourished them. Then, its breakfast done, it rose and stretched and moved toward the shore to steal the sand, to reclaim the earth for itself.

It hurried after the retreating moon and lapped the signs of man-life. The buoys rocked steadily in greeting. The row-boats turned and tugged at their lines, longing for freedom. Sadly the traps were washed and cleaned. The sea was all the liberty that man-life did not have.

The sea crept onto the beach, licking the toes of the early-morning children in bright sun-suits with eyes unstained by life. The sand-castles, so arduously built, were spun into the water, dissolving like a child's grief, and carried away. Then the sea ran down the beach and tossed up the white foam and the angry puddles and returned home.

Singing alone on a stump, a lark leaped and flew. He circled dizzily above the shingled roof-tops of the summer cottages, and on above the very highest, bending, sighing

leaves of the tree, and seemed drawn to the very eye of the sun, which stood high up in the heavens. Then he plunged earthward and settled on the stump. His song sounded as the sea retreated.

"I am waiting for Brother John to enter with his carefully arranged notebooks and text and pens. He will arrange these meticulously on his desk, draw out his pocket watch with the medal on the fob, and sit down cautiously. Then he will gaze vaguely at the class to see if any of the students are missing, and the lesson will begin. But I will not hear anything he says, because I cannot hear.

"I am a lazy puddle, a dropping of my great mother sea, a little blot upon the beach. The welling green and blue, tipped with white, crept and crawled onto the beach to steal away some members, and then retreated runningly from the strand, and the brim became holm. But I was left. A stagnant muddy pool, I am stirred and riled by some child's foot. He runs along and does not see me but only the sea. And I hungrily long for the swallowing sand, but the sand does not swallow. It watches me pass by, as if I were some white-winged bird, circling at dusk, white-winged against the glowing, absorbing blue, and it were a tall, young man, all khaki and canvas shoes and pipe, waiting for the foot-fall of some beloved, narrow-waisted girl in a flouncing skirt. I pass the sand, but it does not absorb me. And I long to be absorbed.

"But Richard knows none of this. He is listening to Brother John. Richard watches and listens. He is like a sponge, a great, amorphous spong, drinking and soaking, giving forth at a touch all its contents. But one day Richard will dry and become worse than nothing. One day his softness will be torn and twisted and tangled.

" 'Yes, Brother John. I will listen next time. I'm sorry, Brother John!' Brother John doesn't know that a puddle can't hear, and he calls on me. I must make an effort to listen. Richard listens, and Brother John is poking him with a question. Richard is twisted and turned. Now the answer oozes forth. Brother John smiles. He doesn't know that someday he'll twist the sponge and rip it.

" 'James is looking at me sadly,' Richard said, Perhaps he envies me for getting the correct answer. But I am not to be envied. I am only a grain of sand.

"I was once a great rock nestled in the floor of the sea, but the water, angry at my size, tore me and dashed me about on the jagged crags and the hardness. I was knocked against myself. The tender, liquid greenness of ferns and weed, the food of the motley fish who fed there, was ripped and snatched from my bleeding sides. I grew less and less until I became what I am today—a hard, unbreakable, immaleable grain of sand. I am as completely isolated as a man in the rain at a bus-stop or Christ in the Garden. Only the vague memory of the fish and the touch of the fern and the licking lapping of the sea lives in myself, and that is fading like a yesterday or tomorrow tea-rose.

"Brother John is looking at me oddly. Perhaps he recognizes me. He must be another grain of sand, but I cannot tell, because in my isolation I cannot speak the truth. Brother John has finished the lecture now, and he is opening the text. I may listen and bounce off the words like a rock in a cave when he questions me.

" 'I sit and I turn the pages one by one,' said Brother John. And the words form in my mouth and well forth. 'Brother John is reading now,' they say, 'and we must listen.' But they should not listen to me. Only my song is

of value, for I am a lark. I should be heard as a far-away evening voice across the darkness. I am descant with the open-throated wind and the sibilant song of the stream. Point-counter-point we run with God our firm song. And all the heavens attend. The praise of God runs on and on to eternity. I sing for only one tiny speck of time, and I do not know what I sing. But my melody is clear like a sky after the quick shower, and my voice is strong like the knotted muscle of a blacksmith or a crested warrior.

"Oh, if I could understand my singing. Sometimes I race along the stairs to understanding and climb the winding, up-reaching path, and clearness hovers like a phantom just out of view, and in my haste I fall. But clarity is there, brilliant, effulgent, all the lights of all the stars gathered into one mass of brightness, and I am blinded pleasingly by the clarity, and there is no clearness.

"I have slowed down in my reading. They must notice. I will read on for a few more pages and await the stabbing ring of the bell. 'I am Who am.'

" 'Yes, I am He who is,' said He. I watch the countless and feel and sense and know and love the all. I see the little boy growing sad in the passing of time. I hide in the torn heart of the mourning. Where a man is tossing fitfully in his bed, I stand and still the painful thoughts. I nudge along the black-shelled ant, carrying its heavy burden of victim. The grass bows gently at my touch, and the maple raises its gnarled winter-hands in my praise. A virgin, holding her will, fettered like a prisoner, offers this will, this rag-doll to Me, and I give her Myself for a lover.

"I know the longing of the sea-puddle and the sand and the lark. And one day there will be a perhaps-satisfaction for these and all."

And a fire began in some far-away place. Someone pulled an alarm, and the huge red teams hurtle through the streets, but there were not enough. And the fire spread.

Houses blew into fire like sight into love. Women huddled together in small knots of fright, and children ran, their eyes burning and singed and stained with death. Men yelled and clenched their fists skyward. But the fire ate and grew and belched. The world was burning.

Along the beach an angry, isolated grain of sand was burning with a thirst. It opened itself to drink and gulped down the water. But the water sizzled and sent forth tiny bubbles of agony, a chain of sorrow. And the grain of sand was isolated.

The stagnant puddle on the beach had watched the fire in its agonistic approach, tearing the bushes, wrestling with the great trees, that now fell and crumbled. The puddle had at first rejoiced, but in horror it had felt itself becoming nothing. Then the sand had opened, and the puddle in its tears wept and burned and was no more.

The lark, singing in the fire, had thought that it had attained the brightness, but then its wings were singed. Fearful, the lark leapt from the now gone stump and flapped its wings awkwardly heaven-ward. As it flew, it saw beneath it the pulsating, red sea. Raising its head, it saw the eye of the sun open and beyond there was clearness. Its breath hurt, and its lungs throbbed from the smoke and the ugliness below. The wings fluttered, and sometimes stopped, but the bird could not plunge. It closed its eyes and tore through the sun. It was in the clearness and the light. Its song was now understood.

JAMES McLARNEY

circular prufrock

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

T. S. Eliot

He walked along the beach with the marshes to his left shoulder and the afternoon sun and surf on his right. There was a tiny thought in his mind which came to the surface of his awareness like a minnow flicking the surface of a placid, scum-green backwater in tiny rushes of pointlessness. But the silly thing slipped away, for he tried only half-heartedly to grasp it. He knew only that he was walking on the beach and that he must keep on doing so because the roaring of the surf was on his right side and he must keep it there. His eyes would not bring themselves to look upon the spasmodic hands of the sea with the white fingernails scraping the sands. Pipers were running back and forth beneath the very palms of the sea; he knew this without hearing them or seeing them, and the gulls swung high in the tree clouds, unseen, but also present in his mind. He stepped in footprints laced by the trails of fiddler crabs who peeped warily from their lairs on the edges of the marsh where the short grasses thrust flaxen tongues into the air. The wind touseled his hair, and his feet made not a whisper in the smother-stuff uncountables. He stepped along in the footprints, the marshes on his left and perdition thundering on his right.

The sun drooped lower on his shoulder and the beach swung in; he doubled the footprints, overturning wet, virgin sand with harsh leather. Sweat beaded his forehead and refused to be dried by the wind. He did not think this strange because the wind was not supposed to dry him; only the sea could do this and he could not yet look at the sea.

The beach curved in even more. The footprints followed and soon his back was on perdition and the water was so calm and untroubled that he was able to look at it. He dropped down into kneeprints by the bank of the inlet and put his fingers, and presently his hands, into the greenness. It was cool about his hands and there was an odd tickle in his forehead which was still sweating. The tickle grew until it was almost a hurt, and then a minnow flicked the mirror surface. What had he thought about a minnow? The hurt was worse and he splashed his whole head into the water, scaring the minnow away. There was a voice calling him away off. He pulled his head abruptly from the water and the voice seemed to fade. He put his head back into the water again and heard it calling his name. It was a name and it had to be his. The greenness was in his nose and his mouth wanting to be breathed, searching with a loving hunger to be breathed. The voice grew fainter and he pulled his head from the water, letting it run from his face in little fingers. The hurt was gone and the voice tinkled in the wind, laughing, bubbling, calling his name on the wind about his ears. He knelt there listening to it call him and licked the taste of greenness from his lips until the wind-blown laughter became urgent. He shouted back, his voice snatching the air and forming it on the wind with the sea in his breath, and he arose from the bank and walked, half-running up the inlet where

the marsh folded closer and closer to the bank and the wind soothed itself to a moan of reeds and bullrushes and cattails and sea echoes of his shouting green words to the voice on the wind. He hurried and there was no jab of tiredness in his legs and he laughed at the old crab scuttling out of the way in the shallows as he ran through them and the voice, now so near and ivory-clear in the lipsmack hush of the afternoon, laughed back with him.

His feet were not imprisoned on the banks and the bogs and the earth made no protest at his passing and he looked down to see the footprints the voice had left and the footprints were no longer large and misshapen, but the tracks of small, bare feet, fitting the voice like a keel to the spray with toes as beautiful as the petals of a flower of the depths. The voice was so close it was in the drum of his ear and he ran on to almost the end of the inlet, frightening birds and sea things and reeds in the tumult of his passage, until he came to a house.

It was an old house, crouching on the shore, a huge ogre unshaven, an old woman of the land, the burned-out tentacles of its rooms hiding in star-points in the softening stems of rushes, its gables stabbing the sky in howling wails of its long-dead last agony of fire. Its window-eyes were many, but he saw through them and the sea was at his back with the stains of its kisses fresh upon his face and he was unafraid.

He stepped up upon the fallen arms of the porch, heeding not the creaks and the groans of the old woman because the voice was not in his ear but inside and no longer did it call his name, but was content to laugh with itself and say things he could not understand. He walked into the hall of the ogre, into the doorway framed with wrinkled

beams of age, and saw her sitting on a stone by a sterile fireplace with sea-weed in her long hair, pale as winter-sand in the shadow of the deepening afternoon.

The voice which he had followed from the sea ended in her lungs and she stood up, slim and straight and lovely, by the doddering bricks, and did not move until the sea was dry upon his cheeks. He stepped toward her slowly and now the grits and the fashioned pebbles screamed at him as he came and stood next to her by the dead cave of the fireplace. She spoke again those words he could not understand, quickly and without laughter and her eyes were hollow and empty in the gloom. The faster she spoke the more the hurt was in his head and he longed for the sea-greenness to stop it. Just thinking about it and longing for its release filled her eyes with the blue that should have been there and her voice laughed and bubbled again on the wind that sprang suddenly into the room, stirring the long brown hair which tumbled about her shoulders like the surf upon a reef. The hurt departed with the wind and he stepped to her with her voice swishing about him like spray. He pressed her to him and her white arms cradled his back and crept up to his neck, wrapping about him as if he were a shawl, bringing his face closer to hers. Her lips were upon his and the hurt was again in his head and filling his whole body because her mouth tasted of stones and rustling dryness of ancient cities and old timber in the desert. He tried to tell her but his voice would not come and she pressed him closer until the smell of the dead places covered him. He pushed her away and her eyes were once more hollow and black and she was screaming things he could not understand and the wind was gone because the sea-weed in her hair no longer moved. He tried to tell her that she needed the sea, that the sea loved her as it did

him, but she only screamed more loudly and he wished for the greenness to come and stop it and take the taste of age and stone from her and the awful hurt from his head. Then he knew that it was near him in the cellar, that the inlet had worked its cool greenness of release under the old ogre-woman of the dead places and he took her with him, struggling and making the hurt sharper and sharper, down the steps which he suddenly remembered into the cellar where the smell was clean and the wind was blowing faintly, where there was a deep dark pool of the inlet which he loved and which he knew loved him and would love her. He put her gently into the pool and held her there, seeing her long white legs flashing in the greenness and the stream of pearls like gulls rising from her open mouth. And when it was almost over she smiled at him and her eyes were getting blue and her brown hair looked almost black as it fluttered about her face.

Then it was done and he brought her into his arms from the pool. But her mouth still tasted of dry age. And her eyes were hollow and the sea-weed was all mixed up in her white skin as it pulled away from her arm into his hand!

He left her there in the pool and ran out of the old woman in the marshes; he ran back down the inlet with the muck and the ooze tugging at his feet and the hurt in his head worse than he had ever known it. He ran back to the sea—to the clutching white palms which loved him —screaming things he now understood, shouting over and over and over and over that he would walk the other way down the beach so that when her voice came like a gull on the wind from the pool he would not hear it and would not go to her again as he had in the past.

His run presently slowed to a walk and he turned and could not look at the white fingers of the surf scraping the sand because they were like long white legs, flashing in the darkness. He didn't know why he should think they were legs, and soon he forgot that they looked like legs, remembering only that he must not look at the sea. He walked along the beach with the marshes to his left shoulder and the afternoon sun and surf to his right. There was a tiny thought in his mind which came to the surface of his awareness like a minnow flicking the surface of a scum-green backwater in tiny rushes of pointlessness. But the silly thing slipped away, for he tried only half-heartedly to grasp it. He stepped along in the footprints, the marshes on his left and perdition thundering on his right.

GEORGE RILEY

THREE POEMS

footsteps

Footsteps beyond the window!
  My heart leaps up to run,
To see who comes, who passes;
  Perhaps it is *the one!*

The laughing figures hasten
  Unseeing past my door.
I slink back now, unnoticed;
  The sound is heard no more.

Time was when I'd pursue them;
  Loud would ring my cry,
"Oh wait! please let me join you!"
  Unheard, the echoes die.

Once came there good companions,
  Some young men, just my age.
I chased the youthful laughter;
  Their gladness turned to rage.

In truth, they did not want me
  To join the happy crowd;
The voices called me "Different,"
  The mocking laughs rang loud.

And once the steps were female;
I thought *she* might be there.
They turned as I came closer,
I cringed beneath their stare.

Sometimes the steps are coupled
As are the hearts that pass.
Then are my tears from envy;
Is there for me no lass?

Sometimes the steps sound lonely,
They solitary roam.
Perhaps somewhere *she* wanders;
When will our hearts come home?

I sit here now, unwanted,
Unwelcome, and alone.
Yet, each time I hear a step
I dream of *one* unknown.

A face — a voice — a footstep;
Again my heart must run
To peer forth out the window,
To hope it is *the one*.

the night and the mist

The Night is dark. It lays on the land
Like the shadow of Evil to come.
The Mist is grey. It steals from the sea
Like the grey ghost of Sorrow now gone.
The Night and the Mist with great rounded eyes
Press close up to my window to stare.
Their voice is low, the Night and the Mist
Yet I know I cannot fail the call;
My thoughts are grey and my dreams are dark,
To the Night and the Mist they are kin;
A Siren's song sing the Night and the Mist
To their brother who lurks here within.

I link arms with the Night and the Mist
As in friendship our own world we roam,
Where shadows are soft, and lights are blurred,
And noise echoes across the Unknown.
This is our toy that a city was,
Now by alien footstep untrod,
For we prowl with glee while Goodmen sleep,
Seek our solace in Solitude's sway.
Mist lays grey fingers across each house;
They grow small within his ghostly grip.
Night winds his shroud around each light
And robs them of their fire as we pass.

We laugh together, sharing a jest
At proud Man and his proud-puny works.
He lies now, sleeping, cowered by Night
While we brothers make free with his world.
Stars grow curious, old Moon looks down
Till crafty Mist covers their eyes,
For this is our kingdom, ours alone,
And its secrets no other may know.
Our revels go on until, at last,
Sun's swift sword scarlet-slashes the Sky.
Then we hide — we wait — to walk once more,
The Night . . . and the Mist . . . and I.

so beautiful, my love

So beautiful, my love,
My poor eyes stop and stare
As if amazed to look upon
A creature half as fair.

So soft your hair, my love,
As gleams its golden flow
I wonder if some angel passed
And left it here below.

so beautiful, my love

So blue your eyes, my love,
  They put all else to shame
Both turquoise sky and turquoise lakes
  And gems which bear that name.

So fair your cheek, my love,
  Its color makes me think
Of pure white clouds spread on the sky
  In sunrise brushed with pink.

So red your lips, my love,
  They must pale the rose
Not ruby jewel nor ruby wine
  Are half so red as those.

So sweet your voice, my love,
  Its tones so dear to me
Strains of it mock composer's dreams
  Of greatest symphony.

All this you are, my love;
  So far above my place
That it must seem a travesty
  To look upon your face.

Aud yet I vow, my love,
  My love I vow to you.
Have pity on my humble plea.
  You'll find no love so true.

GERALD POULIOT

the last patrol

"You're on patrol, Bross," the voice rang through the bunker, waking the solitary occupant of that timbered fortress.

"Go to hell," was the reply to that nameless voice. Bross slipped out from his sleeping bag and sat sleepily on the edge of his bunk, he gave no thoughts to the eternity of damnation he had just relegated to that unknown man. Bross dressed slowly, concerning himself with putting on a clean pair of fatigues rather than with the duties for the patrol. Lacing his boots, he day-dreamed of his trip home; he was due to leave any day on rotation for the rear, then Japan, then home—home!

"Snap it up, Bross, the C.O.'s waiting." This time the voice was not nameless, the face not unknown, for First Sergeant Kody was giving the order. Though Bross had no fear of the old timer he respected the top-kick and held him in high esteem.

"Be with you, Sarge, but why in hell does a short-timer like me get a patrol. I'm due to get rotated out of this hole."

"D'Allosso's orders and that's that," came the terse reply and then Kody added in a softer tone: "Pete got it last night, Bross, and you're the only radio-man we have; so take it easy out there."

Bross and the top kick emerged from the bunker, Bross with his carbine slung loosely from his shoulder. As they walked to the command post Bross for the first time realized

how much he liked Kody but he didn't know just how to tell the old man.

Captain D'Allosso, a medal of honor winner, got up from his bunk as Bross and Kody entered. Looking at the Captain, Bross realized how different the real article is in comparison to those movie medal winners. His thoughts were interrupted abruptly. "It's a reconnaisance patrol, Bross; make visual contact, radio your position and then get out of there. Besides yourself there'll be Moody, Klause, Paterno, and Jenkes. Lt. Waldron will be in charge."

"What!" yelled Bross. "Are you crazy, Captain; he's brand new, he's a chicken's-second looie."

"That's enough Bross," yelled back D'Allosso. "Waldron's in charge and you can get the hell out of here!"

Bross had no dreams of home as he stalked out of the command post and hastened towards the other bunkers to get Moody, Klause, Paterno, and Jenkes.

"Hold it, soldier! Don't you salute an officer when you pass one?" There he stood, Second Lieutenant Ambrose Waldron, cap blocked, boots polished and his brass bars shining.

"You can—," Bross buried the answer in his chest. No need to get court-martialed now, he reasoned. "I'm sorry, sir." He saluted the officer as though he were a new recruit bent on a good impression.

Bross and the patrol stood in front of the C.P. while Captain D'Alosso and Lt. Waldron talked over the patrol. Jenkes strapped the radio to Bross' back and Bross inserted the plugs and spoke to the signal officer. "Lion black forward to lion black rear, over." The answer crackled loud and clear, "Lion black rear to lion black forward, over." "Lion black rear—how do you read me, over?" "Lion black forward—I read you loud and clear, over." "Lion black rear—I read you loud and clear—out." Bross pulled out

the plug and stored the phone on the side of the transmitter.

As the lieutenant and the captain came out of the C.P. D'Alosso, putting his hand on Bross' shoulder said quietly, "Take it easy Bross—and be sure to come back."

As the group started down from the lines Lt. Waldron gave out positions. "Bross, take the front flank."

Bross flared up: "I'm a radio man. A radio man doesn't take front position, you damn fool!"

Waldron reddened. "You take the left front flank, Bross, and you're on report for that last remark."

The group marched on without enthusiasm, for one thing is a veritable fact—no one wants to go anywhere on a patrol. Bross came to a clearing and raised his arm for the patrol to stop. Lt. Waldron came up to the front and surveyed the area. "Take ten men and no noise."

It had been two hours since the patrol had left the lines and Bross had little doubt that they would soon run into the enemy. "Hope it's the Chinese," spoke Bross, half to himself; "those damn North Koreans always want to fight." As he stood there staring out into the grass meadow Bross' wish was answered; 400 yards to the front was a Chinese patrol. Their advance scout hopped about forty yards in front of the rest of the patrol which Bross estimated to be twenty-five in number.

Bross removed the phone and plugged it in. Getting the signal post he gave the grid co-ordinates to show the patrol's as well as the enemy's position. After unplugging the phone he was relieved that the patrol would end in a satisfactory manner, saluted at the Lieutenant and started to lead the patrol back to the lines.

"Hold it, Bross," snapped Waldron. "We have to take a prisoner."

The anger rose in Bross as never before. "I must remind you, sir, this is a reconnaisance patrol—just visual

contact and then we return to our lines—nothing more!" This last line was added with venom.

Lt. Waldron, however, was determined to have a prize from his first patrol. He dispersed the men. Bross, happy a few minutes previous at the thought of a completed patrol, found himself on the left front flank facing twenty-five Chinese troops.

At a time like that no thoughts enter a man's mind and Bross stood there silently, the anger gone, the fear gone, just his finger on the trigger of his carbine. The advance scout neared Bross and as Bross stared at him he wondered what this pathetic looking Chinese did back in China.

Nearer the patrol came—200 yards, 150 yards. With the patrol at this distance the advance scout was about 20 yards from Bross. He stopped short and stared—right at Bross. No hesitation now. Bross squeezed the trigger and that silent piece of metal became destruction. The spitting slugs raised the barrel of the carbine and that poor Chinese joined his ancestors as blood spilled out of his jacket, chest and face.

Hell broke loose. As Bross turned to run toward the line he ran into Waldron. "Help me, Bross; help me!" Bross did, with a forehand and backhand across the mouth.

Four hours later they arrived back. Picerno had a slight wound but the remainder were unhurt. D'Allosso raced from the C.P.: "What happened; what happened?"

"Slight skirmish, sir," answered Waldron quietly.

"Is that all, Bross?" asked D'Allosso.

It was all over, thought Bross. Waldron would learn—in time. The only one who really lost was the poor Chinese soldier. "That's right, sir; just a slight skirmish," answered Bross.

He turned and headed towards his bunker, hoping that he'd soon get home.

ROBERT E. LAFFEY

THREE POEMS

ambition

Whaddayawannabee?
the oft asked question
comes while I sit sweating in the parlor
and the torturers (you have another name for them)
smile benignly

To please, I say a fireman or some such
thing that they will understand
in their officetelevisionnewspaper world

Fireman doctor lawyer
goodgoodgood
they cry, and the conversation turns to
pleasant things again, the duty done.

Someday, when they ask whaddayawannabee
I'll say
I wannabee an IBM machine
and just sit quietly in a corner
ticking off the minutes
watchingwatchingwatching

HaHaHa, very funny they'll say
but really, whaddayawannabee
and I'll say doctor lawyer fireman
goodgoodgood they'll shout

ambition

And then they'll turn to other things
the price of beans and why they're ex*HAUS*ted
(from doing nothing, strenuously)
while i, IBM machine
sit quietly in the corner
ticking off the minutes
watchingwatchingwatching.

explanation

There was a room
which promised delights that
in the fertile child-brain
seemed the begin-all and the end-all

The door had bars
(you cannot see them but they're there)
and so it sat, the child brain working feverishly
planning entrance

It marked those that entered
noted them well
and the fertile child brain made note
details filed away in pigeon holes

The fertile child-brain grew older
the time was ripe
flanneled and cynical
it applied for entrance

It was welcomed at the door
the bars were down
entrance was free to the child-brain
it sought delights

Bare and strange the room
seemed to the child-brain
a cold bleak desert full
of faceless hollow men

The child-brain went out the same door it came in
and the bars closed behind it
as it formulated philosophy

Thus are all things made level
while the IBM machine sits quietly in the corner
ticking off the minutes
watchingwatchingwatching.

blueprint

Build a column heaven-high
and then
point to
it
and call your fellows about

Laugh at it, throw bricks if you will
after all
it's your
privilege
but don't let yourself get caught.

Call in the scientists and commission them
with caliper
and slide rule
to prove it
wrong
they will you know, they always do

And when the verdict's rendered
pull it
down into the
dust
be sure to start at the bottom

So that when you do, your shiny column
will come tumbling
down on your
head
and smash the vestigial brain

Thus are all things made level
while the IBM machine sits quietly in the corner
ticking off the minutes
watching and laughing.

JOHN RYAN

melancholy

When sable clouds hang drear'ly o'er my heart
  And, like Aeneas tossed on raging sea,
I curse my state and plead to be dispart
  From the surly bonds of this gethsemane

Each day is spent so void of all delight.
  So cold and lone my aching soul doth feel.
All through the day I long for sullen night
That such great pangs calm sleep might heal.

And then the dappled dawn doth rise;
  The lurking shadows of the night depart.
Pure, majestic, free appear the skies;
  No longer ebon clouds enshroud my heart

And like the lark I soar the heavens free;
For God his gift of peace bestowed on me.

journalistic degeneration

Unquestionably one of the greatest blights upon the history of American intellectual, spiritual progress is the prodigious omnipresence of sex and sensationalism occurring in journalistic endeavor. A far more terrifying blight, however, consists in the almost universal acceptance and acknowledgment of such crude appeals to man's sensual propensities and the utter betrayal of his intellectual competence.

The thoroughness of immorality's journalistic penetration is indisputable and sorely manifest in the alarming number of publications whose primary concern is either lurid sensuality or a sensationalism soliciting an abnormal interest in death, destruction, or in the desecration of law. Of even greater significance attesting to the extent of vile and unprincipled journalism are the colossal numbers who patronize this ethical, intellectual outrage and who actually indicate a preference by demanding and consuming "objectionables" in far greater quantities than they do printings which resist the profits of publicizing social evil.

The profundity of journalism's deviation from decency and social responsibility remains a severe refutation of America's civic morality and its intellectual, educational standards. Hardly can a nation boast of a high spiritual consciousness or an effective educational system when such a terrifying number of its constituents indulge in a literary preoccupation which is obviously a corruption of legitimacy.

The causes of this degneration certainly are multiple; but unquestionably to the irresponsible publishers—the opportunists—can be attributed the greatest culpability, for it is they who wilfully incite and prey upon the passions and prejudicies of man. The consumer, however, must bear his burden of guilt; for it is he who submits to emotions and expediency obviously contrary to his reason and spiritual intent. To government remains the final, ultimate responsibility; for it alone has the authority to control and obliterate alien forces which degrade the moral and intellectual security of its subjects.

Regeneration can well be attained by a proper public education and by the enforcement of journalistic values and principles. If publishers fail to assume the initiative, the situation can be justly remedied by a strict government censorship and code of ethics.

The National Organization for Decent Literature, a Catholic board established in 1929, has formulated a code according to which readers can indicate to publishers why certain publications are objectionable. To attain its objective of safeguarding moral and spiritual ideals, the NODL evaluates all current fictional publications according to objective, non-arbitrary standards. It lists as objectionable the publications which: 1) glorify crime or the criminal; 2) describe in detail ways to commit criminal acts; 3) hold lawful authority in disrespect; 4) exploit horror, cruelty or violence; 5) portray sex facts offensively; 6) feature indecent, lewd or suggestive photographs or illustrations; 7) carry advertising which is offensive in content or advertise products which may lead to physical or moral harm; 8) use blasphemous, profane or obscene speech indiscriminately and repeatedly; 9) hold up to ridicule any national, religious or racial group.

The plague of degenerating journalism and fiction will be curbed if readers avoid the types of publications listed by the NODL.

the causes of student failure in college

Almost invariably, the causes of all student failure at collegiate endeavor can be readily traced to two very distinct and totally dependent origins.

The first cause directly involves the collegiate administration, its educational standards and policies.

Clearly, if a college, under the guise or pretext of mass-educational expediencies or twentieth century liberalism, gears its program, curricula, or course of study to the ridiculously exaggerated limitation of the so-named "average student" it serves only to glamorize and legitimize the convenience of mediocrity.

Capitulation to the expediencies of indulgence and mediocrity—already firmly and extensively entrenched among primary and secondary educational institutions—remains wholly unnecessary and yet continues to be magnanimously tolerated among our collegiate systems. Herein lies one of the greatest tragedies of all American pedagogic

history and herein lies the most fatal and yet the least recognized of college failures.

The student, not necessarily exceptional in ability or brilliance, but industrious, inventive, or inquisitive, matriculating into an indulgent collegiate system, finds his intellect and initiative stifled or even suppressed into a state of utter indifference and passivity.

The student failure in this instance does not necessarily manifest itself in unbecoming grades but rather in the colossal, catastrophic inability of creative potential to become actualized.

The second cause involves directly the student and in fact his standards and his policies.

There are unquestionably in every college a certain minimum of students who rigorously and consciously refuse to submit themselves and their energies to intellectual endeavor or scholarship. Whether their primary pursuits become social, recreational, athletic, or simply vegetative, failure is inevitable and can be readily attributed to irresponsibility, indifference, or indolence. Through these causes of character deficiency, failure becomes manifest in the student's abject refusal to submit himself to the rigors and self-denial prerequisite to intellectual and collegiate achievement.

Such failure, however, usually manages to exist undetected and can be rather conveniently concealed by grading systems which too often prove to be misleading or even deceptive.

Such a situation, nevertheless, can be remedied by the student's individual effort to overcome the causes, the irresponsibilities, which shroud and subvert his essential collegiate intent.

individualists

It is not at all enigmatic that a modern civilization which unhesitantly boast rapidity of communication, facility in social contact, and convenience of transportation should, with so few exceptions, breed a species of beings whose mental and physical share a most shocking degree of similiarity.

Our concern, however, is not with this passive, acquiescent, and representative human but with the contrasting being who lawfully refuses to submit to the convention and regimentation of social trend and fashion. Variously classified as "non-conformist," "introverted," or "eccentric"—labels which, by the way, have achieved an evil, negative connotation—individualists are often subjected to merciless social prejudice and ostracism. Passive, unchallenging mass-conformists secure and self-contained in their "normality" do not hesitate to derogate those whose behavior deviates in the least from their pre-conceived notions and modes of social conduct. Such loathsome criticism, although admittedly a partial deterrent to many would-be individualists, more often tends to solidify and justify one's right to legitimate free thought and action.

Courageously facing prejudiced opposition, our free thinkers represent the greatest contributors and pioneers of research in all fields of human endeavor. Indeed, the most rvolutionary and most revered theories of intellec-

tual thought and progress emanate from the creative talents of such non-conformism.

It is a responsibility of our society, our civilization, to encourage and tolerate individualism and creative thinking. The result would be unquestionably a benefaction to all worlds of thought and an immeasurable aid to man's cultural and intellectual progress.

Conditioning for individualism should be initiated and sustained in all educational systems. Instruction should incorporate a spirit of intellectual independence and encourage liberal ideas and trains of thought. Awareness to the virtues of the individualistic mind reciprocates a due respect for progress and the infinite capabilities of man.

elements of racial prejudice

Unfortunately, but assuredly, a substantial proportion of racial prejudice is prompted, if not promoted, by man's sadistic and satanic suspicion of anything foreign or alien in nature. This species of prejudice, however, perforce assumes complete culpability, particularly since it is a manifestation of abject hate and a conscious submission to an obvious evil.

It is my assertion, however, that a motivation, of even greater significance in promoting racial inequality, exists which essentially denies moral irresponsibility as it concerns

the motivator. This force (or motivation) can be justly attributed to racial man's fear of a retrogressive encroachment upon his living standards, his concepts of morality, and his cultural and intellectual progress.

Firstly, every society and civilization is collectively conscious of its living standards and rigorously sensitive to any alien incursion which might have the effect of social degradation. Similiarly are races effected by conceptions and similarly do they react. When races of vastly contrasting origins are subjected to a physical merger differences in material, social satisfactions and attainments are paramount to mutual acknowledgment. Thus, where social conditions differ appreciably, the race possessing the greatest degree of material attainment and progress assumes a pre-eminence and manifests a prejudice motivated by fear of degradating its social standards and not by hate of adversary.

Similarly does a race respond to invasive elements which it considers retrogressive to its concepts and standards of morality. The reaction again is a fear, prejudicial fear that its ethical and moral principles will suffer from degeneracy. As long as variances of moral conduct and conformity exist, discrimination is inevitable and racial inter-recognition impossible.

In similar fashion do grades of cultural and intellectual competence affect racial relations. Prejudice becomes again a manifestation of racial apprehension or fear that if integration is implemented a deterioration of intellectual standards will follow.

Subsequently, it is safe to assume that it is a psychological impossibility for complete and unrestrained racial equality to become realized when racial differences of social contrast exist or are presumed to exist.

GERALD POULIOT

the bet

Muldoon was a gambling man! Every saloon keeper in Dublin would attest to that fact. Muldoon bet on anything and everything; he bet on the ponies; he bet on cards; he bet on the weather; he bet on his capacity to down the amber fluid. Muldoon never turned away from that lady called chance, not on any single occasion.

Though Muldoon was a gambling man, we must not believe that he was just lucky—not by a long shot. He invariably knew what he was betting on and he had a good head for figures; consequently, ninety percent of the bets made were ones that Muldoon was sure he could win. Of the remaining ten percent his skill and daring almost always came to the fore. Last but not least Lady Luck seemed always at his side.

So it happened that on one damp, foggy evening, Muldoon, in Paddy Ryan's pub, was boasting of his willingness to engage in any type of wager, be it large or small, when from the rear of the pub a stranger, on hearing Muldoon's roar, rose from his seat and asked the gambler, "You'll bet on anything, Timothy?" Now this in itself was odd for though Muldoon had frequented these pubs for many a year no one had ever had the courage or the nerve to call him by his first name. This incident unnerved Muldoon somewhat but with firm resolve he restated his boast to the stranger, "You heard correctly, me lord: I'll bet on anything be it fair to both parties."

The stranger moved to the front of the pub, a sardonic smile on his rather thin face. "Well, Timothy, I have a wager for you—that is, if you don't back out." The stranger said this to infuriate Muldoon and infuriate him it did; for Muldoon, the whole six foot five, three hundred and ten pounds of him, grabbed the stranger by the lapels and lifting him from the floor said, "Any bet you wish to make I'll agree to." So it was, the bet was agreed to, Muldoon not even knowing of what the bet consisted. Having accepted it in the presence of his cronies, the big Irishman was honor bound to accept any terms the stranger would impose.

Muldoon somewhat cooled off asked the stranger, "Your name first, sir, and the nature of our bet."

A crowd had gathered by this time and Muldoon, facing the stranger, seemed to sense the impending doom as the stranger spoke. "My name is Mr. Lucifer, and," he added with a chuckle, "I'm from the south or more correctly from 'down under'."

Murmurs arose from the crowd, "An Australian, a sheep rancher, a multimillionaire."

"Alright, Mr. Lucifer," interrupted Muldoon, "now the bet."

"Yes," said Mr. Lucifer, "the bet. It shall be extremely simple. I shall put up one million pounds. All you have to do is to remain in a room of my choosing for two weeks and at the end of this time you shall choose one of two doors in this particular room. One door will open to the million pounds and the other . . . well, you shall see for yourself."

Muldoon could do nothing but shake on the bet with Mr. Lucifer. Together they left the pub for that room of Mr. Lucifer's choosing.

The pair entered one of the old castles on the outskirts of Dublin, and Mr. Lucifer immediately took Muldoon to the "room." Mr. Lucifer put the million pounds at the entrance of the door through which they entered. Taking Muldoon to the opposite side of the room, Mr. Lucifer opened the second door. As he stared beyond the open doorway, Muldoon felt himself becoming sick at the sight before him. He staggered back.

"It is not a fair bet, you blasted devil," he screamed at Mr. Lucifer; "it's not human."

"I never said it was," smirked the stranger; "now if you want to back out . . . ".

Muldoon could not call off the bet regardless of the cost; he must see it through. "The bet is still on," he cried; "now leave me alone!"

"Most certainly," said Mr. Lucifer; "and remember you have to remain two weeks in this room and then you must choose one door." With this Mr. Lucifer left—through the doorway that so appalled the good Mr. Timothy Muldoon.

After the door had been shut Muldoon looked around the room. It appeared to be a completely square room. Muldoon, not content with what it apparently looked like, paced each side using his shoes and hands for measuring rules. The side with the door that opened to the million pounds proved to be one foot and two fingers shorter than the opposite side. He next examined each door and found that one door hung a trifle lower than the other. Muldoon then took some dirt from the bottom of his shoes and marked the top of the lower door. "Three safeguards," he

murmured to himself. Muldoon didn't feel half so bad now that he knew which door to go through when the two weeks were up.

He now rested on a cot, the one piece of furniture in the room. He would have to conserve his strength since he would get no food for the next fourteen days. Throughout the first week a deep gnawing in his huge frame gradually caused Muldoon much pain. In his troubled dreams huge hams and sides of corned beef danced before him. Kegs of ale soothed his parched throat but he would always awaken to find himself on that cot and without a morsel to sustain him.

Muldoon fell into a fever; his body was in torture; his strength ebbed away; his eyesight became blurred. "What if I cannot see the signs—the mark of the dirt, the shorter wall, the door that hangs lower. It was barely perceptible that first day. I'll never recognize the signs." Again Muldoon slept fitfully and dreamed of food.

At last the fourteen days passed; however, on that cot lay not the real Muldoon, brute king of the gamblers, but a gaunt, emaciated, incoherent replica.

"Your time is up," the voice of Mr. Lucifer rang out; "you must chose the door."

From deep within himself Muldoon drew his last remaining bit of strength and focused his eyes so that he might be able to see those minute signs which would lead him to wealth and freedom.

As he staggered up from the cot, Mr. Lucifer said, "Oh, one more thing, Timothy. I took the liberty to even the size of the room, to rehang the door, and to wash away that mark you made."

With the voice of that demon echoing in his feverish brain Muldoon drew himself up and with maddening cry staggered to a door and opened it!

Chan Luke was a gambling man! Every saloon-keeper in Shanghai would attest to that fact. "I'll bet on anything," Chan was often heard to say and one evening at the local bar from the back of the room a man with a sardonic . . . What's that? What of whom? Oh, Muldoon, why he owns the largest pub in Dublin, wears a diamond stick pin as big as your fist. Money in every pocket. Luckiest man this side of Hades!

JAMES TOBEY

o! life

Weary, old and grey
Victim of life's endless dismay
I search amidst the waning breaths of life
For solace, peace from strife.

Yet fate with timeless, endless wrath
Pursues my heart, reproves my path
To light, to joy, to peace.

Oh heaven, you must at last make cease
This dearth, this life in waste
For time too pursues with aged haste
To end, to end, to end,

RAYMOND RUSSELL SHEA

love

Love is hate's seed, yet its sole redress,
Which prompts God's hallowed hands to bless.

Good is not lack of evil done,
But open heart to all, as one.

The depth of love aroused for Thee;
The deltas ne'er the fathom decree.

The sitio of dry limbs on-Tree;
Shall pay the quenching cup from thee.

Walk to lead, not lose those far behind;
Lest feet are dashed, stones to powder grind.

Breathe your brother's breath in deep,
Be tempered by his heartstring's weep.

Love beauty in ebony or bronze or gold,
Surely shaped and shined by hand untold.

Laugh loveless thrusts to shame,
And conquer the worlds love's arrows maim.

Drink deeply of this red-blood wine,
That loving men, you tent a love divine.

DAVID J. LOUGHLIN, JR.

to whom it may concern

Dear Reader:

How do you do! Allow me to introduce myself to you. I'm Uncle Joe. Of course that's not my real name but it's the one I like the best because it makes me feel—well, like I'm a father who can advise and help all his little children. In reality I'm Paul Richards, now an insignificant invalid, confined within four walls of a not too cheerful hospital room. Two weeks ago this morning the doctor came and told me that I had about a month left to live. This news filled me with such a fear that I was beside myself to know what to do. The clock ticked on the table across the room. Each minute seemed like an hour, each hour lengthened into a day. At the end of a week I felt as though I had lived through an eternity.

Insanity is not an easy thing to confess to—but I confess that towards the end of the second week I was insane—crazed by the thought of dying, of facing the God I knew I must face, of His judgment; or perhaps it was my own life of which I was afraid. Not that my life was so horrifyingly sinful; it was just the things I didn't do and could have. I had nothing positive to hand to God as a passport to Heaven.

Anyhow—on Friday night before the second week ended, I had a feeling that death was creeping in, as though it had sneaked in the window, and now was creeping into the very marrow of my bones. I rang for the nurse to come

and dozed off while I waited. Within a few minutes I heard the door of my room open and a footstep heavier than usual crossed the room to the side of my bed. By this time I had opened my eyes, and I shall never forget, even in eternity, the sight that met them. It was a Catholic priest, but for an instant he looked so closely like the picture of Our Lord which I recalled having seen when I was a boy, that I blinked a few times and then looked again. It was the beautiful visage still standing there. He leaned slightly forward, placing one hand on the bed, and said in the calmest, friendliest voice I have ever heard:

"Is there something I can do for you? I heard your buzzer ring and came to see if I could be of any assistance."

Each word was said with the warmth of a golden bell, each word enunciated as though spoken by a diction teacher. Deeply impressed, I fumbled for a minute and then with almost childlike simplicity I faltered out:

"Father, if you could, a glass of water, please!"

Promptly, but not sharply, came this reply from the same wondrous voice:

"Certainly! Right away! You just lie back and relax."

The priest left the room and I was alone—alone again with my conscience. I couldn't keep the image of this Christ-like man from my mind. From the moment he came into the room my fear had ceased. An apostle of Christ had brought the peace of Christ to me. In a few minutes Father returned and after drinking the water I told him of the miraculous effect he had on me. All he would say was:

"God works in strange ways!"

He heard my confession, gave me his blessing, and promised to bring me Holy Communion in the morning.

That night for the first time in two weeks I slept, slept like a baby. My fears had dissolved and in their stead rose a new and glorious strength. When I awoke I felt like singing a song, like dancing a jig, but I deemed it more appropriate to express my thanks. For the first time in quiet a few years I pushed back the covers and knelt down beside my bed. Gratitude poured forth from my heart in prayers such as I had never prayed before. Then I washed and waited anxiously for Father Riley to come. I lay still, offering silent prayers that I would be worthy to eat the Bread of Life. I heard the bell ringing down the hall, heralding the coming of the Savior. Words cannot express adequately the joy, the supreme happiness that filled my heart, my soul, my whole being when Father Riley placed the sacred host on my tongue. After offering up my Communion and making an act of thanksgiving, I cried. Not tears of sorrow or agony—but tears of joy.

The nurse was amazed when she brought my breakfast and saw me smiling, but when I asked for a second breakfast she could no longer hold back her curiosity. She asked:

"Mister Richards, how is it that you act so like a well man all of a sudden?"

"You see—I've gotten my accounts straightened out and with my money in the bank I feel quite secure now."

The next morning I asked for some paper and a pen. Realizing my time was drawing to an end, I decided to write a little story that may concern you, someone dear to you, or may be able to awaken some sleeping soul.

You know—I'm getting old now and it takes old people many words to say what a young person could say in but a few. But I thought maybe you should know where, and how and why I am writing this letter. Without further adieu—on with my story.

About twenty years ago I was editor of "The Eagle," an evening paper published daily. On the staff was a young chap, Larry Benson, who was a live wire and a very promising reporter. After rising steadily to become one of the top reporters, he married a lovely girl, Kathy Rhody. How proud he was of her! If he wasn't talking of her around the office he would bring her in. It seemed that nowhere could be found a truer love or stronger devotion. Then boom! Along came the depression. Naturally wages had to be cut and of course the cost of living had gone up. Larry being of a rather proud nature, felt that Kathy should have the nicest things and tried very hard to make a little extra money on the side. For a time he worked nights in a factory. Soon, however, the depression growing steadily worse, Larry gave up all hope. What little salary he was getting as a reporter he was spending on making himself a first class drunkard. Not too infrequently, or should I say very frequently, you could find Larry in a disgustingly inebriated condition in the cheapest barrooms in town.

Kathy was expecting a baby within the next month. She was sickly, weak from lack of food, cold from lack of clothing. Still she loved Larry with all the love a heart could ever love with, and pleaded with such tears as were never shed before. Still Larry continued. Kathy went to the hospital and soon both mother and a lovely baby daughter were reported doing fine. To this day, I think it was only Kathy's strong devotion to Our Blessed Mother that pulled her through those terrible months before the baby was born. Larry never even went to the hospital to see his wife and baby. By nature I'm not a nosey person and don't like to butt into other people's business but they had gone far enough. It just pulled at my heart strings to see such a fine young man making a fool of himself. So, one day after

lunch I called him into my office and asked him to sit down. His clothes were shabby and his eyes and face were red from over-drinking. I hardly knew where to begin, but I found myself saying:

"Larry, there's a little something I'd like to tell you. A true story that happened right here in this town and not too many years ago. There was a young reporter, Jack Smith we'll call him, who was doing fairly well, was happily married and had one child, a son. Things were going pretty smoothly, perhaps a little too smoothly, and soon Jack fell in with bad companions. One thing led to another and in a short time Jack was drinking heavily, seeing other women, not going home at all. His wife was lost, but being a good Catholic she prayed and prayed for him. It was only a matter of time before Jack became involved in one of the biggest ring of gangsters in town. One night there was a murder on the east side and it was carefully planned that he would be in the vicinity at that time so the murder could be pinned on him. Being arrested for murder wasn't an easy pill to swallow, especially since he didn't do it. He broke loose and went to the house of the woman whom he knew could clear him. While there, he was in the midst of a shooting between the police and the gangsters, and was seriously wounded. Only the grace of God saved his life. The gangsters were revealed and he was proven innocent. There in the courtroom to greet him were his wife and child. I was standing down in back and my eyes clouded as I saw him embrace first his wife and then his son. Love and happiness were restored to this family. Then . . .!"

By this time Larry Benson had stood all he could. Perhaps it was his conscience that was bothering him. He stormed out of the room and I watched him board a bus as I gazed from my window. Somehow, I just had a feeling

that he was going home, shall we say, to sort of straighten things out. Yes—Larry did go home and from that time on a more devoted husband or a prouder father could not be found. Larry's doing fine now. In fact he took my place as editor of "The Eagle." The other day he came up to see me in the hospital and I asked him if he recalled the day I had told him the story.

"Yes—yes," he said slowly and very thoughtfully, "as if it were yesterday."

"Well Larry—you know there's something even more personal that brings joy to my own heart for having told you that story. You see—it was the story of your own father."

Slowly, placidly, Larry came over to the side of my bed, gave me a firm manly hand clasp, and with an almost angelic glow on his face left, murmuring something under his breath about going over to the little chapel on West Street.

Of course I wasn't there, but I can well imagine how he knelt before the Blessed Sacrament and, his heart bursting with joy, shouted silently to his Lord, "Thank You, Jesus," and then to his own father, "Thanks Pop!"

Well that ends my story, I'd like to tell you another but my time is fast drawing to a close. Of course, this story may not have applied to you—or you—but to whomever it did or will—I most sincerely hope I may have helped you.

Wishing you and yours the best of everything that life has in store for you—

I remain—

Sincerely,

Uncle Joe

GEORGE E. BOYD

the poet

he sings the song of all mankind
(he sings it very well)
but if he's heard by anyone
only Time can tell
at first his style's compared to that
    cum or keats
of mings of
and this he must explain to each new person that he meets

he's always hailed and damned because
he follows tradition or doesn't
must defend himself saying i'm feeling quite well
but when i wrote that one i
                wasn't
simple or ornate his verse is repeated
in salon on campus et cet
and behind him rises a Brahmin class
of the lucky people he's met

in a year or two his comet's burnt out
his anthologies offered on sale
the cycle's complete and attention's returned
to the sea and the G*R*E*A*T**W*H*I*T*E
    W*H*A*L*E*
at times he's requested to say a few words
to a ladies' club gathered for tea
they haven't a notion of who he is
but he doesn't ask too large a fee

the poet

Impoverished he dies alone unmo
u
r
n
e
d
or causing a scandal so great
the tabloids make merry and bookstores are crowded
and again his works bring the top rate
now every Sunday afternoon
pilgrims crowd into potters field
and weep for they know the genius is gone
no more brilliant gems will he yield

his worries are over he doesn't mind now
when their interest once again turns
and they flock to the shrine of the G*R*E*A*T
W*H*I*T*E*W*H*A*L*E*
or revive their jo bobbie burns
his verse is forgotten or put into text-books
as a model of this or that school
to be scanned by some bard embryonic
(that is
if he followed each prosody rule)

a life has been spent a heart has been broken
to titillate the throng
and the moral you'll see if you look hard enough
at this ridiculous
song
it's known by every poet who writes
to please the hoi polloi
no one gives a ——— for the thoughts you express
but just for the style you employ

JAMES McLARNEY

on the death of diffy

I weep for Diffy. He is dead!
Ill-fated, innocent, youthful weed
Was Diffy. This tender sprout
In chaos first found root.

O lovely child of nature's own!
How came you 'gainst a porcine snout?
Literary cancer was not in your seed,
Nor ounce of malice in your head.

How I recall the morn of your birth:
Ten-thousand Hemmingbirds sung out
Clip-phrasedly praising your ego-seed.
There, in Greek Chamois, you were born.

We word-dissenters were on a toot,
Typewriters tingling lest a pout
Take form upon your tiny, loving face
How short your life in a neo-Gothic place!

The halcyon days of your childhood are
Engravened 'pon my heart, dear Diffy.
As a mere shoot you had us all quite squiffy
Doing verse experiments with images . . .

on the death of diffy

until
we
wroteveryquickly
or
v e r y s l o w l y
as
was
your slightest whim;

Taking the ends of our beginnings
In the rut-down ends of run-out days,
Building gory pyramids
Of dirty lobster claws
In the pits of morgue-smell drawing rooms
and the depths of silent seas;

Singing of Brooklyn,
Fermy city of a thousand streets,
Fish Market, Knish-Baker to the world,
Knife-snicking, gutter-waddling Vagrant,

Fat-boiling, drink-swilling Roisterer of the barrooms,
Shipper of the Nation's dresses,
Juggler of trolley cars, Giant of chewing gum,
Steaming, sweating, cosmic stew-pot;

laughing merrillymerilly on the way
to the market of human flesh
cursing at mr. abadoes on the step
and seeing
the president
(God help him)
sitting on a
Big Black BOMB

Sweet Diffy! We covered you with asterisks
'till *nobirdy avair fleu eagley hier . . .*
While you grew slowly, taking heady risks
And spreading feverishly 'round the sterile arch.

We should have sensed the vengeance in the air,
Heard O. Henry yelping in his grave,
And noticed Dr. Johnson squirming in his chair.
Fond Weed! The minions gathered for your doom!

I was out collecting adjectives that fatal day
(I know not where the others were) when through
The cultured underbrush of leaves of py-co-pay
With a blast of moral trumpets came the killers.

There you stood, Stout Weed, ringed all around
By a thousand righteous hob-nail boots
Enduring (bravely, I know) the awful hoots
Of central unity and social unawareness.

Then, without a murmur, you bowed your frondy head
And there—by the arch—they did you in.
They tramped and stomped and rooted and fed:
You silently paid didactic penalty for sin.

When I at last returned, poor Bloom was weeping
O'er your corpse. I knelt 'next Prufy and mourned,
While the Hemmingbirds dropped roses and sadly seeping
Through the trees came the notes of Prewitt's taps.

The arch 'neath which you dide, Poor Weed,
Has become in time your monument. Indeed!
We built a Chapel on the spot, a heady place
Of wrong-way altars and prayers in lower case.