Winter 1935

Quarterly, Vol. 15 No. 2

Connecticut College

WINTER

QUARTERLY

The QUARTERLY

CONNECTICUT COLLEGE
NEW LONDON, CONN.
WINTER · · · 1935-36

VOLUME XV NUMBER II

THE C. C. QUARTERLY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I STOOD IN MY SHOES

Peggy Ball '38

I WAS GETTING very tired. Tired of thinking, tired of doing, tired of being. And as I was being tired of myself and my environment I began being tired of being tired. It was all very fatiguing and disheartening, this state of mind, a continual drag and drain on any efficient thought or action. I felt all over like a relaxed fist or a caved-in chest. It was confusing too, for at times I would forget that I was tired. I would expand and my eyes bothered to see extra things; and then I would remember that I was tired. My energy would leave me, sometimes in wheezes and sometimes in seepings, but always as air from a collapsing balloon.

This tiredness I felt was irritating. My mind was muffled as a voice with laryngitis. As the afflicted speaker fights continually the desire to say more than his paralyzed cords will permit and then submits to monosyllables and nods of the head; so my mind gave up trying to express or finish any firm, strong thoughts or observant opinions and simply released tedious and worn commonplaces. It was no wonder I was tired of being tired. Living with despised and insignificant thoughts, I seemed to be disintegrating into a plastic nonentity.

It was unreasonable! Here I was, weary and depressed, yet I wouldn't let myself rest or recuperate. I wandered about becoming more tired and hopeless. Finally I tried reading. It was soothing—I mulled over things that other people had said and found it satisfying. I began to lose my tedious self and think in the thought patterns of people in the stories I read. I found myself drifting away from being tired. The little obsession was wearing off and I was being something else again. I couldn't quite explain it, this

drifting and sliding into something else, when I had so positively a drab, exhausted existence, and yet I couldn't quite imagine ever being anything other than what I was just then. Into these obscure ramblings fitted the refrain of a poem that John Keats wrote for his little sister. He probably did not mean what I have taken from it, but the jingle ran;

"So he stood in his shoes
And he wonder'd,
He wonder'd,
He stood in his shoes
And he wonder'd."

And I stood in my shoes and I wondered how I had ever been the tiresome, weak individual who allowed herself to be tired of being tired; and I also wondered what I would be after I stopped being what I was as I stood there in my shoes wondering.

I

TAKEOFF

Sonia

IT WAS UNUSUALLY QUIET at the airport. An orange disc of moon rose slowly behind distant trees and fused with the red glow of the boundary lights. On one side, a revolving beacon shed its interrupted sweeps of light across the field and illumined momentarily the doors of the quiet hangars. There was no sound but the hushed voice of a strong, cool wind rushing past us and raising little clouds of dust in its path.

As we sat watching the moon rise higher above the treetops, the familiar sound we had been waiting for broke the silence of the night—the drone of a motor coming nearer through the darkness; then two lights circling over our heads, lower—lower—until they disappeared behind the little rise of ground before us. In a moment they reappeared, close to the ground now and coming nearer. The great red ship, reflecting the moonlight, moved slowly toward us, turned halfway, and stopped.

Lew rose and walked slowly out onto the field. I followed close behind, holding my coat tight around me as the current from the propeller caught it and flapped it about my legs. "How's it look, Jack," he asked, raising his voice to a shout over the noise of the motor.

"Fine," came the shout from inside, "Couldn't be better." The two of us climbed into the cabin and sank back comfortably against the fragrant leather seats. We talked gaily as the ship bumped roughly over the uneven ground to the end of the field. Jack turned the ship, and with necessary caution opened the throttle wider for a few

moments while he scanned the horizon for approaching planes. Another minute and we were moving swiftly toward the dark line of hangars. The wheels of the ship left the ground, and we roared into the cloudless sky—three human beings behind a host of unseen horses.

II

MOON OVER MANHATTAN

We Were Fast Leaving Long Island behind us. I leaned back contentedly and watched Jack. His small, strong hands moved skillfully over the controls, keeping the ship steady against the contrary currents that would carry us from our straight, level course. This was nothing new for him; he who knew every variation in the sound of his motor; who, more than once had come so near ever-watching Death—the time he thought his head had burst as his sleet-coated plane shrieked crazily to earth—the time he left his shattered plane and dead companion in the South American jungles and made his way alone back to civilization. How could he have come back after that? How could he sit so quietly smoking a cigarette, so unconcernedly noticing the changes on the lighted dials before him? I sighed impatiently and peered through the small window. I know the answer, but I cannot tell *you*.

How smugly safe the little houses looked below us. How feeble were the uncertain rings of light cast by the flickering streetlamps. The brighter highways wound like giant pythons into the fast-approaching metropolis. And before us always, the rays of the pale moon diluted the blackness of the sky and caught on the spinning silver blades of the propeller. We were flying low now through the warm haze of light that hangs over Manhattan after the

sun goes down. The skyscrapers (I smiled at the name man has given them) with their walls of windows catching the lights from below, seemed the toys of a child—so fragile I could have crushed them in my hand. Forty-second Street —Broadway—Times Square—with their little cars and the little people that built the skyscrapers and chained the hundreds of horses that were speeding us through the night.

How can I describe the magnificence of the scene—the overwhelming confusion of light and stone and men? You must see it yourself to understand. Jack banked the ship steeply to the left and circled the sharp pinnacle of the Empire State Building, then opened the throttle and turned away from the city, back into the darkness. As we left, I looked down at a passing tower. The thread-like hands of a lighted clock said ten-thirty. I smiled again, this time at the way men measure every tiny minute of existence. The propeller cut high up into the air—the little lights of man grew smaller—the blackness closed in on every side—and we sped on, nearer and nearer the watching stars.

III

LANDING

THE MOON HAD RISEN high by this time. Its silver dust filtered through the sky and collected in one wide, shimmering ribbon on the black surface of water below us. In one place the ribbon lay severed—the dark strip of Long Island cutting its soft splendor. The earth, the sky, and the sea were one—an infinite darkness pierced by the moon and stars above and their quivering reflections below.

No one of us spoke. Words were such useless things, such inadequate expressions of true feeling, such hopelessly poor instruments of understanding. Somewhere down be-

low, the people were looking up at our two tiny lights and were glad for the safety of their little streets and little worlds. All at once I hated these people of the earth. I hated their pettiness and their triviality. What possible part could they play in this infinitesimal universe? How could they matter to a God whose hands move planets and keep the sun and moon in constant never-ending harmony? Poor miserable atoms, begotten of dust, nourished on frothy philosophies of nothingness, and believing in their own small minds that they mattered. I could not return to their emptiness.

And then, through the steady song of the motor, I heard the answer. "You are too far away from your earth. If these people were mere particles of insignificance, would not your God reach down and crush them in His mighty fingers? You are part of them—no bigger than the rest. You must go back to them and share their littleness."

On our left, the familiar beacon swept through the sky. The propeller cut downwards through the air as the ship picked up tremendous speed and roared over the dark line of buildings. I fastened my safety belt and swallowed hard. Suddenly the field was flooded with white light; the ground came swiftly nearer; and in a moment, the wheels sank softly to the earth. It was all over.

The three of us walked slowly over to the restaurant. The ground felt strange beneath my feet. Lew and Jack were talking, so I dropped a little behind them, holding on as long as possible to the beauty of the moonlight on the dark, quiet field. When we opened the door of the restaurant, we were greeted by a flood of light and laughing voices mingling with the clink of ice in tall glasses and a few soft bars of music from upstairs.

"Hello there,"—a voice from the other side of the room —"Where have you three been? We've been looking all

over for you. What? This time of night? Don't you get enough of it in the daytime? Come on, join the party. You don't know what you've been missing. We all thought you'd—"

I held tight to the edge of the table, then flinging my half-smoked cigarette to the floor, I crushed it fiercely beneath my heel. I couldn't see very well. "It is the brightness of the lights," I told myself.

WHAT IS BEAUTY?

Marion Zabriskie '37

Beauty is the barren tree that etches a gaunt skeleton against a steel-grey sky that promises quick snow.

Beauty is the sap-filled twig that radiates a faint blush of blood-red life into the coaxing, misty air that says it's Spring.

Beauty is the teeming maturity of the full-leafed tree, dropping fertile seeds unto the womb of earth, offering sheltered haunts for robins' nests.

Beauty is the garish leaf that flaunts red and gold before a dying nature, fast becoming drab and dull.

Or, is Beauty the unchanging line of rocks that cuts sharp juts and jags into the eternity of space?

Answer me, philosophers, quibbling over "time" and "timeless!"

THE THIRD GENERATION

Harriet C. Mendel '39

I

HERBERT'S MOTHER was remarkably proud of her son when he was president of his school's dramatic society, editor of the school newspaper, head of his fraternity (the "best" one in school since almost every member has his own automobile). She boasts a very little less since he failed to "make" the dean's list at Yale. Mrs. Klein is president of the Council of Jewish Women; she is the most active member of the literary society—which extols Jewish writers because they are Jewish and non-Jewish ones because they must have been good to have their books published. Mrs. Klein can effectively discuss the faults of every Jewish woman in town; she always knows what is socially proper. Those are the qualifications for president of the sisterhood.

Herbert, of course, has a great many friends. People say that he is very promising—just what he promises is a bit vague. Whenever Herbert is congratulated on his honors or complimented on his beauty, he smiles modestly—Herbert has extraordinarily deep dimples. Girls say that he is a marvelous dancer and has a smooth "line"; they are always telephoning him, his mother says, beaming. Herbert is proportionately egotistical. People used to say, "He's so brilliant and so modest." They still think that he is modest. That is because he never fails to greet anyone with his famous smile.

Herbert's grandfather attends an orthodox synagogue. "You know how old people hate to change their habits," apologizes Herbert's mother.

I once met Herbert walking with a Gentile boy. He

introduced his friend to me proudly, a little condescendingly. The boy said, "Good-bye Herbert, thanks for helping me with the history. See you again some time." Herbert told me that boy has three yachts. I was suitably impressed.

II

I Once Knew a Boy who killed himself; he jumped from a third story window in New York. His mother went to a sanatorium for two months; his father was astonished; the faces of the boys who had known him were grave—though these boys had never been his friends; the old women put their heads together; Jimmy's grandfather swayed in his *taleth*. Everybody said: "It's too bad; I pity his mother—an only son." A *kaddish*, they might have said—but Jimmy's parents and their friends never spoke of death, tried never to think of it. Speaking softly, they said: "I wonder why he did it . . . ."

Jimmy was handsome and brilliant. His mother often wondered why he never brought his friends to his home. His parents are American-born, well-educated in American schools; his friends were a pious *melamed* who peddled vegetables in the day time and studied the Talmud far into the night, a professor of English literature from Boston, a girl with a passion for any kind of knowledge. Jimmy's mother sighed often, telling her most intimate friend, "Jimmy used to tell me everything; now he never talks when he is at home." "Home" is an apartment on Riverside Drive, furnished beautifully and unimaginatively by the correct decorator. A third floor apartment—an ideal location, Jimmy must have thought. But he went down to the Ghetto to jump out of the window.

Avrahm the *melamed* called him Jacob—for he was named for his great-grandfather, who was a rabbi and a

Cohen. Jimmy's sister is married to a Protestant Anglo-American. Louise is no longer beautiful; there are hard lines about her mouth, and her eyes are sharp and bright. Jimmy wanted to get married, too; eighteen is the traditional age for marriage—Jimmy was almost twenty. Somehow someone heard something. "Maybe he got into an entanglement with some girl . . . ." The old women's heads came closer together. The women who had young daughters looked worried. Elise wept just a little and read philosophy.

Jimmy told me once that he wanted to write, had plans for a history of the Jews. He showed me something he had done—criticism and poetry, not history. I went home and burned all my verses.

"The brown waves of fog toss up to me
Twisted faces from the bottom of the street . . ."

T. S. Eliot

They are calm faces
and their eyes are turned inside out.
They are calm faces
and their mouths are set on backward.
They come up to me in circumlocutions of the mind.
My eyes twist them as they carry them.
And my lips writhe when I try to speak.

Harriet C. Mendel '39

KALEIDOSCOPE

Jessie A. Foley '37

THE CONVENT where I used to go to school is just around the corner from my house. I remember how, at two minutes of nine, I would run down the alley and past the tall red brick wall that surrounded the convent grounds. The names printed on the wall in scraggly, childish letters would flit past my eyes, and the bicycle rack at the niche in the wall of the building was a flash of chromium lightning as I raced past. I remember the anaemic green plant in the window that faced on Grotto Street; the iron grating which I peeked through to laugh at my friend who had to stay after school. She had run across the monastery walk where only the nuns may go, and now she stood doing penance with her arms outstretched forming a cross. Sister Margaret Mary sat frowning at the desk, her white barbette stiff and gleaming around her long, thin, ascetic face. I remember once having to do penance for a fault I did not commit. Ever after that my arms would ache and I would shudder at the sight of the dull green blotter on that massive brown desk by the window under the grating.

The front door of the building was never open. It used to take all my strength to pull it open, and I always had to run in to escape as it slammed closed. The dark old hall with its red tile floor was surrounded with benches, and the inner door had a big glass window with a sliding piece through which tiny Sister Paula took messages. I used to feel very official and very much on the inside as I marched right in past some poor outsider who had to sit and wait almost in darkness.

The parlor across the hall from the doorway was lighter than most of the rooms. I used to think that Palm Beach

would be like the parlor with its tropical plants, palms, ferns, and its red tile floor. There was a telephone there with an enticing dial appliance, but we were never allowed to use it. The refectory next to the parlor always smelled of something good, and rows of immaculately white tables stretched to the kitchen which was part of that great unknown beyond, the monastery.

I can see the dark halls, dark woodwork, red tile floors, and hear the tinkling chimes of the grandfather clock that stood outside the Mother Superior's office. I can see the garden with its geometrical walks, the pool with its fountain, the porch with its arches and pillars, where we played Hide-and-Seek at recess time. There is the Grotto, a sunken place with wooden swings and see-saws, and the path that ran along the bank behind, where the statue of the Virgin was. It was always such a bother to have to curtsey before the niche when one was off in a hurry to hide from the others. There is the monastery walk hidden by a trellis covered with vines, and the nuns' mysterious cells with those tiny little windows. I can remember the roofless passage that ran along outside the second floor from the monastery to the assembly hall; the surprise when we first saw those lovely new red draperies for the windows and stage of the hall.

But I think I loved the chapel best. The tiny white altar was a replica of the altar of the city cathedral; it looked like part of a doll's house compared to its model. The lights on the altar were bright at mass, and the red rugs were streams of wine in my imagination. There were many shiny gold vessels placed on a fine white altar cloth edged with lace. The nuns sat beside the altar behind a veiled grating so I never could see them. They chanted slowly and monotonously, and at times I thought I could

recognize Sister Jane's gruff voice and Mother Agnes Marie's whistled s's. Sister Theresa was the pretty one who played the organ while we sang "O Salutoris" at Benediction. The priest and the altar boys (they were always homely little things) would kneel before the altar in clouds of heavy-smelling incense. The incensor rattled and the vigil lights twinkled and I would squirm in my seat. The pew squeaked whenever I moved, and the nun, kneeling on her prie-Dieu, would scowl and bow her head again.

There was Sister Rose with her sour face and pince-nez glasses. I can see her squint and purse her lips. I hated her then. I remember how she would sit at her desk in the Annex, just off the Study Hall, and try very hard to teach us Latin. When we didn't know our lesson it was up to me to get her off the subject. Once I got her to talking about what part of a cow different kinds of meat come from. We laughed and she laughed with us. I wonder now if perhaps she was laughing at us.

The boarders were always an enigma to me. I couldn't understand how they could stay away from home so long and sleep in a big dormitory. I couldn't understand especially how they were able to work in the study hall. I used to spend my study hours watching others excuse themselves and return. I was amused to watch the sloppy curtseys they made upon returning, as they blessed themselves with Holy Water from the china fount that hung beside the door. My curtseys were always neatly timed, and I never put more than one finger in the water.

Last summer I went back to call on the nuns as I do every year before I go away to school. Sister Margaret Mary was still raking in the garden. She wore the same black apron with the pocket torn off, the hem of her habit was turned up as usual to show white cotton stockings and

worn black oxfords. I caught occasional glimpses through the trellis of a nun strolling along the monastery walk with her head bowed, reading her daily office. The same sharp notes floated down from the practice room on the third floor. The same white curtains flopped in the wind from the windows of the dormitory on the floor above. Everything was just as the day I left it when I thought innocently to myself, "Whew! I'm glad that's over." Now when I am too old to swing in the gravelled Grotto, or to run heedlessly past the niche, or to trespass laughingly on the monastery walk, I see that these sophisticated places I frequent and the grown-up things I do today have none of the charming, friendly simplicity that I did not know enough to love when I was small.

Mrs. Wagner had a little boy, Stanley,
To Princeton he wended his way;
Until now, that little boy, Stanley—
Is a college man—God save the day!

Mrs. Nies had a little girl, Winnie,
Who also to college did stray;
Until now, that little girl, Winnie—
Has gone "West" in the real Eastern way.

Then Winnie developed a complex,
That Winnie so happy and gay;
So she wrote to the college man, Stanley—
In hopes he would answer straight 'way.

Winifred Nies

ETERNITY

Darlene Sterne '38

THE OLD CASTLE was in ruins, but the two who stood at the parapet that night did not know it. The powerful masonry jutted out in even blacker silhouette, just as it had done for the past five hundred years. The enchanted spell of illusion veiled the eyes of the boy and girl so they could not see that the ageless blocks of the stone were moulding to dust in the courtyard. Secure in their belief that anything which had endured for five hundred years was eternal, deceived by their certainty that that which had once happened would always be, they leaned upon the moon-washed parapet and heard behind them the ghostly sounds of revelry long past.

The girl, and she was very young, said that it wasn't the wind rustling through the trees or whining past the turrets, nor was it the stream below swishing and tinkling on the pebbles that made the noise. The vaulted cavernous halls within were echoing to the sounds of medieval lords and ladies at their nightly feast. Listen! Because the boy was young he listened, and he, too, ceased to hear the wind or stream. Both heard instead, the muted cadences of conversation and laughter, the stiff swish of brocade skirts sweeping along stone floors, the clank of swords in heavy, jewel-incrusted scabbards, the jovial pounding of fists on lavishly heaped tables, the clink of silver goblets brimming with red wine, the tinkling of the jester's bells, the crackling of an open fire with meats sizzling on the spits before it, the restive pawing of the horses on the cobblestones of the courtyard below. This, then, was eternity. The footfalls and the laughter, this host of colorful and brilliant sounds

could never be stilled, could never return to nothingness again.

And then there was a roaring crescendo which rent the soft fabric of the night as the Berlin to Paris express pounded by and tore on through the darkness leaving the tattered shreds of silence hanging and swaying quietly as the diminishing echoes in the valley tapered and trailed off. The night and the silence were whole again and a boy and a girl, suddenly puzzled and alone, stood at the parapet of a silent castle that was slowly crumbling to ruins.

"NICE"?

Winifred Nies '38

I Am What mothers and fiction writers term a "nice" girl. What a pink-tea word that is! What a placid, stolid, and unemotional person the adjective suggests; yet, how perfectly it fits me. If only I might possess dancing eyes, impudent curls, or even a cherry red mouth of the sort that is so often described in novels, I should be happy. But my eyes, unfortunately, contain no veiled hints at merriment, while my curls, which fall down in straggly locks when I fail to keep the "machinery" in long enough at night, cannot be termed impudent by the wildest stretch of the imagination. And to complete the unattractive picture which I can truthfully paint of myself, I must confess that my mouth is a veritable cavern, while my lips are naturally pale.

I thought, for a time, that my freckles might add a note of distinction to my general appearance. But, instead of restricting themselves to the area about my nose, thereby giving me a piquant look, these leopard spots became larger and larger and finally ran riot over my wind-burned face. From then on I was doomed to be s Plain Jane forever.

I cannot masquerade as a damsel in distress or gasp in dismay and appeal to an attractive male for assistance. I cannot gurgle in amusement, nor lisp, nor even attempt baby talk, for my imposing height of five feet eight defies such asinine behavior. Nor will my rotund figure permit me to slink around in satins with a "come hither" look. These feminine wiles are not popular among Amazons, and as such, I must resort to other devices in order to score my point.

Yes, I am a "nice" girl, and as such I attract only wishy-washy, intellectual and equally "nice" men. My first love affair was a very abnormal one, and totally one-sided. Paul was a Freshman at Columbia University, a tall, willowy, ascetic fellow. His chief interest lay in the field of Greek drama and law. The nearest he ever came to a practical application of his knowledge on this subject was his recital of

> "Maid of Athens, ere we part,
> Give, oh give me back my heart;
> Or, since that has left my breast,
> Keep it now, and take the rest."

I listened breathlessly, taking care to keep my lips parted slightly, waiting for Paul to turn to me and make a violent, impassioned declaration of his feeling for me. Alas, I was disappointed. In a dreamy voice, he went on to point out the euphonious phrases and the rhythmic flow of words. And that was the nearest, almost, I ever got to being deliciously sentimental.

It has always been thus. I seem to hold an interest for boys who seek an intellectual companion, not an appealing, dainty young miss upon whom they can lavish affection. I do not lack dates nor attention, but unless some gay Lothario sets out to "rush" me, I shall be unhappy forever.

At present, Frank's picture reposes in solitary splendor on my dresser. Girls who dash in my room on a tour of inspection stop to admire it and inevitably ask, "Is that the 'one and only'?" Whereupon I draw from a reserve supply of false enthusiasm and gush about his eyes and his charming seriousness until I forget myself and am almost convinced that he is my knight-in-waiting. But then suddenly I recall those words that Frank uttered so quietly the morning that he gave me the photograph "as a manifestation of our lasting and growing friendship", and that wave of glowing enthusiasm recedes, leaving me calm and placid as I turn once again to look at his steady grey eyes.

My heart pounded fiercely one morning when I discovered the tiny letters S. W. A. K. under the flap of the envelope. Perhaps the platonic friendship is warming, I thought hopefully. But the impersonal tone of his letter cooled my ardor, for in a single sentence, Frank had dismissed my twelve pages of scintillating humor and colorful description of recent events of the past week, with the comment, "Your completely detailed and vivid account of the activities of the week has arrived and made for some very absorbing reading. But I must return to the topic on the floor—what I feel to be the essence of independence. It is an absolute quality, but little more than an attitude. Maybe a few disconnected sentences will express my train of thought." With careful precision I put the letter in my top drawer; mentally I wrote "finis" to the whole affair."

Jim, my fifteen year old brother, tells me I'm a "swell egg". Dick, my Sophomore friend at Yale, told me the other evening that he would like to put me in cold storage for a while, until he was through "playing around".

Oh well, at least I have something to look forward to; that is, if I don't freeze in the meantime.

TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

Jean Ellis '39

SHE TOSSED FOR HOURS in bed that night. She thought for hours but nothing happened. She got an idea but its title was "Trite" and she tossed some more. She turned on the light, ran downstairs, lit a cigarette, but still no idea. She returned to her den of thought and sat by the window in hopes that the proverbial scene of stars and a full moon outside would bring her a thought. Instead, the stars mocked her and the Man in the Moon seemed to laugh at her. She cursed and slammed down the window. She climbed back into her "cradle" and "rocked". Even the shadows on the wall appeared sinister and were laughing at her. She tore her hair and hoped with a vengeance that her teacher was sleeping very badly too.

Sleep came. It brought dreams that night—dreams of blank, white pages with nothing on them but the word "failure", dreams of a human pencil and a human paper running after her and laughing as she tried to escape. Nightmares haunted her with weird voices that called "composition", "composition", "composition". She dreamt of long, bony fingers wagging reproachfully at her.

She awoke suddenly as the alarm clock rang out into the morning. There was a certain tone in its bell that seemed to say, "Hurry, hurry, hurry!" She leaped out of bed, went through her daily early-morning routine and hurried over to the breakfast hall. She scarcely heard when her friends spoke to her. She was busy thinking, cursing, thinking, cursing. She wanted to die very badly. Still more, she wanted an idea. She prayed for both but she wasn't at all sure for which to pray harder. She wondered what everyone else had written and she hated them for their

"brilliance". She tried to recall the days when she had been "brilliant" too, back in high school, and she wished she was still there and that she still "had her youth".

She glanced at her watch and saw that she didn't have much time and the face of the watch grinned sheepishly at her while the hands pointed accusingly. She took it off and threw it on her desk and hoped she had broken it. She looked at her library and wished she were Alexander Woollcott, Dorothy Parker, and Anatole France rolled into one. She looked at her bed and kicked it as she thought of the way she had tossed in it the night before. She ripped the covers off and stamped upon them. She made faces at herself in the mirror and condemned herself. She still wanted an idea. She prayed again for both but this time she prayed harder for death. She imagined a voice saying "Time marches on" and—

Suddenly she grabbed her typewriter and all but ripped off the cover. She inserted a piece of paper and went to work. When she had finished, her work was very similar to what I am writing now, and as a finishing touch, she added—

"Forgive our wild and wandering cries,
Confusions of a wasted youth;
Forgive them where they fail in truth,
And in thy wisdom make me wise.

from "*In Memoriam*"
ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

SURFACE EXPOSURE

FRANCES WALKER '38

SHE IS ONE of those phenomenal women whose age does not matter. She can always hold an audience's attention. Time has grown fat on the years since she was last on the stage; Time has swallowed her meager portion of footlight success. But she defies Time and Success, sitting in her discreetly furnished living room, surrounded by the abnormalities of stage, studio, and free thought. She is the Prima Donna of the hour without the physical exertion of the drama. The general setting and the business of the scene confine her to a chair. She has lost her lovely Grecian contours sitting there, but an absinthe green velvet touched with egg-shell lace disguises that minor deficiency. It is her flawless white complexion emphasized with clever tinges of red that is unharmed by greedy Time. And she has an experienced hand for combing long black hair into a carefully careless knot. Only the seeing person is haunted by the age in her eyes around and behind their sapphire blueness.

She is never without an audience. She fosters radicalism in Adolescent Youth; she tantalizes Middle Age with indifference to convention and insistence upon etiquette; she warms Old Age with an officious concern. Dogs take to her naturally.

Her voice fills the room—she cultivated it well for the stage—but people pull their chairs close around her to hear what she says, to see how she says it. There is a wave of the hand, a sharp smile, a slight arching of an eye-brow to clarify her meaning. When she has said enough, she has subtle ways of choosing the next speaker. A frown, a too hearty laugh might stop him. In an argument her sentences

have a tone of finality that submerges all doubt. "I have made a *study* of religion, almost *every* phase of it . . . I should like to seriously discuss the question, sometime, with *you*." He is the selected person; he may come again.

She never forgets anyone who has been in her apartment. She remembers what he had to say—her memory was well trained learning manuscripts of plays. All the people who have passed through her life contribute to the part she is performing. Her mind is an absorbing integration of the crumbs of intellect dropped at her feet. Her personality is the period after each thought, the exclamation point after each idea.

One will find that she has made a *study* of almost every question discussable. One will find that she has known eminent personages in every field. And one will never doubt, for in her room now are members of the cast of *Tobacco Road,* the man who wrote *Songs My Mother Never Taught Me,* a radically communistic chiropractor with big-knuckled hands and shiny serge trousers, and a Princeton graduate who swears he can see nothing worth looking at in the paintings of Van Gogh. There are others but introductions did not allow time for memorizing. There will be still others the next time one comes to sit in the semi-circle and applaud her acting. They are usually people who delight in digressing from the colorless tradition of man. They are pseudo-mad, made to seem more so by the few sane ones who appear in their midst. She glitters in the limelight of life's aberrations.

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

Carol Moore '38

POETRY HAS ALWAYS been one of my major vices as far as getting school work done is concerned. I spend hours which should be devoted to more practical purposes laboriously copying pages from books which are far beyond my meagre means. In spite of the fact that more immediate work may suffer, I wouldn't trade those hours or my dog-eared scrap books for all the useful knowledge that the curriculum of any institution can offer.

The poets represented in my collection are real people and I know them intimately. I know their moods, their dreams, their sorrows and their joys. I feel deeply the universal emotions which we all experience but only the gifted can express.

My scrapbook is no anthology of select verse. It is comprised of excerpts from Shakespeare and from Dorothy Parker, from the classics and from the *New Yorker*. There is only one connecting thread, and that is the appeal which each selection holds for me.

Since it is impossible to copy my entire collection, and I could never explain to anyone's satisfaction why certain passages have so great a fascination for me, I shall confine my efforts to one poet, one who seems to possess all the attributes which make fine poetry—Edna St. Vincent Millay. In my opinion she is the greatest modern woman poet. Her moods are as changeable as the clouds and her verse is as varied. Her lyric songs come from deep understanding of universal happiness and suffering.

Sometimes it is cynicism which pervades her words. Such epigrams as "First Fig" and "Second Fig" are designed

to amuse, but beneath the lightness there is real feeling, a rebellion against stodgy conservatism.

"Safe upon the solid rock the ugly houses stand!
Come and see my shining palace built upon the sand!

There is realism too, the poignant knowledge of life and its repressions. Only a person with a deep understanding and with an intense hatred for melo-dramatics could have said,

". . . I could not cry
Aloud, or wring my hands in such a place—
I should but watch the station lights rush by
With a more careful interest on my face,
Or raise my eyes and read with greater care
Where to store furs and how to treat the hair."

This quotation is answer enough for any one who condemns her poetry as "flowery."

Miss Millay possesses much more than cynicism and realism, however. She is one of the formost lyricists of our time. The piercing beauty of *God's World,* the deep sincerity of her sonnets, and the hopeless anguish of *Wine From These Grapes* could come only from one who lives intensely.

"My soul is all but out of me, let fall
No burning leaf; prithee, let no bird call."

It is natural that anyone who can reach such heights of joy will fall into more profound depths than more conservative mortals. This capacity for intense feeling is the basis of poetry. With most people there is the contrast between sorrow and joy, with a poet there is the difference between exultation and despair. Contrast the heedless joy of *The Bobolinks*:

". . . Bobolink, you and I, an airy fool and an earthy,
Chuckling under the rain!"

with the cry:

"The anguish of the world is on my tongue."

Here is the greatest contrast of feeling, yet accurately expressed by the same pen.

Edna St. Vincent Millay does not rely upon the emotions alone. Her poems are filled with images, vivid impressions wrought by a master technician. How original the sense experiences she expresses!

"My kisses now are sand against your mouth,
Teeth in your palm, and pennies on your eyes."

Age old truths are clothed in a new array of words and colors.

"Two agate eyes, two eyes of malachite, . . ."

Only a master craftsman could write descriptions such as this:

"I know what my heart is like
Since you have died.
It is like a hollow ledge
Holding a little pool
Left there by the tide,
A little tepid pool,
Drying inward from the edge."

Miss Millay's poetry is not modernistic in the technical sense of the term. She does not resort to obscure combinations of words and meter. Most of her verse-forms have a classic simplicity. Her originality comes from brilliantly executed word-pictures rather than from any artificial pattern used to achieve the impression for which she is seeking. Her appeal is simple, reaching the mind and heart.

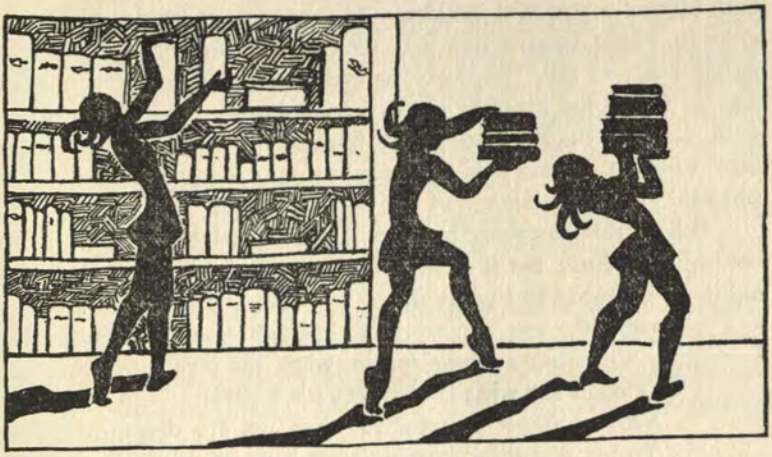
". . . To meet the yelping of the mustering years—
Dim trotting shapes that seldom will attack
Two with a light who match their steps and sing:
To one alone and lost, another thing."

Edna St. Vincent Millay's poetry is not all feeling and imagery, however. There is philosophy hidden in the most beautiful passages for those who care to find it. She chooses her own criterion with a full knowledge of its meaning.

"In the shadow of the hawks we feather our nests."

There is too much meaning in her poetry to explain it in such a brief analysis. Prose can never do more than approach the emotions conveyed in verse. Only by reading her poetry can any one appreciate Edna St. Vincent Millay. This theme is nothing more than an attempt to awaken the interest of those who have never read her works and an explanation of her worth as the greatest living woman poet. To those who do not understand, she addresses the following lines:

"Cruel of heart, lay down my song.
Your reading eyes have done me wrong
Not for you was the pen bitten,
And the mind wrung, and the song written."



BOOKS . . Old and New

KING JASPAR

Edward Arlington Robinson

MacMillan Co. $2.00

I am glad that my introduction to Edward Arlington Robinson was by the way of the last of his poems, *King Jaspar*. Knowing so little about Robinson, I need not compare this last poem with any of his previous works. I can say what I think, and perhaps that will be enough for me and for a few others who have not yet read Mr. Robinson. But how can my opinion be unbiased—when I am so definitely prejudiced in his favor? I have a feeling that my introduction to this poet is merely the beginning of a long and stimulating friendship with him.

I can say that I think the blank verse form of the whole poem is admirably suited to the narrative tale of King Jaspar, his wife, his son, and his son's wife, Zoe. Only the dignity of blank verse and the long-sounding, run-on lines would be adequate as a medium for the majesty and the pathos of *King Jaspar*.

Briefly, it is the story of a king who has sacrificed friendship, love, and even honor, for money and power. Ruthlessly he has

built himself a powerful kingdom. His son, young Jaspar, and even more so, young Jaspar's wife Zoe, see that this kingdom is tottering, nearly ready to fall. Suddenly, as events too long expected have a way of doing, the kingdom breaks. King Jaspar dies. Honora, his wife, commits suicide, and young Jaspar is slain by the son of a man whom the King had destroyed. Only Zoe, with her clear foresight, her great love, and her splendid truth, survives.

Behind this narrative, however, there lies an allegory which is not only prophetic, but is at the same time comforting and challenging in its prophecy that when all else is overthrown, time, and earth, and its people, the love and truth of God will remain transcendant. I recognize this truth in Zoe's speech, when she says—

"I don't say what God is, but it's a name
That somehow answers us when we are driven
To tell and think how little we have to do
With what we are."

M. W. '36

EVENING OF A MARTINET

Jane Oliver

DOUBLEDAY DORAN $2.00

The Evening of a Martinet is one of the best of the light, modern novels. It is refreshing in its clarity and simplicity. Miss Oliver has refrained from any over-ornamentation, and has thus kept our attention on the main figure of the story, Olivia.

Olivia is a rebel. She rebels against the form and strict customs of the day. Yet, to one who is unacquainted with her life, it would seem that she has conformed to the most rigid of regulations. She is most correct in her role as principal in a small, select girl's private school. However, we who know her story can fully appreciate the struggles and heart aches Olivia endured to reach her position and her tranquility.

If any of the parents of her charges had known her story, the school would have had no pupils. As it is, Olivia held a high position socially. She was beloved by old and young.

Olivia had to deprive herself of happiness in order to do what was best for her son. She willingly gave him up to be brought up

under the respectable roof of her sister and brother-in-law. Then she sought the means by which she could give him everything. Miss Oliver has presented several meetings of Olivia and Allen as aunt and nephew. In these scenes, she has incorporated a poignancy hard to describe. It is not difficult to visualize the sufferings of the young mother who can never claim her child.

Nevertheless, she went on improving her financial status until she was no longer in danger of not giving all to Allen. She lived to see him successful and happy.

Olivia is not the only well drawn character in the novel. Allen is very well handled. He is a thoroughly charming, Pan-like person. From the first time we see him as a little boy we feel sure of his success. We are grateful to him too for loving and appreciating Olivia always.

The plot of the story is second only to the character drawing. Our interest is held from beginning to end. It is with great satisfaction that I put down the book, thinking that one light novel is really intelligently executed, and definitely out of the realm of "trash".

M. M. '36

WE WHO ARE ABOUT TO DIE

David Lamson

SCRIBNERS $2.50

About two years ago a young professor at Stanford University captured the national spotlight, and his story and picture were linked on the front pages of the nation's newspapers for fully a week. No mere academic feat could have gained him this publicity, however. On the contrary, people were interested in the good-looking young man because he was accused of murdering his attractive wife in their bathtub.

On a sunny May morning David Lamson was burning rubbish in his back yard—one among hundreds of respectable suburban husbands—when he was asked to show a real estate agent and prospective lessee through the house. Coming to the bathroom he found his wife dead, her skull fractured, her body draped over the

side of the tub, and the walls and floor crazily spattered with blood. Since his first words were, "Call the police! Someone has murdered my wife!", the coroners turned in a report of murder rather than accidental death. The young professor was charged with the crime, sentenced to hang, and sent to Condemned Row at San Quentin with unusual neatness and dispatch. But the Supreme Court consented to give him a new trial, since the evidence was so flimsy, and after three months Lamson was removed from San Quentin.

The wheels of the law are slow and ponderous, however, and David Lamson has not yet had his new trial, but he has had time to write a fascinating and candid book about prison life as he sees it. *We Who Are About to Die* is neither a sentimental plea for the emancipation of convicts, nor is it a daring expose of prison conditions. It is a clear and fluent exposition describing a new experience, a new place, and a new people in much the same manner as William Seabrook wrote *Asylum*, or as a girl would write of her entrance and first three months at college, with anecdotes about the people she knew best there.

Not once does Lamson mention his case or the reason for his death penalty, and, since it is part of the code among condemned men not to bother or talk about their prelude to Condemned Row, there is very little told about the pre-prison life or any of the cons.

Instead, Lamson takes you into prison for the first time with him. You share his sensations, you learn with him the prison vernacular and peculiar code of ethics, you know as vividly as if you had met them yourself, the ten or eleven men on the Row, and with Lamson you make the startling discovery that cons are people, individuals, who differ from the rest of us only in their geographic relationship to a high brick wall.

On the whole, Lamson's picture of prison life is not unattractive. This may be due in part to the fact that condemned men are given the best treatment, food, and cells, paradoxically enough. But it is probably due to the fact that Lamson's interest in the convicts and the material aspects of his imprisonment was a purely objective interest.

For *We Who Are About to Die* is a beautifully incisive piece of journalistic writing, with the added quality of thoughtfulness and philosophical observation that most journalists could never attain. It is difficult to believe that the man who wrote this book lived in the

shadow of the gallows, for his keen and selfless interest in what was happening around him indicated a free conscience and a frank and guiltless mind. *We Who Are About to Die* is a chronicle that will appeal to readers who are interested in prison conditions, those who are interested in people, and above all, those who enjoy an unusual story well told.

D. S. '38