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Senior Ball Number

The St. Stephen's College Messenger

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IN THE THEATRE AT HERCULANEUM—AUGUST 22, A.D. 79*

(*An actor speaks*)

Saw you that girl—the fifth in the third tier?
She, leaning forward where the sun shines through,
Behind the mask's grotesque some secret knew;
To her, of all the throng, our lines spoke clear .

On her alone fell the strange shadow, Fear,
As of impending doom. She turned and drew
Her veil across her lips that none might view
Their trembling, for the final scene was near.

What greater triumph has our art achieved!
And yet, poor child, why should we cause her pain,
Whose tender heart the Tragic Muse believed?
Would that tomorrow she might come again.

Surely for smiles alone her lips should ask,
And I, tomorrow, wear the Comic mask.

John Mills Gilbert

*(August 22 was the day before Herculaneum was buried by the eruption of Vesuvius).

SOB STORY

"Well, it don't take any brains to settle this case," the red-faced, fat little coroner observed to his two listeners. "Old Bob," he went on, "couldn't stand the thought of another winter in this God-forsaken hole. God knows, you can't blame him. Watching this damn island year in year out—why that old house on the hill there is enough to give anybody the creeps. He's been acting queer lately, and now he ups and shoots himself."

The other two men in the shack paid no attention whatever to the coroner's words. The sherriff, obviously of the same opinion, busied himself with a perfunctory collection of evidence. "Chuck" Allen, a young newspaper reporter, was absorbing the details of the gruesome scene before him. Sentences flashed through his mind as he mentally outlined the sob story he would write about this queer old hermit of Waelder's Island.

"Old Man of the River Commits Suicide." Then, "Watchman of historic Waleder's Island afraid to face another winter alone. For the past thirty years, Bob Kendall has lived alone on his little houseboat on the St. Lawrence," etc. ("No longer will the natives be awakened at night by ribald songs as old Bob indulged in a lonely spree. No longer will the occasional trespassers of Walder's Island be startled by the sudden appearance of a savage-looking man who would fiercely insist on their immediate departure.")

"Well, let's get away from here," the sherriff broke in on his thoughts. "There's nothing else we can do, and I don't like the looks of that body. Both barrels of a ten-guage shot-gun can sure do plenty of damage to a man's face."

"I'd like to stick around awhile, Sherriff," the reporter spoke up. "I think I'll write up the story right here where there's plenty of atmosphere."

"Suit yourself Chuck. There's too damn much atmosphere here for me."

Two hours later, the story already written, the reporter made an important discovery. A loose board in the wall, discovered by chance, revealed a crude

hiding place containing a bottle of whisky, a small amount of money and some papers. Sitting down at the rickety table, he proceeded to look through his find. A faded photograph of a young woman was written on the back. With some difficulty he made out the words, "To Robert from Velma, 1893." A number of clippings from a Texas newspaper gave account of the sensational trial of a young grocer's clerk for the murder of his former sweetheart, Velma Hicks, who was at the time affianced to Robert O'Connel. The murderer, David Felton, had pleaded innocence all during the trial, and it was only the insistence of this plea that had gained him a life sentence in the state penitentiary instead of the death penalty.

"Gee, this accounts for the hermit life of the old boy," thought Chuck. "And from Texas too—well, he got a long way from home. Changed his name to Kendall too. I wonder . . . Let's see, this paper is dated 1893; that makes thirty-six years ago. Felton must have been twenty or twenty-five at the time—that would make him fifty-five or sixty now. No, I guess that's a bum hunch. Still it won't hurt to find out if Felton's been released."

Finding nothing more of interest, he walked back to the railroad station telegraph office. After wiring the warden at the Texas State penitentiary about Felton, he phoned his chief, giving him the details of the tragedy, adding that he wanted to hold up the real story until he had followed up a hunch.

As he was leaving, he collided with a gray old man who apologized profusely. The stranger's southern accent aroused the reporter's curiosity, causing him to wait until the man had gone. He went up to the counter.

"Who was the old gent with the drawl, Bob?"

For answer, the operator shoved out the telegram the stronger had just left. It read:

Mrs. J. E. Hardy,
Pittsfield, Texas.
Leaving today. Will arrive Saturday.
D. F. Reichart.

"Many thanks. I was just curious." Chuck was in a hurry to get out before he lost his quarry. He saw

his man on the far end of the platform, suit-case at his feet. The reporter walked briskly up to him.

"Hello, David Felton," he challenged abruptly.

An almost imperceptible start gave him an assurance he had been far from feeling.

"I reckon you must be mistaken, pardner. My name's Reichart," the man answered easily after a pause.

"It didn't take you long to put Robert O'Connel out of the way, did it, Felton?"

Amazement mingled with dread showed in the straightforward, gray eyes. The news hound continued relentlessly:

"So, you get out on good behavior, then come up and get your man."

"Who are you?" the old man muttered hoarsely.

"What matters more is that I've got the goods on you. Looks like another term in the pen now."

"Yes. I'm Felton all right, and I killed O'Connel. I'll serve my term too . . . with pleasure this time." All pretense departed suddenly. "I served thirty-six years for the damn rat. He killed a girl because she wanted to break her engagement to him and marry me—and I had to serve his time. He had a good alibi all fixed up and even planted some evidence that convicted me. Yes, I'll serve my time all right. I'll even go to the chair if they say. I tried to make it look like suicide because I wanted a few years of freedom but I'm ready to go with you."

Almost breathless the old man stopped. The gray eyes were steady, the shoulders back, head high. The train was pulling in.

"You'd better get on before you get left," the reporter said softly. "I don't want you, and if the authorities ever do, they can come and get you."

* * * * *

Back at the office the reporter turned in the story he had written that morning. He had destroyed the papers, given the money to a Salvation Army lassie and was now proceeding to get rid of the whisky.

"Whoee!" he spluttered after one gulp. "Any man who could stand that stuff ought to commit suicide."

Gene Cullum

VILLANELLE

We are all condemned to die,
But the Judges grant reprieve
—For the wood and stone we'll buy:

And we'll each erect a sty,
Call it home, and curse,—and leave.
We are all condemned to die,

So a woman we will try;
And we'll see what we receive
For the wood and stone we'll buy.

When our eyes are hard and dry,
We'll be ready to deceive.
We are all condemned to die.

Invalids, at last we'll lie
Querulous and prone to grieve
For the wood and stone we'll buy.

To our tombs must we apply
All our hoard, for I believe . . .
We are all condemned to die
For the wood and stone we'll buy.

R. F. C.

BOOK REPORT

"How to Raise a Family on Seventy-five Cents per Week."—G. K. CHESTERFIELD.

It was my good fortune to be in Seymour Hall upon the occasion of the following episode:

It seems that a certain student raised the issue that book reports would be due on the following Wednesday. Immediately, seven or eight Freshmen, torn by fear and agony, sought refuge together in a corner, yelling pitiful cries which might be translated: "What have we done to deserve this?"

Now to my mind things have come to a pretty pass when one must read books and write book reports. Things have come to a pretty pass when one must devour the products of another's vanity--bound in book form. For after all, don't books make for superficial, unnatural people? Must innocent students be forced to clothe themselves in a mantle of artificial intellectuality?

"No," I say. Accordingly, the following type book report has been constructed. It is universal, fulfilling the requirements of any course, any book. Use it.

In the present case, we'll suppose that you are reporting on: "How to Raise a Family on Seventy-five Cents per Week", by G. K. Chesterfield.

CHAPTER I. You can't expect to find a lot in the opening chapter. It's like trying to catch fish before the bait is in the water; or like trying to find your pipe before you have lost it; or like trying to get blood from a stone, (but not so much like the last instance).

But Mr. Chesterfield did introduce the piece with supreme literary prowess. He simply had me on my toes,(not actually), waiting for the thing to get under way.

CHAPTER II. You can imagine what Chapter III is going to be like when you hear how this chapter impressed me. But to mention in so many words that Mr. Chesterfield said this or that would be criminal. For, after all, didn't somebody once say in Latin that a truly great work of art could not be disected? So we'll just let the matter stand as read.

CHAPTER III. Our dear Chesterfield (Oh, don't be silly) says interesting things in Chapter III. Oh my yes—three or four at a time. And don't think I didn't copy them down on small bits of paper. Incidentally I mislaid the slips . . . but never worry, they'll turn up along towards summer. How logical everything seemed. I'll bet Mr. Chesterfield is smarter than the president of the United States.

The present chapter has put the book over, or I am no judge of chapters (ou je ne me connais pas bien aux chapitres).

CHAPTER IV. Having entered upon Chapter IV., I am engulfed to the neck in a turbulent sea of intellectual building stone. The mellow stiffness of the author's personality seems to leap from the printed page, and, having committed itself upon the inquiring mind, tries in utter bewilderment to return to the page . . . in bewilderment, because by this time the reader has turned over a page, and the personality just can't find where it came from. Meantime the reader, having delivered himself ardently and with so much abandon to the pages . . . being irritated toward mental anguish (the layman calls it headache from eyestrain), closes the cloth-bound book with much truculence and tosses it into the corner. But never you mind. The reader inevitably recovers the thing . . . the human Will never manifests resistance to such a work—once begun. For is not a book report due soon?

Alas! the final word marks the end of Chapter IV. And how gloomy everything seems. Progressing from that last word over a great white void toward the beginning of Chapter V, the reader sketches funny pictures, curved lines . . . straight lines. How indicative of his mental confusion; but also of his interest . . . for even where there's no reading matter one seems to interpret an intellectual undertone that makes one hesitate to tackle the next chapter . . . makes one sketch all manner of stuff.

CHAPTER V. Our author sums up his work by introducing some delightful new material about his family and divers other things . . . ever attempting to lift from his kind readers the inevitable pallor of pathos that devours them. You know blame well that

you have triumphed, Mr. Chesterfield. Now just try and close your book without leaving us morbid. Divest us of the mourning with which we have been so skillfully surrounded by your art. Laugh that off, Mr. Chesterfield.

But never . . . you can't fool a genius. That logician untangles himself from his web (while I watch dumbfoundedly) merely by showing that no time remains to continue. To quote him: "I must write some more books . . . so toodle doo."

CHAPTER VI. Having conclusively delivered the essence of his work, the author surreptitiously withdraws from the accomplishment, the "coup fini"—like unto the Peruvian hunter, who, having sped his javelin into the sleeping python, silently and stealthily backs away.

The author effects this transition cleverly and modestly by making wise cracks with funny illustrations. But I could not enjoy them; I could feel only the ever-pervading personality of Chesterfield—towering above all, like a meteor at a meat-market.

CRITICISM. Let me express my sincere admiration for the man Chesterfield, aside from the intellectual contempt of his pretty book. Had I children, I should not hesitate to place in their hands any piece that he has ever written. For are they not clean and wholesome? Isn't the book in question altogether clean and vigorous? And aren't his books light enough for children to lift? Now those are but a fraction of the questions which the book arouses.

There are a couple of things to be said concerning the literary content (as opposed to the artistic feeling which I have just so adequately described).

Of course I wouldn't for the world say nasty incriminating things which would hurt the sale of his book. No, I shall ever be discreet. Anyway, I entertain nothing personal against the man.

But one who has been raised in a literary atmosphere and in reach of only the best of books, refuses to swallow lies. Not that Mr. Chesterfield is a liar, but . . . well I refuse to swallow lies.

Take this generalization, for instance: All families can get by on seventy-five cents per week. Get by

what? There you are, Mr. Chesterfield; suppose you just sit down and re-write your book. But don't blame me . . . I merely interpret public opinion.

I'm not prejudiced, however. The book has several good points. The style is smooth and flowing. In fact, the reader is possessed of awe by the placid continuity of the whole thing . . . each sentence following right behind the other, each page picking up where the preceding left off, and each chapter bearing the subtle pervading thread of the other . . . until alas! the last page emblazons the silent conclusion of the book itself. One could no more tear himself away from its inevitable continuity, than a mother could toss her smiling babe into the angry darkness. And maybe more so.

I shall not commit myself further. The book will stand or fall not by what we of today may do or say . . . but by what the people of next Friday say. The book has a message whose subtlety is quite beyond the comprehension of even the most instructed. See?

Silas Frazer.

ON A LITTLE HILL

One day, when a chiselled cross
Shall cast a weak shadow
Over a sparsely speckled mound of earth;
One day, when I shall lie
A droll dust in the sombre box
To which I am committed for eternal rest;
That soil which has absorbed me
Shall announce your approaching footsteps.
I shall be gravely glad.
For is not that flower which you shall gather,
A portion of my heart?

Francis St. M. Caldiero

TO A LITTLE BRASS GOD OF CATHAY

You, with huge and grotesque head—
Bulging eyes and flattened nose—
Wisps of twisted hair and beard
Fringing thick-lipped mouth—
Brooding on the shrouded Past
With terrifying stillness—
Does this tormented Western World
Whirl past without impression?

You, who untold years ago
Squatted in a gilden shrine,
Mid the musty fragrance
Of Joss and perfumed wax—
Heeding not the mumbled prayers
And jingling beads of pilgrims—
Does life progress—or is man still
As witless as his forebears?

Battered, rusted and begrimed
By Time, and man's neglect—
Naked save for flowered robe
Draped about your feet—
Tell me—creature of the East—
Are you friend or guard of Heaven?
Do I dream—or does there play
A mocking smile upon your lips?

John Rhett Wilson

"THE WHOLE DAMNED WORLD"

St. Bernard stuffed the ends of his whiskers in his mouth and snorted savagely as he looked through the floor of heaven to the world below. Augustine smiled paternally at the tempestuous saint, and winked a message of superior and sympathetic understanding to St. Francis, who sat opposite him with his mouth open in bewilderment at such unheavenly behavior. Bernard instinctively sensed the attitude of his brother saints, and he spat resentfully into the huge golden spittoon. His many years in the company of the saints prepared him for Augustine's admonition.

"Why do you insist upon being perturbed about worldly affairs? You can't do anything about them. God, in His infinite wisdom, has preordained the functioning of all life; what is, must be! Remember, brother, that the majority are damned ,and only the elect, received Grace. Come, turn away from your thoughts of mankind, and let us finish our game of dominoes. You have done nothing but grumble over world conditions for the last two centuries."

Bernard leaned over aggressively towards the portly Augustine, and growled his answer. "For two centuries I have heard the same words from you! I admit that you are a great doctor of the Church and an authority with whom I should hesitate to differ, but I am convinced that your predestination theory is the bunk. First you claim that man's fate is already determined, and then you maintain that man still retains his free will despite his already mapped-out end! My dear brother, you are absolutely wrong. Man is too emotional and irrational a creature to be fitted to your procrustean categories; and what's more, neither you nor anybody else can chart out on paper the mechanics of God's mind. You, and your elect! Rot! After hearing you repeat your confessions for the past eight centuries, I feel privileged to inquire of you how it is that you are so elect? The both of us, and even dopey Francis over there, were people such as now cover the world. Oh, of course, the Church sets us on pedestals, and the devout burn candles and pray before our shrines; but that isn't the only error that man-

kind makes! I don't believe that we have any claim to being exceptional; I know that I was nothing wonderful, and you, in your confessions, continually berate yourself for being so wicked. We were just ordinary people who tried to follow the teachings of the Church .All that the world needs is a leader tc bring it to God; if it were not for Ambrose, who would have led you to Christ? Man-kind needs to be awakened to the reality of God, and when it awakens, then all will be saved, regardless of your insistence upon the damnation of the many. You are right when you say that I growl over the condition of the world, but I only wish that I could see my way clear to act."

Augustine, the venerable doctor and foremost Father of the Church, shrugged his shoulders and smiled at the fiery speaker. "Well, why don't you act, my dear and capable brother?

Of course, you will have to go through Hell again to wash off the pollution of the world before you can re-enter heaven; but inasmuch as you are so interested in mankind, perhaps your altruism will enable you to make the sacrifice."

Bernard clamped his jaws together and thought deeply before replying. While on earth, he was ever roaming the world he had foresworn, electing and rebuking popes, stemming both heresy and cruel fanaticism, preaching the crusades or crushing the rationalism of Abelard. He had constantly and fearlessly interfered in the remotest part of Christendom, wherever his watchful eye saw God's Holy Church prostituted to selfish ends; and now he was playing dominoes with Augustine and Francis! It was great to be in the company of the saints; to have been elsewhere would have been Hell. But this praying business didn't seem to be changing the human race at all. Action was necessary or else Bernard would burst. The world needed a big reform, and a two-fisted, hard-boiled saint was necessary to put the job across. Bernard's great zeal for making holiness prevail prompted his reply.

"Very well, learned brother, I will visit the earth and straighten out matters; and, inasmuch as I have decided what course to follow, I will act at once.

Kindly answer any prayers that may be sent to me, and let my friends know of my whereabouts."

Saint Francis, at this moment, suspected that Bernard was contemplating a trip to earth. "My dear brother," he said, "can it be that you are turning your back on eternal bliss to go to earth again? Tell me that it isn't true."

Francis "griped" Bernard, and although the fiery saint did not speak in reply, Bernard so looked his thoughts, that even Francis understood. The worldly interest of Bernard meant nothing to this gentle saint. Politics, war, and the rebuking of clerical corruption were not for him. Francis had gone through life with a childlike wonder and joy, a freshness and a spontaneity that brooked no knowledge or deliberation. Augustine was a bit more bearable to Bernard, and he was too pleased and satisfied with God's selection of the elect, and he was always going over his confessions and getting an obviously unfair pleasure in recounting his sinful past.

Bernard gathered his robe about him and passed through the floor of heaven to the earth below. The trip was uneventful, although he sneezed violently when a flock of angles passed by shaking the dust from their wings. Inasmuch as he was nearer the earth, he damned them heartily, and they in turn prettily thumbed their noses at him as they soared upwards.

Broadway and 42nd street is not a healthy place for any rip-snorting reformer to do business on, especially at the early hours of the morning; but Bernard had noticed peculiar doings around that section of the world. The streets were quite deserted, in spite of the vivid illuminations, and Bernard meditated his first move.

Moving north, he passed the "Chat Noir," from which he heard hilarious singing and syncopated music. Bernard murmured against such pollution of God's still night, and walking back, he peered through the window. The garish glitter half blinded him so that he could barely make out what was taking place. All over the house were pictures of black cats in all sorts the mind of Bernard. The ground floor was crammed

of quaint situations. Thoughts of idolatry oozed thru with men and women in fancy costume and presented a terrible scene of gaiety to the dazed saint. A masquerade ball had just reached its peak, and, with the dancers covering the floor of the hall, presented a scene which was animated in the extreme. The orchestra was playing with a zest which made even the 12th century Bernard feel a rise of temperature. Suddenly the music ceased, for the feature of the evening was to be presented. With a sudden blaring trumpet a number of well known models appeared, in costumes as modest as those in the wardrobe of Eve. This lack of clothing infuriated Bernard's puritanical mind. He became incensed and forced his conspicuous figure past the heavy door.

The dance had commenced again, the spectacle of young men and women embraced in dancing, the motion, the sea-like undulation of heads, the interweaving of figures never ending, still beginning, and the blaze of lights and jewels, and the volume of music overawed Bernard. He began to shout, but he could not hear his own words. Managing to get near a table, he seized a chair and hurled it into the middle of the restaurant, where it alighted on a table with a crash. Glasses flew in all directions; women screamed and men protested. Bernard felt four strong hands grasp him, and he was hurled out into the street. Bruised and badly shaken, he rushed back to the door, but the two doorkeepers speedily battered him down with their fists.

The dancers gathered about the fallen Bernard and burst into laughter at his silly costume and at their own fright. "Say, he looks like a monk." "What a swell costume!" "Throw the drunk out, and let's get hot again," were the remarks.

When Bernard picked himself up the second time, he realized that people had changed vastly since the 12th century. He had too, for he couldn't whip himself together to repeat his entrance, so he wandered dejectedly down Broadway.

Suddenly a firm hand clasped him on the shoulder, and a rasping voice said, "Lissen Bozo! Where ya goin wit de circus outfit? Do ya wanna get pinched

fer being a public nuisance?" This was too much for the already injured saint. "Man, how dare you speak in such a manner! you! a public servant, and me!, one accustomed to being catered to by popes and emperors. Fool! I am saint Bernard." "And I'm the Pope's nose. Come along wit me, mouthy, and tell it to de sergeant." And the militant saint was half dragged and half carried to the nearby police station.

The humiliation of his predicament and the misunderstanding of the men so confused Bernard that he was too muddled up to answer the questions of the officer at the desk. "Throw him in a cell for the night," came the order, "and let him out in the morning. It's only his first offence. Anyone can see he's nuts, but I guess he's harmless. If he bothers anyone again, we'll send him to the King's County Hospital.

Thus Bernard spent the first night of his return to earth in the 41st street police station. In the morning he was given some breakfast by a kind old sweeper, who gave him a sandwich from his lunch; and then the fiery saint stepped out again to battle the world.

The sun was dazzlingly bright, and Bernard was almost blinded by its rays. He stumbled and pushed himself out into the stream of people, only to be pushed to and fro like a cork on a rough stream. Grasping hold of a nearby lamp-post he created an isle of safety for himself. He was a dejected and forlorn appearing creature! Even the busy New York crowd noticed his look of despair. As he leaned against the post, looking up to heaven, he felt cool, hard pieces drop into his cupped hands. This continued at intervals, and soon Bernard awoke to the fact that mankind was being charitable to him. His fact beamed with pleasure at this discovered virtue. "Charity!" he exclaimed. "At last my prayers have been answered. There is still hope for mankind."

Just then a familiar voice spoke up. "Lissen, Bozo, who gave ya license to beg here? Don't ya know that it's a criminal offence? Move on before I pinch ya. Beat it!" This uniformed man had a nasty way of making people do what he said, so Bernard obeyed him promptly.

That night, as Bernard was sleeping on a bench in Central Park, another forced over of the great outdoors squeezed himself onto the foot of the seat. Bernard obligingly hunched himself closer together to give the stranger more room. Unfortunately, however, the saint did not see the look of interest in the man's face as his movement's caused the coins to jingle in his pocket. "Can you change a five, mister," the stranger asked. That was just about the amount of money that Bernard had received, and he willingly handed it over to the man. No sooner had he done this than a terrific blow on the jaw knocked him down. Bleeding at the mouth, dazed and groggy, Bernard started to protest, but the stranger had already disappeared.

Augustine and Francis were playing dominoes as usual when a weary, battered figure approached them. Neither of them recognized Bernard until he spoke. Hell inevitably affected a man that way. "Brother Augustine, I still disagree with your theory of predestination. The majority of mankind is not damned; they all are."

Matthew H. Imric

YOUR EYES

At many eyes I've pranced,
Those brown, these gray:
So many darts have glanced,
Here sad, there gay.

With many eyes I've played,
Now love, then lies:
But only yours I've made,
So tall, my skies.

Francis St. M. Caldiero

PING HO AND LI PO PO FEI

Years ago, by the Wang Tih Kong,
In the Middle Flowery Kingdom,
I stood on the hump of a camel-bridge
And gazed at the amber moon.

Siau Chu—"the little turtle"—
Who followed my upward stare,
Said, Can you see—up in that moon—
Those streaks of cloudy grey?

There, between two faries—
Ping Ho and Li Po Fei—
Stands the Everlasting Tree—
Unchanged since Time began.

Ping Ho and Li, for ages,
Have sawed its giant trunk;
Yet it's renewed as fast as cut—
Their work is all in vain.

But when our world grows old and dies—
Light turns to dismal shadow—
The branches quiver in the tree—
The saw sinks through at last.

Then a roar and a crash like a mountain slide—
The strain breaks the cords of Heaven—
Sky falls to earth, and scatters rice
That sticks the two together.

John Rhett Wilson

LIQUOR?

Here today, gone tomorrow—
A bit of joy, a bit of sorrow;
Out of the Nowhere, into the here—
Pausing a moment, then going where?

R. D. Griffith

A FRESCO IN THE DUOMO AT SIENA—

(The artist speaks)

Here in this chapel a few happy days
San Giovanni's blessing has been mine;
My brush has known an influence benign
Which still about the young Alberto plays.

Here, though Siena tread her devious ways,
Youth ever fearless faces the Divine,—
Bright-armoured youth, whose dreams no walls confine,
At my behest keeps vigil here, and prays.

How I have loved to draw him as he kneels
Unhelmed and boyish! May the envious years
Their blemish spare; age overwise, nor tears
Dim the calm trust his lifted glance reveals.

And, O Alberto, may your pleadings show
Love for the soul of Pinturicchio!

John Mills Gilbert

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