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MESSENGER

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Commencement Number



THE MESSENGER

HARBOR

*A Poem for Alumni Day, May 21, 1930
St. Stephen's College, 1860-1930*

The harbor watches the ships move out
To meet the surge of the sea;
The harbor waits for their return
To its security.

How bravely tended the harbor lights,
These three-score years and ten!
How many ships have thence set sail—
How many come again!

Within the harbor are roadsteads broad
Where merchants of the mind,
Voyagers from distant coasts of thought,
An anchorage may find.

Explorers, colonists, pioneers
Of some new-storied West,
May here narrate, expound, persuade,
Each of his theme possess.

Equipped and cargoed, with courage high
Strange ventures to essay,
The ships their anchors weigh at dawn
And steer into the day.

Beneath the stars and beneath the sun,
Through baffling fogs hung low,
Are ways to chart, and ports to win,
And thither good ships must go.

The harbor watches them swiftly pass
To breast the surge of the sea,
And waits to welcome their return
From fresh discovery.

And while slim craft at their moorings strain,
All eager, trim, and white,
Like gulls gray sea-worn ships glide in
To anchor for a night.

John Mills Gilbert

THE MESSENGER

HEADS OR TAILS

Norton slowly climbed the stairs to his room, placing his feet exactly in the center of the worn spot in the rug on each step. He felt secretly that he was reaking revenge on his landlady, and wished for a brief moment that each worn spot might be her face. Standing before his door he counted three before he unlocked and opened it, shaking his shoulders as he did so, as if getting up nerve to face what lay beyond. After all, the door didn't hide the dreadful. The room was small, but its one window opened up four stories above the street, so it was fairly cool. He flipped his straw hat in the corner, pushed back the damp matted hair from his forehead, and leaned it against the cold window pane, which he had discovered to give a particular soothing effect. With one hand he fingered the hole in his left-hand trouser's pocket and with the other he caressed the iron knob at the foot of his cast iron bed. By closing his eyes he could imagine the knob to be a piece of carved ivory from the jungle land of an Indian prince, but the mold for this knob was bad, and he couldn't imagine-away the uneven ridge that jutted up from its surface.

Norton was facing a dilemma. He was a newly made member of the country's seven million unemployed, and the money he had scraped up for such a time as this had been spent for his mother's latest sickness. The goose egg he had entrusted to his brother, Gable, intending to use it for a much desired trip abroad during the summer, was among the spoils of the stock market crash. Gable Norton had been of the opinion that he could treble this amount. He hadn't succeeded. Well, you couldn't much blame Gable after all, because his intention had been a good brotherly one. Nevertheless the future wasn't tinted a rosy color, no matter how hard you might look. And Norton told the window pane that he wanted a wife like hell. He was getting near the thirty mark, and the flush of his youth was rapidly slipping. There were many women of course who would be glad to remedy his wish without the necessity of marriage, but after all he was a trifle old fashioned. It seemed that he had been chosen by secret agreement among the family to support his mother who was wearing well. The more Norton

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peered into the darkness the more he saw all his plans as idle dreams. It was plain that he would live and die in the dreariness of defeat. He chuckled to himself in sudden humor and began to pace the floor, following out the pattern of the rug with his feet.

On the other hand he might kill himself. But then what of the happiness that might come to him if he lived? You never can tell what Fate will do. Too, he wasn't sure what death might offer. If everything that Religion told him was true he had a merry existence awaiting him, but if there was only silence and a deep quiet he would be pleased. The methods of committing suicide were varied. The only way that appealed to him was gas. All other ways could be rather messy. It took nerve to meet death. Who said that a suicide was a weakling? It was so easy to keep on living as if propelled by a hand, and it was hard to break from the established path. Well, he thought he might like to have a real adventure, so he took a coin from his pocket and flipped. Heads, he continued living, tails he didn't. It lit tails. He was considering flipping two out of three when the woman on the floor below hammered on the ceiling with her shoe. His marching across the room had started the chandeliers to shaking. That decided him. He closed the window, pulled the shade, and turned out the light. He had to clean out the gas jet with a match stick because disuse had cluttered it with dirt. Somehow he felt no bitterness against anyone as he crawled on to the bed. It must be a sure sign that he was getting old. He selected the low spot in the middle of his bed where the springs were weak. He lay as if in the bottom of a valley. A little distance above his feet on the opposite wall was a picture of a road lined with poplars extending far into the mountain ranges in the background . . . After a while Norton felt that he was walking down this road, and the mountains drew nearer, the poplars slowly going by on either side.

* * * * *

Sergeant Henessy was impatient. He hated the sickly odor of gas, and he regarded the form on the bed with peculiar resentment as the author of the crime of constructing houses with four steep flights of stairs. He wanted to see if he had scuffed his shoes coming up, but he had to admit that his bay window was a

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hindrance, and hated to ask anyone else to tell him. It took too much energy to put his foot on the chair in the corner and look. All he could see was an expanse of black vest spotted here and there with what might have been either ashes or grease. He had had a hard day of it, but it was tinged with some pleasant memories—especially the interview with Piccoli, the local bootleg king.

The young cop on the beat raised up from the bed where he had been going through the clothes of the corpse. "It's a damned shame. Looks to me like he was of pretty good quality. I can't find a note, or any papers. I wonder what the reason was. People sure do have a hell of a lot of troubles."

Henessy was gruff. "Get a move on. We gotta get out of this dump. And don't worry about other people's troubles, ain't we got enough of our own to worry about? Life ain't no picnic, you know." With this observation the Sergeant left the room. He was on the whole rather pleased with himself. He had just showed himself to the cop as being somewhat of a natural philosopher, and furthermore a person who had seen a good deal of life. Then, too, the check in his pocket for a thousand bucks, signed by Piccoli, meant that he and his old woman could go abroad for the summer. He closed the door.

Guy Pickering

OFF THE COAST OF SPAIN

Imponderable hills define the sea
And edge the clear blue curtain of the sky;
As on wide wings one white peak soaring high
Is poised, a tireless bird, remote and free.

Here towers sunk in gray senility,
Long-drowsing warders, let the years slip by
Unchallenged; too forgetful to defy
Their ancient pirate foes from Barbary.

These are the hills of Dream! Who has not known
The lure of castles which they somewhere keep,
And thither steering o'er smooth tides of sleep
Has thought at last to come unto his own!

Bright hills of Spain, how soon you fade once more
Into the twilight of a fabled shore!

John Mills Gilbert

LOVE IN AMERICA

The stars blazed and the planets glowed, giving much the same effect as a Paul Revere lantern. The reader objects to the simile because, he argues, a Paul Revere lantern sways to and fro, making the pin-pricks of light swirl around and swish in the night. But, to Stephen, the stars were just like that, swirling and swishing, as if the sky had been a great lantern carried in the hand of God. Stephen was a little drunk. The stars were a little drunk tonight. Really, of course, the stars blazed and the planets glowed.

I, thought Stephen, me, mine, for me, to me, me. My clothes, my looks (which are not at all bad, rather the contrary). My fiancée, he thought, has thirty-three thousand dollars in her own right. Rather clever of me. Thirty-three thousand in her own right. Marriage. Then in my own right. Of course it is always a pity to see a good-looking man married to a girl like that. People say, "How plain she is!" But then, even that has its compensations. After saying that, they will remark, "And how good looking he is!" Still, to be married to a plain looking girl, with money, might, quite possibly, make people say that I . . . How damned mercenary people are! Thirty-three thousand. She's a fine girl!

When I'm married I'll be attentive to her. After all, I'm in love with her. I'll be able to get myself a new car then. Trade in the old one. What kind of a car shall I get. Something light colored. She's a brunette. Yes, old thing, best way to get your money's worth is to trade the old car in. Get a car, get all you can out of it for three years, and trade it in. Trade the old car in! Trade the old car in! Trade the old wife in! New wife, new car. Eh? What the devil are you talking about, Stephen? Drunk? Me drunk? Hell, no! I'm just in love, and had a couple of drinks, that's all. Funny though, saying that. Not a bad idea though. Americanize marriage. Trade in the old. America first, last, and always! America right, she's never wrong! Me first, last, and . . .

Did I hear you say "always", Stephen?

The stars blazed and the planets glowed. A quaint, Early American effect. Star blazes. Hell blazes. How beautiful the stars are! Only, of course, Stephen didn't notice that.

Edgar W. Wilcock

VALE!

Well, so this is the last. Time, I suppose, to grow sentimental. The last time I shall ever be printed in the "Messenger". One tries so, so hard to be sentimental, but over that, no! I cannot squeeze one tear from my eyes. They are in such a weak condition already. A tear! I cry, A tear! But no, not one. Not one little oozy, soppy, little bit of moisture. Not one bit of pity for myself. Perhaps for others, for myself, never. For when I think of the poor old magazine getting on without me, I cannot contain my pity. Readers of the "Messenger", pity yourselves! Never, never again shall you read me! Ah! 'Tis like the Theater Guild doing without the latest failures of G. B. Shaw. Or the "Dial" without the children's prose. Longfellow wrote the "Children's Corner". He's dead, quite. The "Dial" tried to run a children's corner. It's dead, quite. C'est la vie!

Well, I guess I've been sentimental enough. What rot one turns out when one tries to be sentimental. One got a lot of fun out of writing for the "Messenger". Especially when one thumbed one's nose at the common reader. Splotkins! (Do I hear you telling me not to be vulgar? That's all right, I heard the expression used in a sermon the other Sunday.)

Well, one last word. (In a sermon or father-to-son talk that means a ten minutes speal. Here it means, one last word.) Vale!

Edgar W. Wilcock

AFTER A CONCERT

Tonight
My heart, long cold,
Beat swift again with pulse of glad surprise.
To you I whispered, with a lad's delight,
"I am not old
Or wise!"

At last
The music wanes.
The world of make-believe takes flight.
Into the present creeps the pityless past;
And there remains—
The night.

HOMETOWN

Eliot Murray was going home. It had been nineteen years since he had left Marshton, and little news of the town had filtered through to him on the Gold Coast. Eliot Murray was rich now. The Gold Coast and some near-sighted Dutch officials had seen to that. Nice people, the Dutch, and pleasantly corruptible.

Murray had debated the idea of the conventional triumphant return. "Local Boy Makes Good. Chamber of Commerce Does So and So." Too damned regular, and besides he didn't feel that he'd be doing the old town such a favor by coming back,—if they knew the whole story—if they knew the half of it,—about his money, that is,—no, he'd slip in unobtrusively, and *probably be credited with being retiring*. "Marshton Traveler Makes Quiet Return. Plans Being Made To Fete Him". Marshton did things like that. He remembered when the war was over. That was different, of course, but he was willing to bet that there were more American flags per capita in Marshton than in any other place in the world, except American missionary schools in foreign countries. A good hundred per cent town, with tablets, memorials, and a monument.

He thought of the time when he and Tim Carter fished the Little Elk. The water gurgling in little whirlpools between your legs, and the tingly splashes down your back. Cornhusk cigarettes, and later, corn liquor. Funny the family never caught on to all that until he was so old it didn't matter. Thank God the family didn't learn about the Gold Coast thing. Rotten to spoil people's faith in you regardless of how little you deserved it. They were both dead now. He thought of his mother, *choked*, and sneered at himself for a damn' sentimentalist. The Little Elk was a lot of fun, and he'd fish that stream while he was back. No fish of any consequence in the Saignon—boy, it was good to be back where the fish had enough spirit to want to keep from being caught.

Deacon Anderson with his old mouldy swallowtail, black tie, brushed collapsible high hat, black gloves, and—the old hypocrite—loud socks. Odd how he remembered things like that. The Deacon was like a Quaker in silk underwear. He rather relished that—it made him feel worldly. He never would have thought

of comparing the Deacon to a Quaker in silk underwear if he had never left Marshton. He *was* worldly. Not many people in these United States had seen the things he had seen.

Catersburg flashed by the window. He had last seen Catersburg—outbound from Marshton. Nineteen years ago. Told Cecily he'd be back in two years at the very most with money enough to be married. "Married on", he had said then. Cecily and he were to have been married. She had probably married Stoney Worrel and was fat now. Stoney would be too. Stoney had been the one who had announced his regret at Eliot's departure in tones so sincere that it had amounted almost to a confession. He had wanted Cecily, and more than likely they had grown children by now. Eliot was glad they weren't his children. Children grew up, fell in love with people, either got them or not, and were unhappy or stupid, married practically anyone at all, had children, and it began all over again. It wasn't really worth while to bring children into the world. The propagation of the species. That was propaganda distributed by nipple manufacturers and makers of baby carriages.

Soon be there now.

Murray picked up the newspaper lying on the smoker seat. It was dated a week back. "Marshton Completely Razed By Fire". "Property Damage Estimated at \$700,000", "Town Desolated", "Hospital Occupants Leap to Safety Through Flames". So Marshton had burned, eh. Those frame buildings had always looked like marvelous firetraps. Gosh, it must have been some fire. All those stores and houses jammed up together as if land sold for a hundred dollars a front foot. His old home gone, too. The monument couldn't burn, so it must be still there. The mayor had a harelip, and Eliot had laughed when he said, "We are building thith monument for potherity". The train slowed up for Marshton—the railroad people hadn't taken it off the schedules yet, and it was easier to stop there than to arrange another schedule before the new year. Let's see, it was December third now,—the fire had been eight days ago—it cost thirty-two cents to stop a train—thirty-two times thirty-six was, uh, huh, about ten or twelve dollars. Well, the railroads made plenty.

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Murray got off the train. He was the only one. The train stuttered down the track, found its stride, and disappeared around Wilkin's Bend. Murray watched it out of sight, for he was reluctant to turn his eyes on Marshstown. It would never rise again—no Phoenix.

Ashes, timbers burned at the top, fallen telephone poles, fireplaces standing naked and ashamed, the brick walls of the old printing shop. Sickening. Here was where the widow Cummins's house had stood . . . nothing over a foot high there now. A rotten odor of spoiled things and wet burned wood. A small American flag with the stars scorched off—that was typical of something. Eliot tried not to think and found it easier than he expected. He felt almost like a reporter, interested, yet impersonal and detached. There was what was left of his home. Nothing there to make him think—just a pile of ashes and stinking timbers. What a hole! The Little Elk couldn't be changed, though. He and Tim Carter had fished there.

No, the Little Elk hadn't changed a bit. The water chuckled and gurgled the same as it always did. Same as nineteen years ago. (Eliot unslung his rod, jointed it and ran the line through the leaders. They had never heard of a jointed pole in the old days. He'd fish with a worm to honor the memory of Tim, even though he knew his flies would have more chance. He dug for worms where he and Tim had dug for worms and filled a can in a few minutes. Queer squirm worms give you when you run the hook in them.)

The line gently creased the water, and the lead took it under. Murray lighted his pipe, and leaned against the tree he had always leaned against. Nothing came home to him. Nothing mattered. Things simply didn't register.

"Yes, it was nice to come home again after nineteen years. He had enjoyed seeing the old places and people. Of course there had been no fire—silly idea.

O gleaming bird, have I caught you again?
Have you fluttered back to your humble den—
(The best I can give you)—deep, deep in my heart,
To quicken Toil's corpse with a soul of Art?

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THE CAMPO—*Sienna**

Siena wears a rose upon her breast
Petalled with centuries; its heart aglow
With the warm color living roses show,
Siena's life in all its tones expressed.

Long has the sun these roseate walls caressed
And dawn's soft wind its memories breathes low
Of those who through Time's pageant come and go,
Each for a sunny day Siena's guest.

Here Dante dreamed; here Bernardino stirred
The thronged piazza with his eloquence;
Here moved the Medicis' magnificence;
Here, over all, La Mangia's bells were heard.

Siena's rose each morning blooms anew,
And holds its fountain as a drop of dew.

John Mills Gilbert

**(The Campo is the central square of Siena, Italy.)*

TO A LAME GRASSHOPPER

I wonder how you lost that slender leg?
Did some invading host dispute your field,
Or love of some green lady make you yield
In suitors' combat that impelling peg?
You take a sidewise leap through lack of it,
Yet in your low, cool grasses seem content,
As though its loss were but an incident
In life. I wonder what is back of it?
And do your vaulting comrades oft console
As you limp on, or poise for slanting flight;
And does it halt the merry tune you troll,
Or vex your slumber of a summer night?
And tell me, have you never come a cropper
By reason of that absent limb, Grasshopper?

Watson Cone

A PHILOSOPHER'S PEBBLE

An elephant cannot be taught to darn socks, and monkeys cannot be taught to act as human beings *should*.—Similarly, neither can students, unprepared as they are here in America, be made to appreciate and understand profound philosophical thought. As to producing some themselves, it is *beyond possibility*.

The qualities necessary in the make-up of a student to fit him for the study of philosophy are few, but the difficulty of their attainment is not in proportion to their number. A student must first be able to think clearly and logically. He must be able to read in the several important languages and to digest that which he reads in a fashion that would allow no doubt as to whether he understood it or not. He should be sane enough to realize that because the health of the mind depends upon the health of his body, both should be well cared for. And finally, he must know that no philosophical thought is serious enough to connote that he should at some time jump out of a third-story window and splash his new collegiate-cut suit with some unpleasant, messy flesh and blood. Thus much for his ability. Besides languages he should know history, not merely as a memorized knowledge, but of causes and effects. Mathematics is essential in that it trains the mind to think in the abstract with precision and form. And furthermore, a secure knowledge of the fundamental principles of the sciences is an indispensable aid to the best understanding as to what the philosopher is driving at. This is a difficult thing; for most philosophers drive at their objects much the same as a feather-brained woman drives a 1910 Ford from the back seat. If a young student fills these fairly easy requirements, any philosophy professor, whether a philosopher or not, will cast fond eyes upon him as a potential prodigy.

The average college student measures up to these requirements about as much as the existing League of Nations measures up to the ideal which was ever present in the mind of President Wilson. The American student is simply *not* prepared to study philosophy.

Even though he should thank God for that, it must be admitted that it is true. In most of our secondary schools the "Boards of Education" are wasting their time hunting and employing teachers who neither smoke, drink, nor think. These teachers train the youth of the country in everything from plumbing to bluffing with pretty fair success, for do they not obtain diplomas. In order that there will be no misunderstanding, I might add that these generalizations apply also to our so-called "prep" schools.

In order to explain the best type of training necessary for embryonic philosophers, I shall pass to the European school systems, which seem to come closer to hitting the mark than others. In the majority of the countries of Europe, but especially in Germany and France, the emphasis in education is differently placed. The ordinary individuals are merely taught the fundamentals of learning, the three R's and a bit over for good measure. The students who show marked ability and some of the more wealthy are given a solid foundation in the requirement stated above. Foreign languages become something to know, not to be wondered at. They *know* their Greek, Latin, and Mathematics. And when they finish their secondary education and desire to undertake the task of obtaining a university degree, they find themselves well prepared. Philosophical works in their native tongue are "duck soup", and those read in foreign languages, because of poor translation or for other reasons, offer little resistance. If they do not become philosophers as they desire, it is their own fault, for they have been presented with the tools, the rest is up to them.

Why is Germany considered to be *the* nation of philosophers? Because they were born that way, or because they were subject to divine inspiration? No, of course not. The main reason lies in the fact that when its youth reached the university it was ready to study philosophy, not cosmetics or feminine psychology; they knew that already or were not bothered with it. Philosophical study can start in earnest as soon as the university doors close upon them and they like it. A Frenchman once said while comparing French boys with ours;—"Our boys have mature brows but narrow

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chests, yours have broad shoulders but childish expressions." I have seen few French boys but many Americans and so can understand a part of this statement. The Germans have developed mature brows along with broad shoulders without a great deal of added trouble. Why are we unable to do the same? The European students are nearly the same in nature as the American, but as they are sent to school to be taught to think and have teachers who are capable of their task, they obtain a much better training with the least waste of valuable years.

A French or German student, who is still at school or the university at the age of twenty years is intelligent. The languages offer them little trouble, if they are preparing for work that makes them necessary. Scientific students at the same age are doing research work in the laboratories. Their early training has given to them the necessary tools, and they proceed to make use of them, not for grades of A's and B's but to learn something that will be of some utility. What does the American student know at twenty? 1. How to drive a car at seventy miles an hour without going off the road. 2. How to get a girl to put in it; what sort he is not particular. 3. How to work Dad for fifty more after he has just come across with the regular allowance. 4. How to crib gracefully. (Not a small task). 5. A smattering of this and a smattering of that. (This and that mean the subjects he is supposed to be taking, which he does take like an over-dose of castor oil.) And then people like professors attempt to teach us what they call philosophy. Ugg! The funny part about it is that most of us think they are and that they are doing a mighty fine job of it. I sincerely hope that they do not think so. A professor speaks about Dualism and we might think that he is talking about a piccolo duet we had heard over radio.

These, I suppose, are the usual platitudes; meaning that we think ourselves inferior to the Europeans and are not loyal to that which is ours. This is true in way but not in toto. Mass education as we know it may not produce philosophers by the hundreds, and perhaps it does not push us along as quickly nor as well as other educational systems, but it does tend to raise the gen-

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eral standard of intelligence; allowing those, who have brains and wish to attain certain ends, find a way to overcome whatever handicaps our system induces. If we realize our lack and consistently attempt to make up for it, there will not be much for us to worry about. Our solution is to outlive the Europeans and thus to overcome their headstart. And let us remember that there is never anyone so philosophical, that there is not someone else who is also crazy who can understand him.

Kenneth C. Kates

MIDNIGHT IN THE COUNTRY

A moon-kept garden is the earth tonight—
Sinless I know what I was meant to be:
I taste of what man knew of deep delight
Before he feasted at the bitter tree.
Shameless I look on love, and do not feel
Satiety corrupt from carnal stain.
Before the gods I stand, nor would I kneel.
Here may I drink of beauty without pain.

If once again the city dull my eyes,
Bidding me dream no more of man's release—
Its wisdom born of tired compromise:
Then let me not forget this night of peace.
That faith may live, for me it will suffice
If I remember what is Paradise.

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ALL NIGHT CHOP SUEY

What the hell's the matter, Honey,—sick?
 No? Well have a drink an' snap out of it.
 I wanta be noisy tonight.
 Oh, yeah? You don't feel gay.
 An' I suppose I gotta play fond papa,
 an' let you spill your blues on me?
 O. K.—But lissen, Honey,—
 This mornin' as I sloped by a hole they're
 diggin', down by the water-front,
 Where the new warehouse is goin' in,
 I saw a pile of bones they hit with
 the steam shovel, some old
 Graveyard uster be there. Well,
 Here's the point—there musta been
 a hundred skulls, piled up,
 Awaitin' for a truck, an' every
 Hell-damned one of 'em was grinnin'!
 Laughin' fit to kill!
 Sure,—have another when that's gone.
 There's lots more where this come from.
 Atta girl . . . Dance? Sure, Honey!

R. F. C.

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