

HINC ILLAE LACRIMAE

(A FRAGMENT)

Like weeds in the Garden of Eternal Beauty . . .
Like cancerous growths on the face of the Future . . .
Like an army of . . .

Lepers

Down the labyrinthine maze

I see them stumble alone.

"Halt O mighty River of Eternity!

Alas!

Thou floweth faster

Sweeping us to everlasting

. destruction

And we are lost."

Slowly they sink beneath the black muck . . .

Down . . . down . . . down . .

Ne'er to emerge for they are . . .

Doomed.

Like them I too am doomed!

For vain

Are my attempts

To ease

This aching

Tooth.

—FRANK SIGSWORTH '51.

MY FIRST SOCIAL

"Are you going to the social today?"

I wondered why he asked me that question. After all, I wasn't the only one going. There were lots more. Why didn't he ask them?—Oh, I could perceive his motive. He likely knew that I never before attended a social. He might even have been aware of the fact that I never danced 'modern' before, and probably thought that I'd back out of it—that I'd deny that I ever had any intention of going. —Well, I'd fool him. I'd show him that I was no coward. I could take it as well as the next fellow. And so, just as if going to a dance for the first time was a common, everyday occurrence with me, I replied with as much complacency and indifference as I could muster: "I think I will."

As a matter of fact I was going. I had definitely made up my mind. For too many Thursdays now I had wandered aimlessly around town, or had attended the occasional show. I was discontented. Fed up with it. Tramp . . . tramp . . . tramp . . . show . . . tramp . . . tramp . . . tramp . . . another show. It was becoming monotonous. Well, there'd be no more of it. Besides, the boys had been coaxing me to go ever since my first Thursday at college. They assured me of an enjoyable afternoon.

"But what about dancing?" I inquired. "I never danced before in my life."

"Oh, that's nothing. All you have to do is move your feet."

"But the music? Don't you have to keep time to the music?"

"No, all you have to do is move your feet."

So that's all that was required. In that event I didn't have a worry in the world. I could move my feet. I had joints and ligaments and muscles as well as anybody else, didn't I?

. . . At 3.30 sharp I was at the dance hall. There was nobody there. That gave me ample time to view the scene of battle (a person must be prudent on an occasion of this kind). Immense room . . . plenty space between the floor and ceiling . . . excellent place for storing lobster traps for the winter . . . hold lots of hay too, wouldn't it?—Enough speculation, I decided. Something practical would be more in order. I tested the floor to see how slippery it was (be disastrous to fall down while dancing). It was satisfactory. Yet I wished I had taken my rubbers. Oh, well . . .

The hall was rapidly filling. The boys were all crowding to one corner, the girls to another (they must keep their distance, you know). The orchestra seem to be in a malicious mood. Someone likely informed them that I was there, and they were preparing to play the fastest and most complicated numbers they knew. Well, let them play what they wished. I didn't care. If they believed that they could prevent me from moving my feet, they were mistaken. I knew how to cope with their kind.

There were quite a few dancers on the floor by this time. Not a sufficient number yet, I judged. Must bide my time. Must not be rash. Somebody was urging me to get mobile. "C'mon let's get on the floor."

Oh, yes. He was probably attempting to make a fool of me. I had him figured out. I knew what I was doing. I'd wait until there was a larger crowd on the floor before I'd make my debut. Then I wouldn't appear so conspicuous.

. . . I saw my chance. There were enough people on the floor to form a battalion. After some scrutiny, I singled one of the more promising-looking girls and dashed hurriedly across the floor in the general direction of where she was standing. By the time I reached there everything was a complete blurr (what wouldn't I have given to be out of there! Oh why did I ever come anyway?) I was beyond the point of no return. So, I selected the blurr nearest me and stammered, almost in desperation: "Dance this one?" I can't recall whether she said "yes" or "no", or if she said anything at all. Certainly I didn't intend to remain in that predicament. So I promptly grasped her by the arm and led her on to the floor.

The crucial moment had arrived. A whole dancing career was at stake. Must have my wits about me. Thank Heaven the orchestra was playing a slow number. They probably hadn't yet noticed me on the floor, or else they were prolonging my embarrassment.

Oh, oh, bumped against someone. "Rather crowded," I ventured, almost apologetically as if I was responsible for their being so many on the floor.

"Yes, it is" she agreed, forcing a quick smile.

Silence. Another bump. "It's rather—crowded", I reiterated, thinking I might again obtain her approval on my keen observation.

She didn't answer me this time, but only forced another laborious smile. The bumps were coming much more frequently. Up to that time I was attempting to give the impression that I was at least an average dancer. Yet I felt that she was suspicious of my dancing abilities. "I guess I'm not in the mood," I tried, vainly seeking to avoid being labelled an imposter.

She looked at me almost pathetically, but didn't reply.

The orchestra was warming up for the second band. Glancing in their direction I could see them gloating almost fiendishly and I could imagine what they were saying: "Let's torture him awhile before we turn on the heat."

The number began. Alas, it was a fast one. My premonition had been but too true. I realized that this was my last stand. Do or die. But I was doomed. For the music kept getting faster and faster and faster; and the bumps more and more frequent. Shuffle, bump . . . shuffle, bump . . . shuffle, bump . . . (Why wouldn't they slow down?) I could feel that everyone in the hall was looking at me. Well let them look; it didn't matter any more. My reputation was already ruined. Carelessly, I forged ahead, looking neither to left or right. Bump . . . bump . . . bump . . . Like a small craft in the Bay of Biscay, I was jostled about the floor at the same time determinedly returning each bump (Were they ever going to stop?) My partner attempted to lure me towards the side, away from the mad melee; but no, I remained adamant in my purpose, and continued to fight it out in the very centre of the vicious scramble. Bump . . . bump . . . bump . . . bump . . .

Finally the music, (if indeed it was worthy of that term) ceased. Immediately, I pushed madly towards the door. Everybody was staring at me, but that did not deter me from my one purpose—to flee from that infernal mad-house.

What a sigh of relief I breathed when I found myself once again on the street! I left my top coat behind, but what did that matter compared with the joy I felt on having escaped from that ordeal? I decided at that moment that never again would I darken the doors of a dance-hall. Give me back the tramp . . . tramp . . . tramp . . . and the occasional show. I'm satisfied .

—ANON.

THE GOLDEN YEARS

The radiating rays of the setting sun pierced through the stained-glass windows of the little parish church at St. Andrew's as Father Delaney, a Redemptorist, was concluding the parish mission with the words "I hope that you have made a good mission; if you have put nothing into it, then you have got nothing from it. As far as you are concerned, the success of this mission can best be judged not by how you have acted during the past week, but by your actions of the incoming week, of the next month and more-over during the rest of your lives."