

Down a steep incline, 'long a deep ravine,
We run till we almost drop
And see the stream in the moonlight-gleam,
With a shell of ice on top.

Now gathered all in the dining-hall,
The crowd, still mirthful, sits,
As the lunches fade, some jokes are made,
Till it's time to call it quits.

No better fun, and it's all homespun,
Is a winter moonlight clatter,
By snapping trees, to stretch your knees,
With songs and cheerful chatter.

—J. E. TRAINOR '49

A LETTER FROM ART

Dear Students,

I am not what could be called a brilliant conversationalist. Not only do I talk too fast, but I also speak very indistinctly—rather with a mumbling effect. It is not at all peculiar, then, that when I attend a party I appreciate being left to myself and the punch bowl; yet I am invariably be-deviled by guests who mistake my negative approach to oratory as being indicative of a good listener. And so, I fall prey to people with hobbies. Hobbies bring out the Dr. Jekyll in me. Once a friend whom I was visiting tuned in a radio program named, I think, "Hobby Lobby". In an uncontrollable rage I directed five minutes of concentrated effort towards kicking his machine to smithereens before I was interrupted by a firm tap on the back of my head. I incurred a sixty dollar repair bill and an enemy for life. About that time I decided to do something about hobby-lobbyists, the general idea being to shut them up. For my weapon, I chose the one they had taken to themselves with such alarming effectiveness. I, too, would develop a hobby, a hobby so unusual that no matter what my tormentors confronted me with I would always have a counterpoise with which to set them back on their heels.

The decision came easy; in fact, it has been the easiest part of the whole darn business. When I came to consider it, I had none

of the prerequisites for being a hobbyist. To name but a few, I lacked ability to plan, initiative, persistence, and was by no means a mental giant. I was, metaphorically, stark naked.

Being somewhat dull-witted, my first thought was to begin a stamp collection. I well realized that this was not original and that my approach to it would have to be, at least, unique. I thought of saving only American three's, and then later amended it to American purple three-cent's with a New York date stamp. I stayed with that for a month before it occurred to me that the people I know in New York don't write letters, and that I couldn't get stamps off telephone calls. In a whole month I had collected only five stamps for my collection, one of which I lifted off a neighbor's letter that had been dropped in my box by mistake. But my fellow-hobbyist continued in their success, and continued to hound me wherever I went. I was backed into more corners than a washed-up prize fighter and was even less able to defend myself. It was only then that I turned to others for advice.

One of my acquaintances told me that he had food as a hobby, and that both his father and his grandfather made a hobby out of food. That wouldn't do. To me food is, always has been, and always will be, a necessity. It is not something I could pursue at leisure, not something I could take or leave alone. Another made coin-collecting his hobby. I had been doing that for years and did not consider it a sensational occupation. As one point of departure I had resolved that I should decide on would have to be productive. Assuming that to be the key to my subconscious desires, my favorite psychiatrist advised letterwriting. I seized the idea and followed it slavishly for two months, when it occurred to me that even if I worked at it for years I would still have nothing to show for my efforts other than a score sheet, the authenticity of which would always give cause for doubt.

I had taxed my brain to its ultimate devising these two avocations, and now I was faced with the necessity of determining a third. As I was about to throw the whole thing over and leave the country, a friend invited me to an informal dinner at her home. After a succession of these I began to notice a strange feeling in the pit of my stomach when I was with her. Not being naive, I was well aware of what was happening, but I was a willing victim. At last someone could see something charming about me other than my ears, and I loved it. One evening I was feeling rather coquettish and thought I would drop by for a surprise visit. I shot a sly peek through her window before ringing the bell and saw her standing

in the living room almost completely surrounded by a strange figure-ugly evidence that I was not alone in her affections. If there were two, I thought, why not four—six—even ten? Could this be **her** hobby? That did it. I went home in a tizzy and a fenzy, and alternately prayed and cursed for guidance, from either one source or the other.

By the next morning things were no better, but to tide me over I decided to collect letters, my letters, letters received by me. Something might come to me later. I wrote letters by the score, even more than when writing them had been my hobby. In each I pleaded for an answer, as if my friendship with the particular addressee was the most important thing in the state of New York. The answers started dribbling in within a week, at first less effusively than they had been pouring out, but eventually reaching considerable proportions. I had visions of years of happiness ahead for the first time in my mute, long-suffering life.

I devised my own filing system, using the two uppermost drawers in my chiffonier as a filing cabinet, with differently colored ribbons serving as file cards. Letters from my ex-fiancées I tied up in black ribbons; letters from those I was still carrying, in white; letters from my old cronies, in a whiskey shade of brown; letters from my former benefactors were done up in green, as were those from the leeches who had affixed themselves to me; the bills I continued to receive were added to the collection, tied up in red. Within these groupings I had sub-groups. For example, letters from those who owed me money were wrapped with quite a deep green, whereas for requests that were not so well received I used a sort of—well—it was hardly green at all. The one exception I made was concerning letters I got from the potential keeper of my two-room apartment. These were filed in my lawyer's safe, along with carbons of my letters to her.

This went on for about a year, but to my utter amazement I was still being backed into corners. My feeble enunciations about my activities in the way of letter-collecting met only with expressions of—oh—a kind of a "Yeah, yeah, but as I was saying . . ." expression. I was given only hurried attention, and could locate very few willing to be backed into a corner to give me even that, one notable exception being an attendant in a men's room, whom I later suspected of selfish motives in his display of enthusiasm for my work. I was, without a doubt, the most spiritless man in the city of New York. I could command neither attention, nor cooperation, nor respect. To these—to these—to these men of greater conquests I was stupid,

boring, dull, and, above all, hobbyless. My only asset was my good hearing, and it was exhaustively exploited.

One day as I wandered about in a state of great mental confusion I collided with a speaking acquaintance who was ambling about on a sort of shifting bias. I helped him to my apartment, and pillowed him into a sitting position on my couch. To help pass the time until he should recover I began to show him my collection. After a goodly number of bundles had fallen through his hands he began mouthing something comprehensible only to a practicing disciple of Bacchus. To me it sounded sufficiently like "shilly senimenalish" to break my spirit. If there was anything farther from the truth that was it. My collection was anything but that of a silly sentimentalist, and in my semi-neurotic condition I was quick to resent the implication. I ejected my critic and began tearing up the result of my year's work, letter by letter, page by page. Then I had an idea. Why not make a collection of just the closing paragraphs of my letters? Even better, why not collect them and then combine them in a short story, or a familiar essay? I got a pair of scissors and started clipping.

Today I began to sort my collection. For the greater part I find my correspondents singularly unimaginative and lacking in originality. Of the 175 paragraphs in my collection, 102 will have to be discarded. I cannot, for the life of me, fit in, "Well, this is all for now. Write when you have time," or "I must say so long for now. Take care of yourself, and write when you have time." No, I'm afraid they will have to go. That leaves seventy-two. Two more end with, "Hope you have a merry Christmas in Boston." That leaves seventy. But the others offer some possibilities, and since my work will hardly be completed for some time I'll mention just a few to let you know I'm on the right track. Here's one: "There have been several good things along entertainment lines here in Ottawa lately, but unfortunately I am still concentraring on getting my watch back from Al Steiglein. The Dublin Theatre group was here, and also a company under one John Woolfit. They did some Shaw plays and some Shakespeare. Oh well". And then he signs his name. See the noble self-sacrifice of the young student of journalism. There you have a lover of things beautiful, a devout patron of the arts, denying himself the very things that would quench the thirst in his soul to get his watch back from Al Steiglein so he can devote more time to his studies. Another—"So I will outgotten der inkpotten und mit gewiten und guns crathin is signen der nomen." There's quite a bit of that sort of stuff. "Who's **Time** do you borrow now? I would send you mine but my subscription has run out. Remember how you used to pick mine up,

and by August I would finally find out who the Man of the Year was. Would like to hear from you, but not in carbon this time, please." That last line was promoted by my over-eagerness to get letters out. For some weeks I made three carbon copies of each letter I wrote and mailed copies to friends well removed from each other. Complaints such as the above were numerous. But the by-play about Time offers something, though I'm not sure just what. My aunt usually concluded her letters with, "Let me know if you get **this**." (Emphasis mine). "This" usually varied from \$10.00 to \$50.00. I have several of those human interest items. My kid sister, poisoned by the fickleness of the age, usually found a song title to fittingly end her notes, like, "With love, Till the End of Time". "Many thanks for your kindness in letting me use your notes." That from a class mate who had borrowed some Philosophy notes and returned them three years later. (I am choosing at random.) "It is now 4:30 P.M. To night is Hallow'en. I have \$1.25 in my pocket, I can't find my liquor permit, and the vendor closes at 5:30. My problem, as I sign off, is this: where in hell am I going to get three bucks and a "good" liquor book in the next hour. I leave you as I wearily ponder this question, this seemingly eternal question in this land of Prohibition, Mounties, and Moonshiners, (God bless 'em.)" I could make another "Lost Weekend" out of that one.

I could go on. There are others probably much better than those but it is nearly evening and I must forsake my work for something so fleeting as dinner. But you can see how I have stuck to my fight, and I intend to take it to the grave. It's on to the finish, and should I finally lose I'll go down with a flag in one hand and a manuscript in the other. Much better, I say, a hero's death than merely a heroic life.

Well, this is all for now. Write when you have time.

Sincerely,

"Art."

GOD'S HANDIWORK

The potency of a tiny seed,
The beauty of a tree;
The violence of a hurricane,
The fury of an angry sea;