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YALE LITERARY MAGAZINE.

VOL. LXXXIII

MAY 1918

No. 8

EDITORS.

STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT DONALD MALCOLM CAMPBELL
JOHN F. CARTER, JR. ROBERT M. COATES
 THORNTON N. WILDER.

IMPROVING THE TIME.

CAPACITY is a thing that boys of the college age look upon almost with suspicion. At that time of life, they feel, nothing of that sort should darken the carefree course of youth. Promise or threatened ability are of less value to an undergraduate than a knack for quick retort, or sheer animal spirits. A young man in a Barrie play remarks without enthusiasm that he supposes capacity "is a thing we all have to come to in the end," with a suggestion that such an end would be very tiresome and unenviable indeed. In this light there is considerable relief in the reflection that many boys of great ability conceal their powers from themselves and from their friends for many years, having been fortunate enough to have escaped experiences that might bring to light their capabilities.

But there have come times when some stimulus in the greater world has touched a college group to real issues so completely that even the slightest personalities have felt the contagion of intelligence and character. What did the students of Italy during the *Risorgimento* lose by being confronted with great matters, or the Prussian students in 1870, or the English students in the days of Tract 90, or our forefathers during the Revolutionary and Civil Wars? Did they complain because they had their right to youthful in consequence and thoughtfulness abrogated? Or did they regret in after years that they

had had excitement and debate and an early maturity thrust upon them?

The times in which we are living to-day demand of us no less the great response. "The obligation to be intelligent" rests heavily on every individual. Although the national situation from its very nature calls out a different reaction from the youth of the country than that with which "Young Italy" and "Young Ireland" responded in their hour, "Liberty" is still the word that sums up the crisis. The fact that our nation or any institution in it is not yet directly threatened explains why our answer is necessarily more sober and considered. And it is in just such a spirit that our friends have gone, a gravity without hesitation, a willingness without importunity. It is an anomaly in the conduct of war and makes of this war something unique, as though, for the first time, armies, like Justice, were visiting upon criminals an unimpassioned retribution.

It is for us in the College they left behind them to rise also to the stature of this maturity; to induce upon ourselves a "multiplied consciousness," suddenly lifted by the greatness of our times. So in years to come men will not so hastily say of this period that it was a hopeless time to have been in college. Let them say that although the majority of the students were under-classmen, or older men with weak eyes and unreliable lungs, notwithstanding there was to be found on our part a real grip of the situation, and that the men in service during their visits to New Haven did not find the seats, formerly won by high capacity and through strenuous competition, filled now by mediocrity or inaptitude.

T. N. Wilder.

WAR SECTION

THE WINGED TRAIL, IV.

LETTERS OF A NAVAL AVIATOR.

March 15, 1918.

DEAR L. :—

I have just received two more letters from you—one dated January 20th, and the other, February 20th. It's funny how the mails work. Only four or five of our home letters have been opened by the censor, and they were not censored at all. You say in your letter that you're glad to get mail from us;—well, I promise you that if you saw the contrast between a day when we get mail and a day when we don't—you'd think we were insane: the mail day we are chipper and gay—the others we are, too, but don't feel so—which makes all the difference in the world. Do keep on writing the way you have been. I simply adore your letters.

Well, you certainly are a gay young butterfly to be fluttering to R—'s, etc. Why, I've only been there once—and we thought we were most awful devils that time. As a matter of fact, it does seem rather a sedate place, when one actually goes, after what one has heard about it.

Well, L., we are all on war flight at last, and are patrolling over the endless North Sea. We had a bully thrill the other morning—all for nothing, but it was a thrill all the same. We were flying along above some cloud banks, through gaps in which we could see patches of water. Our machine was at the left of the flight, when suddenly we sighted, framed in one of the gaps, a little grey conning tower, with its white wake. We dove immediately through another gap, and came on straight over them at tremendous speed. I had my hands on the bomb release levers and was about to let them have it, when they showed us they were British by recognition signals. We certainly were heartily disappointed—and when we got down

pretty near them we could see that they were terrified. Little men appeared waving things and signaling. So up we went again, to the sunny world above the clouds. We were patrolling above the clouds, because they were so low that we couldn't see far and were in danger of losing the other machines if we stayed below. Well, pretty soon the gaps closed in, and there was nothing in sight but a billowy, white sunny expanse. But we suddenly came to the place where the cloud curtain ended—it was like coming to the edge of a rolly cottony carpet—and over the edge, instead of water—was good solid land. It is awkward to be inland in a seaplane, because if the motor quits, one lands with an awful slam-bang. We turned toward where we knew the coast to be and went for quite a while. Finally we came to another little gap in the clouds and saw the glint of water through it, so we ducked down through the gap and got home all right. You see, the wind velocity had increased tremendously since our departure, so when on the homeward course, which was "tail to wind," we had been carried inland before we had theoretically reached the coast at all. It certainly was lucky that the clouds ended when they did.

March 24, 1918.

DEAR M.:—

I am on my first four days' leave since arriving in England, and am writing from Cousin D.'s house. Cousin B. has put me up ever so comfortably at her flat—which is homelike and delightful.

It is the greatest relief imaginable to get a rest—because we have been doing an almost unprecedented amount of flying for the past week and a half—averaging five hours in the air every day—and one day we had a most exhausting experience, because our motors quit over a hundred miles out to sea, and we had a fierce time getting going again. We managed to get going and returned all right, after twelve hours in the machine. T. and I are tremendously delighted about one thing—S. P. brought down our flying corps' first Hun plane a week ago—so the ball is rolling at last. S. has been in two fights—but T. and I have had bad luck and failed to meet the Hun patrol, although they were out on four days when we were patrolling

and looking for them. However, to-morrow we'll be back on the job, and better luck will be almost certain.

This has been a most blissful time. When first arriving in London I went to the American Officers' Inn, which is a simply ideal establishment run in connection with the Y. M. C. A. A lady called Mrs. N. is hostess, and all the kitchen work and serving at table is done by English society girls, who are most charming. At tea time they serve tea, start the Victor, and dance like everything. Two evenings ago I got two tickets to "Yes, Uncle," and invited a very attractive Canadian girl called Miss C. M., who worked at the Inn, out to dine and go to the play. Really, it was positively delightful—almost as classic as our Paris party with H. B.

But after all this fun it will be great to get back on the job. It's rotten to be inactive when the inferno has broken loose on the Western front and men are dying every second over there.

We are wearing nice little embroidered wings, reproducing the pin, which hasn't come yet.

Yesterday afternoon a party of us from the American Officers' Inn were invited to hear "Aida" at Drury Lane, by Lady Cunard, who had the royal box. It was splendid, but made me all the prouder of our Metropolitan Opera, because it didn't really come up to that at all. They sang it in English, which was all right in one way, but seemed ridiculous in the Temple of Isis.

The North Sea is really quite an interesting place, although it seems frightfully empty on some of these patrols. The U boats run submerged in the day time so much that it's hard to find one.

Good luck—don't worry.

March 28, 1918.

DEAR L.:—

I'll describe our quarters to you. We are in a big room, the three musketeers together, fronting on the North Sea. I'm sitting facing the window across our big center table. Behind me is the fireplace, with a cheerful, glowing coal fire (yes, I said coal). Many books on the mantel, a map of the world

