

HELICON

1949

THE HELICON

"From Helicon's harmonious spring a thousand rills their mazy progress take."

Gray: The Progress of Poesy

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Table of Contents

A Myth	Sam Flores	1
Puddles	Robert Hargraves	4
Infidelity	M. Patricia Di Sarro	4
Prayer	Frances Steere	5
The Melody	Florence Piacitelli	5
Winter—An Etching	Barbara Gusetti	6
Part of the Town	Hely Merikowski	7
Why I Teach	John May	8
Storm	William A. Ferrara	9
Death	Helen Agronick	9
Peace and Warfare	Marjorie Macomber	10
Persistence	Helen Agronick	11
The Burial	Chet Fuller	12
Sophomore Madness	Robert Shields	13
The Library	Roslyn Toomey	15
Destiny	Jacqueline Cahir	15
To Him Who Has My Love	Betty Hamilton Pryce	16
An Iconoclast's View on Modern Art	Ruth E. MacLean	17
Faith in Man	Myron John Francis	17
Sorrow	Gloria Flood	18
Love's Waters	Claire O'Brien	18

A Myth: Why There Are No Miracles Anymore

NEW ENGLAND seacoast towns are all alike, and Little Godawful is no exception. It is a picturesque, protected place, protected alike from the winds of winter on the north and the cold clear sea on the south by the high rolling hills which surround the town. It is the type of place which appeals to sophisticated city-dwellers during the summer months, being not so exclusive as Bar Harbor nor yet so "common" as Newport. In the center of the village—called the Common—are the combination grocery-and-hardware store, the public library, and the Protestant and Catholic churches, all suitably "quaint". Situated around the Common are the homes of the townspeople—or "natives", nice white Cape Cod box-like affairs and plain shacks, while further toward the sea recline the ornately Georgian mansions of the summer residents. The town is predominantly of Yankee stock, the first family (among the "natives", at least) being the Rufus Adams. It was Mr. Adams' great-grandfather who originally founded the town, naming it after his own birthplace in England which, unfortunately, had been a shire called Godawful.

Yes, all in all, little Godawful is a typical New England town.

That is, Little Godawful *was* a typical New England town until the summer of 1948. And yet, in spite of the wondrous events which took place in that favored village during the summer of 1948, Little Godawful is still virtually unknown to all but Little Godawful-ites. This is indeed shameful, for after the summer of 1948—in fact, after August 18 of that summer—Little Godawful should be mentioned in all the textbooks attempting to treat comprehensively of history, theology, philosophy, psychology, sociology, and general enlightenment. So, it is to this purpose, to acquaint the world at large with the strange happenings in Little Godawful during the summer of 1948, that this chronicle is written.

To begin with, the people of Little Godawful were extremely religious. This religious bent was what started the whole thing in the first place. In the whole town, there was only one unbeliever, an agnostic who despised everyone, including God. There is usually one such individual in every town, if the towns described in books are any standard. Authors give their wittiest and most literate speeches to such a man, and more than often he is made to sound like dear old Bernard Shaw, at whom everyone smiles tolerantly and whom everyone loves. But,

unlike these literary atheists, the unbeliever in Little Godawful was not a lovable creature. And to make matters worse, he was very rich. That was another reason why everybody hated him.

Now, Saint Hilary's, the little Catholic church in the village, was very old and in poor condition. The floor creaked, the roof leaked, the pews were falling apart. Everyone agreed that it was a terrible place to devote to God—especially so since many women had ruined their best nylons on the nails of the kneelers. A new church was badly needed; yet the parishioners had never been able to contribute enough money to make a down-payment. But they had not given up hope. The priest ended each service with a fervent prayer that "the great Lord in his Goodness make it possible for a new church to be built." (Some perceptive "natives" noticed that this prayer was given much more emphasis and length during the summer months when many wealthy city-dwellers attended the morning masses).

No one, least of all the priest, expected the prayer to be answered so quickly or so spectacularly as it was. On the morning of August 18, 1948, when the residents of Little Godawful awoke, they were greeted by a strange but very beautiful sight. There on the hill high above the village, overlooking the sea, was the most glorious church the world had ever seen, serene and radiant above the morning mists.

Since the town was too religious to contain a barroom, no one took the pledge. Instead, everybody clambered up the hill to see whether the vision were more than a vision and had substance. It had. So everybody flocked down the hill again and went to his religious adviser to find out what opinions he should hold on the phenomenon, for they were all extremely religious folk and did not dare to think for themselves.

The town was soon in an uproar. The Protestants were plainly perplexed. Such an occurrence seemed to serve as proof that those of the Catholic religion were of the *true* faith, while the rest were heretics living in sin, for obviously God would not have treated any other than his own special children in such a way. Therefore, the Protestant minister counseled his faithful to ignore the church altogether, to pretend it wasn't there at all, serene and pure on the hill beside the sea, and, if pressed for further explanation, to regard it as a mirage caused by atmospheric conditions, extrasensory perception, the position of the planets in relation to the earth, or what have you? To show his broad-mindedness, the minister gave his church members absolute freedom of choice of reasons to account for the mirage, so long as they admitted it *was* a mirage. Naturally, like all good churchfolk everywhere, they all complied, and some even went so far as to place the blame upon Henry

Wallace and the Progressive Party. This solution later came to be the one accepted by the whole community.

Then another explanation arose. The village agnostic was angered because he owned the land on which the church stood; yet he was powerless to do anything. He could take no court action because by doing so he would have to recognize that the church existed; ergo, that a miracle had taken place; ergo, that there was a God. This fact was too simple for such a complex man to accept, so, in desperation, he killed himself.

The suicide was looked upon as a distinct victory by the Catholics. It added to their pride, which already had known no bounds since the miracle. They were secure in the belief that they were the chosen of the Lord, and consequently they took to lording it over everyone else. Another Inquisition was instituted, and life in Little Godawful became, truly, godawful.

Suddenly, two weeks after the church had appeared, a revolution broke out, and many on both sides were killed. Each evening the sun went down on scenes of bloodshed brought about by these extremely religious people in the interests of the Christ who had deplored violence. Each morning, the sun rose upon even worse prospects. But one morning when the sun rose there was an even more astonishing sight to witness, or rather *not* to witness: the hill high above the village, overlooking the sea, was bare, except for a few wind-gnawed trees. The church has disappeared.

The townspeople waited, but the church did not return. Finally, they turned back to their ordinary pursuits, shrugging off the whole three weeks as a nightmare. The people who had been killed in the revolution suddenly came to life again, and, like Lazarus, could remember nothing of the darkness of death. (These resurrections were not termed miracles by the religious leaders, for they had wisely come to fear the term). Even the village agnostic returned, still as hateful and distrustful of God as before, none the worse—or the better—for his sojourn in the outer darkness.

The hill still remains bare, the town has settled down to its normal dull existence, the "business as usual" sign flaps lazily in the wind before the show window of the combination grocery-and-hardware store, the guns and torture racks have been laid away (for later use?), and the priest still concludes each service at little Saint Hilary's with a fervent prayer that "the great Lord in his Goodness make it possible for a new church to be built." But I have a feeling that this plea will never again be answered—haven't you?

—Sam Flores

Puddles

PUDDLES are symbols of something to me,
 And I think to myself, when a puddle I see,
 "Where do you come from? Where do you go?
 Your bubbling message I'd like so to know."
 But the puddle smiles up with ripples quite knowing,
 And hushes me up with — "Quiet, I'm growing!"
 —Robert Hargreaves

Infidelity

A BRANCH flutters
 In the impetuous breeze,
 Powerless against its thrust,
 Bending reluctantly
 Like a woman
 To a greater force.

An impetuous sweep
 A lustful leap
 Then, gone the wind
 And its hollow voice,
 Away with a wistful sway,
 Off at its treacherous play.

Now the still branch,
 Limp, lost, exhausted, pines,
 Moans the infidelity of winds,
 Yet . . . anxiously awaits
 The next
 Inevitable
 Flutter!

—M. Patricia Di Sarro

Prayer

DEAR Lord,
 Let me love to live,
 And live to love
 Those things created
 From above.

Let me help those in need,
 And share my life
 With those less fortunate
 In this strife.

Give me clear vision to see
 Thy creatures as each a friend;
 To be one to them —
 'Til the end!

With Thy guiding hand
 I'll love, help, and know
 My life has been worthy;
 Then to You happily I'll go.
 —Frances Steere

The Melody

I HEAR a golden melody
 Dashing madly against me,
 Sweeping across my soul,
 Tearing at my external vanity
 Until I am void of Being.
 I am a golden chord of song
 Rich and molten by passion,
 Deep as true love,
 Shining as purity.
 Peaceful little gold notes are my halo —
 I am an angel of music.

—Florence Piacitelli

Winter—An Etching

AS the early sun is rising
From its bed of snow-capped mountains
And its rays wake all the woodland
From a slumber, cool and deep,
Early morning chirps and chattering
Sound within the wakened forest;
Brilliant paths of sunlight streaming
Rouse the woodfolk from their sleep.

When the Winter sun is fading
Far beyond the snow-crest summits
And the heavens draw their curtain
O'er the valley, snug and tight,
Weary sighs from darkened corners
Echo through the dusky shadows;
Sleepy woodfolk drift to dreamland
As the sun's rays fade from sight.

As the moon peeks o'er the fir trees
Christ'ning each white tip with silver
And its light makes shiny ribbons
Of the icy mountain streams,
Tiny stars of snow are drifting
Down to whiten Earth's green forest;
Snowflakes fluttering through the dimness
As the full moon sheds its beams.

When the evening snow is falling
Soft and white upon the garden
And the glow from frosty windows
Makes the silvery surface bright,
There comes the sound of sleighbells ringing
From across the moonlit meadow;
Tiny bells and soft snow falling
Break the silence of the night.

—Barbara Gusetti

Part of the Town

THE town was a strictly Yankee town that is often found in New England. A few foreigners had infiltrated and settled there but they seldom became a real part of the town. Until Jennie Lenowski settled there.

Jennie came originally from Poland. Why she came to the town no one ever found out. She knew no one there. She came there one day and wanted to know where she could buy a house. She bought the old Potter place at the end of Main Street, the clapboard cottage with a large yard surrounded by a picket fence.

She was unobtrusive, but the children being curious, as children are from overhearing parents' conversations at home, soon began to gather at her gate and call to her. At first she only smiled and waved. As the children became bolder, they talked to her and asked her questions. She answered as well as she could but her English was not good. "Where do you come from?" "What's your name?" "Why do you live alone?"

One day she invited them into the yard and explained what and where she was going to plant in the spring. Then, "I've gotta surprise for you," and she led them into the house. There were cookies and milk for them all. As soon as the children finished their milk they wanted to see the whole house. When they began, there was a knock at the door. Jennie answered it. "How do you do? I'm Mrs. Griffiths and I've come for my two children, Bill and Jean. I hope they haven't been disturbing you." Jennie smiled quietly, "No, Mrs. Griffiths. I'm called Jennie Lenowski. Your children and I are very good friends. Come, Bill and Jean, it is now the time for you to go to your home."

That was the first time that a neighbor had spoken to Mrs. Lenowski. Mrs. Griffiths eventually found out that Jennie had been married and that she had had a baby, a girl. Whatever had become of the baby or the husband she could not find out.

The children continued to visit her. Other neighbors soon found excuses to go fetch their children from her home. She'd always invite them in and talk with them. Soon she knew everyone and their troubles, too. Whenever a child was sick, she'd know of it and would entertain the child to let the mother rest awhile. If a mother had to go to the hospital, she'd take in the children or help at home.

Throughout the years she remained quiet. Her brown hair turned to gray and she grew heavier. Her first small friends grew up and

married and she became their baby sitter. Her English improved; she belonged to a club. She had become an unseen link of the town.

Mrs. Griffiths went to see Jennie the other day to tell Jennie of her new grandchild. She found Jennie dead in her favorite chair. She couldn't believe it at first. Only the day before she had been nursing Mrs. Johnson.

The funeral was held today. The little Catholic Church was crowded with children, their parents, and grandparents. At the cemetery there were ever so many dry-eyed but sober people. The flowers were the only bright spot on the cold winter earth into which Jennie was laid.

The townspeople are quiet at home tonight. They realize they have lost a friend. They do not, as yet, realize that they have lost a part of their town.

—Hely Merikowski

Why I Teach

I'M trying to answer the quest of youth — "Why?"

As I go forward in my attempts to teach,
There is the hope that somehow I may reach
The minds of youth, those mental knots untie,
Give help to them to find the reason why.
Oh God, to you I pray and of you I beseech
One favor: Please give me the guidance so to teach
That children ever may keep their ideals high.

Our youth can build anew a world for God.
My work will then be done, for peace will reign
Supreme in all the lands, for all to see.
I then with open heart can face my God.
Although in time no one will voice my name,
I care not. Youth will peace and faith decree.

—John May

Storm

IT'S bleak and wet
It's dark and grey
A fearful, frightening, stormy day
As if God in his greatest wrath
Had frowned to make this aftermath
Of sun and joy
When skies were blue
Instead of this foreboding hue.
The wind so strong, like His own strength,
Is sweeping down without relent
Upon the trees who cry in pain
With every lofty branch that's maimed.
And from the sky the Thunder roars
As if 'twould open Heaven's doors.
The rain through all this fury falls,
Its gloom complete and over all.

—William A. Ferrara

Death

AND what is death?
'Tis but a welcome respite
From the strife,
The bitterness, the hate
Called Life.

A velvet shroud
That gives in payment for a
Mortal's breath
Protection from all harms.
And this
Is Death.

—Helen Agronick

Peace and Warfare

ACCORDING to all logic and standards the world should be at peace.

A horrible war has been fought; battles fraught with savage cruelty and bloodthirsty revenge have been waged; yet mankind has emerged from this conflict only to be thrown into another and perhaps greater one. This present war, however, is not being fought in the battlefield or in the sky. Instead, it is a conflict in the heart of man.

Chaos and strife, together with a growing bitterness and despair are seen in our sister countries of Europe. Another great totalitarianism is growing and spreading throughout the world. Man sees all this and asks himself, "What can I do?"

Before this question can possibly be answered, the causes of the present world situation must be determined. Why is the world in such a state of turmoil? Why have we become enmeshed in confusion and uncertainty? One answer to these questions might be that perhaps mankind has developed too great a dependency on the basic animal instincts to carry it through life.

It is, of course, true that man does possess basic life patterns which can be termed animalistic. Be that as it may, this fact also remains true: man possesses another nature than this animal instinct. Man is as he is because a higher unseen power, called God, instilled into him a soul, a sense of reasoning, and a spiritual goodness with which to neutralize the animal-like tendencies.

Man today lives only on the surface of life. It is almost impossible for him to find an opportunity to be alone to think quietly and deeply on life's meanings. It seems that he can find time to accomplish only that which he must, but beyond this it appears impossible to venture. As a result, man has somehow become unable to see beneath the surface of things and, consequently, has lost at least a part of the depth of the Christian soul.

If man could or would but look into his own heart and soul as he would look into a mirror, and face that which exists there! — but somehow he cannot. There is too much going on all about him; there are too many distracting elements in his life.

Deep down in his soul man possesses an eternal desire for unity which is the very essence of life itself. We see proof of this in the unity of the Holy Trinity, and further proof in the well-integrated forces of nature. Thus, it seems that all of life and of death, all that has been in the past, and all that will be in the future, is in harmony. Then why

should not men desire this unity? But the fact remains that he does not recognize this desire, for it seems impossible for him to penetrate his soul to find it. And yet, he cannot relinquish the search for it.

If true peace is ever to be realized it must be fought for, and the fight must be not a negative one, but a positive one. This fight for peace does not mean armaments, nor does it mean fear and revenge. Those are the negative approaches. It means, rather, fighting the forces of destruction with the forces of the Christian spirit, fighting with as definite an aim for victory as in armed warfare.

Wars have been fought with weapons and hate, and nothing has been accomplished toward peace. Truly, the situation is now worse than it has ever been. Does that mean that perhaps something is missing in the fight? Is it possible that we have been using the wrong tactics?

—Marjorie Macomber

Persistence

I STUMBLED up a twisted road,

The wild wind screamed,
The rain beat down
And sharply whipped across my face.

I knew the road
Was right, and so I cried into
The taunting wind,
"Since it be willed by God that I
Should labor 'gainst your rage,
I will," and gave renewed
Persistence to the chase.

—Helen Agronick

The Burial

THE air is bleak and cold;

Winter is riding triumphantly over the gusts.
The leaves, brown and scar, dance crazily around:
They are dying, but spending their last minutes
In the mad, coldly cruel, caress of the winter wind.
The men are silent and bareheaded;
The women weep and wear hats.
They stand around the gaping wound in the earth.
As they stare it seems to become an evil mouth
Growing larger and larger and larger —
Till it would be big enough to swallow them all.

Yet no grave could hold the sorrow he felt;
No ocean, or world of oceans, could hold the tears —
Tears which he wept silently inside where they grew,
And in their torrential whirlpool,
Threatened to drown his very soul.
Listen! Hear him gasping for air!
The people stand and stare.

The leaves pirouette insanely, mockingly;
The wild wind laughs shrilly, pitilessly.
And the man in the reversed collar intones solemnly
The office of the dead; the liturgy of the mourning heart.
The hole in the earth yawns and
A spectator throws in a shovelful of dirt
As an appetizer to whet its tongue.

He looks and his heart breaks and blood falls
Mingling with the tears; the salt of the tears
Finds its way into the wounds of the heart
And pain becomes so intense that he yells!
Men and women stare, then lower their heads
And weep and pray as they were taught.
The body of the loved one is let into the hungry jaws —
The worms rise in anticipation —
Molten misery flows over his soul
Burning, devouring, consuming; leaving only ashes.
The ashes become one with the earth

And are thrown callously, cruelly, over the beloved
By hands of those who do not care and do not love.
They begin to leave but he stands there still —
Staring at the small mound of now-precious earth.
They call him but he does not hear —
They implore him but he does not move —
They touch him but he does not feel.
Someone gently leads him away but
The life in him stays — imprisoned there in the earth
With the woman he loves —
And the heavens weep for a dead love.

—Chet Fuller

Sophomore Madness

"SOME men are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them." With due apologies to Mr. S—, a bit of paraphrasing: Some men are born writers, some just can't write, and some are forced to write for a course in adv. comp.

After some months of slaving over a hot typewriter, the writer, upon completion of one quarter in said course in adv. comp., finally decided that he was sufficiently capable of turning out the novel for which the world had been waiting. One evening — after the fourth cocktail — and after the 100th attempt at a preface to said novel — that thin thread which separates insanity from genius *snapped*. Below is the text of what was found beside the genius' typewriter as the boys in the white coats fitted him into a canvass overcoat and took him to the local "Snake Pit."

Once upon a time in the land of Turfdom there was born to King Parley and Queen Acrosstheboard a son. This son was called Longshot. As an infant and child Longshot was much the same as most infants and children — rather insignificant. When he attained manhood, however, Longshot really started creating havoc in Turfdom. And how!

Longshot, as is the case with most gods, was not an only child; he had three brothers, Betaload, Betamillion, and Twobucks. He got along quite well with Betaload and Betamillion, but, oh, that Twobucks! —

he was really the fly in Longshot's soup. No matter what anyone said or did, Longshot and Twobucks just couldn't hit it off.

One day while Twobucks was on a spree—one of many—he ran into Longshot. You will still find evidence of this meeting in Grandstand, a town in Turfdom. Now, these two mighty monarchs of Turfdom had met many times and at each meeting they had had one grand battle royal. Twobucks, the more powerful of the two, had defeated Longshot in the greater number of these battles, and old Longshot was getting pretty well fed up with taking his guff. It so happened that Longshot had had a sumptuous breakfast of those better-than-ever "Bookies" that particular morning; so he decided that it was time to give Twobucks the beating of his life. The fight was rather even for a while, but when the contest reached the three-quarter pole, just prior to the home-stretch, ol' Longshot began to put it all over Twobucks. The details of that encounter are really too awful to describe here. Let it suffice to say that when the dust of battle had settled, Longshot was seen standing victor over Twobucks.

IN THE WORLD OF TODAY

I. LITERARY ALLUSION

Come on, Longshot, go, go, go.
On your nose we've put our dough.

Bookie Bill—*A Day at 'Gansett*

II. IN WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS

A "mudder" on a dry track is called a longshot.
A horse whose chances are very slim is a longshot.

III. IN OTHER CONNECTIONS

Longshot can be recognized by the loyal people of Turfdom by the symbols "100 to 1."

There are numerous temples to Twobucks on Pari-mutuel Road in Turfdom.

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

No Shirt, Longshot's Battles, Wm. Tout, pp. 107-108

Piker, Twobucks' Rounds, Bookie Bill, pp. 7-11

Last Chance, Twobucks' Defeat, Weeping Willie, pp. 2-12

—Robert Shields

The Library

A SCRATCHING pen
Some scattered books
A crowd of students
Secret looks
The flip of pages
Tap of heels
Forbidden whispers
Muffled squeals
A blot of ink
Some squeaking chairs
Rattling papers
Somber airs
A ticking clock
Devours the day
"At last it's finished"
Students say.

—Roslyn Toomey

Destiny

I STUMBLED wearily along the briared path.
The world was dark; there was no goal in sight,
But still I plodded onward faithfully.
My spirit shone through the eternal night.

Then from the gloom a voice transcended space
And said, "My friend, for what did you embark?"
I could not answer; still I thought a long, long, time,
And then walked on again, alone, and it was dark.

—Jacqueline Cahir

To Him Who Has My Love

MY love is yours whether you will or no.
 You see,
 I have given it to you.

Take my love.
 Keep it, cherish it, nourish it;
 And above all, know it.
 Know it.
 Know this love which I give,
 This love which I tear from my being
 And offer to yours —
 For to yours does it belong; mine
 But kept it in trust.

Know that in my love
 You possess a growing thing,
 That yours is my mind and my body,
 Yea my heart and my life.
 Know that you have all there was or is
 Or will be or thought of being.
 Take heed, then, and know
 That because you have my love
 I have nothing without yours,
 For he that has my love
 Has my all.

And more,
 Know that in possessing my love
 You possess also
 My soul.

—Betty Hamilton Pryce

An Iconoclast's View

MODERN artistry
 Strikes me as being a lot of sophistry.
 A rose is quite obviously no longer a rose
 As just about everybody knows.
 I may be horribly bourgeois,
 But I like things I can *see*.
 My views on pointillism are medioca —
 To me it looks like tapioca.
 Nor are my thoughts about cubism nice;
 I think all cubes should be in ice.
 Impressionism inclines me to think
 The artist might better have been in the clink
 Than allowed to run loose and superimpose
 His impressions on us, if his impressions were *those*.
 This sculpture that seems to hang by a thread
 Makes me wish Praxiteles weren't dead.
 Surrealism only makes me groan,
 And in this I know I'm not alone.
 But I say to you, Mr. Dali, you committer of mayhem,
 I wish *my* alarm clock would melt before A.M.!

—Ruth E. MacLean

Faith In Man

WHEN we have won the love of our brother we will have once more performed the miracle that is as old as the world, and demonstrated once again the strength that no evil can overcome, because we are acting according to the infallible precepts of the Christian faith. It is as simple as that and I wonder at all of us in failing to see our way more clearly. There never has been and never will be any government, any enemy, any political minority, or hate-ridden race that can successfully overcome the love that one man has for his fellow-man.

—Myron John Francis

Sorrow

SOFT, silvery night . . . punctuated by myriads of stars tied together
with lucent bands of Milky Way . . .

Soft night, tell me . . .

What is this sorrow of ours?

What is this sorrow of ours?

Our frantic hearts cry out for some urgent hand to grasp with all
humility and tenderness that which we think is love or sorrow
Lest we should banish it beyond your shimmering night
That which is love or sorrow.

Is it our sterile pride and worldly haughtiness that gives us no answer?

There is sorrow . . . here is love . . .

Is sorrow love?

Is sorrow love?

—Gloria Flood

Love's Waters

LOVE'S waters

Roaring against my heart and brain —
Flowing over me like the pianissimo of violins,
Beating cruelly, unrelenting to my pleading cries,
Soothing gently as they bathe my eager soul.

Love's waters

Robbing me of all — knowing well my human frailties,
Still giving more of life than human minds could know.

Love's waters

Calm, abiding steadfast forever, and yet
Clutching the shreds of my very soul,
Tearing me from the shores of all reality.

—Claire O'Brien

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