

ST. JOHN'S COLLEGIAN

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Editorial

What we have to say is a repetition of what has been said before, officially and unofficially. ("We" means generally, "the Editors of the Collegian," and specifically, "the people who wrote, typed, and proof-read this issue.") The repetition is our saying once more that the Collegian is an organ of the whole St. John's Community, depending for its very existence upon the creative contributions of that community. The repetition is necessary because contributions so far this year have been so very slight.

We are assuming, of course, that the Collegian should exist this coming year. We have no comment on its past history, wondering just what should be expected from such a child. We are sure that at no time past has any publication in any way represented the whole St. John's Community, and now we are only hopeful that such a publication is even possible.

No doubt Collegian suffers a bit from lack of definition. The only definition we have to offer is this issue itself. The definition, we realize, wants amendment. That can best be accomplished, we feel, by contributions from the different segments of the student population.

Comment

Toward the ideal of an Informed Community, let us attempt to find order in the recently witnessed bit of what seems to be Chaos herself. We refer to the once-folded bit of paper found one week ago in truly odd corners of the campus buildings. The origin of the bit is still in question, but we can at this date stamp-out a good many of the rumors.

First, it was not a selection of type-face samples passed out by the Veri-type people to show off their machine, nor was it written and dis-

tributed after dark by Leroy. Leroy, as a matter of fact, found the whole thing sadly lacking. He had hoped that its editors would have hit upon a more "discerning editorial policy." Duns Scotus was of the same opinion. It was certainly neither a new errata sheet to the old lab manuals, nor a fragment from an un-found Plotinus. (Almost four people have pointed out that no Plotinus they know of would use a kappa where a chi would do.)

We suspect that the true story is closer to the Tale that finds the paper in question to be an old Enabling examination, minus the page with the questions on it; the page 5 referred to. This examination was confused in the Treasurer's Office with the copies of the New Financial Policy, which in turn were sent to the decorators responsible for the yellow furniture. The furniture requirement went to the boiler people, who then forwarded it to their head-office, who returned it to the switchboard. There Pat Davis appeared, saw, and the Art exhibit of last Spring was the result, together with the brass lamps and the new lights. Pat left, as we all know, just last week. At some-time, an order recalling Miss Alexander was given, and it seems to have been executed with no confusion.

If further evidence makes itself available, we shall certainly make ourselves so, again as always.

Sansefiera

Crowded they stand
In the wide pot,
All wanting and taking
The best place,
But not looking
For better places.

Such is nature and creature,
The sun laughing upon all.

Robert J. Pierot '53

Liberal Education And The Liberal Arts

Mr. Klein started the lecture year with his lecture "Liberal Education and the Liberal Arts." I have heard it called a freshmen lecture and I guess that is a good name for it. Here it is difficult for one to lecture on the liberal arts for so many lecture on them that if he were to say something new or well, it is surrounded by repetition. This was the strength of the lecture for those who enjoyed and the dullness for those who didn't. Those who enjoyed it did so as one enjoys a good meal, they were satisfied and complacent.

Those who didn't like it, said it was obvious, unorganized, etc. They plainly didn't like it, as the others plainly enjoyed it. With the tradition of lectures we have here, I don't think one can expect a well organized, formally presented lecture. Then how can the lecture clearly state something true and not be deemed obvious? Suppose someone for whom we have great respect lectures to us saying, "And I have found from my studies and experience that man must live moderately, putting everything in its proper place." This is obvious. Do we only want to know how this man solves mathematical problems, what he judges of a work, or how he made his money, some particular point which brings to focus his experience and insight?

Mr. Klein spoke of the relation of man as an individual to the existing order of things, i. e., the tradition, how one can become free to be ones-self.

He stated that Achilles, through his shield became free, and as himself, went into battle. Then he quoted Plato as saying man becomes free through knowledge, that one can only know that which is unchangeable. Yet, to be a free man, man must know the basic assumption on which life is based. This along with the seemingly two-fold place of tradition gave much food for thought, which, of course, was not discussed in the question period.

It is strange that the question period of a lecture aimed primarily at the freshmen should allow the freshmen only one question. I hoped at one time that the reins might be given over to them for a fresh, a new point of approach. The question period was like most question

periods. It did not discuss the questions on hand, but as if that which was said was the impetus for their minds to wander far away and bring to the fore their favorite theme. Whether it be a haughty distance, treating a small point with its cosmic or semantical implications or the — that may be so, but what about this attitude.

The question period shows that once knowledge does become established it sediments, modifies, and petrifies itself. It wasn't that the freshman year was so wonderful, but that we were so wonderful our freshman year.

All in all, I had a pleasurable evening, as most Friday nights are pleasurable; somehow hoping that Mr. Klein would have given eight lectures or cut to one-eighth the one he gave.

Room Service

Room Service was originally a stage play, and the Marx Brothers movie of the same name has many of the familiar faults of unimaginative film adaptations. It is too static, too talky, and in general the peculiar virtues of the screen are uncultivated. By contrast, in *Duck Soup* the resources of the camera are used fully and with great effect; most strikingly in the battlefield scenes. Some of the early Marx Brothers pictures are, however, translated from the stage with even more crudity than *Room Service*; and yet, in their case, it would be trifling to complain.

The main trouble with *Room Service* is that its plot is considered something important, rather than a mere pretext. The very special Marxist Muse is ignobly in the service of ordinary situation comedy. The great comic moment is viewed, not as an end in itself, but as a way to advance the story. For example Harpo is called upon to present his conception, of death, and it's a remarkably intense and funny conception, that reaches to the heart like a horror, and yet the movie here insists on centering its attention on the wearisome circumstance of the hotel man's confoundment.

So, because of the necessity to keep the story moving along, Chico and Harpo are not allowed to exhibit their musical skills. Groucho, who is, as somebody once said, a splendid caricature

of something unknown, can't step outside the story to parody it. And there are no rapid sequences of dialogue and/or action bound together with a strange and inexorable necessity which are as brilliant in totality as a mathematical proof. Instead we are offered little snatches here and there: Groucho cheats at solitaire, Harpo indefatigably pursues a turkey, and in the eating scene and a few other places we are battered into helpless laughter. But the ultimate effect is not the comic ecstasy of their best work.

We grieve for the stupidity of the producer of *Room Service* and trust that the lesson of it is plain enough: the comedy of the Marx Brothers is somehow above this world of struggle and frustration. (Harpo, especially, is a thoroughly self-sufficient man, blonde-chasing and all.) Just what world it's really in is another and greater subject.

Robert Hill.

The Surf

Beneath the pallid moon's sick glow,
Framed against an ashen space,
With rhythmic regularity —
Surf swirls amongst the ragged rocks,
Recedes and flagellates once more
A purposeless song persistently,
That melody, monotony.

G. R. C.

Film Review

By Robert Parslow

The Camera is a merciless machine for travelling in time. It cannot retrieve polyploid chrysanthemums from the future, but it is capable of wedging the visible past awkwardly into the present. You and I on occasion come face to face (this latter "face" a patent synecdoche) with ourselves clad as jaybirds at half a year and then blush with this flesh for that flesh to show that film's artifice has collapsed the line of time to a point of currency.

More irksome than this are the potentialities of the movie camera's vehicle equipped to haul

at least five additional dimensions of its subject through the train of instants on its strip of retina, remembering Bernhardt as a ham (however divine a ham), Lamar as a proponent of Machaty's admirable idea of ecstasy and Chaplin as a peculiarly unpathetic anti-Chaplin.

A lady who has seen more Chaplin screened than I said, "I didn't like the picture because I couldn't cry for Charlie." The picture was "Tillie's Punctured Romance" and the Lady was perhaps over-sensitive. But seeing the older Charlie without the warmth and ambiguous innocence of the old Charlie is discomfoting.

The Comedian cannot, however, fail to evoke some admiration. He still dances to perfection as he moves and, walking with Tillie, executes the world's only pas de deux in counter-point. Tillie pains us somewhat: if we must choose a woman to laugh at, let it be Phulladulla rather than Grishkin, the form Spinster rather than the form Mother, who is the butt of pedal indignities.

I laughed hard at the Keystone Cops coming to Tillie's rescue toward the end of the film, and thought of the similar geometrical confusion of the franc-chasseurs in "A Nous la Liberte."

The meaning and moral of this "Tillie's Punctured Romance" is lost in antiquity. The only metaphysical question I can think of: in 1913 and Iglehart Hall, what were all those people laughing at all the time?

Borromini's Dom

Image in the stone of the cold God of the cavernous

Terror now bound in Acquinian logic and Aristotelian space, compasses Mystery, Life and the Ultimate Reality. Facade is an Inlay of stone in a cosmical screen; infinite Extension, known but as felt, is uncomprehended; and

Nothing outside of the jeweled walls has expression.

P. Lyman

The Reformation

By Paul Cree

The blessings of St. Cecelia, or her Germanic equivalent, have once more been invoked and a harmonious joining of music with the six others is again being attempted. Masculine voices in other words, have sounded in McDowell Hall. After failing to achieve the perfectly possible last year, as Mr. Zuckerkandl remarked, he attempts the impossible this year, with an imposing degree of success, if the first meeting is any indication of what's to follow. Not only did he lure us into demonstration that we could sing great music (Need I name it?) without even extending ourselves, but, after dispelling a few illustrations foisted on us by second-rate romantic musicologists concerning major and minor modes, he even had us singing a Bach Allelujah (the same in a very minor mode) in a fashion which would have made Martin Luther summon up the maximum of whatever joy he was capable of.

All this is merely to say that, in one man's opinion at least, last Wednesday's chorus was pretty wonderful. The spirit was there, the voices were there, and, by God, even the tutors were there. Long may they flourish, and with them, the chorus.

Kinsman's Rationale

Since St. John's College is located very favorably for it, boating is an activity that the College could reasonably be expected to provide for its students. Unfortunately boating is a very expensive recreation and the College is in no position to make it available without support. This support so far as the students are concerned, takes the form of labor given to the College by those who are interested in boats. A year ago a survey of the real property of the Boat Club showed a serious deterioration from lack of organized care. To halt this deterioration and, if possible, to reverse the trend was the problem.

It has been my experience based on an observation of a number of boat clubs that the only group which can be depended upon to pull together and stick together long enough to get the really unpleasant labor done is the racing men. This is perhaps natural since, while all other boating activities are individual and can be pursued alone, racing of necessity means cooperation with a group. For that reason it was proposed to the Club that it would be wise to find a way to promote racing. The Club under-

took to build up a fleet of racing boats in addition to the day sailors it already has. Since this is a long process where money is difficult to come by and where no member can give too much time to Club work, we began to look around for a way of getting some racing during the period while the fleet was being built. The Inter-Collegiate Yacht Racing Association was the answer here. Members need not have a fleet of their own and can sail boats of those fortunate enough to have a fleet. Considering the statement of President Barr printed as Appendix C in the St. John's College Catalogue of 1947-48, particularly the last paragraph, it seemed reasonable to ask the Administrative Council of the College if the Club might not be permitted to join the Association. The Council, after careful consideration, agreed that the conditions under which the Association operated were not pernicious and that the Club might race in it without changing the College policy as expressed by Mr. Barr.

It should be understood that the Club proposes to continue in the Association even after its own fleet is sufficiently large to maintain a good intramural program. Sailboat racing is analogous to the solution of a mathematical problem. The given conditions are the course, the weather and the boat. The problem is to sail the course, come back in one piece and bring the boat with you. The problem can be solved in many ways. On a very low level you can break out a paddle and get around that way. Once some rudimentary skill is gained such a solution, not being very elegant, is not aesthetically satisfying. The man who wins a sailboat race has the satisfaction of knowing that of those who attempted the solution he has been most nearly perfect. In some very real sense sailboat racing is the pursuit of perfection in an art. To continue with the analogy, inter-collegiate racing provided a wider range of problems for solution than any one Club could provide for its members.

The Club does not conceive of itself as an organization of racing men. It is concerned with the problem of making boating of any type the students really want available. The racing men are neither subversive nor reactionary. The fact is that they are a group of men who are coerced into the necessary work of the Club by their need for an organization.

Blair Kinsman.

Contra

There is, elsewhere in this journal, an article in defense and explanation of the action of the Boat Club in joining the Intercollegiate Racing

Association. I have not read this article, and so do not know all of the arguments that may be put forth in it. I have, however, heard some discussion of this issue, and propose here to examine one of the arguments that has been used to support the Boat Club's action.

The proponents of the Boat Club say many things with which I entirely agree, such as that sailing is a great sport, one actively beneficial to man's body and soul, and one that is perhaps especially fitted to the liberal artist. I also agree that sailing takes money for boats and upkeep, and that the College cannot afford the full burden of this demand. I would like it to be clear that on these points I have no differences with Mr. Kinsman and the Boat Club. The Club's supporters go on to say that the only, or at any rate the best way to get this money is to attract it from the Alumni by making a glorious name for themselves in inter-collegiate racing. They say that furthermore, intercollegiate sailing is entirely within the spirit of Mr. Barr's general denunciation of intercollegiate athletics in Appendix C of the catalogue. This is where I differ with them. The Boat Club does not propose racing with other colleges as a thing primarily desirable in itself, but rather as a means of attracting money for its support. I think this is a dishonest way of getting money. For they will be saying to the Alumni that they want money to race, when the truth is that they want money to sail, and are racing to get money. Mr. Barr says in Appendix C that he hopes that the day will come when St. John's can play games with other colleges as naturally as such games ever were played. Mr. Kinsman argues that that day is here, at least for the Boat Club. I do not think it is here, because to race with other schools to impress the old grads and stimulate financial support, is not the natural kind of playing games that Mr. Barr was talking about. Mr. Barr was talking about sport for the love of sport, from which this sort of thing is a far cry.

In answer to this objection of mine, it has been urged that this racing for money is only a necessary means to the end of sailing and racing for sailing's sake, and is really being done, therefore, for the love of the sport. I answer to this that it is my conviction that any means to an end, which is in its nature contradictory of that end, is not a suitable or efficient means. I therefore believe that sailing for money is not a proper means to the end of sailing for sailing.

That is the substance of my objection to the Boat Club's action and its defenders. As to a positive contribution, I suggest to the Boat Club that if sailing is as worthwhile as they say, and I believe it to be, that we try to sell

it to the Alumni on its own merits, and persuade them to support it for its own sake, instead of fooling around with this false reasoning about racing.

I think it can be done, and I would much rather have a real try at it than to see the students here involved in the implied sanction of this attempt to bamboozle the Alumni.

C. R. Lincoln.

Beams From The TOWER LIGHT

"Hallowe'en all of the freshmen dormitory students will undergo the second annual initiation. Each freshman, or "spook," will be assigned to a room of upperclassmen. The program will begin at 4:00 P. M. and will be continued throughout the evening.

Hofmeister gave me the evil eye the other day. He says, "Now look, I want you to give the lowdown, this chair is getting hard."

Dean feels that education should benefit an individual in many ways. A truly educated person has to desire within himself to be of service to his community. He takes care of his own health in order that he may be better able to do this.

On Knowledge And Its Acquisitions

The question is often asked at St. John's "What do we mean by 'knowing'? What is knowledge?" It seems to me that there are two answers to this question — two kinds of knowing, and that a number of interesting ramifications grow out of this distinction.

The first kind of knowledge consists of percepts, cannot be communicated yet is the primary object of teaching, and is the basis on which the other kind of knowledge is built. The second knowledge deals with relations, involves concepts as well as percepts, and can be communicated. First what is meant by "percept" and "concept" will be taken up, then the impossibility of communicating the former and the bearing the kinds of knowledge have on teaching.

The meaning of the terms percept and concept can be approached by looking at the word classification "noun" and "adjective." Adjectives signify abstractions. Such words as "straight" "dry," "hollow" have no existence in themselves but have been lifted out as something common to a number of things we have experienced. They need a substratum before they become existences and for this purpose

we use nouns. Nouns are of two kinds. One kind such as "road," "tree," "people," consist of abstractions as do adjectives but with this difference: in order to be brought into existence and signify some reality they do not need a substratum but a space-time relation. When given this relation, these nouns become members of the second group and we recognize this distinction by capitalizing them. To give an example, "straight" is an adjective needing a substratum, "straight road" is more definite but is still an abstraction and has no existence, "this straight road" or "Lincoln Highway" is a definite thing, having taken on space-time relation which give it uniqueness and therefore reality. No matter how many adjectives and abstract nouns are strung together the abstraction is never lost and reality obtained, although it can be asymptotically approached. The failure to recognize this — that reality is never reached by abstraction — causes misconceptions concerning the communication of knowledge.

The capitalized nouns are percepts, and the general nouns and adjectives are concepts. Our apparatus for dealing with reality and gaining percepts consists of the five senses and the mind. (The function of the mind in the acquiring of percepts will be taken up later.) We gain percepts from experience and from there we go to nouns of the first group by our faculty of abstraction, and from there to adjectives. The direction is never reversed. We must have experience of particular Roads before we gain the notion of road, and we must have experience of several groups of substrata before we can abstract their common attribute as an adjective. Each step of the percept-to-common nouns-to adjective process increases our distance from reality. Plato is asking for a great act of Faith when he would have us believe the superior reality of the abstraction, — Tree, Chair, Triangle, Beauty, for this is contrary to our experience.

Now the first kind of knowledge, consisting of percepts and acquired only by experience, is expressed in speaking by the verb "know" with a direct predication. We say we know Beethoven's Fourth Symphony, meaning we have heard it, or we know the Statue of Liberty, meaning we have seen it. The second kind of knowledge, dealing with concepts in relation to percepts or concepts in knowledge of a thing's relations and attributes rather than of the thing itself, and is expressed by "know that." We know that hydrogen and oxygen are elements, expressing the relation between the two gases and that group of things we call elements; we know that the product of three and three is nine, expressing a particular relation between two threes; we know that this chair is red, expressing the relation between the

chair and the scale of colors. This kind of knowledge can be taught and is what formal education concerns itself with.

To show the impossibility of transmitting the first kind of knowledge, an example will be adduced which may seem trite but it is hard to find one that serves the purpose better. If I should try to give a South African Negro who has never seen ice the knowledge of what an ice cube is, it is probable I would proceed by telling him different things about it. I would say that it was frozen water, explaining freezing as a process by which liquid things become solid, that it was hard, cold, slippery; I might even try to draw a picture of it. None of these would give knowledge of what an ice cube was for he would be trying to reconstruct from certain of the things attributes the thing itself. The more concepts such as hard, cold, slippery I gave him the closer he would be able to approximate the real ice cube, but he would have knowledge of it only when he could see and touch it. This is because the concepts I have given him are common to many things, and singly or together do not constitute what is unique about the ice cube — that by virtue of which we call this particular thing an ice cube and not a tree or something else. It is the knowledge of that particular quality, which being unique is untransmittable by any symbol whatever, that makes the difference between knowing and not knowing the ice cube.

This example is taken from the material — realm. Plato's Theory of Ideas can no more be taught than the ice cube. We have to arrive at it, if we do, by the original questioning and thought analogy to the direct experience knowledge of physical objects requires. Plato in expounding his Theory of Ideas uses concepts or words common to many things, but the theory itself cannot be communicated for it is unique. Knowledge of the theory consists in arriving at it in one's own thought, thus seeing it from the inside and grasping thereby all of its relations at once, rather than trying to synthesize the theory from its relations. When we have gained this primary knowledge of the Theory of Ideas we can analyze and express it in our own way, as much as Plato, choosing whichever of its relations we wish to expound.

Our knowledge then, depends on our store of percepts. One cannot be taught that the sum of the angles of a triangle is equal to 180° until he knows what "angle," "triangle", and "degree" means; nor can he know "the Truth shall make you free" until he is far enough advanced in his thinking to have realized this for himself. Knowledge depends on individual effort ultimately, and this is why the good teacher has always been recognized as the one who stimulates and inspires.

Anton Hardy.