



FEATURES



A CITY SURVEY

by Derek Gemmell

BAGHDAD

Ed. Note: Mr. Gemmell, a second year arts student, was in Baghdad during 1949 and 1950 with the R. A. F.

If you imagine the capital of Iraq to be any thing like the Hollywood film version, complete with scantily clad harem dancers, torture chambers and sabre swinging sheiks, you will be very disappointed. In fact the only thing a sheik does swing nowadays is the steering wheel of a Rolls Royce or Cadillac. However, he is no less dangerous because the speed at which traffic tears through the narrow streets has to be seen to be believed. The noise, too, is deafening, as all drivers insist on keeping one hand continually on the horn. Even the ancient art of calling the faithful to prayer has increased volume. This has been accomplished by installing loud speakers in the minarets of the mosques.

The first view I had of this twelve hundred year old city of the Caliphs was from the back of an R. C. A. F. truck which had come right through the straggling outskirts onto Rashid Street, a main two mile artery lined with white pillared store fronts and just off which was located the British Embassy and the Y. M. C. A.

The former is a large white building surrounded by high wall and having a beautiful garden. Iraqis with revolutionary tendencies are apt to regard it as the true seat of government and show their disapproval by hurling bricks through the windows. It is true that British influence is strong here, not only politically, (there are three important air bases in the country), but also economically. The oil industry, railways and banking are largely controlled from London. One thing no one objects to, however, is the English management of the race course which has one of the most modern totalisators in the world, and is a meeting place of the citizens, second only in importance to the numerous coffee houses scattered throughout the city.

It is at these coffee houses that the affairs of the day are discussed for hours on end, and scandals which are a main source of entertainment are born.

For the more wealthy there are, of course, modern French style night clubs and restaurants lying along the banks of the Tigris. These have excellent food and service, and it is extremely pleasant to sit drinking in the cool evening after a day which could possibly have seen the temperature rise over the 120°F mark. Unfortunately my financial state never did allow me to sit for very long. Though infrequent, these visits added a final touch of glamour to a city and its inhabitants which I found interesting, friendly and still retaining

Reflections

by "LIZ"

My reflective powers are not too good this week, as I am still recovering from the dance.

It was interesting to note that coloured shoes (my prediction of a few weeks ago) replaced to a great extent, the traditional gold and silver evening sandals. Also, the trend towards shorter (ballerina length) dresses was very much in evidence. However, one prediction that didn't come true was that of white as the colour for this year's gala dress. Perhaps we just haven't had time to read the words of the fashion editors of the November issue of "Mademoiselle".

So often men make derogatory statements about women and their choice of hats, but the following is one of the worst: Women, said one man, can sometimes be seen choosing spectacles at chance — store counters, and in about one-tenth of the time they take to choose their hats. What is more, he added, the hats often turn out to be spectacles.

Speaking of spectacles reminds me of blue. The frames of my glasses are blue. Blue reminds me of Monday, and Monday of Apes (Anthropology Class). Apes I associate with trees, and trees, naturally enough, with paper. Paper — Oh yes — Exams.

in some strange way the atmosphere of Scherherazade.

PEN PORTRAITS — A CONTRAST

It was impossible not to notice her immediately as one entered the lounge. She was sitting apart—a sharp silhouette against one of the tall white columns of the room. Poised and self-conscious, she seemed not to notice that she attracted the attention of everyone about her as she sat waiting from time to time she smoothed her dark gloves more closely about her slim hands and fingers, or lightly brushed the velvet lapels of her charcoal suit, but these gestures seemed to be the result of unconscious habit and merely emphasized her serenity.

She was hatless and her light auburn hair shaped itself naturally away from her face except where it fell artlessly like a frame above her narrow brow. Her dark brown eyebrows, a singular contrast to the red of her hair, were unusually straight and almost joined in a line across her forehead. Once she turned and looked directly toward me, and I saw that her eyes were a cool grey-blue; they were intelligent and pensive eyes, yet not without a suggestion of humour in them too. Across her exquisitely sculptured nose was a bridge of freckles whose profusion was almost lost in the deep tan of her face. Unadorned as she was by any jewels, part of her charm lay in this natural blemish which no art sought to conceal. About her vivid lips there was a boyish lack of fullness, and this, with the delicacy of her small oval chin and the symmetry of her throat, gave a classical simplicity and beauty to her face.

She rose. Her heels clicked rhythmically as her trim, black-sheathed figure moved effortlessly among the tables to the door. In a moment she had gone.

She had had too much to drink and hung to the doorway for support.

"Good-night Laura..." She could taste the heavy liquor as his thick lips pressed tightly on hers. Then he tottered down the long stairs.

She remained in the doorway, her face sallow and expressionless, as her eyes, in a pale drunken gaze, followed him down to the wet street. Her body was numb with alcohol, and she did not feel the damp breeze which whirled up from the empty street and caught her blue voluminous negligee, winding it about her bare ankles. She stood there a moment, breathing in the still night and rainy sidewalks. Then she turned slowly, and went back into the room, closing the door behind her.

She made her way to a small table, poured some whiskey into a glass, and drank it quickly. Her face bore a strange traced seriousness, as she fingered the empty glass. Her smooth tapering fingers were small, but not tiny, and had a miniature complete beauty, at once childlike and mature. Her round bare arm seemed like some soft little tentacle. In contrast to her small hands and arms, she had the bosom of some divine being, which would easily surpass all that Priapus might display.

She put the empty glass back on the table and ran her hand across her wet liquored lips. She reached for a package of cigarettes, stuck one in her mouth and lit it. She took a few long drags off the cigarette then let her self fall into a huge lounge chair, spasmodically throwing her head back, revealing a long Muse's throat.

Her cheeks were fiery now — all her face filled with a fierce

Writer's Workshop

MY VOCAL CAREER

by Desmond Pacey

It is my conviction that each of us has a secret source of pride. We may not be as witty as X, or as poised as Y, or as goodlooking as Z, but at least we can bake a better cake, or remember jokes more accurately, or give a subtler lift of our left eyebrow. Now from this form of vanity I am by no means exempt, and up until the age of fifteen it took the form of believing that I was the best boy soprano in amateur circles at least.

Beliefs of this sort, of course, do not need much evidence to support them, and are often completely erroneous. But as Emerson has argued at length, in attempting to prove that it doesn't matter whether external nature really exists or merely seems to, an illusion that is never proven illusory will serve as well as a fact. Looking soberly back over the dim stretches of intervening time, I am now prepared to concede that the excellence of my singing voice was as illusory and as the main prop of my boyish illusions come, but it long served ego.

The belief probably had its origin when, as a mere snippet of three, I was invited to sing a solo at a ship's concert. For days before the event, my mother coached me on the delightful melody and lyrics of "Dear Little Jammy Face", and whether it was the excellence of my voice, the glory of my still-uncut curls, or the mere fact of my youth, I received, on the climactic night, a tremendous ovation.

From that auspicious beginning I went on from strength to strength. It would be immodest of me to recall all my vocal triumphs, but you will be able to form some idea of the dizzy heights I scaled if I tell you that for one whole summer I was second soprano in the boys' choir of a church within ten miles of Oxford itself, that I frequently sang solos and duets at Sunday School concerts, school commencement exercises, and private birthday parties, and that on one memorable occasion I sang the role of the Woodman in an operatic version of that classic of narrative prose, *Little Red Riding Hood*. (It is true that after that event, one man approached me with the rude remark "Who told you you could sing?", but I put that down to his infernal jealousy — his son had failed to make the chorus!)

Came my translation to Canada, at the age of fourteen. Not being backward in the art of blowing my own trumpet, or sounding my own voice, it was not long before my vocal career was resumed. For a few months all went well, and I was beginning to look fondly towards a

spot on the radio and emulation of Bing Crosby, when suddenly the blow fell.

It happened in the summer of 1932, when I was fifteen. I was invited to sing at the local Community Garden Party, the social event of the rural Ontario season. This was indeed an honour: to appear at night, on an outdoor lighted stage, before admiring thousands, and in the professional company of guitar players, singing cowboys, elocutionists, and a real live chorus line of kicking cuties from the City! Determined to do justice to such an occasion, I studiously rehearsed a repertoire of real classics of the vocalist's art. This was no time for juvenilia of the "Dear Little Jammy Face" variety; instead I mastered the rhythmic complexities of "In the Gloaming", "Mother Machree", "Danny Boy", and "The Minstrel Boy".

The great night arrived. Fortified with several bottles of pop from the canteen (understand, I am not offering this as an alibi, but merely from a sense of duty to present every possible relevant fact), I strode to the centre of the stage. Mother struck the opening chords of the accompaniment, and I burst (figuratively of course — it is not to this that the pop is relevant) into that grand old favourite, "In the Gloaming". Fully and smoothly, my voice a miracle of melodic grace, I urged the assembled multitude not to think bitterly of me. Ah! the delight of that feeling of mastery, of the sense that I held that vast throng in the hollow of my hand!

But when I reached the song's roaring climax — "I was BEST to leave you thus, dear!" — my voice unaccountably wavered and broke. It broke unmistakably, completely, with an ugly jarring shriek that no amount of heavy piano playing on Mother's part could cover up. I decided, as the audience stared at me in horrid disbelief, that it was indeed best to leave them — and I ran from the stage and straight home to bed.

And that is why, if anyone asks me today to sing a solo, I am cold sober, I firmly refuse. For years afterwards, I would not sing a note — but, music having become a habit, I did resort to whistling, thus beginning a practice which still puzzles my friends and infuriates my enemies. Gradually my singing shame has to some extent worn off, and in the proper circumstances, surrounded by a group of vocal friends, I allow my voice to waver forth — but always in mortal fear that I shall be heard.

pink. She loosened the sash of her negligee and bared her slender body to the room's damp sticky air. She kicked off her small suede shoes without unbuttoning the straps. In pale stockings her tired and sweaty feet were like two moist cream cheeses encased in covers of cloth. Soon her body, which seemed so slight and slender in its pale blue negligee, lay as limp as a lettuce leaf soaked by a summer's rain.

SLABS 'N EDGINGS



by Jack, Jim and Paul

A meeting of the "association" was held in the Memorial Reading Room on November 7 at which time prizes for the Field Day were given out to the winners. After this was completed, discussion centered on the Xmas Cards. These cards are the only faculty Xmas cards on the campus. Reid Watson is in charge of ordering them this year and turned up with a new design. They are beautiful cards so place your order with your class representatives at once. After the business was discussed, the St. John's ambulance instructor arrived and gave a talk on the history of the Ambulance Brigade. In case anyone does not know, the Foresters who wish are starting Senior St. John's Instruction. The first of six two hour lectures was taken after the meeting. It is not too late to register, so any Forester may come out on Tuesday nights for lectures at the Reading Room.

With regards to the question by Heroditus as to whether it was an engineer who made the Foresters so quiet during our Forestry week. Quiet? Those who turned out to the Field Nite, Social Nite, Dance and Hammerfest. Quiet?

Possibly around the campus where the engineers were left studying. (They have no association that is active enough to give them more than a smoker once in a while, so have nothing to do but study.) Of course, they have Open House in the Engineering Building during their week, but by the time we have seen it twice it becomes quite a dull affair and we don't bother going. When we have a party it is a party, and no beer is left over. With all our fun no one is brought on the carpet like at last year's Wassail, everyone is in the same condition. Quiet Heroditus? Guess again.

The 'Eye' is suffering from astigmatism. Assuming the motive was constructiveness then this criticism can be left up to the three coaches. Isn't that their job? The criticism is based on opinion and for that reason should be left out.

We have noticed the awful traffic jam in the doorway to the Civil Building. This goes to prove the fact that small doors are made for small men.

The next meeting of the Forestry Association will be next Monday at 7:30 p.m. in the Reading Room. We have refreshments, only coffee at meetings though. Let's have you out.

We have recommended to the city that new large economy size street signs be placed on all streets on which Engineers might come in contact. A recommendation was decided upon, following the mishap that struck here last week when an Engineering student, who would appear outwardly to be quite an intelligent lad, read his street map back to front, and consequently the street he was surveying turned to be back-to-front. So therefore instead of being on Green Road he was on Green Road. He was confused even more so by the fact that he was wearing green glasses which made all streets look like Green Road.

One suggestion to this particular Engineering student was that he should carry a bag of jelly-beans the next time he goes surveying so that he could leave a trail to find his way back. Another suggestion was that he tie one end of a ball of string to the Civil Building door and unravel the string as he proceeded.

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