

# Dalhousie Gazette

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### WHERE ARE THE VERDANT FRESHMEN?

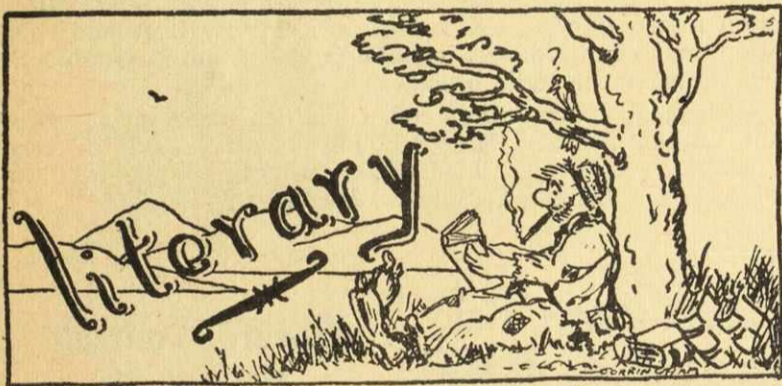
Friday night, at the Freshie-Soph Dance, the Class of '47 will doff their placards and bows, roll down their pant legs, and consider themselves members of Dalhousie University, their formal initiation at an end.

Congratulations are due, and overdue, the Initiation Committee who have this year, faced with one of Dal's largest wartime freshman enrolments, staged probably the most successful initiation seniors and post-grads have witnessed on Studley in recent years.

In the Roaring Twenties, Dal initiations overflowed through the length and breadth of the city, from the professors' homes to the theatre lobbies. As initiations ebbed, so did that elusive ecoplasm whispered of as "Dal spirit". We are not advocating any return to the overabundant exuberance of ten and fifteen years ago. The flame of Dal spirit was fanned until it all but burned itself out. Another such unlimited release of enthusiasm might well extinguish it for good.

What we are in favor of, and hope to see established, is a thorough and well-enforced initiation on our own campus, supported by all upperclassmen. The results of such an initiation are legion. The new men and women are made conscious of themselves as an entity, and of the University's recognition of them as such. The realization of themselves as a part of Dalhousie is the first and greatest step in fostering a spirit of fierce loyalty to their Alma Mater.

This year the spirit, not just the form, of initiation has been revived. May future years see 1943's example followed and developed to its full potentiality!



### STRANGER THAN FICTION

Perhaps once in many, many long years fate draws the threads of a person's life into a strange, unusual pattern—so strange that it makes us stop for a minute or two and think; and then when the wonderment is past we take a deep breath and go on again. In a letter I have just received from England the story of such a life is told:

... Sir Ronald Forbes was not old—as we have come to measure age today—he was only 45. And England knew him, for he was one of those who had helped to make her great and the Forbes chemical plant had brought knighthood to him. A brilliant chemist—he spent his evenings alone in his private laboratory—his work being a secret shared only with the war department. The lights at night were never out and invariably at eleven when we in our own lab turned over our apparatus to the night shift, his shadow could be seen behind the painted windows, moving quickly to and fro.

The Hun knew all about us, and in those hectic days when England heard his bombs whine down and felt them crash, we in the chemical works took our share. But always after heavy damage, the plane from Sheffield would bring in new equipment—even painted glass for Sir Ronald's personal lab and the work went on. It was my good fortune to be transferred two weeks ago to his lab where we were to work together on his first project and it was then I found that not all the effects of bursting bombs had been on glass and brick and plaster—his mind had suffered, too. The long, hard, sleepless nights had aged him, and his hair—always a dusty gray—had turned a lighter shade.

He told me his doctor had taken refuge behind a giant medical word which ended in "phobia" but that in simple English—he had become afraid of bombs, and the thought of being one of their victims was haunting him day and night. Of course, we all feel like that at times. Even if we don't love life we cling to it by strong instinct. But his fear was something that shadowed his way of living, so much so that I needed no Psychologist to tell me what the end would be,—unknown to me he found his own way out.

Two days ago I walked with him down the steps of his air-raid shelter—a shelter which was the result of thousands of hours of labour by many different men. It was of unheard of size and depth, with a shaft of unshatterable, re-inforced concrete going down and down and ending in a kind of buried luxury flat. Down there, Hitler could drop fifty kinds of hell out of the heavens and we would hear no whisper, it was sealed against the faintest whiff of gas and we breathed filtered air. We looked through artificial windows, cunningly lighted from behind to create the illusion of a sea view. At my side Sir Ronald looked lovingly upon it and murmured more to himself than to me: "My Mediterranean." Beneath my feet I felt a soft carpet and around me everywhere was superb furniture—paintings of forests with distant hills and peaceful skies hung on the walls, and as I stood amazed he moved to a phonograph in the corner and gave me a Beethoven symphony to add colour to it all. His worries were over now,—a little army of workmen had made his nights secure.

strange new world; I still remember the scent of roses coming from the vase of rose and fern which rested on the table. In over three long years of war I felt I had seen no gayer, lovelier place.

Soon, however, I was conscious that he was looking at me—he wanted my opinion, of course.

"Do you think, Sir Ronald," I asked, "that one can run away from his destiny?"

"Of course not," he replied, "but one doesn't know his destiny. Air raid shelters are essential—they cut London's casualties 80%."

Two weeks of working together had made us close friends. We always spoke frankly to each other.

"You bring to mind, Sir Ronald, a story which my nurse used to tell me at times when I was difficult to put to sleep. Do you care to hear it? It'll only take a minute."

He smiled: "Carry on."

"Once upon a time, in some Eastern town a servant came to his master and said: Master, I have served you faithfully all my life, let me leave you now. This morning as I was passing through the market place, I saw the Angel of Death and she beckoned to me. Please, Master, let me go away to the town of Samara, because if I stay here the Angel of Death will take me."

"Well," said the Master, 'you have served me faithfully, as you say, and rather than that death should catch you, take a fast camel and some money and go to Samara and good luck to you.'

"The servant went away that same hour. But later in the day the master, crossing the square saw the Angel of Death, too, and he said to her: "O Dark One, why did you beckon to my servant this morning?" The Angel of Death replied: 'Beckon? I did not beckon your servant. I made a gesture of surprise at seeing him in this place—for behold, I have an appointment with him in Samara this afternoon!'"

Sir Ronald clasped his hands: "Fine, fine," he said; and we climbed the winding steps: "You must tell us a few like that tonight. I'm having a bit of a party here—something to eat, you know—and all that!"

A call from the lab kept me from Sir Ronald's party, but now forty-eight hours later, I have come from his bedside. It had been a gay evening with music and guests and—a lot of fun. There were oysters too,—he loved oysters. But in one of them, the doctor thinks, a germ was waiting. Even as I write, the BBC news is coming in:—"We regret to report the death of Sir Ronald Forbes at his home in . . ."

WILK.

### ON LITERATURE

Few of us care to read a dictionary. Dictionaries are to most of us, dry and formal collections of words arranged in a certain systematic order. The breath and vital warmth of Life is not in them. We find in the most authoritative of English dictionaries the following definition of literature, "writings whose value lies in beauty of form or emotional effect". We cannot here detect any reference in which literature is related to Life and Truth, yet even in its task of mirroring Nature, literature is of Life and living—a vital force.

Many and varied are the forms of expression used by important men for the recording of important things. He only is "important", and justified in writing, who has something to say, i.e. something "important". He has a choice of many forms of literature with which to clothe his naked thought. Matter and form at the hand of genius combine literature.

This humble page may never bear great literature but it may bear the

imprint of sincere effort. College students, as such, must have at least a nodding acquaintance with the forms of literature. This column is always open to those who give evidence of a sincere effort at literary expression. We offer the suggestion that a glance at the works of the masters of literary expression will be as a guiding hand when ploughing the first furrow in a new field. This does not mean that detailed study should be attempted merely to aid one in breaking into print. However it might prevent one from sinking into the mire of the commonplace.

There are few mechanical details to be remembered when sending in contributions to this column. Contributions should be typewritten if possible or, failing that, written in clear, legible handwriting. Brevity, clarity, compression, and simplicity should be the keynotes of contributions. Such contributions may be given to the Literary Editor or left at the Gazette office.

After any Show

Before any Meal

Think of . . .

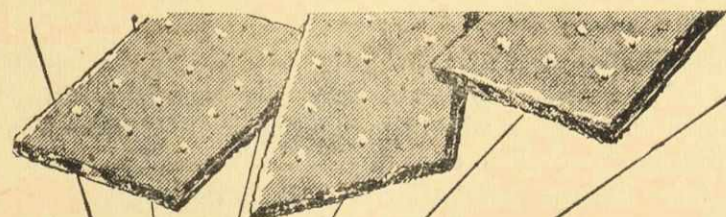
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