

The Mercer Cluster

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Football

Some time ago Mercer University decided to give up its football team for the duration. Many players were entering the service and there was not sufficient manpower for a team. The astronomical score that the University of Georgia piled up on the Bears clinched the deal.

Many other schools elected to suspend intercollegiate football for the same reasons. In fact few schools fielded teams that were not composed largely of Navy or Marine trainees. Those few, that did have football without service men, should be commended for their courageous action.

However, this year many schools throughout the South are returning to intercollegiate football. The Southeastern Conference, which had only four teams in action last fall, looks forward to many of its members returning to the sport. Mississippi State, Alabama, Vanderbilt and Tennessee have definitely announced that they will put teams on the field. Auburn and Florida have not yet made definite announcements that they will have teams, but they are expected to do so in the near future.

All of these schools will build teams composed of seventeen year olds and deferred men. They are not planning to schedule any of the universities with large Navy or Marine Units.

Here is a fine chance for Mercer to have a team that will meet these former big guns of the South on an equal basis. By using members of our V-12 Unit and civilians still in school, we could certainly build a team on par with schools which have to depend on seventeen year olds and deferred men.

Macon would definitely support our team. There are thousands of service men who would love to see college football. We have a fine stadium waiting to be used. We have the coaches. We have much of the equipment needed for football.

We have the chance to avenge many defeats which were handed to Mercer when these schools could get first choice of players. We could also help Mercer financially.

Plans should be started at once so that we can schedule these ex-big shots of the Southeastern Conference. If plans are begun now, Mercer could definitely have a team to be proud of when next fall rolls around.

Winter Carnival

Last Saturday night, Mercer had a fine Winter Carnival. Under the capable direction of Sam Crossley, the festival was a decided success. A great deal of gratitude is due him and everyone who helped in the undertaking.

From the time that Miss Elaine Taylor was crowned as Queen of the Winter Carnival, until the last skit was over, the entertainment was of high calibre. We saw conclusive proof that there is a lot of talent among us.

There was a definite air of good will and light heartedness among the spectators. Only a few were ready to leave the Co-op after everything was over at 11 o'clock.

About that time we started thinking, here's a wonderful time for a dance. With a dance all the Navy men could get to know the civilian girls. It would provide such a splendid opportunity for everyone to get acquainted.

But a dance wasn't started and we are happy because we realize that it wouldn't be right to do something in direct violation of a school ruling.

We sadly put aside our day dreams and came back to reality. We were at Mercer, and Mercer said that dancing is wrong; therefore no one shall dance. Isn't that perfect logic?

Or as a famous Latin philosopher said about a statement of similar logic: "Hoc est taurus."

In Other Words

By Mike Warr

THE NOBLE COMPANY OF FOOLS—

Isn't it queer that we dislike the different? We insist that the other fellow shall go with the crowd—our crowd preferably. He must think as we think and act as we act, else there is something wrong with him. He's batty.

If he persists in his belief and insists on his way—he is a fool! But we are always right; we just could not be wrong. He's the one who is hard-headed, not us. He is narrow and conservative; we are broad and liberal.

When a man departs from the way of the crowd, he is labeled a crank. "Isn't he odd?" we ask each other. What's the matter with him? Because a guy refuses to follow the whims and fancies of other folk, we say he is strange, peculiar, eccentric. He's just plain nuts!

The man who differs, at once becomes a target. He has singled himself out as the object of verbal attacks. The poor simp is a renegade. Why, the loon must be crazy.

But when he is attacked by the mob, he is unshaken. The crack-pot doesn't seem to mind at all. Somehow he believes he is right, and all the bombardment of criticism doesn't bother him in the least. He must be completely bughouse! We are sorely perturbed, too, because the dope ignores the cutting words hurled at him by the crowd. He merrily smiles and seems to take things philosophically.

"Paul, thou art beside thyself," said a boastful accuser to the great Apostle. He was beside himself in the eyes of this man, but it is certain that the accuser was inside himself.

"We are fools for Christ's sake," said the Jewish tentmaker, completely unmoved by the accusation. Fact is, he admitted it, which probably aroused his enemy's ire still more. "The preaching of the cross is foolishness," declared Paul.

The Word tells us of one of the saddest days in the life of the young Carpenter of Nazareth when His family tapped their foreheads significantly. Furtive eyes had been watching Him askance. "He is no longer responsible," they said.

The crowd at the cross on that fateful Friday must have felt the same way. They wagged their heads and said, "He saved others; Himself, He cannot save." They thought He was a fool. But He was the wisest of them all.

Is it wiser to have the crowd's applause and God's "Thou fool," or the crowd's sneer and God's approval?

Strange that it never occurs to the accusers of those tagged as fools that they may be the bigger fools themselves.

Madder Music

By Joe Harrison

A couple of weeks ago I read W. Somerset Maugham's "The Moon and Sixpence." Though it was published in 1919, supposedly before Maugham had reached his literary zenith, I think it is one of his best; for to me, Maugham's whole idea and concept of the story is amazing.

In brief, "The Moon and Sixpence" is a sort of perverted version of "Life Begins At Forty." It is the story of Robert Strickland, a middle class, middle-aged English stockbroker who was so consumed by a burning desire to paint that he left his family and his prosperous business—never to think of either again—and went to Paris to struggle with his painting, living in poverty all the while.

Strickland allowed nothing to interfere with his painting—neither poverty, his natural clumsiness, his lack of technique, his friends—nothing. He was completely selfish, self-centered, totally ungrateful to all who helped him and brutally rude to all with whom he came in contact. If he liked anyone at all, it was those who were equally hard and rude toward him. He despised those who would allow him to play upon their sympathies. He thought them weak, and was heartless in his persecution of them.

After many years in Paris, Strickland went to Tahiti, where he continued to paint madly and furiously until he died—of leprosy. His painting was crude, brutal, sensuous—but inspired. He was a genius; the first of the Post-Impressionists. It is not a particular pretty story; it is a singular story—a Maugham story.

Maugham tells the story in the first person, and tells it as though he knew Strickland personally. He quotes from other biographies of Strickland. He even has footnotes at the bottoms of the pages which bear the quotations, to show from which books the quotations were taken. In fact, so certain was I that there was a great English painter who bore the name Robert Strickland that I began a fruitless search for the other books about him, from the list which Maugham had so thoughtfully supplied in the footnotes. True, I had never heard the name Strickland mentioned with the Post-Impressionists, or with the artists of any period, for that matter; but being quite self-conscious of the fact that I am hardly more than a nodding acquaintance of Art, I was undaunted in my search.

After three hours of intensive research I found that I had, to use the vernacular, permitted Maugham to pull my leg. Laughing at myself, I suddenly realized that this author was the most convincing, attractive and magnificent liar I had ever read!

It seems that Maugham got his inspiration for this story from the life of Gauguin, a French painter, the first of the Post-Impressionists. Maugham's character, Strickland, is almost a caricature of Gauguin. They are similar only in a few broad ways: they both lived in Paris and Tahiti, both left their families, both were Post-Impressionists; at this point Maugham's imagination takes command.

Strickland always spoke in monosyllables; he was almost inarticulate. Gauguin was fluent; to the point that he talked much about his work. He even wrote a book about it.

The way Somerset Maugham leads you to believe and convinces you that he was a personal friend of this great artist, and in telling you of their common experiences, is nothing short of phenomenal. Observing the time element, it is quite doubtful that the author ever met Gauguin, since Gauguin died in Tahiti, shortly after the turn of the last century. Somerset Maugham is a great and imaginative writer.

Strictly From Hunger

By Floyd Wade

In 1865, Walt Whitman said, "We must have new words, new potentialities of speech—an American range of self-expression. . . . The new times, the new people need a tongue according, yes, and what is more, they will have such a tongue—will not be satisfied until it is evolved."

Americans have always been an inventive race of people who continually experiment, not only to build a better mousetrap, but to build a better means of verbal communication. Experimentation has led to the evolving of a multiplicity of forms, but they have all been discarded sooner or later for new and different ones. We are never content to bask in the complacent light of a time-worn metaphor.

Since that memorable day George Washington made the now immortal reply to his father's question concerning a tree, to wit, "Ike done it" and thus became the father of the American school of ambiguity, the King's English has taken an awful beating from those seeking to mold it into something more than a means of satisfying immediate wants. All of us seem to have an insatiable urge to add something to our native tongue—a new word, a new phrase—which will be picked up by the mob and tossed around until someone else thinks of a better one.

The English have been content to drift along for centuries using the same old words and phrases. Cliches were handed down to the eldest son in almost the same spirit as were the family coat of arms and drinking cup.

But the evolution of American speech is something else. In the future, scholars seeking doctorates will probably pour over the translation of "Do you dig me, Jack?" and "That's solid" with as much painstaking study as we are now forced to do in the reading of James Fenimore Cooper or even Gertrude Stein.

Here is a verbatim conversation of two American soldiers in Britain, as reported in London's Sunday Express. It is the epitome of concise speech, and definitely indicates something or other:

"Yeah."
 "No kiddin'?"
 "No kiddin'."
 "Kinda tough."
 "I'll say."
 "Swell dame, though."
 "Yeah, swell."
 "Kinda ritzy."
 "Sure."
 "How's tricks?"
 "Okay."
 "Yeah?"
 "Yeah."
 "Say, sister!"
 "What's cookin', sister?"
 "Say, sister."
 "What's cookin', sister? Say!"
 "Kinda snooty."
 "Yeah, kinda."
 "Any mail?"
 "Yeah, plenty mail."
 "Folks back home okay?"
 "Yeah, okay."
 "'At's swell."
 "Yeah, swell."
 "Say, sister."
 "Where ya goin', sister?"
 "Say, sister."
 "What's cookin', sister?"
 "Kinda snooty."
 "Yeah, kinda."
 "Cigarette?"
 "Thanks a lot."
 "It's a crazy country."
 "Sure is crazy."
 "Snooty dames, snooty as hell."
 "Say, sister."
 "Where ya goin', sister?"
 "Say, sister."
 "What's cookin', sister."

CLUSTER POLICY

"We are the sum of all the moments of our lives . . ."—Thomas Wolfe
 It shall be the policy of the Mercer Cluster to record these moments honestly, focusing upon them without distortion.