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THE SOUR NOTE

No. 1

Friday, February 24, 1933

Whatever policies Kenyon College as an institution pursued throughout her first hundred years we do not know. To some extent perhaps we do not care. But this we do know, and it is of great importance to us: The state of affairs within the college today is intolerable. It is not that we desire to find fault and to tear down because we dislike this college of ours and therefore are happy in pointing out its weaknesses; it is because we have a profound love, sentimental if you like, for this hill and the institution that has evolved upon it.

The situation cannot continue as it is. We have reached a crisis and this bitter little paper is trying in a small way to meet it. It is no financial crisis that meets the college, although Heaven knows money matters at this time are dire enough; it is not a problem of the number of students who will study here; it is something that touches the very roots of the organization.

In the first place, there seems to be no initiative within the student body at all. It seems to take anything with a sort of resigned noncommittance, being faintly disturbed about this and that, weakly desirous of action perhaps, but certainly not willing to do anything about it. Where in Heaven's name is the fire that used to make the student's voice at Kenyon a great factor in the government of the college? Where is it?

The students of Kenyon College must be whipped indeed to accept so meekly the measures that have been passed lately by the regime. No doubt these measures were necessary, but certainly all these actions taken in the name of economy do not imply the methods used in gaining them. We would be puny, adolescent and certainly thick-skinned if we did not resent some of these reforms. Let us repeat that we are not finding fault with the regime for being forced to economize; what we resent is the method.

It seems that the official organ of the student body (*The Collegian*, 1853) cannot express what we the students feel. It murmurs facts in a delicate whisper, glossing over this, remonstrating weakly over that. (Through no fault of the staff, who are tied hand and foot.) We will not employ here the adage about the abysmal senility of this "*Collegian*" but let us simply face the fact that it is ineffective. Quite harmless.

We wish to lay our cards upon the table. Why did the trustees release four young professors who form the principal contact of the student body with the faculty? The answer may be none of our business but, we say bitterly, the answer would be interesting. Quite.

Secondly, we hear that the library staff is next year to be cut down, and, what is even more shocking, it is to be closed part time. O but then books

aren't a very important part of study, so perhaps the action is justified.

And there are other points that might be mentioned, such as the attempted removal of the non-fraternity men from their quarters and the closing of the cafeteria at two of its most important business hours.

This paper is created with the very idea of making people mad. We defy anyone to deny the justice of these remarks. We welcome dissension. Because it has begun to dawn upon us that it is a hard thing for us here in these months to have an opinion on anything; in these our poor years of disillusionment we demand discussion of some of these points that aggravate us.

This shout is but the first.

—Anthony.

A THOUGHT

Smugness, pride and stiff tradition
Constipate a good condition.
Gin and salt and lemon juice
Make a college rather loose.
Universities are finding
Memories are rather binding.
While modernity, they say,
Causes movements every day.

—Anthony.

BEHIND LOCKED DOORS

"Julius, why did they lock the Middle Kenyon doors?"

"There are various reasons, my lord. Economy comes first, you know. A locked door saves wear and tear on the hinges. Also, no grease bill is to be considered. The stair treads will not be pounded to pieces by stamping feet. Then, too, the heat will be kept within."

"But, Julius, that is negligible."

"I know, my lord, it is for the best. He told me so."

"What else did he say?"

"Oh, yes. He said that it would prevent those who moved out from secretly moving back. Strangers who might attempt to steal the diamonds and pearls from the encrusted wall are kept out."

"To be sure, I never considered that. Say, could not someone get in from the basement?"

"Well, he didn't say anything about that. He did say that the chapel monitors would have a devil of a time ringing the jocsin. They have to carry a key now. Ha! I bet they will lose the key."

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—Christopher Berserk

—Kringelein.

"All right. I'll tell you. You know I attend a small college nestled away in the Ohio hills. It's a

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charming place, full of tradition and erudition, but everything is screwy there. There have been in the last week some simple, blundering actions. They have been levied on us, and we can't do a thing about them. We pay for good food, and do not get it. The hash that they had today was awful. I can still taste it. We can't eat anywhere else except in the coffee shop. And do you know, they were going to close that up? It is the only place for good food around here, and it offers us much leisure from these bleak countrysides. They said it was losing money. Nonsense! How can it? The dining hall loses the money. Why not close the dining hall? But why should we do that, when we pay a good price to support it? Oh, it's a mess. Something is wrong. We can't do a thing to rectify it. We have no say in the matter, although we must put up our good money."

"Go on, Julius. I am listening intently."

"Here's another thing, Tom. They are firing four of their younger faculty members. They say that it is because of economy measures. To be sure, I grant you that, but it is false economy. They are destroying a well organized faculty; consequently, they lower their educational standards. Now tell me, how can they draw students? It is just 'killing the goose that laid the golden egg.' They deal not in personalities. It is merely money. They save the pennies, but lose the dollars. A good professor can be secured for almost nothing today or at any time. I don't believe a good one can be so procured. They don't think of this. We students do, but we are to have nothing to say in the matter."

"Have the students no self-government, Julius?"

"Yes, but they don't use it. They are used to being walked on. They fear to air their beliefs. A lot of them just do not care. It is a dormant and timid lot that we have now. It isn't like the old days."

"Alas, Julius, I fear that I cannot help you. If you men do not take things into your own hands, how can you accomplish anything? How may others know your desires? Of course they will take advantage of you. It is your own fault. They should exploit you. You have heard this old adage, no doubt? 'They can because they think they can.'"

—Tom MacGregor.

ON COMPULSORY CHAPEL

Our erstwhile contemporary, "College Humor," has seldom shown itself to be more than a receptacle of pay for high-school morons. This contention bears no dispute. But happily enough, the world is full of precious and refreshing surprises. In this case the refreshment was derived from an article in the same rag, an article on religion and its place in the collegiate scene which not only displayed a distinct, a canny insight into the question but, further, a clear and bold sense of need for something to take the place of the ancient and honorable practice of stuffing the student with Exodus and clayish platitudes. Thus it should be of interest to all who have

suffered hard and long under Kenyon's ecclesiastical tyranny.

This article, let it be said, does not voice the opinions of sage educators to the exclusion of student sentiment; the expression of undergraduate thought on this matter swings from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the editor of Princeton's famous "Tiger" to the president of the student body at Leland Stanford University. Its power, its appeal are far-reaching. Few of these student spokesmen, however, discussed the problem of compulsory chapel; most of their respective alma maters had long since given up that system as a first-magnitude failure, a definite courting of death to the individual's belief. Princeton's representative alone had this evil to speak of, for the New Jersey school still clung to disciplinary tactics in religion with all the avidity of an undernourished leech. In substance, his thought closely parallels that of men of Kenyon. His premise, comprehensive though it may be in its grasp of the fundamental evils of this program, is bound by the contention, the flat, unyielding contention that compulsory chapel must go as an institution worthy of Inquisitorial rank. No one doubts the argument that it has done good; now, however, it must be buried with full honors, a faithful seruant whose tired body can no longer bear a weighty, liberal modernism. In this, men of Kenyon, he is as much your own spokesman as the Princeton undergraduate's.

The system of forced religious observance is ostensibly for the delectation and good of the student and as such its conduct should tally with the trend of his honestly-expressed wishes in the matter. The student, however, has never been consulted. Why should he be? What does he know of God? How can he see the Light but through the eyes of us who have seen and have a monopoly on that vision? The authorities say. Surely this is a domination of one's own, one's beautifully conceived personal belief which smacks of complacent unfairness.

There is definite harm in this attitude of those who would so direct our religious destinies. The author has felt that harm. He remembers coming to Gambier with the Book of Job settled in his mind due to parental stimulation; he also remembers the attendant unsettlement when his vision was expelled upon a first furtive resort to the movie page during prayer. His desire to know and hear the Word of God had been all but displaced by oppression. He felt, as others have felt, that if the services were real it was truly farcical in conduct; if merely a form of discipline, it could be only construed as a damnable blasphemy. When a school uses the Christian service as a disciplinary measure it commits a grievous wrong.

That wrong must be done away with by abolishment of the compulsory chapel service.

—Kringelein.

*Only God can make the trees,
But Heaven knows who made trustees.*

*My heart, when I am dozing, scrawls
Mottoes on the Chapel walls.*

THE HOME PAGE

Entertaining As Well As Instructive

FABLE OF THE COLLEGE AND THE HOLE

Version I.

Once upon a time there was a college in a hole. A meeting was called and all the Big Men sat round a table and talked things over. "What does one do about these predicaments?" questioned one. Said another: "If one has no ladder to get out he digs around with his fingernails and makes the hole bigger and bigger, and its sides less steep; then he walks out and looks back at the thing." And he drew a diagram. But another Big Man said: "But how destructive! Think of the mess you would make of it all. And you could not carry the buildings out or even the Traditions: they are so heavy. All you could take with you would be the Honour in its little rosewood box. Surely we should call for help, for someone to let down grappling irons—or better (and his eyes brightened) why not make the hole as comfortable as possible?" It was a longer speech than he had ever made, and the other men were enraged for they were jealous of the little rosewood box.

But it was decided that Steps Should Be Taken to abandon the hole. It was done. Now one may see in the old place, far down, only some ruins with crows and hens cackling among them. And elsewhere is a little rosewood box on a plush cushion, and men come every Sunday and burn incense before it.

Version II.

Once upon a time there was a college in a hole. The Moguls met on a day and decided that money must be saved, otherwise anything might happen. They knew also that to economize they must look for anything to happen. So they deliberated, and meanwhile things became worse and worse. Then there was Action. Some professors were Allowed to Leave. This is how they were chosen: A Judge was blindfolded and all the faculty passed before him conversing with him separately and trying to guess his name; then they raced with each other; and later the Judge dissected a cat to tell whence the wind blew; and still later, he Judge tried to remember who had conversed the best and had guessed his name and had run swiftest. And these men were asked to leave.

And then were other measures taken. The cafeteria was closed because it did not earn enough money; and the dormitories were closed, for money is not earned while one sleeps. And later more professors were discharged, for it is expensive to pay for teaching; and after all, one didn't want to load such an institution with learning. For the same reason, the library was closed; no one used it anyhow. Last, or next to last, did they close the gymnasium: it was the belief of the college that one should have mens sana in corpore sano, and if one knew where to throw a basketball one had mens sana, and if one was able to throw it there one had corpore sano.

Towards the end, the students who remained lived in the chapel. For after all, it was a church

school. They would build little bon-fires of books in the nave to keep warm, and then huddle together in the pews while collection plates were passed round every hour; this was the only amusement. There was no place to eat, but there was a plenty of spiritual food for the inhaling.

Now some time afterwards there passed an airplane over the place. And the pilot said to the passenger, "There used to be a college down there, in a hole." And the passenger said to the pilot, "Yes, and now I see nothing but a hole."

Moral: If you don't like this country, go back where you came from.

—Christopher Berserk.

A WORD OF THANKS

We learn with surprise that Franklin D. Roosevelt is the president-elect of the United States. The news came through on the pack train from Tiffin along with the Broccoli, bully beef, flour, saltpetre, and hot-house tomatoes on which we are to live until the spring thaw. Since the electricity has been turned off, we have little or no contact with the outside world. We also were very glad to receive the lovely photograph from Mrs. F. B. Trampleasure who forwarded the following items: World Almanac (1909), The American Needlework Review for 1931 (except Oct., Nov.). Our hearts go out to Mrs. Trampleasure.

—Anthony.

KENYON'S OWN BOOKSHELF

1. Death in the Afternoon. A good book about Kenyon activities.
2. The Narrow Corner. Well written history of Gambier.
3. The Fountain. The one thing the college hasn't turned off.
4. Obscure Destinies. Willa Cather salutes the graduating class.
5. Flowering Wilderness. Galsworthy wrote it but White did it.

THE QUESTION BOX

1. Whom do we remember before God this day?
2. What color robe does the Bishop of Ohio wear during an electrical storm?
3. Where is Kitty?
4. What man that later became President graduated from Kenyon College?
5. Where did Salmon P. Chase get his propensities for dirty politics?
6. What occupation are you best suited for? (Ten minutes to answer.)
7. Who are Gambier's 400?
8. Identify the following: Long suffering, joy, temperance, meekness, the spirit and the bride say come, Cromwell Cottage.
9. Has Kenyon got a student government? (Answer true or false.)
10. Whom do we remember before God this day?
- 10-A. Who should have wealth?