

Softly the Silence

Robert B. Wallace

Sci. '40



Softly—
Like the blue merging of a winter night
On pine-bough snow—
The owl-feathered silence drifts upon me,
Stilling my chipmunk fingers
And muffling to wonder
The hasty little creatures of my mind.

The tides of human confusion,
Receding, then, to the pale horizon's mist,
Strand me in the vast starlit plain of silence—
The owl-feathered silence
Which has sought me out to speak of infinity,
To speak as two intimate minds speak,
Saying nothing.

Homecoming

Edward Owen Brown

Sci. Jr.

IT WAS late Sunday-noon, and the Rocket was hurrying, swaying, clicking along back to Kansas City. The train was rather empty; only half of the berths of the car Jim was in were filled. He was glad of it; the less people the better. His thoughts tripped along with the clicking of the wheels against the tracks.

Well, Koenig—something within him rose up—that was quite a weekend. Jim Koenig, recent and highly successful college

grad, returns in triumph to dear old Alma Mater; brothers of Beta Phi Zu welcome with open arms long lost Alum. Yes, it had been quite a week end, quite a week end, quite a week end. He had hit town fairly early Friday night, and had gone directly over to the House. More of the boys had been home than he had imagined would be; rather surprising for Spring Quarter. As he entered, fifteen Brothers rose simultaneously, gathering around him with eager and hearty salutations, and each in turn had warmly pumped his hand. How was his job? When was he getting married or was he already and if so how big was the family? How about the two Brothers down in K. C. working for Monkey Ward? Did he ever see them? A thousand and one questions had been fired at him, and then reverently someone had suggested that he must be tired after the long trip up, and they had picked up his grips for him and ushered him to the guest room. When they had closed the door and gone, he carefully lay down on the big double bed. He marveled at the comfort of the 'beauty rest' mattress. The soft indirect lighting was soothing to his tired eyes. He had always dreamed of the day that he would come back to school and would sleep in the guest room. There was a rule that Actives were never to use the guest room. It was the best furnished room in the house. The bathroom was immaculate. The shiny, stainless steel fixtures and the clear liquid white porcelain of the wash basin reminded him of the good old days, back some five years ago when he was a pledge and saw to it without fail that the bathroom was kept looking immaculate. He smiled to himself; how things did change.

SHORTLY, he had gone out into the parlor again. He was rather surprised for most everyone with the exception of three or four fellows had gone. One of those remaining was Paul Mackley. Paul was going to work for the same concern he did after he graduated that Spring. He was a brilliant fellow; had never had anything but straight four point since he had come to college. Jim had done well; but never that well. Paul had come up to him, "Well, how are you, old man. Really glad to see you. How do you like Procter and Gamble?" From there he had gone on and on. Paul in his most deadly analytical manner had

examined and cross examined him about everything under the sun concerning P & G. Did they pay their men well, did they treat their men well, did the raises come regularly, how about promotions? Then suddenly as if he had sucked the thing dry, he broke off and abruptly left saying he had to get studying on a mid-quarter for Monday. Come to think of it, he hadn't seen Paul again that weekend.

The evening, what was left of it, turned out to be disappointing, and he had turned into his soft bed early. He was tired, and there was no doubt about it. He looked forward to a big day with the boys Saturday. But Saturday had come, and it had gone, and it had been awful. All the boys had been very busy—too busy. At first he had tried to make conversation, but finally he had given up. Oh, they were interested all right—up to a certain extent, but past that there was nothing—nothing but blank grins. If Saturday was bad, Sunday was worse, ten times worse. It had all ended up by playing bridge, bridge and more bridge. Probably that game was the greatest substitute for passing time away that had yet been invented. The beauty about it all was that in bridge you didn't have to say anything; in fact to a certain extent you didn't even have to think. All you had to do was sit back and say "by." Occasionally, perhaps once every two hours, you had to be cagey about a finesse. But for the most part any fool could figure the thing out. And so the time had passed.

SUDDENLY the Rocket lurched slightly as it took a curve, and Jim's golf bag slid against his leg. He glanced down at his shiny, new 4 and 5 irons. He hadn't even used them. The train sped along, and he settled further back into the soft cushioning of the seat. He was just beginning to relax; he hadn't realized he had been so tightened up. Outside, far to the southwest, the sky held a whitish glow. They were coming into Kansas City.

Outside, the lights of the city sparkled. Home! Bill would be there. Bill's first question wasn't difficult to prevision. Had he had a swell week-end? His answer would be as inevitable, too: Oh sure, sure. Swell.

