

"Eternity is a long time" for

Romance at the SSCA

by Rev. Herbert O'H. Walker, S. J.

from the *Queen's Work*



I was seated in a yawning leather chair a few yards from the elevator doors on the first floor of Hotel Morrison in Chicago. We had worked diligently all afternoon setting up our exhibits and everything was in readiness for the formal opening of the SSCA in the morning. It was gratifying now to sit back, relax, and catch the first joyful cries of surprise and appreciation of the teen-agers as the elevator doors opened upon the glory of the Mural Room and the Sodality displays.

Wide-eyed with excitement, drinking in the beauty of the place, they slowly gravitated over the ballroom floor where an informal, get-acquainted dance was in progress. The registration desk, just off the Embassy Room on the mezzanine, was open and many of the lads and lassies were flashing their name cards. Happy, smiling, well-mannered, and beautifully dressed, they arrived in a steady flow, stepping lightly from the five elevators that were servicing this section of the building.

I had a stack of cards on the table beside me, and now and then when a group paused to chat, I would inquire about their home town, school, how they enjoyed the trip to Chicago, and sign up one of them to be a coeditor for **The Queen's Work** during the coming year. I had just finished greeting a fine group of sharp-looking boys when an elevator door flashed open and five pretty girls in party dresses came into the room. Al Goodmaor, who was bent over filling out a coeditor card, and I looked up and caught their smiles. They hurried over to say hello.

"Girls," I said "I know you want to meet Al here. He is going to be a coeditor next year on TOW." Al straightened up: "It's a pleasure," he beamed. The girls smiled up to him and then looked from one to another until a brave little spirit with mischievous blue eyes and brunette hair spoke up. "We're from Garetti Academy," she cheered. "And from left to right we are Ruth Doherty, Mary Wilson, Henrietta Smith, Donna

Holmes, and I'm Noreen Callahan. Isn't it just thrilling? And we don't know a soul."

Al looked across the carpeted flooring and saw his pals watching the dancers. "Hey, Pete and Joe," he called, "bring the fellows over here." Quickly he filled in the remaining information on the card and then led the Goretti girls over to meet his friends. I watched as they joyfully went through the introductions and with a lot of excited, nervous laughter paired off and began dancing. Soon they were out on the huge floor and lost among the hundreds of moving bodies.

The next morning as I waited at the door of the Walnut Room to start my lecture on editing Sodality papers, Noreen stopped to talk. "You know what?" she said. "That Al Goodmoor is a cute fellow. Wouldn't it be wonderful if I had to be eternally grateful to you for introducing us?"

"It certainly would," I agreed. "I'd expect you to drop by and say your thanks at least once in every ten thousand years."

Noreen shook her head slowly—the gold of a hair clasp was bright as it caught the light. "It might get monotonous at that," she said sadly.

"Yes, eternity is an awful long stretch. Better be certain you like him a deal."

Her smile was bright. "I haven't much time to find out—so I'd better get going."

Al and his pals came to my class on "Parliamentary Law" and added

a lot of punch to it. After briefing the crowd on the fundamentals, we began to practice a bit to find if the information had taken root. I noticed Al among those clamoring for the floor and recognized him. "I move," he said clearly and deliberately, "that we take up a collection and buy cars for all those in the front row." There was a delightful explosion of approval and during the uproar I quickly glanced at the people in the front row. Right in the center in front of the apron of the stage were the Goretti girls. Their heads were tilted back and they were showing plenty of tooth paste. I stated the question and asked for the pleasure of the class. Playing along with Al, I recognized his pal, a tall, blond lad with a tight crew cut. "I move to amend the motion," he cried, "by introducing the word *kitty* before the cars." The Casino rocked with spontaneous laughter and the fun continued as Noreen Callahan stood up and waved her right arm menacingly at the lad who had offered the amendment.

Of course, when the previous question was carried, it was obvious how the voting would go. After a roar of ayes that made a ripple in the heavy backdrop, I called for the negative vote. In the big amphitheater there was a concerted and unified scream of five voices. The Goretti girls voted no to a man, but their cry seemed so pale after the other vote, so thin in the vast silence that it was really funny. The crowd laughed and gave them a heavy round of

applause. And Noreen stood up to accept it, raising her clasped hands above her head like a boxer who has won a match. She was flushed with victory in her defeat.

That evening I stopped by the Mural Room to watch the social mixers and square dances and pick up some more coeditors. The Goodmoors and Callahans were in the thick of things. Excitement seemed a tonic for them and the flavor of the wine of youth was in the air. During an intermission, Noreen came over. "I've had seven dances already," she confided, evidently considering that a very fine score. "And two with you know who," she added with an approving arch of her right eyebrow. "Don't be too hosty," I said with a mock seriousness. "Eternity is a mighty long time to be in my debt."

I didn't get to talk to Noreen or any of the Gorettis all day Tuesday. But that evening in the lobby, as I was buying a paper, I saw them sail in through the revolving door. When Noreen saw me, they hustled over. "We've had the grandest time," she declared excitedly. "You know, we walked down to the late front by the Chicago Yatch Club and we met Al and his friends with Father Ryan. He's their Sodality director. He drove them here in his car. Well, while we were talking, a big cabin cruiser came by and the owner called out to Father asking if we'd like to take a ride. We had to walk down the sidewalk to a landing place to get on and the man made all of us girls take off our shoes.

"It was a really beautiful boat—it's called 'Gamecock II.' He let Al steer it when we got out beyond the breakwater. He gave us Cokes and cookies and Father had a Scotch and water. The sun was going down behind all the big buildings and it was just breath-taking. I thought for a while I was going to get seasick, the water was so choppy and all, but I didn't. The boys had a wonderful time too. Ruth and Pete and Joe and Mary were in the last seat, right above the propellers. Boy, I'll never forget it."

There was no need for me to say anything. She poured out her enthusiasm without any pause. It would have been sacrilegious to interrupt it. Noreen was certainly alive, attractive, and a born leader. The Goretti girls revolved around her like electrons. "That was a wonderful experience," I agreed. "I envy that Father Ryan. He must be a grand priest."

"I'll say he is," they chorused, and turning away, swept over to the elevators.

On Wednesday I called on Al to try his hand at conducting a meeting and made him chairman for the final minutes of the class. He was perfectly at ease and ran things pretty smoothly. The four hundred teenagers gave him a hand for it.

"Noreen Callahan is a great fan of yours," he said, as we were leaving the stage. "You know, that little girl from Goretti Academy we met Sunday night?"

"Oh yes, I remember her very

well," I said. "What is she saying about me?"

"When you have a free afternoon, let me know, and I'll tell you," he replied with a laugh.

"You must be talking to her quite a bit, then," I suggested.

"Yes. I was just thinking during lunch how I always seem to be coming along just as she is."

"That's quite a coincidence," I agreed. "In fact, it actually verges on the miraculous when you consider the hundreds of boys and girls around here."

After the Amateur Show on Thursday night the two passed me in the lobby. Noreen's arm was hooked in with Al's. She raised her right elbow to me and touched her index finger to her thumb and gave me a wink. It was a pretty sight and enough to wind up my busy day.

Friday afternoon Father Ryan came to the circulation desk and put in his order for **The Queen's Work**. "How's everything going?" I asked. "I'm worn out," he said limply. "Whoever said that there are six days you'll never forget and six nights you never sleep was certainly correct. I expected to get a little vacation out of this but now I'll need one. But it's certainly wonderful. The spirit here is beyond description. And the lecturers are absolutely the best. I think I've learned more this week than I did all through high school and college."

You are evidently more tired than you think," I replied. "When do you start back?"

"I'm going to drive the boys out to Mundelein tomorrow after the last class. I want to show them the seminary where I made my studies. Then we'll head on home right from there. Don't tell Al and the fellows though. I want it to be a surprise."

"You can count on me," I said cheerfully, but down in my heart I wondered if he knew how great a surprise it might be for them.

During the farewell dance that night I was making a final check on coeditors and Al and Noreen stopped at the desk to chat.

"I guess this wraps up everything for the week," I suggested.

"Not quite," Al said. "We've made plans for tomorrow afternoon."

"Our train doesn't leave until seven-thirty and that gives us over three hours after the last session," Noreen said brightly.

"We're going to have dinner together. The Goretti girls and the fellows from St. Joe's," Al announced. "We are pooling our funds for quite a splash. How about coming with us?"

"I'd love to," I replied, "but my train leaves at four-thirty. I'll be well on my way to St. Louis by the time you sit down to eat."

"That's a shame," Noreen said with real disappointment. "We were counting on you. It's going to be real special. We are all going to autograph each other's menu and write in our addresses and telephone numbers."

"It might be smarter to get that information right away," I cautioned

them. "After all, something might turn up to change your plans and there you'd be without some very important data."

"We're not worried," Al replied. "It will add so much fun and make the dinner more memorable."

"Suit yourselves," I told them, "but if something goes wrong, please remember I warned you."

I felt a little guilty as they returned to the dance.

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The afternoon as I was checking out, a disconsolate Noreen was slumped on the lounge by the elevators. I went over to say good-bye. "Why all the gloom?" I asked.

"Do you know what happened? That awful Father Ryan left and he took Al and the boys with him. Al

left a note in my mailbox. Here," she said, pushing it at me, "read it."

"Sorry, Noreen," I read aloud, "but we have to leave right away with Father Ryan. We're going to visit Mundelein Seminary. Be sure to write. In a hurry. Al."

"Be sure to write," she repeated, and I saw her lips quiver. "How can I write when the big goof didn't leave his address?"

"Oh, cheer up," I said. "I can get it for you. It's on his coeditor card. Just drop me a line and I'll send it."

"Oh, you're wonderful," she said, jumping up, her old spirit back again. "Will you?"

"Eternity is a long time," I said, picking up my suitcase.

"I don't care," she answered and pressed my hand hard.



The much preoccupied professor walked into the barber shop and sat in a chair next to a woman who was having her hair bobbed.

"Haircut, please."

"Certainly," said the barber, "but if you really want a haircut, would you mind taking off your hat first?"

The customer removed his hat. "I'm sorry," he apologized as he looked around, "I didn't know there was a lady present!"



An Englishman asked a Scotchman:

"What would you be weren't you a Scot?"

The Scotsman said: "Why an Englishman, of course."

Then the Englishman turned to an Irish and asked: "And what would you be weren't you an Irishman?"

The Irishman thought for a moment and said: "I'd be ashamed of myself!"

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Which has more legs, a horse or no horse?

A horse has four legs, no horse has five legs.