

# The Glenville Mercury

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## The Ascetic

By Virgil Smith

THE SERMON was brief. She had been a gentle woman. The first look of rest was finally upon her face, and her calloused hands lay folded neatly across her flat chest. The scent from the one wreath of red roses seemed to fill the tiny weatherboarded church. Alfred, her only child and survivor, a shaggy man of twenty-five, failed her in death as he had in life. John Matthew, a neighbor, knew this, for it was he who had sat with her through the final night and heard her ask calmly for a drink of water.

"Let her get it herself," Alfred had said.

"Damn you!" was all John had said as he filled the tin cup and carried it to her bedside—too late. "You'll pay," he had threatened as he walked through the clean kitchen and stepped out into the night.

WHEN FRED and Dorothy, a young married couple, moved into the neighborhood twenty-five years later, they learned that John had kept his threat. Alfred's name was seldom spoken except to keep children out of closets or places where they didn't belong.

FRED COULDN'T forget that the first time he saw him, Alfred was dragging two slabs of wood from the sawmill where he worked part-time as an offbearer. He spent most of his time, however, cutting unneeded firewood and stacking it around the already filled outbuildings. Sawdust and shavings lined the paths between the racks of wood.

ALTHOUGH JOHN, speaking for the neighborhood, had asked Fred to ignore Alfred, when he met him on the road dragging the two useless slabs like an ant drags home unneeded twigs, the look of famine in his eyes made Fred forget the advice John had given him.

"Load them on the truck, and I'll take them down for you," Fred said.

"Don't need no help," Alfred replied without looking up, and continued with a slab now under each arm.

THAT NIGHT, Alfred, as usual, covered the fire with ashes to preserve the supply of wood. But as he lay on the dirty cot, he wondered why Fred had offered to help.

"Don't need no help," he said again, for it had seemingly become his motto over a quarter of a century.

HE WENT to an old trunk, opened it, and counted silently.

"One more year," he thought, "I'll never stay here and die as my mother did — fighting the weeds and watching the crops grow smaller each year from lack of new seed."

BEFORE LYING back down, he opened the door and let his dog out. With the exception of three chickens, it was the only animal on the tiny farm. Knowing its only food came from the field, it set out instantly in search.

THE NEXT day's being Saturday, Alfred allowed himself one egg, then, taking the fourteen he had saved, walked five miles down the road to the nearest village. The clerk, not knowing the age of the eggs, bought them as usual. With the money he received, Alfred bought his weekly groceries: two loaves of brown bread and a jar of peanut butter. This, and the dried fruit saved from the summer, was his diet, supplemented in the summer months by the grapes and berries that grew along the worn-out garden.

THOUGH ALFRED was just fifty years old, his scanty diet had taken its toll, and it was only with great effort that he had returned to his weather-washed shack. It was almost dark, and as he unlocked the chain on his door, he felt nauseated. The hunger he felt demanded prompt attention, but he thought perhaps he could sleep until morning as he had done often in his life.

HIS DOC, instead of searching for food, lay shivering just outside the door. Too tired to search for game, it grew stiff and died during the night.

THREE DAYS passed, and Alfred missed work at the sawmill. Fred, the only one that showed concern, entered the dirty shack one evening, and where the bedstead met the wall, found a body wedged with an impression of the iron railing in its stomach.

HE NOTICED an open trunk pushed part-way under the bed, and the patched gumboots draped over it. But he didn't know that it contained three-thousand dollars. Twelve-hundred of it, bound with a leather thong, had been left to Alfred by his mother.

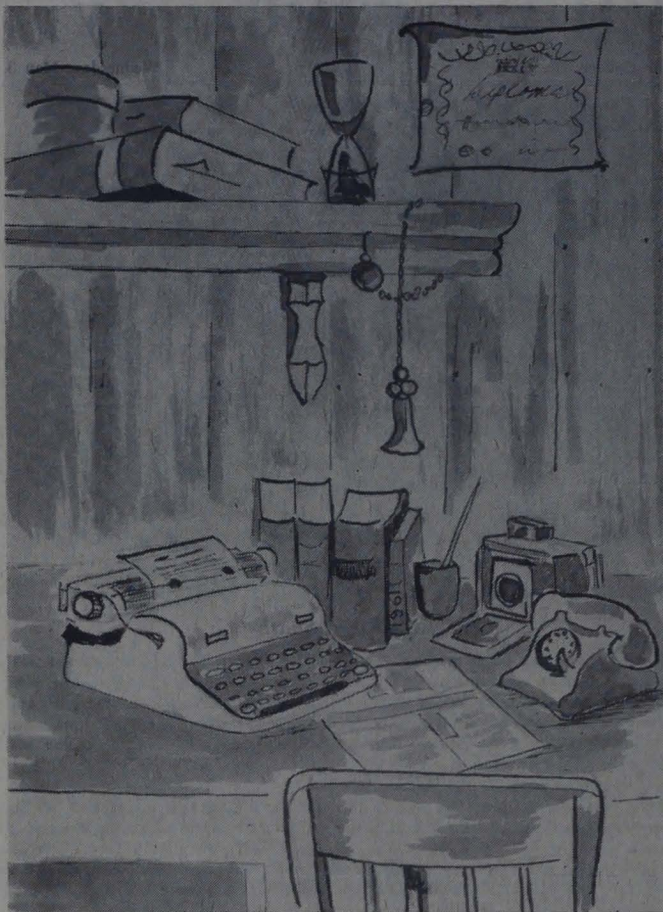
ALFRED HAD slipped while pushing the trunk under the bed, and the strength to rise failed him.

FRED TURNED and noticed the cold, brown ashes in the fireplace. "Don't need no help," he whispered, and closed the door.

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## Poetry and Journalism

Archibald MacLish, prolific and admired American poet, playwright, literary critic and Pulitzer-Prize winner recently had something to say about "Poetry and Journalism."

Mr. MacLish says that poetry and journalism are not opposites and cannot be opposites and the notion that they are is a delusion. Journalism is concerned with events — poetry with feelings. Journalism is concerned with the look of the world; poetry with the feel of the world. Journalism wishes to tell what has happened. Poetry wishes to say what it is like to any man to be himself.

The best definition of poetry is "... the balances or reconciliation of discordant qualities ... a more than usual state of emotions with more than usual order."

The poet with us, stops his horse at twilight at the wood's edge in falling snow and yields for a moment to that longing for sleep in the cold, white, drifting stillness which is also another and deeper longing all reflective men have known, but the journalist permits himself to see only a man in a buggy stopping in inclement weather at a remote spot; since nothing has "happened," he publishes nothing.

The same thing may be true in reverse. The journalist may dodge hand grenades in a dusty, dirty, flea-bitten desert city to report an obscure war.

The poet, because of all of this is merely "happening," does not write at all; because nothing is "felt," he has nothing to say. Of course there have been journalists of our generation — men like Elmer Davis and Ernie Pyle — who would not have separated the feel of things from the look of them if they could, and there are contemporary poets who not only felt but saw the war in Spain.

Great poems are instruments of knowledge — a knowledge carried alive into the heart by passion, but knowledge nevertheless. Feeling without knowing never made a work of art and never will. We are deluged with information, but we have lost or are losing our human ability to feel facts and information.

We have not discarded the art of poetry, but we have impaired the practice of the skill the art can give, the art of feeling truly and so truly knowing. We seem unable to know as Shakespeare knew who made King Lear cry out to blinded Gloucester on the heath: "... you see how this world goes," and Gloucester answers: "I see it feelingly."

The real crisis in the life of our society is the crisis of the life of the imagination. We need to come alive again, to recover the virility of the imagination on which all earlier civilizations have been based.

Education is not wholly responsible for the flaw which has split knowledge of heart from knowledge of head, though it has surely its fair share of the blame. It is principally by the process of education that the flaw can be healed.

The need for a review of the relation between education and the arts was never greater than at this moment when our whole attention is fixed on the relation between education and the sciences. A society which has so lost the capacity to see the world feelingly that it can watch in silence while the possibility of nuclear extermination is employed as a diplomatic maneuver may stand in need of thousands of young manufacturing scientists sooner than it thinks. But even sooner it will need to learn to know.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS -

LUCILLE SMITH BUTLER is a junior English and library science student from Orton. Besides her interest in school work and writing, Mrs. Butler manages a household and a large family. She has been listed on the Dean's List each semester.

LEITH OWEN CLARKE is a senior English and speech student from Spencer. Mrs. Clarke has been active in dramatic work for three years. She was director of "Look Back in Anger," and appeared in "Physician in Spite of Himself" last year. Mrs. Clarke, a MERCURY reporter the first semester, placed first in the MERCURY Poetry Contest with her poem "Panorama."

BARBARA HUGGINS, a senior English and speech student, is now at her home in Parkersburg. Miss Huggins has been active in college dramatic activities and served as a MERCURY reporter during the first semester.

CAROL SUE REED, an elementary education junior from Nutter Fort, is a MERCURY reporter. Miss Reed, a graduate of Roosevelt Wilson High School, is active in Wesley Foundation. Miss Reed is also listed on the Dean's List each semester.

VIRGIL SMITH is a senior English and speech student from Glenville. Smith has been active in dramatic productions this year and he is currently serving as president of the Literary Club.

WILLIAM SIMMONS, a senior from Cox's Mills, is a biological science and English student.

MARY VAUGHAN is a sophomore English and speech student from Clay County. Miss Vaughan has appeared recently in "Beyond the Horizon," "Hedda Gabler," "Major Barbara," and "The Last of the Lowries." Miss Vaughan is a MERCURY reporter.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST -

All the art work in this issue of the MERCURY is the work of JANET MAE FIELDS. Miss Fields, an art and social studies senior, is from Candeeville. She is a member of Palette and Brush Club and Xi Beta Tau, vice president of Verona Mapel Hall and feature editor of the KANAWHACHEN. Miss Fields was named to "Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges" in December.

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# CHILD

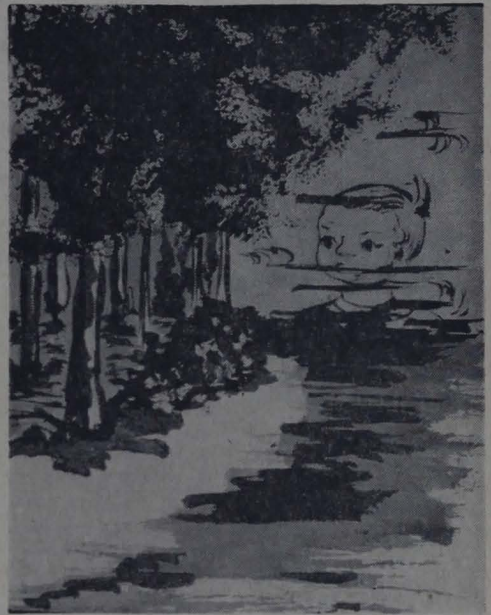
by Leith Owen Clarke

You sit there, gazing.  
Lost perhaps in a lonely wood,  
Or journeying through time and space to a  
star.

Defying me to superimpose my thoughts upon your own.  
Silently asking me, with your inscrutable stare,  
if I dare enter the world of your own making.  
(A world of cut-glass snowflakes in a blue  
velvet sky.  
where you, disembodied,  
float.)

And,  
rebuffed by the clear coolness of the ice-blue  
pools which are your eyes,  
I return alone,  
to the prosaic corner of my mind from which I came.

Leaving you  
in a pink-edged shell washed  
by the waves,  
curled within yourself,  
listening to the stars  
shine



## Oblivion

by Leith Owen Clarke

Like softly running water the days  
flow into each other  
morning, evening daytime nighttime  
there is no time  
no light  
no dark  
and  
like a leaf upon the water I  
drift into endlessness  
swallowed up by infinity.

## Where?

by Barbara Huggins

Crowded streets — empty  
laughter — silent,  
people ——— happy?  
Gone!  
Children ——— playing  
Houses ——— cheerful,  
Life ——— complete,  
Gone!  
Plan . . . . . death  
Hour ——— near,  
Countdown ——— now,  
Gone!  
Above us ——— far  
Watchful ——— knowing  
Chaos ——— seeing,  
Eyes ——— ears  
Now!  
Gone?  
Where?

## Wordsworth Speaks To The Twentieth-Century Reader

by Carol Sue Reed

"Good afternoon, Mr. Wordsworth. I hope that my asking you for an interview has not disturbed your rest."

"Not at all! However, I must admit that I am not too sure of the purpose of your visit."

"Well, Mr. Wordsworth, I have read several of your poems and I believe that they contain many ideas which apply to our life in Twentieth-Century America as well as to the Eighteenth Century in England. I am using the term 'Eighteenth Century' since 1802 was just the beginning of the Nineteenth Century. I would like to have your opinions as to whether or not the ideas and criticisms you express in your sonnet 'London, 1802' can and do apply to our life."

"Even though I have been absent from the earthly realm for several years, I have not been completely unaware of what has been happening there. But, I must tell you that I have a severe case of laryngitis and will not be able to do much talking."

"I am sorry to hear that, sir. In that case, would it be agreeable with you if I should express my own opinions and ideas on the poem? Then you could criticize or add to them at your will."

"Quite agreeable."

"I should like to proceed word-by-word or phrase-by-phrase. To begin, the first word is 'Milton', the man to whom the poem is addressed. You had very high regard for John Milton, did you not?"

"That I did. He was an alumnus of my school Cambridge, and it was there that I began to really appreciate his work."

"I notice that you wish that he were living in the Eighteenth Century. . . . thou should'st be living at this hour: . . . This is one idea that would not be feasible in the Twentieth Century. With our apathetic people who have become slaves to television, movies, and

cheap novels, I am afraid that even a genius like Milton's would be overlooked. May I here widen the meaning of the phrase 'England hath need of thee: . . . which is next? I should like to specifically relate my comments to my country, although many of them can be applied to the world.'"

"Quite all right, just do not over do it."

"Thank you. . . . she is a fen / Of stagnant waters: . . . As marshes breed disease so does our complacent and lackadaisical society breed greed, communism, prejudice, and juvenile delinquency. For example, you criticize the relations discrimination and the close ties of Church and State in England by the use of 'altar'. Here, in America, religion became a major issue in our recent political election. People are growing away from God by emphasizing materialism."

" . . . sword . . . ' England had just recently lost the American colonies in 1802, whereas America has just lost the Island of Cuba. We have also weathered the threatening storm of a second civil war in the rioting over racial integration. Too, there is an all-encompassing race between the United States and Russia (symbols of the free world and of communism, respectively) to develop the most powerful bombs, rockets, satellites, and guided missiles."

"I do not think Americans are as lacking in good literature as you believed the Eighteenth Century to be, . . . and pen, . . . Ours is simple buried under a mountain of cheap, available, poorly-written trash."

"Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower, / Have forfeited their ancient English dower / Of inward happiness . . . ' Certainly Americans do not regard love, marriage, and home life with the same high respect that Milton gave them. This disregard for the home

is becoming apparent in the rising problem of juvenile delinquency and in the ever-increasing number of cases of mental illness."

"I do not mean to give the impression that the Twentieth Century is such a wicked world, but since your poem contains criticism, I thought it only appropriate that my comments be critical, too. Today too many people are living in a dream world whereby they have shut out the realities of our existent social problems. Some day 'the bubble will burst'."

"I understand your viewpoint, and I am sure that if you put the good qualities of your society on the scale, they would more than balance these evils. Nevertheless, when evils do exist, people should be made aware of them. I think that bringing these matters to public attention is one of the duties of a good writer."

"I agree. As to the next phrase, ' . . . We are selfish men . . . ', I think the adjective is quite suitable for modern Americans. Each of us is primarily interested in himself. We try to get as much as possible for as little as possible, some using any means available to do so."

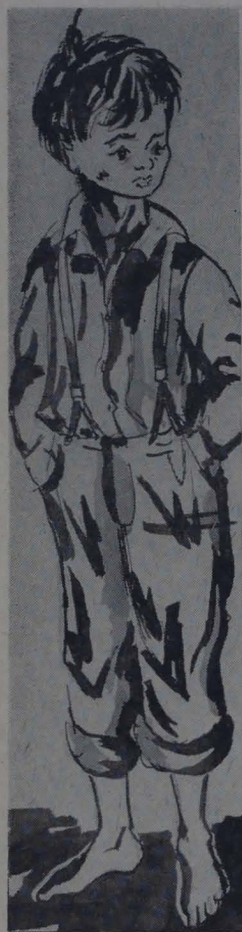
"I really cannot make much comment on the next two lines 'Oh! raise us up, return to us again; / And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.' except to say that we too can surely use these qualities. Our manners and virtues are slowly disappearing; power we are struggling for, and our freedoms are constitutional, not real."

"This line, 'Thy soul was like a Star, and dewt apart.' is considered the greatest tribute ever paid to Milton or to any poet."

"Why, thank you. But I imagine those words have lost much of their meaning in your world of rockets, satellites, and missiles. In fact, it may even be a little dangerous to be a 'Star.'"

(Continued on page 4)





# SLEWFOOT'S COINAGE *by William Simmons*

As I was cleaning out my desk drawer today, I ran across a picture of Ezra Fox, an old friend of mine, with whom I had shared all the suffering and good times that accompany high-school days. Yes, those were the good old days, and Ezra was one of the elements that had made them so good.

Even in his early high-school days, Ezra "Slewfoot" Fox had amazed all of his friends with his ability to acquire currency. Ezra had grown up in an atmosphere of hard work and honesty, but when it came to handling monetary affairs he demonstrated that he could outdo even the shrewdest trader.

Ezra came fresh from the farm to Peach Tree High School with the innocence of a fawn and an eagerness to learn the ways of the world. At first, he was very gullible, but he soon learned not to listen to all the wild tales that his classmates told him about his big new world. Once someone had played a trick on him or had taken advantage of him, he never forgot the lesson learned.

In one instance I remember, Ezra had a gun catalog for sale and I wanted it, so I asked him how much he would take for it. He told me he had a dollar in it, but that he would sacrifice it for seventy-five cents.

I bought the catalog, and found out later that Ezra had bought it for a dime to start with. He had made a profit of sixty-five cents.

As time progressed Ezra learned more and more about the business world. Ezra raised hogs for sale on his dad's farm, and one day he happened to hear about a restaurant owner who wanted to buy a dressed hog, so he inquired about the matter. Sure enough, he made a sale. He was to cut the hog up into the various cuts of meat, and since some cuts were worth more than others he aimed to get a lot more choice cuts than any other kind. He even went so far as to cut the whole backbone up into pork chops in order to increase his profit. When Ezra figured up his total profit, he found that he had cleared about twice as much money on that hog as he would if he had not taken special precautions in the cutting process.

Yes, Ezra was learning all the tricks of the trade.

Aside from the fact that Ezra was a hard man to trade with he was generally a very likeable person. His red face always beaming, and his black eyes snapped and danced with alertness. His jovial mood gained him many friends, and even those people whom he had cheated forgave him for his

deeds. We especially like the "Huck Finn" type of lies he told. He told one about a clock with wooden springs, and swore that he knew where the clock was, and that it would keep perfect time.

Ezra and I joined the football team. Ezra really didn't know too much about football, and when we had to make a trip, he always worried about whether our team would get there in time for the kickoff or not. During the last quarter of one game, Ezra complained about his feet hurting. One of the members of the team happened to glance at Ezra's feet and discovered that he had two right shoes on. That was how he got the name of "Slewfoot."

After Ezra graduated from high school he went to a neighboring state to look for a job. He had only been there a day or two when he got a job and a good one at that. A month or two later he won a new car with a raffle ticket he had collected in a poker game. He also collected two thousand dollars as the result of an automobile accident in which his car was supposed to be damaged. The fact was that it was damaged only because a money-hungry lawyer told him it was. I spoke with Ezra about this and asked him if his conscience bothered him a little, and he said no that someone else

would have stuck him in the same way if he had been in his place. I disagreed violently, but Ezra could not be convinced that he was wrong.

A few months ago I heard that Ezra was still doing quite well for himself. It seems he has bought a fine brick home in a residential section of a large city. His four sisters who work in the same city are living in the house, and Ezra is paying for it with the rent he collects from them. They also do his cooking and washing for free. He has a small construction company that does landscaping. He charges maximum rates for the work he does and pays the three Negroes whom he has working for him minimum wages.

Yes, it has only been four years since we graduated from high school, and Ezra is still demonstrating his ability to handle coinage. However, the last time I talked with Ezra he seemed disturbed because he was only twenty-two years old and had all the material wealth he had ever hoped for. He was afraid that he would run out of something to strive for. I suggested a college education, and I think he liked the idea. Yes sir, that picture I found today sure recalls a lot of memories about "Slewfoot" and his coinage.

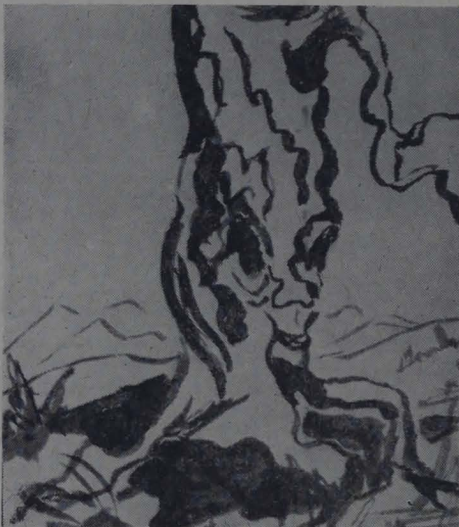
## MOVING TIME

by Lucille Smith Butler

It's moving time again.  
Old pangs return.  
This scene is played,  
Yet, as a tree  
Transplanted  
Leaves part of itself  
And carries away a part  
Of from which it sprang

So I leave behind  
Fragments of my life,  
And shall carry away  
Memories  
That began here.

Fain would I linger . . .  
My spirit stretches  
Toward the untried,  
Seeking fresh soil.  
Will I, through uprooting  
Wither and die  
Or take root and flourish  
"Till moving time again?



## life

by Mary Vaughan

As I  
walk along  
the path,

I  
look  
ahead . . .  
and also  
behind.

What do I see?  
Nothing.  
Leading to  
nothing . . .

# Wordsworth Speaks to the Twentieth Century

(Continued from Page 3)

"I get your point. But on the other hand, could not these devices only add a depth of meaning to the metaphor? In this chaotic world, the stars and their light are one of the few things that remain constant."

"Perhaps so."

"I would like to combine the following lines for discussion since

they are all part of the same idea.

Thou hadst a voice whose  
sound was like the sea;  
Pure as the naked heavens,  
majestic, free,  
So didst thou travel on life's  
common way,  
In cheerful godliness; . . .

In these lines, I can see you are admiring Milton's ability to speak the truth as he saw it. Today,

people only want to be told ideas that they want to hear.

"The remaining lines, ' . . . and yet thy heart / The lowliest duties on herself did lay,' serve to remind us that Milton, although famous, did not neglect his civil and patriotic duties.

"Perhaps I have been a bit too particular or made what might seem to be some excessive or far-

fetched criticisms, but these are my personal interpretations of 'London, 1802' and the ways I think they apply to our Twentieth-Century America."

"Allow me to help you state some general conclusions. The attitudes of your people then and now seem to be very similar in that they involve political unrest; emphasis on false values such as money, fame,

and material wealth; and an overlooking of virtues, such as modesty, beauty, family, Nature, honesty, freedom, and the rights of the individual. These broad statements might help you to correlate your ideas."

"They certainly will help, Mr. Wordsworth. Thank you very much for your time and trouble.

"Thank you, and good day!"