

The Free Press' Short Story

THE GREEN OLIVE TREE

LILLIAE M. MITCHELL

HAL WARD stood on the sidewalk, looking uncertainly at the great, gray stone building. A year ago he would have thrilled at the thought of entering this great university. A year ago? Yes, or a month ago or a week ago. And today he stood on the sidewalk dreading the moment that he should have to present his credentials.

The prank that, had seemed so funny back at Willowvale College in this environment, judging from the figures hurrying past him, one class period had just ended and another was about to begin. Some students, as they passed, laughed lightly, but beneath the laughter was a seriousness of purpose, an intensity upon the problem of getting across campus to another building in the least possible time. All this, now, made the stunt of leading a goat to the platform during chapel time even more ridiculous than it had seemed before.

Hal Ward had not planned to lead that goat to the platform alone. It had been a Senior stunt that was to have been carried out by ten of the Senior men. However, when the time, chapel had been the place, and Hal Ward was one of the ten Seniors who were to have been the actors.

Willowvale College was a small school, and only a small college would have tolerated the various pranks that the students had tried, now and then.

Hal Ward never had cared especially for these jokes. He was a little older than the other students—was working his way through college—and felt, therefore, that he must take his work more seriously than the other students. Nevertheless, he always tried to be a good sport, and when jokes were proposed, entered into such activities heartily and with complete good nature.

The goat episode had been, as far as Hal Ward was concerned, a complete fiasco. The Seniors, as befitted their advanced status in college, had been permitted to sit in any place they chose during chapel. Freshmen, Sophomores, and Juniors always, occupied assigned seats.

The plan had been, briefly, that Elmira, the goat, should be hidden just outside of the east door of the chapel. At precisely twenty-five minutes after ten, ten Senior men (including Hal Ward) were to rise, walk to Elmira's hiding place, and lead her to the platform. At the moment she was hoisted up, all of the Seniors were to rise and sing their class song.

Now, as Hal looked back upon it all, he was not only ashamed of his part in it, but rather disgusted. As far as he could see, it appeared that the Seniors were the goats.

Hal had worked at his job as Clerk in the astronomy building until chapel time. He had taken the seat he had agreed to take, had kept close track of the time, and at exactly the appointed moment had risen to lead Elmira to the platform. To his surprise, the other nine Seniors were nowhere in sight. It had been a difficult decision—whether to pretend that he had a bad cough and needed to go on with the pre-arranged plan and lead Elmira to the platform by himself. The Seniors always had insisted that the Freshmen carry through certain jokes, and it struck him, suddenly that it was only fair that the Senior Hallowe'en stunt should be carried through to its arranged conclusion.

Consequently he, alone, had led Elmira forward. He had "boosted" her to the platform and held her there securely, waiting for the Seniors to begin their class song. But averted eyes and silence had followed Elmira's appearance. There had been a few suppressed snickers on the part of the lower classmen, and that was all. "If you have finished, Mr. Ward," the cold voice of Professor Seward MacCrea, dean of men, had said, "we shall continue the chapel services as soon as the animal is removed. The trustee of the college, who must leave very shortly, has promised to give us short talks which, naturally, we do not wish to interrupt unnecessarily."

Red-faced, Hal had led the goat down the aisle again to the door of the chapel. He had known that the trustees planned to visit the college, unannounced, to see exactly how affairs were going, but he had not known they were there this day. He had been called to the dean's office, and young Seward MacCrea, with the prematurely white patch of hair on his right temple, had scathingly dismissed him from the college.

"I am heartily ashamed of you, Ward," MacCrea had said severely.

"I didn't know, sir, that the trustees were there in the front row. If I had known, sir, I—"

"You should have known!" snapped MacCrea. "You have a brilliant mind, Ward. It is a pity to use it in such childish pranks. Your grades are being prepared for you at the registrar's office. You will kindly not appear in the classrooms again."

"I'm being expelled?" Hal had asked. "It wouldn't take any master mind to deuce that," MacCrea had said drily.

new thing of this year. It was traditional for the Seniors to introduce some surprise stunt at this time of year. Unfortunately they had picked the day that the trustees had chosen for their visit.

"MacCrea needn't have been so hot-headed about it all," he said to himself. "and in Exodus, amongst the laws, we find, 'came a voice from the building marked Divinity. Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand.'"

He was passing along the wide walks where the golden maple leaves were all ready fluttering their last, and in his heart was hate towards Seward MacCrea.

"An eye for an eye—," he said in low tones. "An eye for an eye! If ever I have a chance to damage MacCrea as he has damaged me—"

The President, strangely enough, was waiting for him when he reached his office. "You knew Seward MacCrea down there at Willowvale?" he asked Hal abruptly.

"Why—yes?" answered Hal. The president nodded. "In a small college, that is usually the way. Everyone knows everyone else, more or less. You had worked with him in astronomy, possibly?"

Hal nodded. "Yes, sir," he answered. He wondered if this might be leading up to the question of why he had left Willowvale at this time of year.

"I used to know Seward pretty well," said the president thoughtfully. "Pretty well. Good student, he was, but I always had my—well, no doubts precisely, and yet that is as good a word for it as any, perhaps. I had my doubts as to his ability to mix with students. You see, when I started at this university business, a professor never mixed with students. He was supposed to sit up neatly on a pedestal and dispense information. That's not the way teaching goes nowadays. I—"

Hal had come to the end of my time as president of this university. I have always promised my wife that on my sixty-fifth birthday we should start a world trip. My birthday comes shortly. MacCrea is being considered as my successor, Ward. Do you think he would make a good college president?"

The question was snapped at him abruptly—as abruptly as the president had started to talk.

"Why—why?" blundered Hal uneasily. "I—I could not judge a serious point like that, sir."

"I am not asking you to judge. I am asking your opinion as a former student of his, as a former student in the college where he is dean of men, Ward."

Hal fairly trembled. Again he was in MacCrea's office, and MacCrea's words were sounding hard in his ears. "The only thing we shall miss here, when you are gone, will be—goals!" And now as if an enemy were within his hand, MacCrea's name was under discussion and a word from him, from Hal, while not of any great weight, was surely worth a little something—or the president would not be wasting time talking with him.

He thought of MacCrea leading chapel exercises. He could hear in his ears as distinctly as if MacCrea were within the room, the way MacCrea had said the second Psalm. He could hear the students' voices responding: "But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever." They didn't make the responses so fervently for anyone else. The green olive tree—somehow Hal liked the musical sound of that phrase. An eye for an eye—how harsh that was beside the other one! Yet, had it not been for MacCrea, college would have gone along smoothly.

"Well, sir?" prodded the president. Then Hal found himself telling about the chapel-goat fiasco: how he had led the animal up the aisle, the presence of the trustees, MacCrea's censure of his part in the affair. "I must have been crazy," said Hal frankly. "I guess I'm crazy now to tell you all of this, for you probably won't want me here when you see what a trouble maker I was, and I've always counted upon taking my master's degree here at this university."

The only reason I am telling you all of this is so that you can see for yourself. I'm no one to ask about MacCrea. The honest side of me tells me to assure you that you couldn't find a finer man for the place. He has a wonderful hold over the students, and he himself is as straight as a die—and that counts a lot with the students, you know. But the side of me that is still angry clear through at being dropped—well, it calls for an eye for an eye, sir." He finished with a "disarming" smile.

The president was looking across the campus, his finger tips matched neatly together, his elbows on the arms of his swivel chair. "And if I told you that MacCrea has lost his job, that the trustees declared his discipline poor, else you would never have dared pull a stunt like that—what would you say, Ward?"

Hal Ward leaned forward. "Oh, he didn't—didn't lose his job because of me? No wonder he was angry! I'm sorry, honestly I am. Do you think if I went to the trustees and explained that it was all my fault—oh, what attention would they pay to me?" he ended.

The president smiled and waved his hand negligently. "I'll tell you the ins and outs of it," he said softly. "MacCrea is, as you say, straight as a die. He knew he was being considered for this place. He wanted to be fair all around, and so he told the trustees that if he were elected he wanted to be released there. Well, they didn't like that very well. They met at Willowvale that morning to induce him to remain, and when he said he wished to be released to come to this university, they used you for a handle and cancelled his contract. Unthinkable, isn't it? But only the night before, our committee had met and decided definitely to ask

him to come here. He is the next president of the university, my boy."

Hal crimsoned. "And you knew it all the time you were asking me about him?"

The president smiled good-naturedly. "Why, certainly. The president of an institution like this one isn't chosen on the whim of a lad who still has to earn his first degree. I wanted to test you out to see if MacCrea was right in his judgment of you."

Hal started suddenly. The president reached into his top drawer for a letter: "I expelled him. I was sorry the moment I had done it. I honestly didn't intend to do it and I hoped all day he would come back to me to talk it over. When he didn't, I went to his room, but he had already left. He intended to do graduate work with you. He may come to you, and I think he will, to finish his work for his bachelor's degree. If it is humanly possible, will you see to it that he gets a fellowship? He is good at astronomy and should be putting as much of his time on it as possible. To put him at a rough job—well, I want to see him get along as easily as he can until I get there. And when I arrive, I'll take care of Hal Ward. I think I must have forgotten the pranks we used to play when you were dean and I was student."

The president paused and read a little more silently. "Well, Ward, that is all that will interest you. And about the fellowship—here," he scribbled a name on a slip of paper. "I've seen him about it and he has a fellowship for you; Ward, until the new president arrives, at least, he ended with a smile as he stretched out his right hand for a handclasp that Hal knew he would never forget.

WAR EXPANSION IN CANADIAN INDUSTRY

The erection or enlargement of more than 100 industrial plants in Canada under the government's industrial development program now involves expenditures totalling some \$180,000,000. These will help provide for Canada's growing war needs.

WAR 25 Years Ago

By The Canadian Press British Cabinet "War Committee" Appointed But Churchill Not in It

Public demand for a small executive body to supervise Britain's conduct of military operations in the First Great War led to the appointment of a War Committee of the Cabinet 25 years ago by Prime Minister H. H. Asquith.

The veteran Prime Minister, announced, November 11th, 1915, that the strategic conduct of the war would be committed to himself, David Lloyd George, Andrew Bonar Law, Arthur Balfour and Reginald McKenna. Lord Kitchener was not included at the time, as he had left for Gallipoli to investigate conditions there and at Salonika.

As early as October 29th, Lord Cromer had declared in the House of Lords the public wanted a small committee chosen from men representing the best talent in the country. A little later Lord Carson resigned as Attorney-General. He disagreed with the government's Balkan policy. Exclusion of Winston Churchill from the War Committee resulted in his immediate resignation as First Lord of the Admiralty and his departure to join the British Army in France.

Fighting in Balkans The campaign in the Balkans found Serbian troops, reinforced by British and French, endeavoring to stem the great drive of the Central Powers, who had a new ally in Bulgaria. Mustering in southern Serbia, the Allies fought back courageously, but the fall of Prilep, on November 16th, left them defending only a small area north of the Greek boundary, including the town of Monastir.

Russian forces strove desperately to hold up von Hindenburg's army in the Baltic sector on the Eastern Front and they succeeded in capturing two towns, west of Riga. There was little change

in positions on the Western Front, where the Allied and German armies prepared for another winter in the trenches.

Lives Normally with Heart Hit

Veteran of First Great War With Bullet in Vital Organ Still Plays Golf

London, November 13th (CP)—The saying "old soldiers never die" fits the case of a man who has lived a normal life since the 1918 Armistice, with a machine-gun bullet lodged in the wall of his heart.

In the publication, "Lancet," G. Grey Turner, Professor of Surgery at London University, describes the case. An unsuccessful operation to remove the bullet was performed 39 days after the soldier was wounded.

Discharged from the Army in 1922, he took a long rest before returning to a civilian job. He was able to do ordinary things in moderation, including a mild game of golf. He married ten years after the operation. Last April the old soldier was reported quite well though a little tired—a result of the present war, not the last one," said Professor Turner.

BUT THERE'S A LIMIT

Canberra (CP)—While members of the foreign diplomatic corps in Australia enjoy free registration and free motor-driving licenses and immunity from the traffic laws, they are reported to their home governments for serious breaches.

WHERE EUROPE ENDURES

St. Gallen, Switzerland (CP)—Francis Heidegger, French sergeant interned here, found his name carved on a tree, with the date 1871. His grandfather had carved the name when he was one jump ahead of the Prussians, in the Franco-Prussian War.

ONE DEFENDABLE

A man who had four sons was asked what he intended to do with them. He said:

"The first will be a solicitor, the second will become a chartered accountant, and the third an assessor to an insurance company."

"And how about the fourth?"

"Oh, the fourth will be a professional bankrupt, and will keep the whole family."

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