

# NOTE TO AMERICAN LITERATURE

Waldo Miller, Jr.

Most American literature textbooks contains a poem by Henry Timrod entitled, "Charleston". I hope to acquaint you with the people and some customs of the city before you study the poem. For the greatness of this city cannot be understood if the greatness of its people is not known.

There are many things to say about the "Holy City" for it is a different city, different from any other city in America. If the South had finished seceding from the Union, South Carolina would have seceded from the South, the Low Country would have seceded from South Carolina, and Charleston would have seceded from the Low Country. Charleston is a charmer and if you've ever been there you always have a yen to go again. But those who live there . . . well, that's a different story. I get amused every time I recall the conversation I heard several summers ago down at the Post Office where the Negro women bring their flowers to sell.

"For Lord's sake, where is you come from, 'Becca darlin'? I ain't know that you is in town; somebody is tell me you is not Nort' to lib wid your daughter," shouted one of the flower women as Rebecca pushed her fully loaded produce cart to the curb.

"I done bin gone and I come back", she answered, with a shake of the head. "I don't like it up dere".

"Dat's so? Well, I ain't gone away myself," said her friend, "so I don't know."

"You best stay right here where you is belong, sister," Rebecca advised. "Chas'n ain't no place for lebe. Seem like Chas'n keep all de odder place I see from seem natchel. I suits dis place 'cause it don't change non."

Of course Charleston had not changed! Rebecca could peddle her produce through the same streets, ring the same doorbells and sell her vegetables to the same families that she had known as a little barefoot girl. At Christmas she could exchange presents with her buyers and come home with her cart piled high with goodies while her hand-woven palmetto baskets would be gifts prized by any Charlestonian. Charleston streets were Rebecca's life and they satisfied her craving for the continuing of existence.

There is something in Charleston that transcends time. Indeed, she makes time conform to her pattern for if the clock on St. Michael's spire is five minutes slow, the world is five minutes fast. Every time I go back to her, no matter whether I enter down old Meeting Street Road or by crossing either the Ashley or the Cooper River, everytime, I have a feeling of rest for I realize that I am Home. When I set my foot upon her soil I stand on precious soil, soil worth keeping; for it is home.

There's a story my uncle used to tell me about the red-caps in Grand Central Station. It seems that he was waiting for the train to Charleston when a redcap grab-

bed his bags and asked him what train.

"Chas'n, Sah? Mis'a, you set right here 'til I come back. I gwine to git de Chas'n boys." With that the news galloped across Grand Central Station and the redcaps on nimble legs started gathering. As my uncle sat surrounded by redcaps giving him messages to take home, he heard a lady across the aisle remark, "How very strange!" "Mis'a, you know my brudder, he wuk to de Liberty Cleanin' Company; if you is see um, please tell um I comin' home on my holiday." All wanted to go home. My uncle remembers the embarrassment he felt when they scuffled to see who would carry his bags.

One of the redcaps proudly blared out, "Dis ain't nothin', mis'a, to de Grand Central Station. When you comes again, just say 'Ciras'n' and you watch dem boys step 'cause de big boss of all de whole crowd is Poinsett of Chas'n."

I wondered if Joel Poinsett, for whom the scarlet flower was named, would not be happy to know that one Poinsett would some day be in the esteemed position of head redcap at the Grand Central Station in the world's biggest metropolis bestowing hospitality upon stray Charlestonians.

Charleston is more than a city; it is people, it is custom and tradition, and so Charleston is also rice, for in Charleston rice is an institution. Foreigners (for if you're not a Charlestonian you're a foreigner) will tell you that Charlestonians spend their lives eating rice and worshipping their ancestors. On every proper Charleston dinner table you find the rice-spoon. Of massive silver, about fifteen inches long and very broad, it is laid on the cloth with something of the reverential distinction that surrounds the mace in the House of Commons at Westminster. Their functions are not dissimilar, for if you take away the bauble, as did Cromwell, the Commons of England are a mob without authority, and if you take away the rice-spoon from the Charleston dinner table, the meal that follows is not really dinner. In fact, it's hardly worth calling a meal; so little worthy of notice one family would never ask a grace before a meal without rice, thinking it hardly worth thanking the Lord for. Whistle "Marching Through Georgia" in St. Michael's Churchyard, proclaim on the steps of City Hall your admiration for John Brown or General Sherman, but don't ask for sugar when you've helped yourself to rice. The Charlestonian when not aroused is a courteous creature and often inclined to make allowances, but there are limits beyond which he will not go. And, anyway, there is little excuse for not eating rice as the Charlestonians do when it is cooked as they want it. There was nothing in the other North American colonies that had the status of rice in and around Charleston. The most zealous of Bostonians ate fishballs but once a week. Undoubtedly there were some Virginians who never used tobacco. But in the Carolina Low Country there are extra-pious people who could eat rice thrice in every twenty-four hours, year in and year out.

Henry Timrod lived in Charleston at a time when a great page in U. S. history was being written, but Charleston had written much previous history. The streets of Charleston reflect some of her history. Being loyal to the Crown the City has a King, a Queen, a Princess, and a Hanover Street.

She had a Union Street in commemoration of the union of Scotland and England, but when South Carolina became a state the name was changed to State Street.

The growth of Charleston can also be seen in its streets' names. George Street and Anson Street still mark Ansonboro, a fashionable section of town now being restored. Wraggsboro is identifiable by John, Elizabeth and Judith Streets—the Wragg children. Glebe Street, St. Philip Street, and Coming Street together tell the story of Mrs. Affra Coming's gift of a globe to St. Philip's Parish.

Of course, everyone knows that Charleston speech is unusual. Generally the mention of Charleston to a person familiar with it brings quite often some sort of joke about "the Bott'ry". The inhabitants of this Athens of the South insist they say the Battery when they mean the Battery. Charleston speech at its best is clear, rapid, and smooth. Charlestonians speak lip-speech, not the hideous garglings of New York and Philadelphia. Some of the old-timers used to say "cyart" and "gyarden" and "gyirl" and "cyards" and no doubt a few of the younger generation still do — if English teachers haven't made them self-conscious. This is simply an exaggeration of the liquid sound of g and c as in "c(y)arry", "c(y)andy", characteristic of all educated English.

And if Charlestonians want to say, "Cooper River", pronouncing the oo as in "book", well, it's their river! Their way of saying "dear", "fear", and "ear" has been traced back to Chaucer. And if the folk of the Carolina Low Country make a long o in "glory" and "story", that sounds better than "glawry" and "stawry".

There is no Gibraltar in Charleston but there is something there. As one looks at the city from the harbor entrance, the skyline shows the gleam of St. Philip's cross, St. Michael's white spire, the copper domes of the First (Scots) Presbyterian Church and far uptown the slender steeple of St. Matthews — these are the Holy City's skyscrapers. Fort Moultrie is on one side of the harbor and Fort Sumter on the other, a narrow channel between, but yet they split a nation. So small a city, so confined by rivers, but yet, it has become an essence of itself.

Why does the smell of pluff mud and fertilizer plants smell good to a Charlestonian's nostrils? Why does the salt flatness of artesian water quench his thirst? Why do houses on narrow streets with no place to park seem preferable to boulevards? Why does he enjoy being awakened by the raucous and unintelligible voice of the shrimp vender? He knows that life is not perfect there, but he knows he has a friend in Charleston — Time.

As Rebecca told her friend, "Chas'n don't change none and it keep all de odder place on earth from seem natchel".

"We know not: in the temple of the Fates

God has inscribed her doom; And, all untroubled in her faith, she waits the triumph or the tomb."

Can any Charlestonian go elsewhere and say, "This is where I want to live; this is where I wish I had been born," or "This is where I wish to end my days"? No, he cannot. No Charlestonian ever says that he is from anywhere but Charleston. Charlestonians are scattered across the globe. But they come back—to be married, to bring out their daughters, to christen their grand-

## Sports At Montreat

by Ronnie Morris

The varsity basketball team concluded its season by absorbing a defeat at the hands of the Warren Wilson Cagers in McAllister Hall. The high scorer for Montreat-Anderson was Bud Haney who hit for a total of 23 points. The lack of height was quite evident as time after time Warren Wilson cleared the backboard and either tapped the ball in or started a fast break down count. The final score was 81-45.

## Blue-Gold Tournament

On the night of February 23, 1962, the WRA Blue team won the basketball tournament by beating the Gold team by a score of 29 to 24. This game climaxed four previous games, two of which were won by the sophomores and two by the freshmen.

The first game ended with a 25 to 20 victory for the Blue team. This was followed by two straight triumphs for the Gold team by the too close scores of 19 to 18 and 24 to 23. The freshmen heroine of the second game was Judy Hardin, whose two foul shots in the few remaining minutes gave the victory to the freshmen. The third game ended even more dramatically with a two-minute extra period to break a 22 to 22 tie. The sophomores bounded back in the fourth game and massacred the freshmen with a 49 to 12 victory. In this game, Peggy Hennessee accumulated 30 points to become the leading scorer of the tournament.

Our special congratulations are extended to the victorious Blue team. The players on this team were Fran Black, Peggy Hennessee, Daphne Jolly, Gloria Leach, Frosty Moore, Sandy Scott, Georgiana Swan, and Judy Wildermuth.

The Gold team, consisting of Tomiko Arimura, Jo Bost, Jean Clark, Elizabeth Ellis, Margo Fraser, Margaret Gentry, Judy Hardin, Carole Holder, Martha Johnston, Judy Nave, Shirley Pound, Susie Smith, Sue Sutton, and Ann West, gave the Blue team a run for their money.

All of the girls played with good sportsmanship and fair play and are commended for it.

Our thanks go out to those who helped to officiate in the games; some of them were Coach Stewart, Mrs. Harvey, Bud Haney, Dickie Player, Bob Jarman, Hilda Ferguson, and Bill Rhodes.

## WRA Board Members Elected

The Women's Recreation Association is happy to welcome to the board three new members.

Judy Nave of Bristol, Virginia, is replacing Lynn Gouner as Head of Individual Sports. Jean Clark of Asheville, North Carolina, is the new head of volleyball. Susie Smith of Florence, South Carolina, is the new head of softball.

The W. R. A. Board is very glad to have these new members and feel that they will be an asset in promoting W. R. A. activities.

children—it is the Mecca, the Holy City. It is the place that, " . . . Keep all de odder place on earth from seem natchel". It is home.

## Poet's Corner

### WHO DO YOU PUT YOUR TRUST IN?

By Nancy Whittemore

I put my trust in people.  
People were my life,  
But I failed them;  
And they failed me;  
And all ended in strife.

I put my trust in God.  
To the ever failure end.  
I see no failure now,  
Because God is my friend.

### TO SAMMY GOLDEN

There is faint reproach and a hint of disbelief in your eyes, my hurt child, when I tell you that there is no reason for tears to fall on your sun-kissed cheeks.

You utter something that resembles an explanation for your hurt, incomprehensible feelings. Well, perhaps you, in your tender years, have tripped upon a jagged rock and a wound has been inflicted. I tell you this, my dear, dear child: it is not the last time you will feel that pain.

What's that? You say life isn't so pretty anymore? Oh Sammy, how wrong you are! Life would be boring routine if it were not for the challenge of sorrowful emotions as well as joyous ones.

Remember my words when I say that you should smile and fling your heart to the heavens to be mended. God understands many times when no one else does . . .

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\* Sammy Golden was a character in the movie "Dark At The Top of the Stairs". He was a young, persecuted Jewish boy who killed himself in the end of the story because people cruelly judged him by his religion. I had sympathy for this boy because I found that this situation was so pitifully true in our real world of today.

### PRAYER ROOM

By Nancy Whittemore

This is a place of quiet rest,  
A place where God shows us His best,

A place where sounds are all God's words,

A place where all our prayers are heard.

In this little world within a world  
All our heartaches to God are hurled.

He catches them and says, Have peace.

And then right here we find release.

### WHAT IS MY PURPOSE FOR LIVING

By Nancy Whittemore

As I sit here on the brink of life  
Trouble and sorrow are not in strife.

For I have a Savior to lead me on  
And help me to bear the grief of wrong.

As I sit here on my earthly throne  
I wonder how long 'till I'll go home.  
I know I must live my life to it's fullest

Then I'll enjoy the heavenly coolness.

Life is a challenge, despite its fret

Made by working and good honest sweat.

My life has in the short while  
Made me look back and smile.

I have been so foolish and yet  
I have my Savior to help me forget  
All my troubles and pains  
And who will be up there  
To help me make my claim.  
O, Lord make me a mountain  
In this flat earthly world  
That I may be helpful  
To another girl.