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Alumni Banquet

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NEW MEXICO QUARTERLY REVIEW
ALUMNI BANQUET

Bill

Old Harry's clothes look rather seedy
But then perhaps the man is needy.
His marks in Greek, they say, were high
And why take Greek or Latin, why?
Dead languages. To make good wages
Forget the Greeks and ancient sages
And use a little common sense.
Learning is just a trained pretense.

Harry

We used to call him "shiftless Bill,"
The dunce. I wonder do they still
Joke with this William Bromberg Simms.
He used to parody the hymns
At chapel hour, and cut his classes.
If we could know as our time passes
What each would be, I'd cut out Greek
And learn the right word I should speak
To get a raise, or help to sell
Cheap goods at profit. I should tell
The world some lie for cash, invent
Some bomb to send them all Hell-bent.

Bill

I wonder what old Harry thinks
Sitting embarrassed by his drinks.
The dollar spent's about his last.
He grabs at food each time it's passed.
Perhaps he thinks he's on to speak
About reviving ancient Greek
To discipline the student's mind,
I'd think he'd leave that stuff behind.

Harry

How neat and trim our William looks;
He's not learned that in our school books.
I guess his style is what's called "nifty."
That suit must cost him over fifty.
He works for Standard Oil and earns

Ten thousand every year—and turns
Most of it back in federal taxes,
To hear him talk. I guess he waxes
Indignant when he comes to pay.
If I am asked to speak I'll say
No word about the college famous.
I doubt if they will even name us
Who teach and minister. Relief
Is what we'll get, is my belief.

Bill

I wish he wouldn't stare at me;
I hardly have a chance to see
Those facial lines. There's something there
I can't make out, a certain stare,
As if he sees beyond the place.
It seems to be a gentle face.
I guess he's never known the worry,
The fuss, and talk, the rush and hurry
Of keeping forty persons busy.
I never rest, my head is dizzy
Right now; and it will be my heart
When the time comes. I think I'll start
To take it easy. If they call
On me to talk, I think I'll stall
About myself and say a word
About old Harry. He's the bird
Who's flying high—but I could never
Say anything so very clever.

Harry

I wish that I had used my head
And stayed at home or walked instead.
These things bring back too much, like graves
And programs, things a person saves.
You start at analyzing self.
O leave the old books on the shelf.

Bill

I know it now, contentment, peace;
Old Harry's found that now, release
From strong ambition's stronger chains.

Perhaps he walks in wind and rains
 And dreams like bookish people do,
 Or finds in books what's good and true.
 I heard a speaker give that line.
 I wish such peace were truly mine.

Harry

We're ready now to sing the song
 We always sang, and all along
 I knew they wouldn't call on me,
 But famous Bill—I still can't see
 How they left out a man admired
 By all. But then he does look tired.
 I wonder now what wealth has cost.
 Suddenly Bill looks pretty lost.

Bill

I'd like to talk to Harry now,
 Suggest a drink, or walk, but how?
 He's leaving hurriedly. A walk
 Along the paths, a little talk
 Would do me good. I can't forget
 That lonely look he had and yet
 I wonder if he could have known
 How lives are chiseled out of stone
 And only breaking them can change
 The lines. That's poetry, and strange
 I thought of it. Our shapes were set
 Years, years ago. I must forget.

Harry

I've never time to think, to dream.
 Life flows on like a widening stream.
 I'm getting so I need no words;
 They fail me now—wingless, dead birds.
 My metaphors and lines are mixed.
 But then I guess our ways are fixed
 Eastward, northward, around the town.
 Mine is not up, nor is it down.

RAYMOND KRESENSKY