

# LITERARY PAGE

## The Rise and Fall of Clementina Potts

By MARY LOUISE VINCENT  
**T**HE president of the Girls' League wound up her speech on "Participation in Activities and the Advantages Lying Therein" with a verbal flourish to the effect that "who knows better than we who have gone before you that there are other things on the campus beyond the frivolities of social life, the false allure of pretty clothes, and the enjoyable, unprofitable expenditure of time on what the movies depict as collegiate life that can reap you no gain and result in no honor."

She murmured a "God knows what!" to the vice-president and strode off the platform. The majority of her listeners, doubtless sunk long ago into the "frivolities of social life" to a point far beyond redemption, heaved a not inaudible sigh and shuffled out of the auditorium clutching their reversibles.

If Clementina Potts had sighed it didn't denote the same attitude as these more shallow characters, for she had been smitten with the full impact of what she had heard. It was clear that she was one who had not fallen into the pit of social life—the round shiny face and snub nose would have tended to keep her on very level ground; and if there was allure of any sort, however false, about blue serge, Mrs. Potts had managed to conceal it in Clementina's pleated skirt.

But the five-foot-three figure with the plain brown hair was struck with a resolve that was truly noble—she out of all these lesser characters had heard her call and she would answer. At that moment she took her vows and dedicated her life to activities.

\* \* \*

**B**UNKER Hill college had been frankly unaware of Potts, Clementina up until the moment of her inspiration, but within a fortnight there were few people on the campus who were not Potts-conscious. She descended on "dear old B.H." with the vehemence of a Valkyrie. She volunteered to sell Hot Cross buns for the benefit of Indigent Seniors, and was awarded a booth in the library lower hall with a sign on it that read "Eat a Bun, for '41"—'41 being the unhappy class for which people like Clementina Potts ('44) were giving their all. Clementina tackled all comers alike; student body presidents, the more severe members of the faculty, sleek senior Romeos and pimply freshmen.

She emerged victorious from Bunk week, and was mentioned in the Daily Bunk on the seventh

page. She cut out the whole sentence "Clementina Potts sold the most buns" and started a scrap book. She was on her way.

After this evidence of her ability "the world (as far as the campus was concerned) beat a path to her door." She sold peanuts for the speech division, pennants for the law division, programs for the drama division, and pop for the art school (she was an English major herself). She peddled chrysanthemums for the football team, magazines for the alumnae group and pamphlets for the chamber of commerce (it was never quite clear how the latter had sneaked in.)

She collected contributions for the Chinese, the Polish, the Finnish, the French, and the Wahoonatuch County Depraved Adolescents. She swam for the Associated Water-Dogs, danced for the Modern Dance group, and played field hockey, ping-pong, basketball, volleyball, tennis, golf, and Chinese checkers for the house team.

Then one day, one wonderful day, all the sweat and strain of the long preceding months were erased from her memory, all her struggle and endeavor culminated in a glorious, soul-elevating moment of reward. Clementina Potts was tapped. In fact she was thrice tapped, for the service honorary of Omicron Omicron Omicron believed in going whole hog if you go at all, and tapped her (and 42 other girls) first with a rose, then a lighted candle and finally a book. Clementina stood up under the thorn in the shoulder, hot wax down the back and a clunk on the head for the sake of virtue, guidance, and knowledge respectively. She seemed hardly of this world at that moment.

The president of the Girls' League made an inspiring speech, pinned three cents worth of black and cerise ribbon on 42 girls and Clementina murmured, "God, late for lunch again," and left. Clementina still floated—St. Peter could never open the way into bliss beyond this. She ate baked beans and salad composed of sliced oranges and mayonnaise that noon and never even tasted it.

**F**OR awhile Clementina gave to Omicron Omicron Omicron all that it deserved. She sometimes directed affairs now that she was experienced, but she still sold, peddled and collected for there seemed to be a dearth of people for these positions and she felt that where she was most needed was the place she ought to be. This noble attitude resulted one day in her being stationed with a jug of cider in front of

the YMCA. A position like this was old stuff to Clementina, and she was dishing out cider like an automat without really keeping her mind on her work, a pardonable sin considering her skill. She was dreaming of multi-colored ribbons, gold pins, and addresses to the Girls' league when something snapped her mind back to the present. This something was Morton Joe Hodges.

Morton Joe spent his Saturday mornings at the Y with the fellows and at 11:30 he always went home to mow the lawn. Today as he left he saw Clementina, and all thoughts of the lawn left his mind. She wasn't really conscious of his presence until he bought his fifth glass of cider, but after his seventh glass she gave him a faint smile. Morton Joe felt that nine glasses of cider gave him the right to move up within two feet of the defenseless girl and murmur juicily (the cider, no doubt)

"Brown is my favorite color for eyes. Yours are pretty. More cider, please."

Now if Clementina had not led so sheltered a life (her father had taken four years to court her mother and Mrs. Potts just didn't realize how things could be), she might have been somewhat equipped to cope with this situation. She poured out a glass of cider, ran it over two pints onto the table and handed Morton Joe the jug.

Morton Joe fell back a foot or two, and with the jug held defensively between him and Clementina (he had four older sisters), said,

"You're like the goddess of the harvest giving cider to thirsty mortals," (which was pretty smooth talk for Bunker Hill). He swallowed hard handed her the jug, retreated a few steps, fell over the curb, and went straight home.

\* \* \*

**F**RIDAY morning amid telephone calls about requisitions, tickets, and decorations, she received one of a different sort. She answered with the usual "Clementina Potts speaking" which she had found saved time. But the answer wasn't of the usual breed. It came in a gasp, and was, as nearly as she could make out,

"This is Morton Joe Hodges which drank all the cider in front of the Y and I belong to the Epworth league which is giving a dance and we all have to bring somebody and would you like to go."

"With who?" was all she could blurt out.

"With me, Morton Joe Hodges," he said, fully under control.

"Why?" Clementina would never have said things if she had been in ordinary circumstances, but these for her were extraordinary.

This broke through some of Morton Joe's smooth sophistication and he frankly had to search for an answer. "I did drink an awful lot of that apple juice and—and—and—but if you don't want—"

"Oh, I do want—the cider, of course, surely—yes that would be fine—yes, thank you, thank you," recovered Clementina.

"You're welcome. Eight o'clock tonight. Goodbye." He had recovered his composure and he rattled this off.

"Good . . . bye." Clementina whispered.

## Forsythia

Yellow stars will sing in my dreams tonight  
 Yellow stars, like a glimpse of gold bees,  
 And I will know an aeon that was all delight.

Forsythia, the name is old to me—  
 Old as the hills are old,  
 Young as their spring is young,  
 Worn as these pebbles,  
 Sharp as this sun . . .

He who remembers, sometimes sees  
 Forsythia, a dream of bees,  
 Which in the far time  
 Before his birth,  
 Told his grave mind  
 Of death, of earth.

—Marjorie Major

**C**LEMENTINA went through a day such as she had never imagined could exist this side of Hell. The creative instincts in 15 girls bloomed and flourished; and beauty processes are inclined to be unpleasant, even in the hands of the most solicitous of attendants. Her hair was cut, washed, dried, and screwed into pin curls; she was manicured and pedicured; she underwent mud packs, beauty packs, vanishing cream, tissue cream, complexion cream and massage; she was powdered, painted, rouged, and mascaraed; she tried on 11 formal dresses, 2 pairs of evening slippers, 4 girdles and endless amounts of jewelry. She was fully instructed in the "Hard to Get," the "Flatter Your Man," and the "Woman of the World" techniques of conquering mankind.

\* \* \*

**H**E didn't recognize her at first because she did look a little different, and then, of course, she had no cider with her; but even inexperienced Clementina could recognize the pleasure mixed with incredulity when she went up and shook hands with him. After Morton Joe had expressed his approval, for a Hodges knows a good thing when he's confronted with it, Clementina, too, grew to like the way she looked, the way she smiled, and the way she felt. Above all she liked the way that Morton Joe gaped at her, opened doors for her, helped her with the coat, and fell down the steps because

**Literary Page Staff:**  
 Editor: Carol Greening  
 Contributors:  
 Mary Louise Vincent  
 Marjorie Major  
 Barbara Hampson

he was looking at her. But that's what worried her—liking it. She knew that here were "frivolities of social life, false allure of pretty clothes, and wasteful expenditure of time" and she, Clementina Potts, Omicron Omicron Omicron, was not only indulging in it but liking it. When Morton Joe with his smooth oily tongue told her that she looked like the Blue Fairy in "Pinnocchio" and asked her to go see "Roaring Hoofs" with H. Saturday night, Clementina wrestled with her conscience, knocked it down, sat on it, and said, "Yes!"

**B**UT fate seemed to have put Clementina on her black list, for when she got home that night she found an underlined notation on her "List of Things to Do for Saturday" that read: "assistant punch ladler at University Fathers' Free-for-All—9:30 p.m." Clementina was distraught. There was no doubt but that the Fathers would prove more enlightening than "Roaring Hoofs," and still there was just one thing she could do.

She realized that there was no telling to what ends Morton Joe might go when crossed, being the  
 (Please turn to Page Seven)

## To a Loved One

Oh yes, I will be careful with this spark,  
 This little flame that flickers in my breast,  
 This candle, held so high against the dark,  
 Some loving ones reflect it in the west  
 Of their own hearts; this little hour of song,  
 This fevered passion, fire beneath my grasp;  
 This that becomes illusion, when my clasp  
 Holds it too tightly, clutches overlong.  
 For this intangible half-shadowy thing  
 That has no flesh, no bone, no visible life;  
 For this that often will refuse to sing  
 In peace and calm, to turn a lark in strife;  
 I will be careful what I do and see  
 Since this, I am aware, binds you to me.

—Barbara Hampson

## IT IS WAR! Total Global War

AND THESE BOOKS SHOULD BE  
 READ FOR THEY TREAT OF  
 THINGS THAT TOUCH EVERY  
 ONE OF US!

- ◆ Marquis Childs: I WRITE FROM WASHINGTON.
- ◆ John Steinback: BOMBS AWAY.
- ◆ O. D. Gallagher: ACTION IN THE EAST
- ◆ Cecil Brown: SUEZ TO SINGAPORE.
- ◆ Emil Ludwig: STALIN.
- ◆ J. K. Lassar: YOUR INCOME TAX.
- ◆ Sidney Margolius: HOW TO BUY MORE FOR YOUR MONEY.
- ◆ OFFICERS GUIDE . . . . .
- ◆ Caroline F. Ware: THE CONSUMER GOES TO WAR.
- ◆ Winston Churchill: THE UNRELENTING STRUGGLE.

University "CO-OP"