

## OPENING GATES WITH THE GOLDEN BOUGH

(This message was written by the National President of Alpha Mu Gamma, Dr. Richard L. Trapp of San Francisco State College, for publication in the Alpha Mu Gamma "Newsletter" of February, 1966.)

You will recall that in the "Aeneid," the great Roman epic by Vergil, the hero, Aeneas, by divine command, leaves Carthage and sails north to the land destined to be the home of a mighty nation. After landing near Cumae Aeneas goes to consult the ancient prophetess, the Sibyl. She tells Aeneas of a fierce war he must fight and of other hardships he must suffer.

Then Aeneas asks the Sibyl how he may reach the Elysian Fields of the Blessed in the Underworld, where he is to meet his father, Anchises, who, in a dream, has ordered Aeneas to come to him. The Sibyl tells Aeneas of the difficulties through which he must pass in order to reach his goal. She declares that he will be allowed to make this wondrous journey if he can find and pluck a Golden Bough hidden in a forest nearby. No one can reach the hidden world who has not first plucked this Bough, which must be presented to Proserpina, queen of the Underworld, as a special offering. The Sibyl directs Aeneas in words, which contain the motto of our Society:

*Ergo alte vestige oculis...*

She then declares that it is not granted to everyone to pluck the Golden Bough.

As Aeneas sets out on his quest for the Bough, he stops first to perform an office of obligation and friendship, the burial of his comrade, Misenus. Aeneas then enters the forest and, with divine aid, finds the Bough and brings it back to the Sibyl. Together they enter the Underworld. The boatman of the River Styx, Charon, at first is insolent to Aeneas, but when he sees the Golden Bough, he readily grants him passage.

The Golden Bough opens to Aeneas a world not otherwise permitted to mortal man. The plucking of the Golden Bough, like the drawing of the sword from the stone, is a test of prowess and grants special privileges to the individual who accomplishes such a task.

You, the members of Alpha Mu Gamma, also possess a special kind of prowess. You have distinguished yourselves in the attainment of the knowledge of foreign languages. You, too, have revealed an extraordinary strength and you have shown yourselves worthy to receive and bear the Golden Bough.

Just as for Aeneas, so also for you are opened new and wonderful worlds. Realms of knowledge that can never be attained so fully and deeply in any other way you can now penetrate. The gates of these realms swing open before your Golden Bough. Because of your own accomplishment you are privileged to pass through the gates to a knowledge of world cultures, civilizations, and science. You have the means of opening windows on the world, of opening hearts. Let the Golden Bough truly mean for you Enlightenment, Friendship, and Sympathetic Understanding of other peoples!

## TO THE AMΓ INITIATE

### *Congratulations*

You have just been initiated into Alpha Mu Gamma, the National Collegiate Foreign Language Honor Society of the United States, with well over three hundred chapters across the nation, both in state and private universities and in public and private colleges.

Alpha Mu Gamma exists primarily for the purpose of honoring students who, like you, have achieved an outstanding record during the first year of foreign language study. You have received a parchment certificate of initiation and are now entitled to wear the scroll-shaped key of the Society.

We hope that you will continue to be active in the Society and take advantage of the many opportunities which it offers to enrich your life: national conventions, regional conferences, chapter meetings and activities, National Foreign Language Week (originated in 1957 by Alpha Mu Gamma and sponsored yearly by the Society), annual scholarships, and the national Newsletter publications.

### *The History of Alpha Mu Gamma*

Alpha Mu Gamma was established at Los Angeles City College on April 29, 1931, by five members of the foreign language faculty who recognized the need for a society to honor achievement in all languages at an early stage in the student's career. The interest shown by the other colleges inspired an almost immediate expansion into a national organization. Within seven years chapters had been established in the Middle West, and by 1943 three campuses of the University of California had formed chapters.

In January 1957, through the effort of the eleventh National President, Sister Eloise-Therese of Sigma Chapter at Mount Saint Mary's College in Los Angeles, the week of February 16-22 was proclaimed as National Foreign Language Week by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Each succeeding President of the United States has contributed a message of endorsement of the Week. Soon the annual celebration of the Week, accompanied by the nationwide distribution of posters and programs, both on college campuses and throughout the nation, led to an extremely rapid growth of the organization, especially in the East and the Middle West. By 1983 the number had reached 242 and the Society is adding an average of 3 or 4 new chapters each year.

The National Executive Council of Alpha Mu Gamma has been expanded to include twelve regional Vice-Presidents chosen to represent all areas of the nation and a large number of student representatives providing a similar wide representation. Recent Presidents have been chosen from New York, Tennessee, Wyoming, California, Iowa, Connecticut and Illinois. In line with this trend, conventions have been held in Chicago, Illinois; Albany, New York; Monterey, California; Kearney, Nebraska; Caspar Wyoming; Thousand Oaks, California; Prairie View, Texas; Lancaster California, Fairfield, Connecticut; Elmhurst, Illinois; and Spartanburg, South Carolina.

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## *The Symbols and Their Significance*

The name Alpha Mu Gamma is composed of the names of the initial Greek letters found in the phrase "Amphi Mouse Glosson\*," meaning, "For the Muse of Languages."

The motto of the Society is "Search with eyes aloft," from Vergil's "Aeneid," Book VI. The original Latin version is "Alte vestia oculist†." The Greek translation is "Hypselois ophthalmois theoreite§."

The emblem is the Golden Bough, mentioned in Vergil's "Aeneid," Book VI, and is a golden olive branch.

The key is partially covered by a scroll bearing the Greek letters for the Society's name diagonally across its face and the Golden Bough in the upper right corner. The key behind the scroll signifies intellectual endeavor, which unlocks the doors to other literatures and cultures. The scroll represents achievement, learning, and love of literature. The Golden Bough symbolizes enlightenment, friendship, and sympathetic understanding of other peoples.

The call is three long knocks. The answer is the same. One knock represents the key, one the scroll, and one the golden bough.

The color of the Society is gold, symbolizing truth, light, and intelligence.

\* Pronounced "ahm-fee' moo'-say glows-sown'."

† Pronounced "ahl'-tay wess-tee'-gah aw'-coo-leess," with *coo* given the same sound as in *cook*.

§ Pronounced "heep-say-loyss' awf-thahl-moyss' the-oh-ray'-te," with the vowel in *keep* actually given the sound of *u* in the French *pure* or of *ü* in the German *Hüte*, with *the* given the same sound as in *theft*, and with *te* given the same sound as in *ten*.

## *Excerpts from the Literature Inspired by the Ideals of Alpha Mu Gamma*

### THE GOLDEN BOUGH

(This poem was written by Ruth Mildred Tolin, a charter member of Alpha Chapter, on April 13, 1931. It was used in the first initiation on April 29 of that same year and incorporated thereafter into the ritual of the Society. The message from Dr. Trapp, which appears at the end of the booklet, explains the symbolism of the poem.)

Now hath the long-concealed bough been found,  
That bough whose golden fronds sweet Virgil sought,  
That bough whose brilliant leaves the goddess kept,  
That bough whose properties were known as naught  
Until by search and earnest voice in prayer  
Its character the aiding goddess taught.

But conscious now of all the power we hold,  
Forward we'll go with foot full confident  
To open wide the portals to us closed  
Had not the golden bough its secret lent,  
That by the wielding of its sacred stem  
We need not fear all barriers imminent.

Therefore, O Bough, grant now our first request:  
Three precious jewels are hidden from our sight.  
Friendship, the rarest treasure which we seek,  
Is bounded by a gulf of darkest night  
Which thy bright beams alone will now dispel  
To guide our halting footsteps to its light.

Another gem whose value we discern,  
Enlightenment, is owned by very few,  
But those who hold this treasure told to us  
That its matchless worth we ever knew,  
We'd want naught else, for as its every facet  
Caught the light's beams, its fascination grew.

Grant unto us a third most precious pearl,  
Whose opalescent light so few have seen,  
For, searching for the brilliant treasures more,  
Its subtle beauty lost to us hath been.  
Naught else nor further service ask we, Bough,  
If Human Understanding we might win.

Now lead us forth to these, our objects dear.  
Cast forth the many barriers we shall find.  
Open the gates which lead to untried fields.  
Guide us to where for many years have shined  
Those only ornaments to reward our search  
And gracefully adorn our happy mind.

### SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THE GOLDEN BOUGH, SYMBOL OF ALPHA MU GAMMA

(This material is excerpted from an address given in 1965 by the National Second Vice-President, Sister Rosaire of the College of St. Rose, at the installation of Gamma Beta Chapter at Fordham University New York City.)

I welcome you as members of Alpha Mu Gamma. You are standard bearers of the symbol Golden Bough, which signifies Enlightenment, Sympathetic Understanding, and Friendship. Let us look upon these ideals of the Society as gifts bestowed by the Master not to be reserved for the profit of self, but to be put to work in the service of all.

During your years of college education, you are undertaking the interior decorating of your living for the rest of your life. To carry out this endeavor, you will need a blueprint of conduct, the guiding lines of which could be motivated by a spiritual interpretation of Enlightenment, Sympathetic Understanding, and Friendship. In following such a rule of life, your first duty is to be as fully as possible what God wants you to be: a person who uses his mind to acquire a conscious philosophy of life, a firm set of values which give meaning, direction, and purpose throughout the days God has allotted you to live.

Your presence here this evening indicates not only your interest in languages, but also your friendly feelings toward people of other lands. Tonight you have made a commitment, which, kept, will bring great honor to your Alma Mater. Perhaps you will bear with me if I use the prayer of Francis of Assisi to illustrate the ideals of which I have been speaking. The enlightened man will know that

The glory of life is to love,  
Not to be loved.

The man who possesses sympathetic understanding will appreciate that

The glory of life is  
To give, not to get,  
To serve, not to be served.

The man who values friendship will realize that

The glory of life is  
To be a strong hand in the dark  
To another in time of need,  
To be a cup of strength  
To any soul in the crisis of weakness.  
This is to know the glory of life.