Sweet Farewell

Countering, she scribbled this response in the Club’s book:

True, Byron was shockingly bred
Still at Harvard, have I been misled?
I’ve been brought up to note
That what’s outside the throat
Matters less than what’s inside the head.
Looking back to that exchange now, it was no contest. Laurans’s victory seems complete, to the delight and comfort of thousands of men, Byronic or otherwise.

“FAIR HARVARD” ENCORE. Before the recent decision to do in “the stock of the Puritans” (see The College Pump, July-August, page 76, and prior dispatches)—long before, in fact—alumni had raised the issue. An eagle-eyed colleague found in the July-August 1974 edition of this department a letter from New York City’s James G. King ’20 (soon we will have to note 1920), who observed: “One need scarcely point out that there are many other stocks of which our modern Harvard is composed, and that all of them are equally important, and have been made up of pioneers, no less than were our earliest founders.” He suggested a “slight emendation of this otherwise excellent stanza”:

Let not moss-cover’d error moor thee at its side
As the world on truth’s current glides past,
Be the herald of light and the bearer of love,
For as long as our country shall last.
King generously hoped there would be “other suggestions for emending this long-valued stanza for effective use today.”

Given Harvard’s augmented international composition and reach, it is perhaps best that he was so broad-minded. The larger question, perhaps, is how long the current version of that troublesome last line (“Till the stars in the firmament die”) itself endures.

MELTING MOMENTS. “Celebrate 28,” a by-invitation gala Drew Faust-fest thrown by the Corporation on the afternoon of June 28, lauded the concluding presidency with a concert/mock “report card”/graduation in Sanders Theatre (John Lithgow ’67, Ar.D. ’05, emceeing; trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, Ar.D. ’09, tooting his golden horn). It ended with Faust boogieing across the stage as Joshua Brian Campbell ’16, reprising his 2016 and 2018 Commencement performances (as shown), crooned “Ain’t Too Proud to Beg,” a twofer: an emotional opening for the fans in attendance (“I know you wanna leave me, But I refuse to let you go”); and a perhaps subliminal statement about a leader who did her utmost in asking (but not so much begging) to ensure the success of the $9-billion-plus Harvard Campaign. An evening of dancing in Memorial Hall ensued.

The public exit reprised Faust’s first official day in office, July 2, 2007, when she held an ice-cream social in Harvard Yard. This one, on the steamy afternoon of June 29, took place at the Science Center Plaza, a tangible legacy of Faust’s community-building “Common Spaces” initiative. Sweet.

SPIDER MAN. Parents pass their names along to children. Donors often have theirs applied to buildings. But scientists have their own devices for enshrining their identities. The faculty’s memorial minute for the late Agassiz professor of zoology Herbert W. Levi (who was “fascinated by spiders” as a young man, and for whom “respect among the arachnological community was immense”) reveals his superpower: describing an astounding 1,254 new spider species. (With suitably scientific precision, it notes that 1,204 are “still considered valid,” but reveals no more about the other 50.) The signal legacy of that meticulous scholarship is “the more than 40 species, and two genera, named after him.”

TYING ONE OFF. Penelope Laurans, Ph.D. ’75, last seen here in the last issue, forwards another gem—from the liberation front, sartorial division: a “limerick war” with the formidable classicist John Finley, master (the then title) of Eliot House, who weighed in thus on the Faculty Club’s coat-and-tie rule:

Though drawn by Lyssipus and Myron
And often displayed by Lord Byron
The masculine throat
Is small object of note
It looks brighter with tighter attire on.