

SATAN'S CHILD

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No. 5.



EDITORIUM BREVITUM

Democracy is akin to unsociableness (so I have just read), especially when it becomes the reason for every encroachment upon human rights, individuality and the levelling out of the norm. Dare I say that Fandom may be suffering from a surfeit of ultra-democracy?

C O N T E N T S

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Devil's Ride

I AM A BACK SEAT-DRIVER - and it's all very difficult. Usually when I've driven anywhere I'm the most phlegmatic of passengers with little regard for passing traffic or the dangers that exist, either in reality or in the driver's mind. Lately, however, a new feeling has crept surrepticiously into my character which, when considered in retrospect, is alarming - if only because it points to the ease with which we can descend to demoniacs.

My first thought when seated on the back of a Lambretta (in the early days of course) was to sit back and survey the scenery, to note the little unfinished incidents that were left to my imagination to develop into full size Victoria melodramas, and to smile at the almost negative perception to danger that enveloped pedestrian and motorist alike.

Along a country lane or through congested traffic - it made no difference to my enjoyment of sitting on a moving vehicle that swifly covered the ground towards our destination.

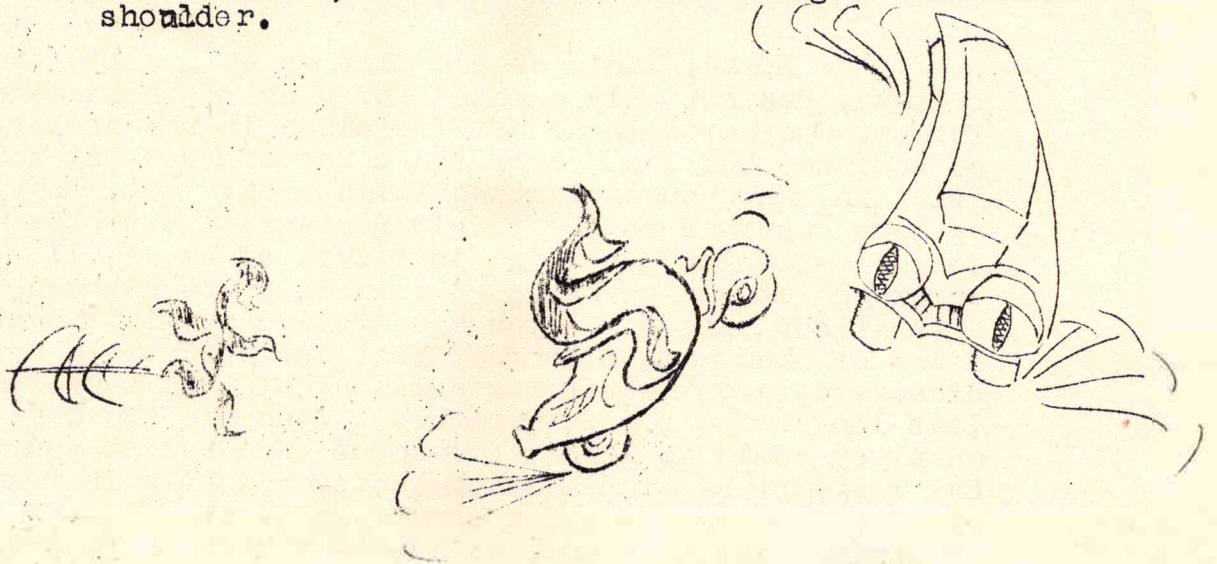
I really don't know when I first began to put my hand out for a left or right turn (naturally put the correct hand - I'm not that stupid!) or to waive the traffic down to slow, but, somehow the very idea of jockeying for position in the stream of traffic, to enable us to leap forward a few yards has gradually become intensified, so that every foot covered is the result of technical skill on the part of the driver, plus the ability to project his thoughts a hundred yards ahead. Advanced strategy is planned for the sole purpose of achieving the maximum road coverage with the minimum of inconvenience in the event of any given set of circumstances. But, not satisfied with this, it's ME that's projecting my mind in advance, over and above that of the driver's with the results that our minds meet somewhere at a central point a hundred yards ahead, and strange to relate, our individual plans of strategum are usually poles apart.

To complete this picture of a Jekyll and Hyde nature, I've gone so far as to snarl back at a car that's growled obscenities as a side wing chafed my right-ankle, and to tell the driver of this same goddamned car the name of a good academy that specialises in the use of good English, and so forth. The poor Lambretta driver has not been overlooked during these machinations of the mind. Oh no! Despite the fact that the visual aspects of both driver and pillion passenger are quite different, I insist that such and such a course of action is best and if these instructions are totally ignored and/or the unfortunate driver may find himself in an unexpectedly tight corner(not even envisaged mark you, by the brilliant pillion passenger) I start verbally belabouring the poor man who, after all, is trying to do his damndest to ignore me, to keep control of the bike and to avoid being crushed to death between buses on one side and ten-ton lorries on t'other, all at one and the same time - the wheels of both vehicles just mentioned come almost level with our ears - a very frightening aspect I can assure you.

In my quieter(and saner) moments I have pondered over my rearguard manipulations and verbal onslaughts and have come to the conclusion that it's not really ME, but a devil sitting behind Jim. I have a mental image of a small imperial red devil sitting behind him lashing his tail with fierce rhythmic movements, lips drawn back revealing horrible broken teeth and a pair of horns bristling visibly with every passing car. Any vehicle that so much as impedes our way takes on the terrifying aspect of a monster and has to be destroyed(mentally) or hooted furiously out of the way. One's whole body becomes a complete unit for the self-justification of proceeding along the public highway at our own speeds, in our own way and any skirmishes that take place en route is bloodily fought out with either, vicious comments on each side or by using the vehicle itself to ram the other's car.

At traffic lights we quietly creep up on some unsuspecting old dear riding an antiquated bicycle - a straw boater and long skirt would complete a very charming picture, but we are not concerned with drawing charming pictures at the moment, and then as the lights change from amber to green, suddenly roar and lash about like some frenzied animal, panting and spitting all over the place and straining at the leash, to leap forward driven ever onward (tra la la) by the now semi-exhausted, croaking pillion passenger, who gives a last fiendish chuckle as she looks back in time to see the old dear wobbling perilously on her high seat. (I have no idea of the physical or mental state of the driver....it never really dawned on me to even suppose that he would be anything but in rude health).

I have now sworn to myself and to my poor husband to return to my natural phlegmatic impartiality and leave the driver to become influenced by a much smaller, bewhiskered devil riding on his left shoulder.

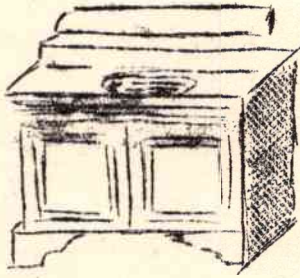


A motor scooter

SCIENCE IN MINIATURE

We are aware of the many committees being formed at the present day for the protection of something or other, but I read of a committee which has been formed for the sole purpose of protecting the moon from hydrogen bomb rockets. A note of hysteria crept into my laugh when it was mentioned that any unthoughtful person despatching a hydrogen bomb rocket to the moon would jeopardise future scientific research. The hysterical note became a crescendo when it further stated that adventurous spacemen must be deterred at all costs from chipping off lumps of the moon and bringing them back to Earth as souvenirs. This form of souvenir hunting would cause widespread surface disturbances which too, may cause not only impurities but will upset future investigations. Any enthusiastic section of the earthly community must restrain their zeal so that scientists can continue their investigations of the moon first, then, when all has been accomplished, you may go ahead and do what you darn well like with it - what say, Convention site, "MOON SHINE - '99".

Bread, man's staple diet so we are led to believe, has not only existed for many years in some form or another (with a definite place in the history of England) but has been the cause of much joy and grief in many households and farmsteads. Now, that we have returned to the pre-1939 standard - to the good old-fashioned cottage loaf type of bread, all burnt and sticky on top just waiting to be nibbled with sticky fingers - you can imagine my distraught frame of mind when I learned that our scientists have discovered yet another ingredient that will make bread last longer and remain sweeter. Gone are the days when you could go into a breadshop and select your own masterpiece of bakery by gently pinching in the sides of the loaf between thumb and first finger - exquisite ecstasy - now, we'll never know whether the bread is freshly baked or has been in the window over the weekend. You know, the more I think of it the less I am beginning to like science after all. It's killing all the joys of living... it's taking all the yeast out of life!



The Seat of Learning

I don't know why it should suddenly occur to me that "the small back room" would be a good subject for an article - it may have been prompted by the thought that the office toilet left something to be desired. On reflection of course, one can say with honesty that, however bad it may be, it is luxurious in comparison with some toilets to be found on the continent.

I was recently passed a small brochure regarding this important part of a house and was amazed to see the stages of infinite variety through which this household article has progressed. For such a utilitarian commodity the ornamentation had to be seen to be believed.

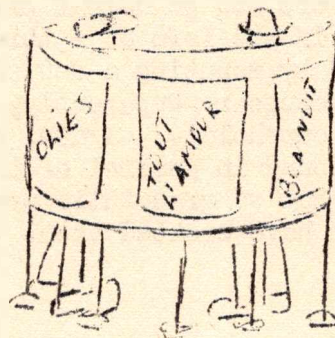
Delicately hand-painted scenes of rural life looked back at you from within the utensil itself, surrounded by beautifully polished red mahogany arm-rests in the form of laughing dolphins and cherubic imps.

This elaborate ornamentation was still visible in the "small back room" I visited in Buckingham Palace; 'One entered in with modest grace' and found a huge room panelled with magnificent mirrors and gold-leaf bric-a-brac, the toilet itself was built in the form of a throne and the desired objective was reached by mounting a few steps (dignity and regality singularly necessary apparently, even in this remote corner of the royal household). Again, similarly constructed edifices were to be found in several of the houses in Park Street, London, W.1. but so gracefully proportioned and designed that Adam must surely have created them.

It's only during the last fifteen years that ornamentation has been kept to a minimum and the chain-pulling system radically changed to the down-handle or push-button flushes... some even, are members of the silent service.

As much as I like modern architecture and interior design I am wondering if all the romance is being knocked out of life by the introduction of such clinical lines and aesthetic colours. There's hardly the same joy in visiting a "small back room" nowadays - it's a question of the least time spent in this room the better-gone are the feelings of refuge from the outside world, the feeling of being entirely alone with yourself and your thoughts, dreams... or even a book! The tranquility that was felt as you gazed at the rural scenes or the intense physical satisfaction of gently caressing your hand over the dolphin's curving back, is now no longer possible.

Now, when visiting "small back rooms" outside our homes, we are regaled with the exploits of Joe Bloggs on some memorable night in January, or the terse and sapient advice from a girl who knows where to meet him and where to send unwanted suitors. The only thing that can be said in favour of these most-apt slogans is, that they do detract one's mind from the solid, dull concrete surrounds and not the least, add's to one's store of knowledge.



Is Science

Progress?

Although the progress of science is always of interest to me, I have been shattered by the thought that this progress may be carried too far. While scientific knowledge is being utilised to assist mankind in all its aspects then I am in full agreement but, when it overlooks completely the horrors of mechanical entertainment, i.e. television, then I am worried!

I cannot avoid referring to my own childhood in order to push a point and in this case it stands well for the argument I wish to pursue. As an only child without any neighbours' children to play with, I had to resort to my own devices; invariably shops, hospitals (even including dolls and such like with imaginary broken limbs and other serious internal complaints) with an occasional song and dance act before these poor dolls all came within the scope of childish play-acting; for the creative side I enjoyed designing fashions and making clay models; and last but not least read avidly everything I could lay my hands on from Schoolgirls' Own to Lambs' Tales from Shakespeare (diversity still is my weakness). In other words a fairly active child and very seldom bored!.

This imagination which should be allowed full play in a child's formative years is gradually being superseded by a process which is eliminating this faculty and, we are faced with an ever increasing number of children sitting before a television screen for a large proportion of their normal playing time.

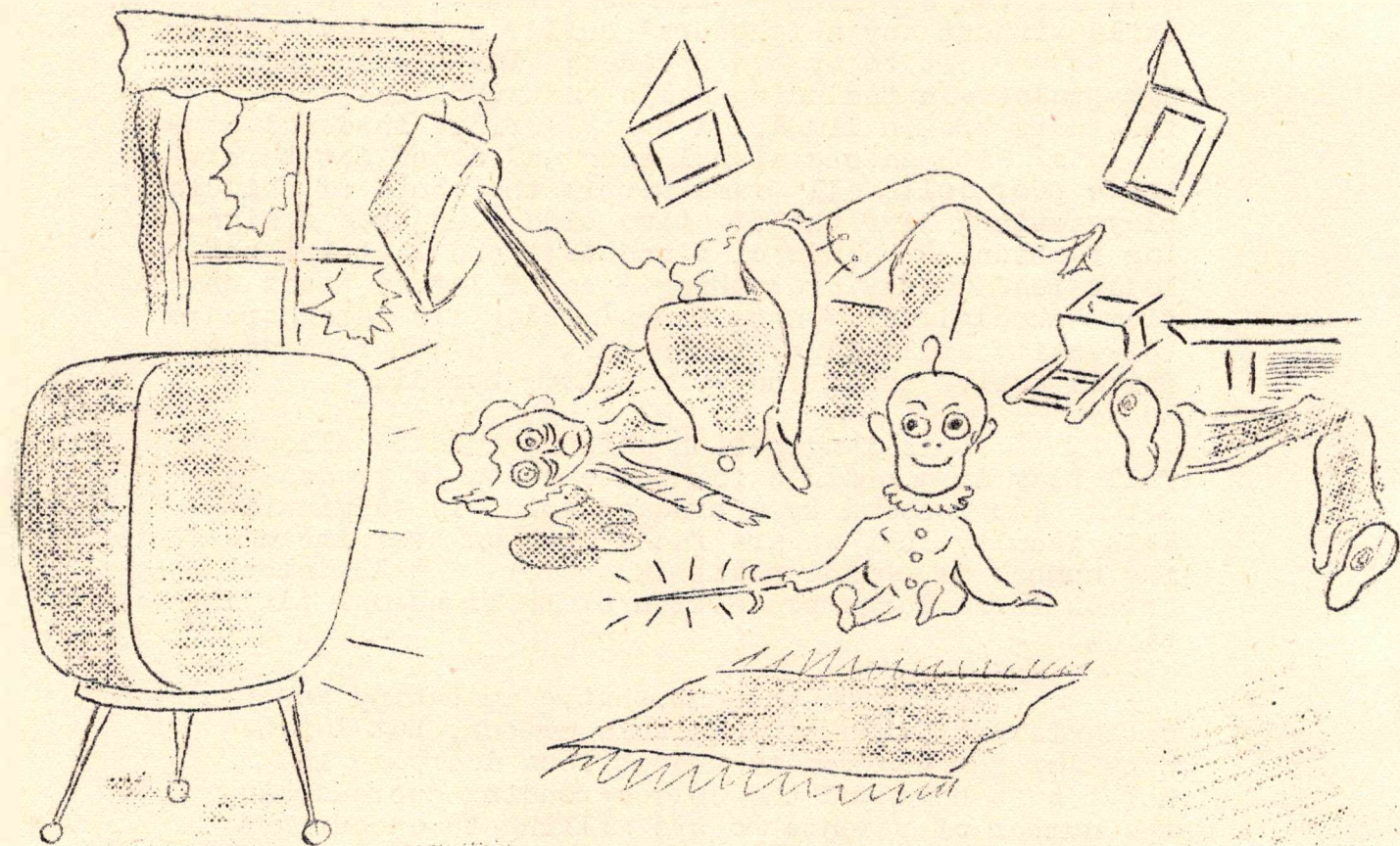
It may be thought that I am taking an extremist attitude towards this matter, but let us consider for one moment the obvious decrease in hobbies at home and the corresponding decrease in the number of parents who are willing to encourage childrens' imagination by creative work. (I understand that the present day school still retain the traditional free-style drawing and painting lessons - thank God!)

*school:
get child out of way?*

It's far easier and less tiring for the parent to place the child before a television screen. While it must be said that the majority of the television programmes afford the perfect source for mimicry it must eventually have the affect of nullifying any imagination within the child. It would seem logical, therefore, to assume that with this diminishing faculty there will surely be a corresponding increase in moronic tendencies.

A lively enquiring mind is based on imagination, without this there is nothing. Absolutely nothing.

Surely the purpose of science is the advancement of knowledge not the gradual disintegration towards a common denominator?



..... MORE THAN A POUND OF FLESH?

To: H.P.Sanderson

For quite some time now we have received numerous fanzines from all parts of the world and have noticed, with concern, that many of them contain some unpleasant undertone or subtle innuendo directed towards one or more persons. From 'Inchmery' we have received not only 'Appeals to save Fandom' but also a form of literature which appears to be undoing all the good efforts made to bring about a closer unison between fans. Such opposing factions beneath one roof neither indicates a fluidity of pen nor boundless limits of fertile imagination, but serves only to stress that invidious attack appears to be your specialty.

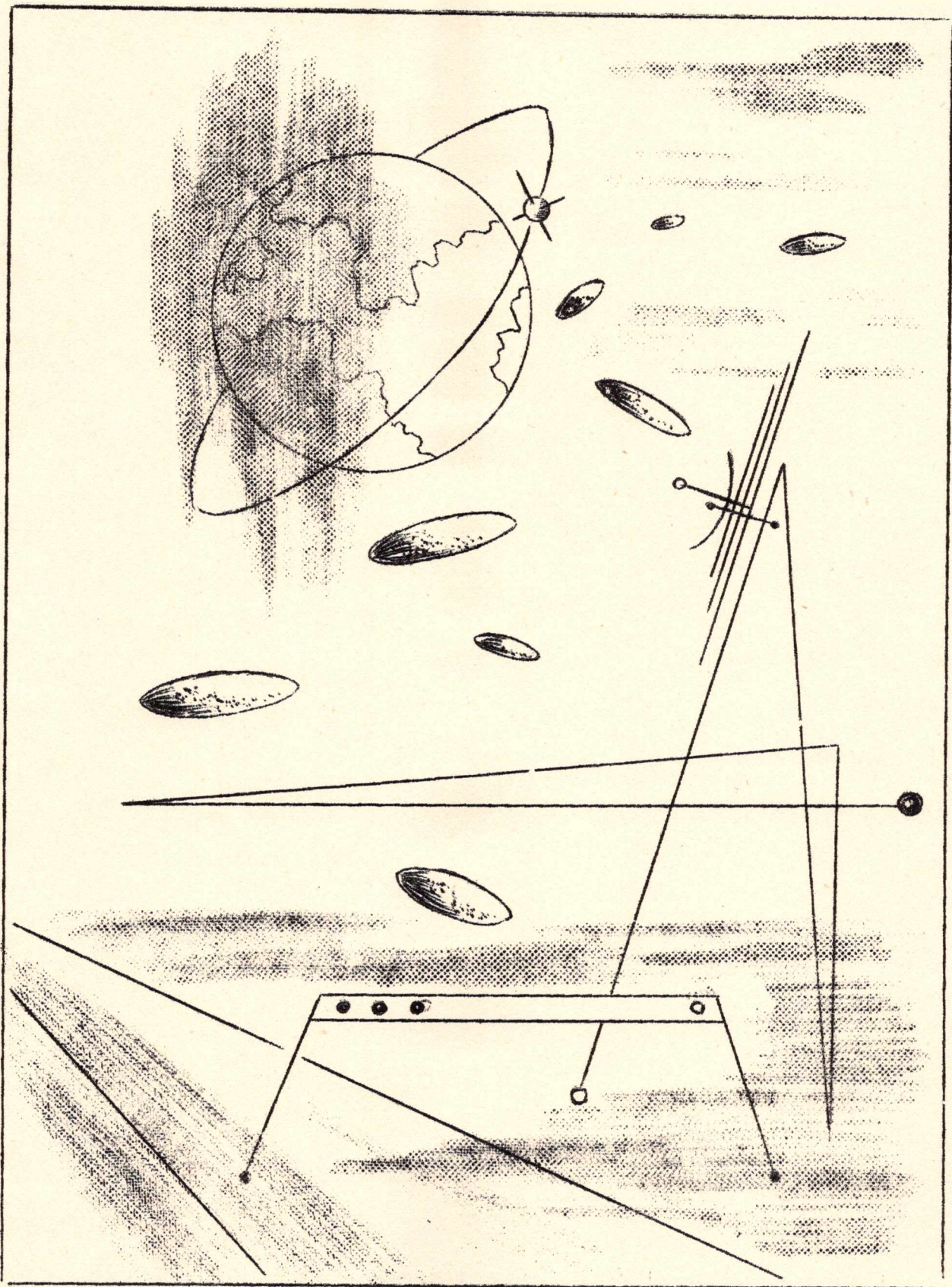
'Inchmery' has gone out of its way to demonstrate quite clearly how they feel about the 'Kyle' and 'Madle' problems; in fact you have presented a 'fait accompli' case with documentary evidence to support your arguments. Not satisfied with this 'open and shut' case, you presume to lead us all through the maze of American Federal Law in the form of puerile nonsense entitled "Little Bo Pest" in APORRHETA No.5. Surely, if you feel confident that the case, as presented to the fannish public, is in your opinion the whole truth and nothing but the truth then why the hell go to such lengths to spit venom in the defendant's eye? You really must learn to play the game Sandy, you can't be Prosecutor, Judge, Jury and the man who pulls the switch, all at one and the same time. These unjustifiable attacks in the form of scurrilous comments, after tearing the people apart, does not bring about greater understanding between two fandoms - if anything, it'll widen the breach even more - and yours can be a particularly vitriolic pen! Sufficient has surely been said against both parties? Don't keep scraping the barrel for whatever dregs there may be left.

Of course, I had not altogether ruled out the possibility that you may just be doing this to become known as the 'Fan who speaks his mind'. Is this the form of renown you're seeking? It's one thing to be well known and well liked and another to be well known and thoroughly disliked! And, what is more, I should hate any friends in American Fandom to be influenced by the writings from your pen, or to assume that 'Inchmery' speaks for British Fandom. It most certainly does not speak for me!! If it's renown you want Sandy, what finer way of earning it than to write of more interesting things - naturally of course, we shall expect your articles to be somewhat analytical, but despite that, they could be made to be interesting. Cheap abuse is the medium of the unintelligent being - and I can't imagine any one person who has an interest in s-f belonging to that level.

We must learn to accept the fact that most individuals have faults, but they also have their virtues, and while their interest in s-f is shared with many other people all over the world, we can afford to ride above the commonplace arguments of the mundane and evaluate the individual fairly.

If you argue then , that in other words I condone the unethical conduct of some members of fandom solely because he or she has an interest in s-f, you will be quite wrong. I do not condone, neither do I condemn. What is right in the eyes of one person is wrong in the eyes of another. In any case I would never take it upon myself to assume the role of Judge.

One thing which predominates in my mind is that instead of progressing, as we should, being the thinkers and readers of the future, we tend to retrogress towards some half-forgotten principles and that we defend them with a tenacity bordering on fanaticism. Whilst some principles are worth fighting for, if, during the battle they have destroyed something more important, more precious, then the battle is meaningless and the principles involved become relatively unimportant.



A 'Dorothy Ratigan' Production, 131 East Dulwich Grove, London, S.E.22.