

It must be mentioned here, as RGH always forgets, that Bibliophan is a sheet compiled by RGHedhurst of 120 Finborough Road, West Brompton, London S.W.10, and issued by Michael Rosenblum along with the less important part of Fido.

#### CONCERNING CHRISTOPHER BLAYRE

Fans and Fannettes, your sympathy, if you please! Your Bibliophan has, in the language of the vulgar, "put his foot in it up to the neck", and now he writhed feebly under one of the most ferocious snubs that an unkind humanity has visited upon him. Like many fans, he is a sensitive plant: manly confidence is not strong in him, his stock of self-esteem is a fluctuating and precariously-maintained quantity. And so he is, maybe irrationally, resentful when someone ruthlessly places a heel on him, and grinds.

The case for the plaintiff goes thus. Some of you (those who took the trouble to read it) may remember that in the first Bibliophan I put forth some remarks on the mystery of CHRISTOPHER BLAYRE, compiler of THE STRANGE PAPERS OF DR. BLAYRE. Ardent fan Ken Bulmer very kindly referred me to Robert Stockwell, Printer and Stationer (of 5-7 Baden Place, Crosby Row, Borough, London, S.E.1), and this firm suggested that I consult Mr. \* \* \* of Sussex. [Horrified note: this \* \* \* has no relation to the gentleman of the same name mentioned in a previous Bib. D' ] They also offered me two copies of SOME WOMEN OF THE UNIVERSITY, at a nominal price. I should like to say, in view of the sequel, that I consider Mr. R.F. Stockwell to have dealt with me in a most courteous manner, and I feel considerably indebted to him. I wrote to Mr. \* \* \* as follows:

"\* \* \*, Esq.,  
Blankhouse,  
Sussex.

19.11.41

"Dear Mr. \* \* \*,"

"I hope you will forgive my intruding on you via the post. The passage I have marked in the enclosed "Bibliophan" will make clear my reason for venturing to do so. Since that was written, a reader of "Futurian War Digest" had put me in touch with Robert Stockwell, the printers, and they very kindly referred me to you (with the cautious suggestion: "He might be able to give you the information you require").

"I suppose I may assume that you are responsible for the remarkable happenings at the University of Cosmopolis. Even apart from more direct evidence, the wide range of your published work (as given in "Who's Who") agrees very well with the remarkably varied knowledge shown in "The Strange Papers". Have I your permission to reveal "Dr. Blyre's" identity in "The Bibliophan"? There seems to be considerable interest in the mysterious Doctor in science-fantasy circles.

"I was so fortunate as to obtain two copies of the rare "Some Women of the University" from Robert Stockwell. They are not numbered, and I should imagine that they were printed in addition to the 100 volume edition. I do not suppose that you are interested in the opinions and criticisms of a total stranger, so I will reserve them for "The Bibliophan". I should like to say, though, that I enjoyed the second series of Dr. Blyre's Papers a great deal. Good fantasy isn't so common! If one were criticising, I imagine the main line of attack would be directed against "The Boots". Simply because the boots themselves seem to be so irrelevant to the story.



2/ "The note on "The Choctah-Girl" was very intriguing. I am wondering just how literally we are expected to take the account of the wily Dr. Blayre. If, in fact, the 20 copy edition was printed surreptitiously, as a result of the loan of the IS to a "friend's friend", you very likely would not be over eager to repeat the experiment. If, however, it is at all possible, I should be very grateful indeed if you would do me the great kindness of lending me either the "Choctah-Girl" IS or a copy of the printed edition. I can guarantee not to reprint it! It has been one of my stfl (stfl. is an abbreviation for the obsolete Americanism "scientifiction", by the way) ambitions to read "The Choctah Girl", ever since I triumphantly came upon it in the Cambridge University Library, only to be repulsed by an unfriendly library assistant.

"Since "Who's Who" lists "Scientific Romances" among your hobbies, I am also enclosing the issue of "Futurian War Digest" to which "The Bibliophan" was a supplement, in case you should happen to find some interest in it. It is an amateur publication, largely (though not exclusively) concerned with scientific fantasy in magazine form.

"One last question; "Who's Who" states, intriguingly, that you have written "fiction .... chiefly under various pseudonyms". Would it be indiscreet if I were to enquire whether any more of these pseudonymous writings are of a fantasy nature?

Yours sincerely,  
(signed) "R.G. McDhurst."

Maybe this was excessively verbose. Possibly it was tactless in some respect. In any event, this was the astonishing answer:

"21st. Nov: 1941.

"Dear Sir,

"Mr. \* \* \*, who is seriously ill, has asked me to reply to your letter of the 19th. inst.

"Like many well-known scientists, and others whose names will be familiar to you, Mr. \* \* \* has published during the last thirty years, many minor works which may have properly been called "works of recreation". The fact that Mr. \* \* \* never signed these works with his own name is a sufficient indication that he desired, and still desires, them to be anonymous.

"He is sorry but not surprised to hear that the Printers whom he employed, overprinted (cf. pirated) unauthorised copies. This appears to be a form of literary piracy which it is impossible to avoid or guard against.

"I am, Sir,

"Yours faithfully,  
(signed) "Harriet + + +."

The logic of the last sentence of the second paragraph is not irreproachable. Thus, there was no such unexpected reaction from Mr. S. Fowler Wright when I traced the authorship of a pseudonymous fantasy novel to him. However, the letter obviously is not intended to be merely logical; its intention is to put me firmly in my place!

I shall all, in fandom, feel sympathy, in his illness, for a man who has made interesting contributions to scientific fantasy. It is in virtue of this condition, and in spite of the surprising discourtesy of the letter written on his behalf, that I have suppressed "Christopher Blayre's" true name.

I might mention, to forestall any eager collectors, that the second copy of "Some Women of the University" is now in the hands of Bert Lewis. I had promised it to Bert in the event of the author making no objection to my disposing of it, considering it the correct procedure to give him the opportunity of requesting me not to do so. Such scruples appear out of place, under the circumstances.

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A few words on this rare piece of fantasy, "Some Women of the University", (of which I am the proud possessor of a "pirated" copy!) may not be out of place, here. It is bound in a similar manner to one of the bindings of "The Purple Sapphire", in blue paper on boards, with the name and author on white paper, pasted on the spine. Details of title, &c., I have already given elsewhere. After the title page comes the note: "This is No..... of One Hundred copies of this Final Selection from "The Strange Papers of Doctor Blayre," printed for the Chosen Few whose interest in them caused them to be selected." Your Bibliophan has now inserted himself, uninvited, into this select company!

The stories are not, on the whole, so well done as the best of those in the Philip Allen collection. The first, "Zur Wildbad", is a rather terrifying tale of vampirism in Austria. "The Boots" certainly introduces some supernatural articles of foot-wear, but these seem quite irrelevant to the story, which, if I have read it rightly, concerns itself with female homosexuality. The same theme is woven into "Zur Wildbad". Story the third, "Another Squaw?", is, as a story, the least satisfying of the batch. It is a variation on the theme of Bram Stoker's famous short story, "The Swamp". The technical details, of marine biology and a proposed method of obtaining deep-sea specimens, are, however, of considerable interest. The last tale, "Passiflora Vindicta. Wrammsbothame", deals with a remarkably anthropomorphic tropical plant. At the end of the volume is a 'Postscriptum: A few Words in Explanation of "The Cheetah-Girl".' Actually, references are scattered throughout the volume to this famous story, which would appear to be one of the most interesting of "Dr. Blayre's" Strange Papers. At the end of the Postscriptum, the "Doctor" states, 'The MS of "The Cheetah Girl", . . . lent in confidence (by a friend to a friend of hers) was . . ."Printed as manuscript for private circulation" in 1925, and at least ten, if not more, copies are known to exist. The printer was never discovered, the work being such that, in the present state of the law, he would undoubtedly have incurred severe penalties.'

\* \* \* \* \*

Well, fans and fannettes, I hope all this hasn't bored you? But it is difficult to see on what ground you can blame the Bibliophan. You refuse outright to tell him what, if anything, you do want him to talk about. As a result, he just rambles along the path that requires from him the least effort to traverse.

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A very curious plunge into the out-lands of the mind is a volume by Eugene Jolas, I HAVE SEEN MONSTERS AND ANGELS (Transition Press, Paris, 1938). The blurb describes it as "a multilingual autobiography of the night-mind, containing prose-poetry in new forms, such as: paranyth, grotesque, poem without words, incantation, hypnologue, fantasia, fairy tale." I have ventured (I hope the sensitive will forgive the aesthetic depravity) to extract and rearrange some lines from the concluding poem, PLANETS AND ANGELS.

We grow huge and visionary  
We play with spiral nebulae  
With the angelic spheres  
And ride upward  
In a vertigo of fire-streams  
  
We swarm in stellar dew  
We are racing through burst-flames  
Into a time without frontiers  
  
We are racing through a million years  
We are roamers through the yore-days  
Into the wonder-years to come "

[EJ - DW]



4/ And here, just to fan the dying flames, is another slant on S.P.C. aims, culled from HEMDAL: THE VAGABOND PHILOSOPHER by Maurice Deobra (Laurie, 1957).

"The invertebrate love without refinement. All those who study the mating of sea-urchins have noted with what indifference, we may even say with what lack of imagination, the urchin goes about this serious business. Amongst the cephalopods, like the octopus, the performance is no less banal. But if we mount one step higher in the scale of life, we at once notice a difference. Take, for example, a Government official. He mates indeed with a mournful expression and without the least sign of enthusiasm. However, he shows a certain degree of progress.

"All, at the top of the class of mammals which Man honours with his membership he has cultivated the art of love ever since the birth of humanity.

"You see that Man has profited by the experience of his ancestors. The great lovers of olden days would merely make the deux-vinges of today laugh at their puerility. The Lupercalian Orgies of Ancient Rome have been grossly over-rated. The imagination of the novelist has painted in lurid colours these extremely banal festivities. Love is brought to perfection as it descends from one generation to another. And it may be borne in mind that we have by no means reached the supreme height of perfection. Our great-great-grandchildren in the year 5000 will consider our methods very primitive.. They will laugh at our rude ideas of eroticism. Twenty or thirty centuries hence Man will be merely an enormous brain with highly specialised sex proclivities. And love makings will be a very complicated affair from which our miserable perversities will seem as far apart as the primitive agricultural implements of the Egyptian peasants are from the latest American reapers and binders. Hertzian waves will be used to bring wayward girls into the arms of their lovers; X-rays will give lovers the sight of the workings of their cells as regards love; telluric currents will revive their flagging ardour and magnetic fields will increase the courage and prowess of Man. Passions and vices will in short be intensified by radio-activity of the hair and various parts of the body."

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After which, suppose we cool our fevered imagination with a sweet piece of banality, in the best style of Victorian imperialist expansionism, about the interplanetary trip. For which see current FANTASY plug---DW It runs:

"We are all tired of being stuck to this cosnical speck, with its monotonous ocean, loaden sky, and single moon that is useless more than half the time, while its size is so microscopic compared with the Universe that we can traverse its great circle in four days. Its possibilities are exhausted; and just as Greece became too small for the civilization of the Greeks, and as reproduction is growth beyond the individual, so it seems to me that the future glory of the human race lies in exploring at least the solar system . . ."

(John Jacob Astor: A JOURNEY IN OTHER WORLDS, Appleton, 1894)

There is, of course, an answer to this. The version I shall give is not, as it happens, from Martians in fear of "the future glory of mankind", but from dwellers at the North Pole.

And I greatly fear, brothers, that the said version will have to be held over, through exigencies of space, for a future Bib. But it's all very funny, and you'll be sure to laugh in a cynical way. Might I mention, though, just to make your teeth water, that by far the juiciest hunks in Bib & related RGM projects are the ones that have to be censored? Golly, you should see the slashing 3-page attack on "pure" fans! The Ragatzy S.P.C. ramblings! But let it be known that I, Douglas Webster, the humble stenciller, have full MSS of all these & am willing to hire them out at nominal price to interested parties.

Also available - full name of the notorious Mr. \* \* \* of p.l. Book now! DW