Kitsch in sync legends

The Bleary Eyes vo. 4 selected by John Berry

contents

The Bleary Eyes vo. 4

Our sincere thanks to Bob Shaw, James White and Walt Willis for allowing us to use their stories, and to Vine Clarke for cutting the electro-stencils.

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ART CREDITS...Steve Jeffery,(S.J. or esjay) pages 3, 6, 27, 35, 36, 42.
W.Rotsler...page 14.
ARTHUR THOMSON, Atom, ALL THE REST illos and both covers.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE.....the circumstances and placements of the stories in this publication, sequentially, should appear between TBE.1. and TBE.2. This, "TBE 4" is therefore, abstractly, TBE1½.

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JOHN BERRY.
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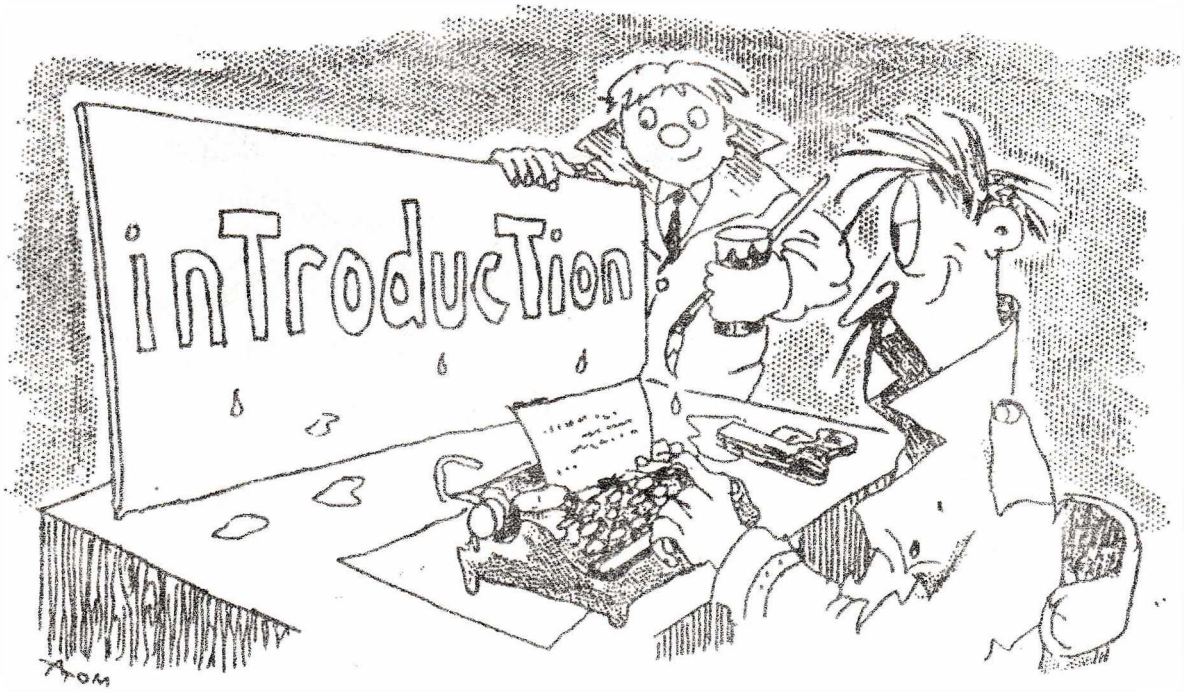


The entire contents of this fourth issue of **THE BLEARY EYES** are written by members of Irish Fandom, including Honorary Member Arthur Thomson.

The stories originated in those halcyon days in the middle and late 'fifties, almost forty years ago, when every moment I spent in the presence of Walt and Madeleine Willis, George Charters, Bob Shaw and James White were breathtakingly inspirational; I always floated in a cloud of blissful enchantment. They all entered enthusiastically into the opportunities for writing very humorous and well-crafted stories about **The Bleary Eyes**; always supremely illustrated by **ATOM**, who, as his story shows, was as imaginative with the written word as he was with his stylo.

********** **********

A reviewer in CRITICAL WAVE recently commented adversely on the schoolboy smut of the Bleary character in the stories, and I am somewhat nonplussed as to why it was so thought to labour this aspect, so patently obvious, it being an integral part of the make-up of the personality....as necessary as the worn trilby hat, hobnail boots, tattered trench coat, and befuddled mental processes.

....Entirely alien, of course, to my rather attractive sartorial appearance, and retentive mind.

John Berry

1995. JULY

THE GOON — IRELAND'S PEKINESE DRUMMOND

BY WALT WILLIS

To most of you the Goon must seem a majestic superhuman figure, appearing dramatically out of the blue whenever the forces of darkness and confusion are about to strike and giving his all to help. 'Ghod' gasp many at their first sight of him.'The Devil' exclaim others incredulously. But no: all appearances to the contray, the Goon is human. It is my purpose in this brief article to give you some of the background to the Goon legend, some inner light on the powerful figure who has left such a deep immpression on Oblique House.

Normally, the Goon masquerades as a simple police constable ...or, after working hours, as an even simpler neo-fan, content with such uncomplicated diversions as playing with my bricks. Until, that is, the call comes for his services ----usually, as it happens, from me. Then he is transformed, like Clarke Kent. I should explain first that the Goon, noble dedicated character that he is, spurns financial reward for his work. All that the gallant fellow will accept is some work of an artistic nature pertaining to the fair sex. Once the details are settled, and the fee exhibited, the Goon becomes transfigured. His eyes gleam, his breathing deepens, his stature grows until he towers almost to normal height, and his moustaches stiffen and begin to vibrate faster and faster until eventually they bear him upwards and out of sight into the sky on his appointed mission.

It would be of course impossible for one man to accomplish all the exploits that are related to the Goon. I am now able to reveal that, like Captain Future, he has the help of four loyal and devoted companions ---Joey the Budgerigar, Kid Colin the Killer, his lady-love Diane and Cedric the Female Impersonator.

Joey, besides dictating most of the Goon's articles, is the principal source of intelligence in the Goon organisation; he is the secret of the Goon's uncanny knowledge of one's most secret actions. For example, some time ago I had a builder in to see the hole in the attic wall. He poked his head into the jagged cavern curiously."Rat's?" he asked, swinging absently at what looked like a large diseased house-fly which had just fluttered in. "No," I said,"Just one." At that moment there was a knock downstairs. I hastily escorted the builder out of the back door and opened the front door to the Goon. He strode up to the attic, pulled out his horrrimmed 3D glasses which he uses for looking at the centre pages of Paris-Hollywood, and started examining the floor. Standing up again quickly, he screamed and clutched his face. Then, disentangling his moustache from his shoelaces, he spoke. "My powers of deduction tell me," he announced," that you have been recently visited by a middleaged man with red hair and a tweed suit who looked at the hole in the wall that I made playing ghoodminton."

"Ghad,Goon," I marvelled."How do you do it ?".

"Simple." he said, " I wear hobnail boots."

"No,no" I said, " the deduction."

He smirked mysteriously. "A little bird told me."

It was some time before I realised that this was literally true. He has trained Joey to be a sort of peeping tomtit and sends him into places where he cannot go himself. Recently he sent the little bird, hung with pannier bags full of birdseed for refuelling in mid air, on a proving flight as far as Marilyn Monroe's bedroom in Hollywood, and spent hours studying the aerial reconnaissance pictures it took with it's miniature camera.

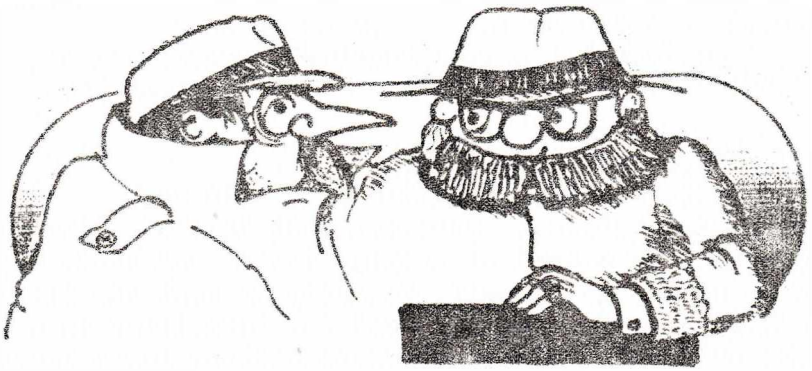
Colin the Killer Kid, sometimes known as Callous Colin, is the Goon's strong-arm man. In spite of his youth - he is actually rumoured to be the Goon's son - he is the terror of all who cross his path. Naturally, iron discipline prevails in the Goon's semi-detached bijou fortress, hidden deep in the primaeval jungle, peopled only by lost tribes of postmen, sanitary inspectors, etc, but this cannot protect the Goon himself when Colin runs amok. An intelligent parent, the Goon seldom attempts to strike his children except in self defence. The only hoods that might dare to challenge Colin are the Turner boys, the dreaded Carlton Ave mob.

The woman behind the Goon is of course his beautiful and talented wife Diane, a glamorous adventuress who uses her feminine wiles in any subtle and delicate intrigues involving stolen jewels, State secrets or copies of HYPHEN. She also of course writes the rest of his articles and all his letters,(hence the famous quotation 'Great is Diane of the Effusions) and when her man returns home from one of his dangerous and deadly missions, binds up his wounds and sweeps my plaster out of his shoes.

For activities too sordid and dangerous for a woman, such as consorting with Eric Needham, the Goon enlists the services of the mysterious Cedric. A master of disguise, Cedric has been the Goon's secret weapon in his long struggle against Eric Needham. I am now able to reveal that all the femme fans visited by Eric Needham on his recent lecher tour of the British Isles have really been Cedric in disguise. Equipped with a special motor bike with auxilary rockets designed by BIS member James White, Cedric has outdistanced Needham on his way to each victim, warned the innocent girl, and taken her place in time to meet Needham again. The Goon hopes by this incessant series of frustrations to break Needham's nerve and subvert him from his alliance with the terrorist organisation known as the Romiley Fan Dancers.

This undercover organisation is but a thread in a world-wide net of intrigue spread by the Goon's arch enemy, the sinister Greek criminal mastermind known as Antigoon, or, in his own language, Antigone. This evil figure plots against all that is fine and good in fandom. But against all these machinations the Goon and his trusty hand fight bravely on, careless of danger. The Goon himself does not know the meaning of the word timidity. (He knows the meaning of very few four-syllable words.) Undaunted he fights on, with his back to the wall....and, in at least one case, half way through it.

Walt Willis.



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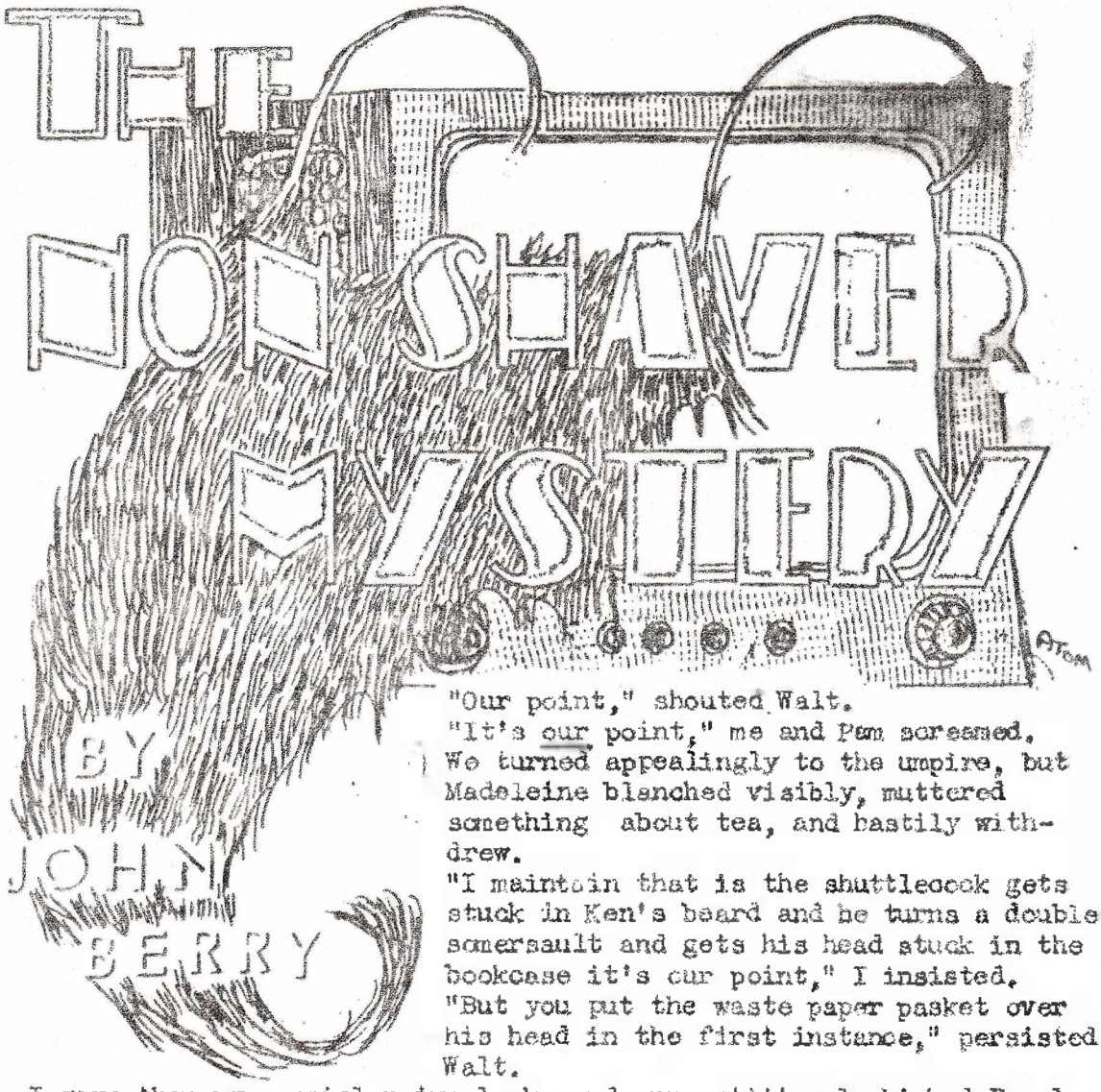


"Our point," shouted Walt.

"It's our point," me and Pam screamed.

We turned appealingly to the umpire, but Madeleine blanched visibly, muttered something about tea, and hastily withdrew.

"I maintain that is the shuttlecock gets stuck in Ken's beard and he turns a double somersault and gets his head stuck in the bookcase it's our point," I insisted.

"But you put the waste paper pasket over his head in the first instance," persisted Walt.

I gave them my special naive look, and surreptitiously kicked Pamela on the ankle, hoping for support.

"It's our point," said Pamela, with a certain agressive sweetness.

"Ask Ken," suggested James.

It seemed a reasonable suggestion, so we grabbed Ken by the legs, and pulled, and eventually he sort of plopped out from between The Immortal Storm and volume 2 of The Decameron of Boccaccio (which I hoped Walt would return to me soon.)

With the aid of a pair of scissors, Walt removed the waste paper basket off Ken's head, at the same time inadvertantly giving him a hair cut, which ultimately revealed two red ears.

"Whose point ?" we chorused.

Ken's eyes danced from left to right, 90% of his facial hairs assumed a temporary erection, and he angrily shook the shuttlecock out of his mouth.

"That is definately the last time I play ghoodminton," he grunted, and flounced angrily out of the room, taking the Decameron with him. The others drifted away, their nostrils twitching with the smell of food wafting from

downstairs. I stayed behind to help Walt clear up the debris.

"Psssst," hissed Walt.

I dropped the remains of a wickerwork chair, and walked over to him.

"A little job for the agency," he whispered.

This was a surprise. After the Cedric Biz, Walt had sworn that he would never avail of the GDA again, and had strictly adhered to this, even when a couple of his Manly Barmister publications had mysteriously vanished. (I mentally promised myself I'd return 'em soon.) So it must be something really big to make Walt change his mind.

"So," I panted.

"Ken and Pam Bulmer have been staying here for a few days, as you know," he whispered,"and will be here for a couple of weeks more. The funny thing is that he got a letter the other morning that he was very secretive about. Naturally, I don't want to read his mail, but any other letter he gets he shows us, and it must be a fannish letter, for the sender to know he is staying with us. I want you to find out what that letter is about. I strongly suspect a hoax. There is no need for me to tell you that the job must be very delicately handled. If the letter is personal, don't read it, of course. But I am very suspicious..."

"My fee ?" I breathed.

"Diana Dors in 3D," he smiled.

"Consider the job already done," I breathed.

....

Later that night, when the others were having an intellectual conversation about sf story plots, I left the room, and nipped upstairs to the Bulmers bedroom. I spotted a few letters on a small table, and began to read 'em. The GDA in sheer slashing action. Diana Dors in 3D. My pornographic library almost complete, that is, if.....

"Can I help you ?" I heard the unmistakeable voice of Ken in my ear.

I pushed my two arms in front of my face, and let my eyeballs click upwards.

"I'm sleep walkin', Ken," I said, and was nearly outa the room when he dragged me back. He was obviously much more intelligent than I thought.

"Weeeell, I heard Walt say how good your story was in the last NEBULA," I panted, " and I came up to see if you would.....?"

"Why, of course," Ken beamed . He reached under his pillow, and handed me the book.

"Ah, many thanks, Ken," I grinned, and scuttled outa the room before the sweat started to drip outa the bottom of my trousers. That was a close shave. Good job my superior intellect saved the day.

....

Back in my office, I leaned back on the tea chest, and wondered how I was going to get the letter. Ken would be suspicious if he caught me in his bedroom again . I shrugged, and pulled the copy of NEBULA from my pocket. I could always go back to his room, and say I wanted him to autograph it. Hmmm. I flicked the book through, lookin' for some of Art's illo's. Heck, it was great having my lieutenant a fully certified pro. I would hafta.....

A letter fell from the pages of NEBULA...obviously being used as a bookmark.The dirty thumb marks on it corresponded to the same type of mark on

the first page of Kens story.

I opened the letter. It was only pages 3 and 4, but it gave sufficient food for thought :-

> '....so I checked up, and according to the late edition of the London newspapers, Marilyn Monroe is definately flying over to Belfast next week. Weather permitting. I have ascertained the fact that, as we originally anticipated from that issue of Confidential, that she likes men with beards. I assume...."

That was the pertinent part of the letter, which was signed simply..H.T.

I folded the letter up, smiled smugly, and stuck it back in its correct place.

The luck of the game. The GDA had once more triumphed over adversity. I looked round the walls of my office, trying to decide where I would put the Diana Dors fotos. I hated to have 'em in book form, as I felt it a frustrating waste of time having to turn pages over all the time. But with 'em stuck on the wall....

And then I pondered. So Marilyn was coming over to Belfast, was she .....and she liked men with beards.....hmmmmmm.

I mapped out a provisional plan of campaign.

....

I fingered my stubble hopefully as I called to see Walt next morning. I knew that Ken and Pamela were away sight-seeing, so I was quite safe from discovery.

"-so that's what it's all about, Walt, " I concluded."Naturally, it was an extremely difficult task to find out about it, but I don't mind spending all night under their bed. And now...Diana Dors in 3d, please?"

He idly flipped the book over to me.

"I see you've brought your own coloured glasses. But I must say the GDA has improved. You've considerably eased my mind. I'm not interested in Marilyn Monroe or beards, so I'll just forget about the matter."

I took off my coloured glasses, bowed low respectfully, and left his room. On my way downstairs, I opened the Bulmer bedroom door and flung NEBULA on the bed.

I raced home, and settled down to some serious GDA work with the book, 3D glasses and a large bottle of Optrex.

....

That night, 'bout 11pm, I parked my bike outside The White House, and walked to the front door, carefully avoiding the puddles.

The clatter of a typer from an upstairs bedroom indicated that James White was at home, so I buzzed until Peggy answered. She showed me upstairs to James's room. I knocked, and walked in. (Usually, on GDA biz, I kicked the door open, but James, with a recent four figure cheque to show for a sf story, rated much more respect.)

James continued typing with his left hand, and drew his zap with his right, but with the adroit use of the new GDA sawn-off hosepipe (invented by Mr.Benford) I sprayed it out of his hand.

"This is a peaceful mission, James, " I announced. "Scouts Honour. Forget the Antigoon fued for tonight. I've brought something for you. "

I tossed my young son's plastic Luger into his lap.

James drooled happily. He forgot NEW WORLDS, Carnell, Ead and his typer.

"Fact is, James," I said confidentially, "I'm working on an investigation for George Charters, and I've got to go to Bangor in disguise, and I've mislaid my false beard. Can I borrow yours, please ?"

Still crooning merrily, James, obviously in the throes of bliss, reached in a drawer and threw the Antigoon false beard over to me, then, holding the plastic gun in a menacing manner, went 'bang-bang-bang ' and mentally shot down all his model aeroplanes .

Smiling, I withdrew. I cycled home and dumped the false beard in the attic. I knew that James was unable to grow a beard, and with his false one out of the way, he wouldn't be able to spring a last minute surprise when Marilyn came, should he discover the great secret.

....

Some of the hairs on my chin were about an inch long. I surveyed my growing beard in the mirror.

Mmmmmm-mmmmm.

....

The next afternoon, I called in a chemists shop (a drug store to all youse provincials) and made a purchase,to the undoubted embarrasment of the female assistant. Then I caught a green bus to Bangor, County Down, home of Irish Fandoms Sage, George A.T.W.Charters.

George Charters was at home, gurgling away as he put circulars in an envelope, advertising the fees to join the Max Brand Fan Club, of which he is President.

"Just passing by, George," I lied," when I remembered you still have that troublesome rash on your chin, and I know you can't shave. I've got some stuff here that will clear your rash away in a flash. Just let me rub it in...yeeses....that's enough . Doesn't it feel better ? Well, cheerio, George."

It was as easy as that. Before Georges senile mind had grasped the full significance of the situation, I had cleverly eliminated him as another potential beardy. I mean, George, with that bad skin rash, wouldn't have been able to shave, and Marilyn, bein' a soft-hearted girl, would maybe have been swayed by Georges aged appearance. But I had fixed George. The stuff in the box, so it said on the label, would remove the hairs from under a ladies arm in thirty seconds. It was bound to have the same effect on Georges chin.

Yuk yuk.

....

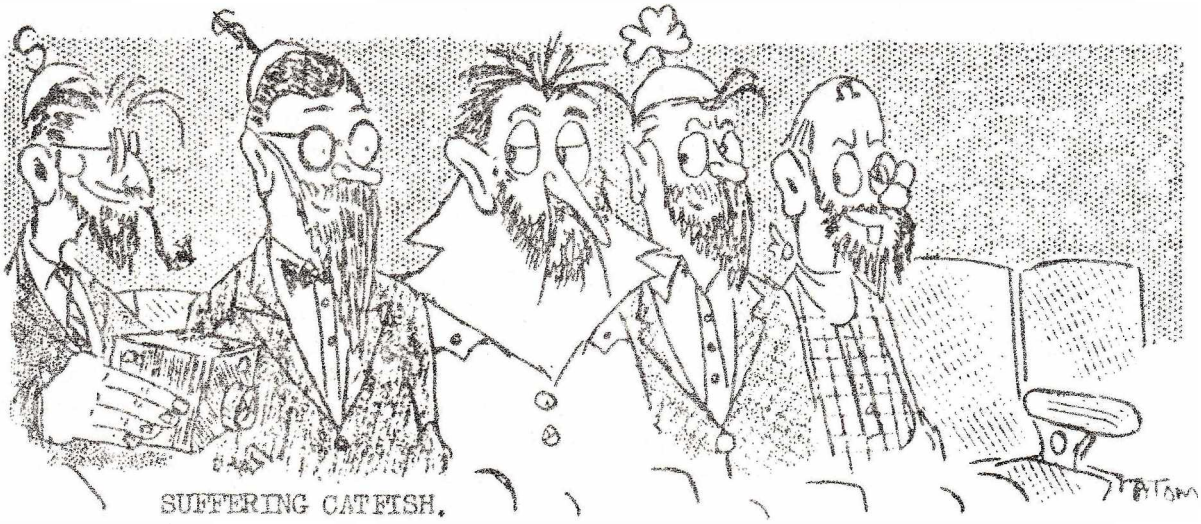
The theatre lights were still on, but I craned forward in my seat, front centre of the balcony, and focused my ex-U-boat binoculars on the centre of the stage. The other seats about me soon filled up, but I ignored the other occupants. This was to be the greatest moment of my life ...Miss Monroe in the flesh.

Someone on the left nudged me, and asked for a match. Hoping against hope it wasn't Cedric, I turned to say I hadn't got one, and .....

Suffering Catfish.

The man next to me had a beard, and it looked like James White, I'd recognise that typer anywhere. I looked at the person in the seat next to him. It was Ken Bulmer.

I swung my head round to my right, stroking my beard in anguish. Walt Willis had a beard. I looked next to him. George Charters had a beard.



SUFFERING CATFISH.

Foiled agin'.

Just then, before I could expostulate, Ken whipped out a camera and took a foto-flash picture of the four of us.." for old times sake".. he smiled.

The final blow was the announcement from the stage that Miss Monroe's 'plane couldn't land because of thick fog - but the management had obtained at short notice her most recent film 'Bus Stop'.

Weeell, that was some consolation.

....

Ken and Pamela had to go back to London next morning, and although we escorted them to the boat, I didn't get a chance to ask Ken in private what it was all about, because even to my goonish mind it was obvious that he had supplied James, Walt and George with false beards. Anyway, I had been glad to shave off my beard again, so's folks could get a proper look at my moustache.

Just before we left the boat, Ken got out his camera again, lined us up against the rails of the boat, and snapped us just once more, for, he said, a future OMPA mailing.

....

"So I can't let you have the Diana Dors book back again, Walt," I argued," because I've pasted 'em all on the wall in my office."

Walt shrugged.

"Ah well...,but I knew at the time it was too good to be true. We all turned up at the theatre, at Ken's special request, and we were all clean shaven...George remarkably so, if I may say so... and when we were in the foyer, Ken bet us all ten shillings each that we wouldn't put fake beards on...and...well.. ten shillings is ten shillings."

I nodded. It was queer, right enough. I'm not saying that Ken is

mean with his money, but he must have had a mighty big incentive to part with that much £sd on a seemingly trivial ploy.

"If only I knew why ?" mused Walt.

....

A few weeks later, a letter from my father, domiciled in England, threw a new light on the matter. He complimented me on following his example and growing a beard. I wrote back by return, asking for further details, and his reply mentioned that he'd seen me, plus beard, on TV...commercial TV.

We in Belfast only get the BBC TV programme, so I had to contact Art Thomson, in London, and instruct him to watch commercial TV henceforth until he saw me on it . I hoped the shock wasn't too great, as, according to his doctor, he hadn't fully recovered from the previous time he had seen me on TV, in November 1955.

But two days later, the Express Delivery missive from Art solved the mystery:-

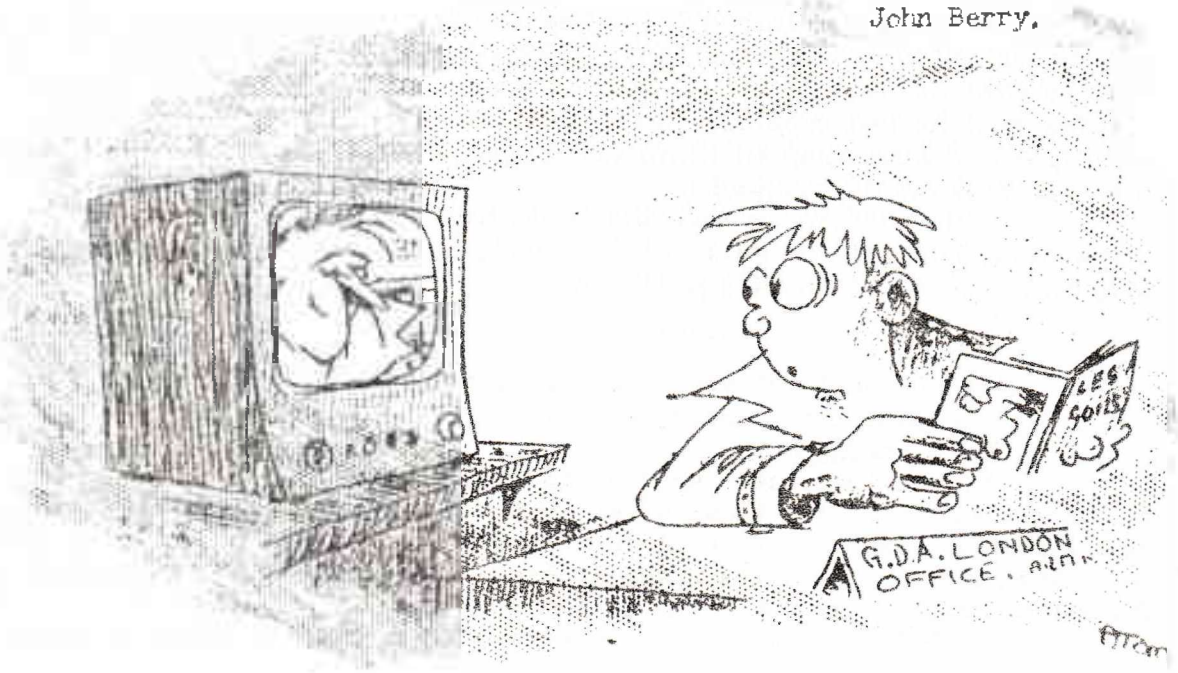
> "....not only you, but Walt, James and George were on TV, all with beards.When the commercials came on, there appeared a snap of the four of you, plus beards, and the commentator said..' These four rugged Irishmen, seen at the theatre in Belfast before they heard of our product." There was a pause, then on came a picture of you, all clean shaven,standing against the rails of a ship, and the voice said .." The same men, seen holidaying in the Rivera, after using SKIINO razor blades.
>
> Hope this information is of some use to you, as it leaves me completely baffled....."

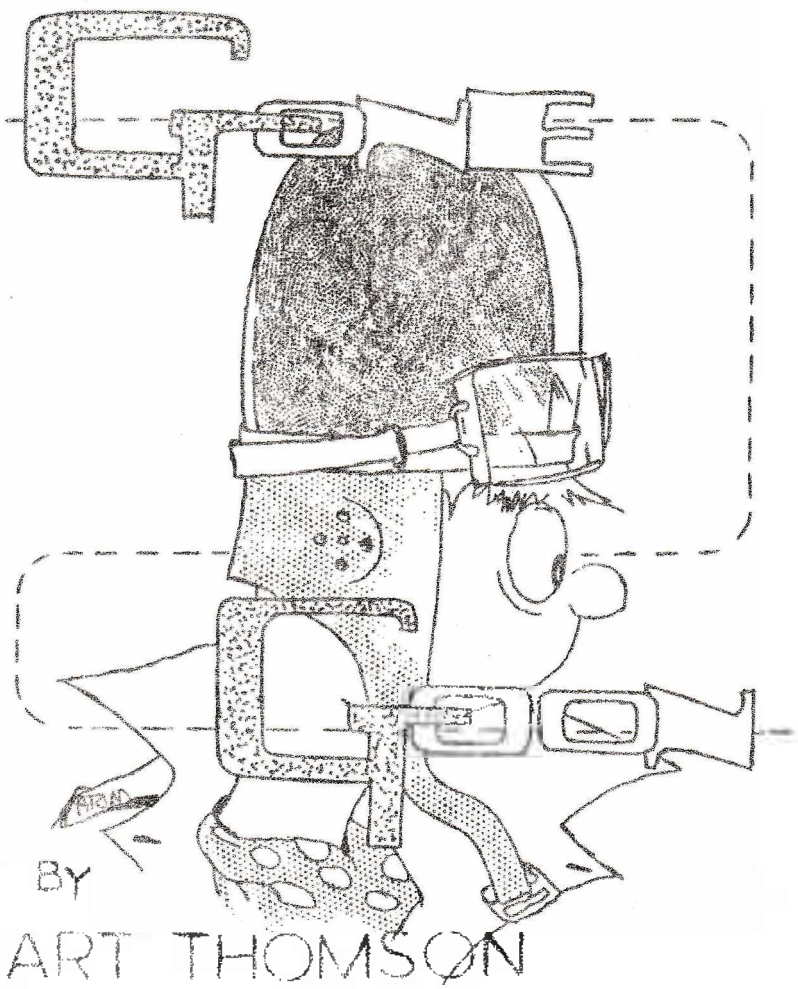
....

It baffled me too,in fact. I've made a few very discreet inquiries from Walt, and have discovered that the initials 'H.T.' on Ken's letter could stand for Harry Turner...and further...Harry Turner is a high-powered advertising executive.

There might, there just might be a connection somewhere.

John Berry.





Business was slack at the London office of the Goon Defective Agency. I smothered a yawn and idly turned over the pages of the Goon Casebook for Defectives. Hmmm. The boss certainly knew what he was doing when he included a photo of Miss Monroe on every other page. A slight 'ratatat' on the office door brought me from my starry eyed contemplation of the Casebook. A client. I quickly straightened the sign on the desk, which read 'Art Thomson - Goon at Large'. I opened the door.

A heavily muffled figure brushed by me and entered the office. Turning, I found it in animated conversation with my fedora beanie on the coat stand. Heck-I wasn't that thin. I crossed the room and seated myself behind the desk. "What gives, Mr?" I growled at the figure. It swung round, and taking a seat in the chair in front of the desk, leaned forward.

"This is the office of the G.D.A?" a voice whispered from the fold of the coat it was muffled in. I poured a slug of orangeade into my tooth glass and drank it. Aaaaargh. I'd have to water that stuff down. I leaned over the desk, and sending my orangeade-sodden breath into the eye that was regarding me from the coat button-hole, wheezed:-

"Yes. This is the London Goon Office. What can I do for you, shy boy?" The figure hunched further down in the chair.

"I wish to remain anonymous for reasons of my own, but I want you to investigate something for me. I'll pay well."

A hand came out and placed three photo's of a certain Miss Monroe onto the table. I grabbed but missed. The hand returned them to their parent pocket.

"To obtain these you must first take the case," the voice whispered.

"O.K.....O.K." I muttered sheepishly. "What do you want investigated, and why?"

"I want you to go to Torquay. I want you to find out if in fact a female called Helen Highwater exists, and if she does, is she in fact the girl friend of fake fan Nigel Lindsay."

I smiled. "Of course there's a Helen Highwater, she's Ol' Spiders girl alright, and a cracking fine bit of stuff from what he says in his OMPAzine."

"Pah" said the figure. "How do you know. Have you ever seen her, or seen a photograph of her ?"

I frowned. "I see what you mean. Nobody really knows if she is fact or fiction, only what Nigel likes to tell us about her. He could be doing a Joan

Carr hoax on us. It appeals to the bloodhound in me."

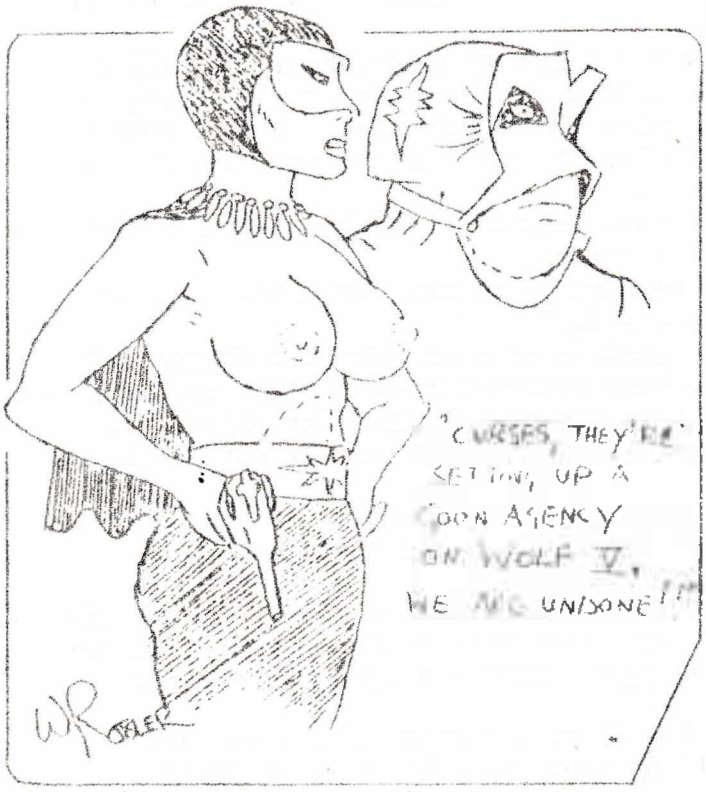
The eye from the coat button-hole looked significantly at me.

"Yes, I see what you mean."

I ushered the mysterious fan out of the office. I had tried to find out who he actually was, but even the name on the beanie had been painted out. Looking after him as he went down the corridor I repressed a shudder. He was wearing high heels. Was it Cedric ? Ghod, what was fandom coming to ! Looking round the office before I locked up I noticed that the client had dropped a roll of bandages and a clinical thermometer with a little tartan bow on, they must have dropped out of his pocket when he showed me the Monroe pictures. I kicked them under the desk and caught a cab for the railway station.

An hour later I was grimly hanging on to the rods under the train heading for Torquay ((which, for the information of American readers, is a seaside resort on the south coast of England)) and cursing the Goon for not giving travelling expenses to his operators. Turning over the case in my mind, I wondered if I should have perhaps consulted the Goon about it. But in his last letter he had stated that he was hot on a 'Cedric' lead, so I decided to play this case on my own. Arriving at Torquay I dropped off before we reached the station, and hobbling across the tracks made for the biggest hotel on Babbacombe Down. I booked in under an assumed name 'Eric Needham'. Nigel met me at once, and I didn't want him to know that the G.D.A. were in town. I hurried up to my room to disguise myself. Pumping the bell-boy who showed me to my room, I discovered that the orchestra Nigel played in was booked for a dance in the hotel that very night. I felt pleased with the way things were going.

That evening I donned my disguise, and clad in crash helmet, goggles, and with a chamois leather and pail sticking out of my pockets I made my way down to the ballroom and mingled unnoticed with the dancers. I edged my way across the hall to the stage where the band was playing, and sure enough, there was Nigel wearing a comic nose and pounding away at the piano. I reasoned that if there was a Helen Nightower she would be near the band, and behind my goggles my eyes scanned the people at the tables around the stage. Yes. There, sitting by herself at a table was a heavily veiled woman looking in the direction of the band. The band struck up a new tune and Nigel took off his comic nose and put on a comic hat. Now was my chance. I scuttled across to the table, and raising my crash helmet - we Goons are Gents - I invited her with a twitch of my shoulders in the direction of the floor, to dance. She nodded gracefully, her veil swinging around her face, and rose to join me on the floor. I was amazed. She took me in her arms, and taking the male position, proceeded to dance me round the floor.



"Hey," I mouthed, "Aren't you supposed to be piloted by me ?"

She gave a start, and in a squeaky voice from behind the veil,

said, "He he. I'm so sorry. Shall we reverse ?" I started leading her, and we continued dancing. I had a little more trouble at one of the corners when swinging her round in my best Waltz style. A part of her chest slipped down to her waist, but giving it a hitch up she gave a shrill 'He he' and we continued with the dance until the orchestra had finished. Thinking to get her alone and finally establish her as Helen, I suggested a stroll on the hotel terrace. She agreed, and grasping her rather hairy muscular arm, I steered her outside. We seated ourselves on a secluded stone bench, she gave a shudder as she sat down, and so did I. That bench was cold. I put my arm round her and tried tactic number one.

"Say, sister," I crooned. "You are certainly a swell dish. How's about telling me your name ?" She giggled, and giving me a playful push sent me off the bench on to the sharp-edged crazy paving. I was hurt, and it wasn't only my pride. Leaping up, I decided I'd had enough of fooling around with crazy females.

"You are Helen Highwater, Nigel Lindsay's girl friend !" I shouted, and pulled the veil from her face. Ghod ! It was the Goon who stared at me from under the tatters of the veil.

Moustache twitching, the Goon leant up from the bench with a look of triumph in his eyes. "No, I'm not Helen Highwater ", he gritted," I'm Goon Bleary of the G.D.A. I've trapped you at last, 'Cedric' alias Eric Needham." He ripped the crash helmet and goggles from my face and then fell back over the bench.

I shouted," I's me, Boss. I'm Art." Rushing to a nearby goldfish pond, I filled the crash helmet with water and running back threw the contents over the unconscious form of the beloved head of the G.D.A. He slowly recovered, and spitting out a goldfish croaked," Suffering Catfish, Art, what gives ?" By the time I had explained the whole story of why I was in Torquay, he had recovered the gleam in his eye and a mite of chick-weed from his moustache.

"Lissen, Art," he said as we walked back to my hotel room. "I had a hot tip from an informer in Leeds, that Eric Needham had driven off on his motor bike somewhere, and knowing that he had missed Torquay from his tour last year I played a hunch and came down here in disguise. If he went after Helen he was indeed only Needham, but if I found him friendly with Nigel I was going to accuse him of being 'Cedric'. When you kept looking at Nigel yet took me up to dance I couldn't decide whether you were Credric or Needham."

"Yeah," I muttered."But that doesn't help me. I have not established if there is a Helen Highwater, and I don't even know who my client is to report back to and tell that the case will take a little longer than I originally thought."

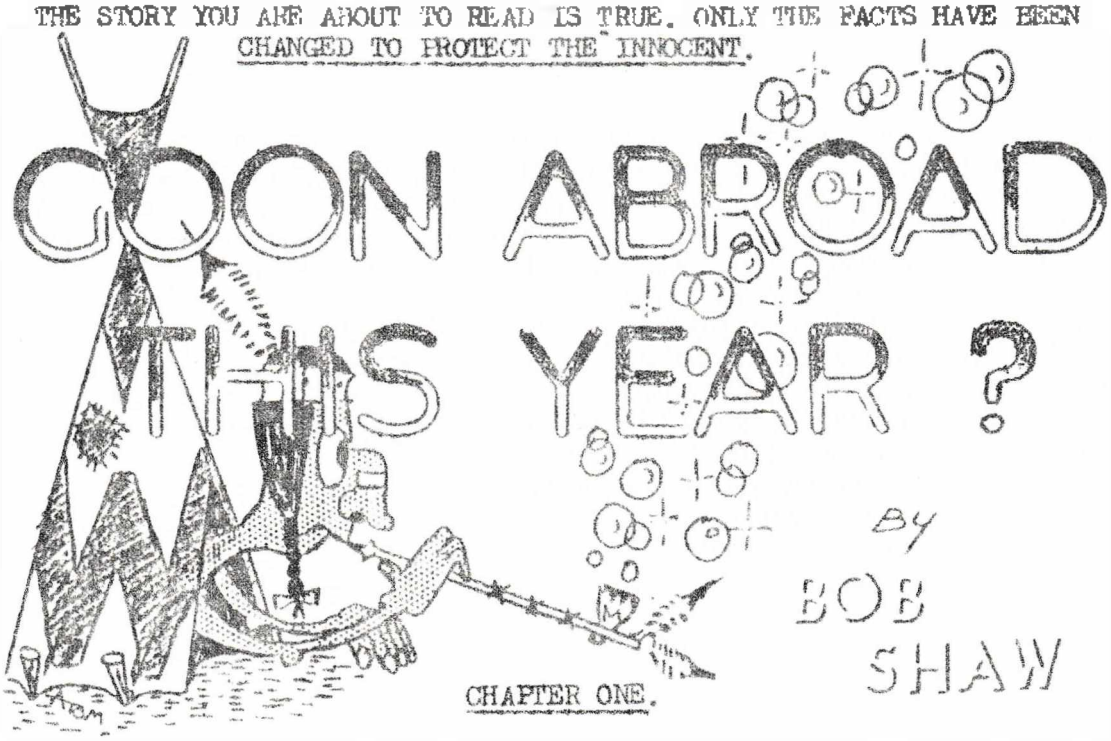
"Tell me what happened in your office when you took the case," the Goon said. I told him the whole story, leaving nothing out. He then tucked one of his moustache ends into his mouth and sucked it....he was obviously thinking.

"I've got it," he chuckled. He straightened up, triumph in his eyes. "By pure deduction, I know who your client is. Here's what to do."

So there you are, Ethel. I've done exactly what the Goon told me to do. To tell you the whole story and ask if I can have one of those Marilyn photo's as a retainer while I investigate the case further. So could you send one, please, Ethel. The Goon also said I was to send your thermometer back. But how he deduced you were my client I guess I'll never know. It must just be his genius.

Arthur Thomson.

THE STORY YOU ARE ABOUT TO READ IS TRUE. ONLY THE FACTS HAVE BEEN CHANGED TO PROTECT THE INNOCENT.



CHAPTER ONE.

My thoughts were grim that foggy night in January 1956 when my ship began to apply the brakes as it edged slowly towards Canada, nearing port. I had heard somebody saying you could see a place called Newfoundland from the dack but when I went above there was nothing visible but cold, swirling vapour. I leaned on the rail of the bleak, deserted promenade deck, staring blindly outwards as I finished a cigarette.

My mind went back to the night that Bleary handed me this assignment..

.....

....

"I want you to go into the wild, woolly west," he told me, carefully casual.

"Why, " I said, " I like this cold weather. I don't need no wide woolly vest."

"Shaddup," he shouted, jumping up in his overstuffed chair - a home made effort with a back in the shape of Marilyn Monroe.

"Oh, I get it, Goon. You want me to adopt a disguise. Well, it wont work. I once went to an orphanage, picked up a coupla kids and said to the dame,'I want to adopt 'deseguys.'', but ...."

"SHADDAP" he screamed. His breath sent the thousands of model aeroplanes hanging from the ceiling swinging and spinning, bumping of his cluttered story files and wall photo's, so that he seemed to be sitting in a snowstorm.

I waited until I glimpsed his face through the swarm, and said,

" Take it easy, Goon. You've been jumpy for weeks, now. What's the matter ? Tell the BoSher."

He calmed down, then went to a cabinet and took out a bulky file of papers and dumped them on the desk in front of me. They seemed covered

with complex inscriptions, like :- 8.3.55.JB&JW10-GC&WAW21.

"What's this ?," I snapped, "looks like ghoodminton scores."

"It is," he snapped. "That is a complete record of every game I ever played. As you know, I've hit a losing streak lately-in fact, I have been losing time after time. It got me down, BoSher,....I knew I was playing O.K., but I just couldn't win. So I turned the records over to Joey," he nodded towards his budgie," and he analysed them. He came up with one very interesting fact."

"Is that so ?" I gasped, impressed. I glanced admiringly at Joey who was sleeping in his cage, which was one of those wire dressmakers dummies ... shaped like Marilyn Monroe. "What was it ?"

"Well," the Goon whispered," as you know, my style of play is tough. I jump around a lot, and throw my feet around. Rough stuff."

"yes" I nodded, fingering the lump behind my ear where the Goon had kicked me during one of his trick services.

"Well, due to the fact that I have been kicking people about the head and face it has become a sort of custom to put me on the same side as James. He is so tall I couldn't reach his head - even iffen I tried," he added hastily.

"Go on," I said, curiously, poking my tongue into the gap in my grinders where the Goon's elbow had hit me in a fast rally, "What did Joey find ?"

"Simply this," said the Goon dramatically. "In every game in which James plays against George Charters, Georges side always wins.

I was astounded. At first, I couldn't believe it, and then, thinking back, I saw it was true. George was no mean player, he was cunning, it was George who invented the deadly alternating vertibrate chop which, when properly applied, had been known to leave a human spine looking like an eccentric camshaft. But it wasn't in the cards that his side should always beat a side with James on it. James was too good for that.

"Brilliant work, Goon," I said," worthy of the head of the Bleary Eyes. There is something queer going on."

The Goon smirked with pride for a moment, then sobered up.

"You've said it. Lose, lose, lose. I tell you it can't go on. That's why I want you to go to western Canada, You see, I began to check back on James and George to see if something could have given George a hold over James. I had to give up on George right away... nobody could check on his past. There's just too much of it. The other trail comes to a dead end, because James was not born in Northern Ireland. He comes from Canada."

I whistled. "So he does. You want me to go there and turn in a complete report on him.?"

"You mean you'll go ? Great. Suffering Catfish. BoSher, that's brilliant ...."

"At a price," I snarled, irritably brushing away an attacking squadron of dive bombers which had been launched by the Goon's sudden capering around the desk. "What's in it for me ?"

He stopped travelling about on an invisible pogo stick, a business-like gleam appeared in his beady eyes and his moustache took on a crafty slant. He opened a drawer in his desk and took something out of it

"How about this?"

"I'll take it," I yelled joyfully."I'ts just what I've always wanted. Oh Goon. I'll wear it always."

"Wear it ?" he said.

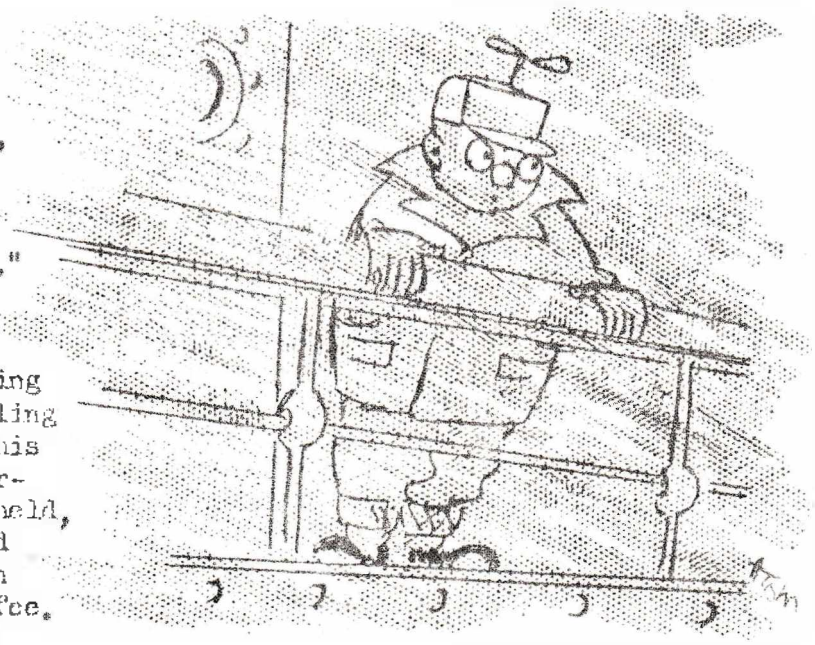
"Yes, Isn't it a badge...an emblem of the Bleary Eyes ?"

"No," he cried indignantly, "it's a fried egg with a sprinkling of tomato ketchup."

"The deals off. Look at the size of it. I'd be afraid to smell it in case it flew up my nostrils. Besides...I know Chuck...I'd feel like a cannibal. "

At the mention of Harris, the budgie gave a faint sqwark and threw itself off the large front balcony of its cage, but the Goon didn't seem to notice.

"All right," he gritted miserably. "You win. I'll give you the two dozen bottles of beer, the bottle of sherry and two glasses of whiskey I ...er... saved from James' wedding reception.."



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So here I was , staring out into the fog, and feeling uneasy, wondering would this be my last mission, wandering what the near future held, but mostly wondering would Bleary be able to restrain himself from drinking my fee. I couldn't remember if he liked fee or coffee. I flicked my cigarette end over the rail, wishing that I was off the ship where there wouldn't be any cheap cigarettes.

I don't smoke.

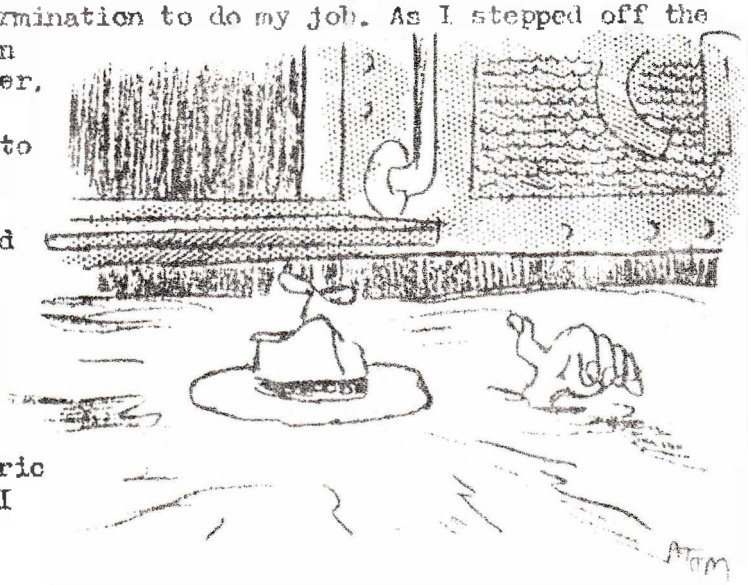
CHAPTER TWO.

Four days later. My train shuddered to a halt at Calgary in the heart of the golden west. I stood at the head of the steps for a moment scanning the snow covered landscape and the milling crowds, searching for something that would give me a clue. This was the fourth city I had tried, but Canada is a big country and I had to find a trace of White. Four days now I had been following that line, travelling fast, straining, striving....

I finally caught up with the train ten miles from Calgary..what a run.

As I came down the steps the crowds began to shout and wave at me. I smiled. So word had got round that a member of the G.D.A. was in Canada.

I gave the people a steady look which was intended to express my gratitude for the welcome and my determination to do my job. As I stepped off the train the shouting grew even louder, the arms waved faster. "Too kind, too kind," I murmured and disappeared into ten feet of snow. Luckily I was wearing my G.D.A. felt hat, the brim of which acted as a sort of hilt and so prevented me being lost for ever. I dangled there until they sent for a snow plough from the station building, and brought me in. After a quick rundown with an electric fire I felt O.K. again and I set out to scan the city.



By the time I had had a few square meals it was getting dark and I decided just to give the place a onceover before getting a place to sleep. Somehow, I felt that this was the city.

In the growing darkness I wandered about admiring the skyscrapers until I realised that I was lost. Trying to find my way back to the station I wandered down a narrow street and saw dimly in the darkness the outlines of a number of tents in a vacant lot between two buildings. It was an Indian reservation.

There didn't seem to be anybody about. They must all be inside watching T.V., I decided when I noticed the 'H' Aerial on top of each teepee. Cautiously I tiptoed into the reservation determined to steal something I could keep as a souvenir. My stealthy entrance was somewhat spoiled by the fact that I trod on a sleeping dog which ran around the tents yelling in a very moranic manner. I turned and ran, tripped over a guy rope, winded myself and realised that I was trapped. There was only one way to escape from the Indians who were dashing out of the front porches of their teepees. I shinned up a totem pole.

It was strange being up there in the darkness whilst the Indians and dogs milled around below, wondering what was up. I was too smart for them all. Gleefully I whipped out my water pistol, fired a burst downwards and was rewarded by a yelp of anguish from one of the dogs and the sound of somebody saying " Ugh, Take that Fido." I grabbed the top of the totem pole and leaned out to get a better shot and then....

Dum da dum dum

Right on top of the pole was a little propeller.

Astounded, I groped around the carved wood at the head of the pole and felt the likeness of a beanie. Beneath it was the shape of a high forehead, glasses and a familiar face with lines of asceticism, or maybe ulcers round the mouth.

It was a carving of James White.

CHAPTER THREE.

I was so astonished that I fell off the pole into the crowd of Indians who grabbed me and marched me into the nearest tent. The Jackie Gleason Show was still on TV so they made me stand in the dark till it was over. What do you know ? I whispered to myself...James an Indian. A Blackfoot Indian, too, which was why he had changed his name to White when he left them ... a cover up.

It suddenly dawned on me that although I had found out a lot I was no nearer to solving the Goons problem. Why was James hiding in Ireland under a new identity ? What connection could this have with George ? And ghoodminton ? I realised I would have to be tough and brave and smart, I realised I was in dire peril, I realised I should have let somebody else handle this job.

The lights went on, and I found myself in a large spacious tent with an open fireplace and lots of closet space. Facing me were several fierce looking Indians and in one dark corner sat an attractive squaw. Deciding to brazen it out I stared hard at her, and at the very old squaw sitting next to her.

"My orders were to search every Nanook and granny," I shrieked, doubling with laughter.

The Indians turned several shades paler.

"Him make pun too," one of them whispered. "Ugh."

"Ugh., ugh." another replied.

"Ugh, ugh, ugh," I responded. The natives respect a man who has taken the trouble to learn their own language. The one who seemed to be the chief stepped up to me and grabbed my lapels.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"Shan't tell, so there." I snapped.

"Alright, bucketface," he said, releasing me. "If you won't talk we use dreaded Blackfoot secret weapon on you. This weapon the secret of my tribe for three hundred years. Top security. You will talk."

He clapped his hands and the others pushed me into a chair and set me facing the door of the next room. I heard sounds of preparation behind the door, and I got scared. All this for a few bottles of beer, I moaned, and not even a pie thrown in.

The chief stood in front of me, his face a twisted bronze mask of hatred.

"Talk," he thundered.

"No," I gulped. Suddenly I noticed his socks. They were of bright blue wool and had huge red and white diamond shapes all round them. I had seen socks like that before. Somewhere.

"Wait," I shouted. "Where did you get those socks ?"

The chief simpered.

"Like them ?' he asked, doing a little pirouette," given to me a long time ago by great Indian scout and wild west explorer Gopher George Charters."

Dunn da dunn dunn.

My heart leapt. What was this ? George Charters a pioneer of the wild west . This was getting more and more interesting ... so that was

why George loved Westerns so much-and how he knew so much about cowboys and so forth. Another piece of the puzzle had fallen into place and I got so involved in figuring out this new angle that I forgot all about the secret weapon.

The door facing me swung open and I saw a little Indian holding something under his arm. It was a sort of bladder from which led a single tube pointing straight at me - the whole thing looked like a set of hotrod bagpipes. The Indian squeezed with his elbow and a stream of soap bubbles shot out and enveloped me.

At first I could have laughed out loud. James had used a variation of the same weapon at one of his parties the time he shot bubbles at the Goon from his vacuum cleaner. (+ see footnote.) I was beginning to see daylight.

Then the danger of my situation hit me. The bubbles kept bursting in my eyes and going up my nose and down my collar. It was horrible. I wouldn't be able to take much more of this without cracking up. My admiration for the Goon increased as I remembered how he had gone through this and laughed it off. So this is the end, I whispered, death by bubbles. My grand Finlay.

Suddenly the bubbles ceased.

"Darn this water," I heard the little Indian mutter," it's as hard as iron - can't get a decent lather at all."

The others gathered round him talking sympathetically about chapped hands, fluoridization and the new TIME. I got out of the chair, sneaked out of the tent and tiptoed away from the Indians. My stealthy exit was somewhat spoiled by the fact that I trod on a sleeping dog which ran around yelping in a most moranic manner.

I ran out of the reservation, across the street and into a large gloomy building on the other side. I figured they would never think of looking for me in a museum.

I'm smart.

CHAPTER FOUR.

Safe in the darkness of the museum I had time to consider the significance of some of the things I had uncovered. Apparently James had at one time been a member of the Blackfoot tribe and he had left them or had been thrown out. Probably the latter, I thought, as I remembered the hostile reaction to my pun - what would they not do when they heard one of James's jokes ?

All right. So far, so good. Now George must have known about James's past because he had been in the locality and knew all about the Indians and because that could be the only thing to give him a hold over James. What hold ?

The secret weapon.

That was it. The bubble projector was a much treasured secret of the Blackfeet and James had revealed it at his party so that he could get the egoboo of claiming it his invention. The Blackfeet would not like that. The Blackfeet would be furious. Eureka. George had got James

(+) This goes a little way to prove the authenticy of my story in ALPHA published early in 1956, which most people took to be pure fantasy. J.B.

on his own, revealed his identity as Gopher George Charters and threatened to tittle-tattle to the tribe unless James always let him win at ghoodminton. I had it all. For a moment I felt great, then I remembered the Goon had sent me to find something he could employ to break Georges hold. None of the things I had discovered could be used as a lever and the Goon was quite capable of refusing to pay off unless he was able to start winning again. I broke into a sweat.

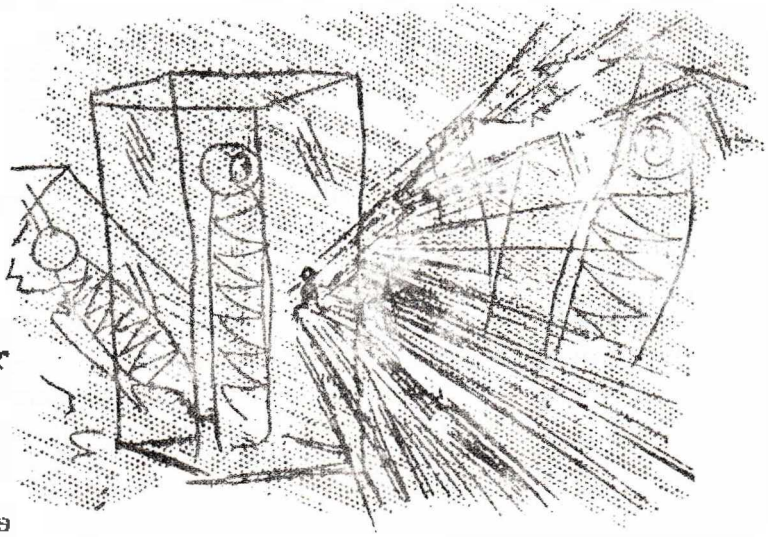
What could I dig up about George ?

Click.

I heard a stealthy noise in the darkness, near me. I was not alone.

Too late it occured to me that it was strange for the museum to be open at this time of night and no caretaker about. Somebody, perhaps dangerous criminals, had sneaked into the museum and I had unknowingly walked into the middle of them. The blood rushed out of my face so fast that four hundred corpuscles were killed in the panic.

I dropped to my knees and crawled away to what I thought was the place the door should be. I crawled for a long time before I realised I was lost. Then I heard another noise behind me. Applying the GDA maxim 'He who frights and runs away lives to run away another day,' I bounded away quietly and swiftly and coolly. I bumped into one or two things, of course.



When I had run myself out I looked back and saw in the faint moonlight from the ceiling that I had passed through a number of glass cases, scrambled all the eggs in the natural history section , disintegrated eleven suits of armour, overturned a Patagonian war canoe, knocked the stuffing out of an Ethiopian orang-otan, powdered twelve shelves of ancient pottery, collapsed a dinosaur skeleton, made two tyrannasaurus wrecks, forged through three showcases of coins and indecently exposed Queen Victoria and Oliver Cromwell.

Somehow, in spite of all my caution, theyknew where I was and came running after me, sinister, half-seen shapes. I looked wildly round me for a place to hide. There was a nearby alcove marked ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA. I ran into it and hid behind a big piece of carved rock and crouched there while my pursuers came up and tiptoed round the place looking for me. They whispered to each other in a foreign language.

The rock that hid me had a card on it which said, ' The Stele of King Hammurabi ' and as I had nothing else to do I began to study the figures chiselled on it. There was the king himself lying on a big bed effort, probably suffering from a code in the head, and lots of queer looking servants who were offering him trays of fruit and so forth. They

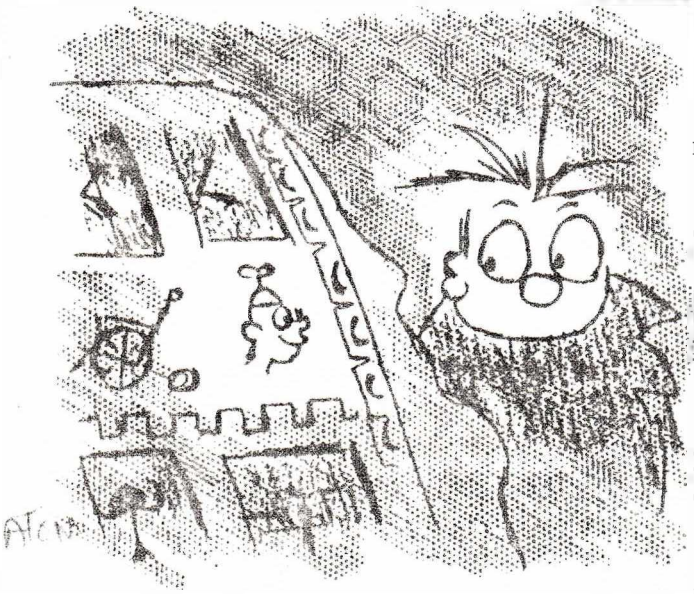
were all wearing funny little skull caps, and one of them.....

DOMM DA DOMM DOMM

...had a little propellor on top.

I looked closer at this one. He had a broad cheery face, horn rimmed glasses and a big grin. It was George Charters.

I was so flabbergasted I rose to my feet and staggered away from the stone. George in ancient Sumer and Akkad ? Five thousand years before Christ ? I knew he was incredibly old.. but not that much. How did he do it ?



Next thing I knew all the little men with foreign voices and swarthy skins had surrounded me and pinned my arms to my sides. I knew they were dangerous because they hadn't even used safety pins. They were all wearing funny little caps like the men in the carving. They pushed me back over to the Stele of King Hammurabi and one of them put his finger squarely on the carving of George.

"Something startled you," he said in English," do you by any chance know somebody like this man?"

I thought for a moment.

"No, why ?" I said. I'm smart.

"He has stolen something that belonged to my people seven thousand years ago. It is our inherited task to find him and return it. We have tracked him this far but we lost the trail. Are you sure you don't know him ?"

"Come to think of it," I said, my brain working like electricity, making me DC, " I did see a fellow like that the other week when I was up at the North Pole on holiday. Charters you call him. He spends all his time up there visiting Eskimos. I don't know why. He keeps saying he just loves that old Northern hospitality."

"That sounds like him," the little men shouted. They all turned and ran out of the museum, probably on their way to Cooks. I'm a brilliant liar.

Next morning I phoned the Goon and told the operator to reverse the charges. A few moments later I heard his moustache filtered voice.

"Thank you operator, and reverse the charges, please. Hello,BoSher."

"Hello, Goon," I said. "Operator, reverse the charges."

"Anything to report ? I was hammered again last night. I can't take this much longer.And operator ...reverse the charges. "

I told him all that had happened and finished up with the dope about George having stolen the secret of longevity from Sumer and Akkad and how this could be used to break his hold on James. Then I told the operator to reverse the charges to the Goon.

"Brilliant work, BoSh," he told me. "You've earned your fee. The Bleary eyes are proud of you. When you send in your report what are you going to call it ? Reverse the charges, operator."

"Oh, I don't know," I said. "Maybe just,'An Excerpt from the G.D.A.Files.'

"A what from our files ?"

"Excerpt."

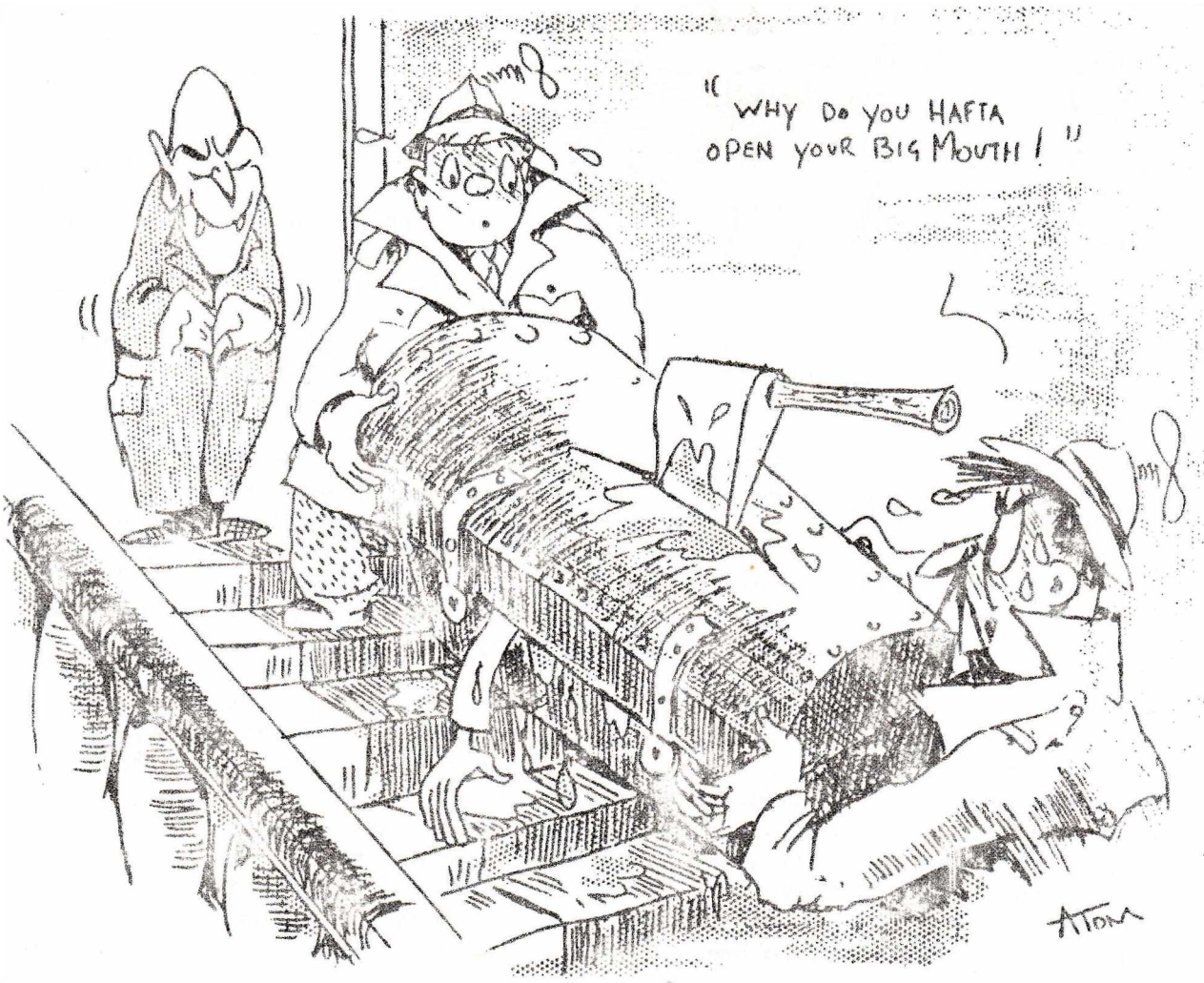
"WHAT ?"

"Excerpt. EXCERPT," I shouted.

"Do you hear that, operator ?" the Goon yelled. "He accepts the charges. Suffering Catfish. I'm brilliant. Honestly I am. What a mind. Suff ...."

I hung up on him.

Bob Shaw.



THE G.D.A. MOTTO IS :-
NO CASE TOO BIG TO HANDLE - TRUNKS A SPECIALITY.

WHAT THE BUTLER SAW OR TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

BY JOHN BERRY

With a muttered curse of "Suffering Catfish", and making sure my false moustache was affixed, I kicked open the door of our fanroom and leapt inside, facing Walt Willis.

"Steady, boy" he grimaced, his haggard face peering over a wall of folded fanzines. I sidled over, picked up one of them. It was the latest HYPHEN. Funny. They were all HYPHENs. About 250 of them.

"Thought you posted all the HYPHENs last week, Walt", I frowned.

"True", he nodded. "But they all arrived back here again in a couple of days...all unopened. By the way, your moustache is upside down".

I ripped it off, ran the edge of my tongue over the gum-arabic, and slapped it on properly. "But why have the HYPHENs been returned?" I asked, sort of disgruntled. It had been a special issue commemorating the publication of my 250th article.

"Same reason as all my mail has been returned,unopened, I suppose", muttered Walt, kicking at the waist-high heap of letters that surrounded him.

"Any news of Peggy White?" I asked, trying to change the subject. Things were sort of complicated, and when things are complicated, I get baffled.

"I understand she has obtained a life membership of Alcoholics Anonymous", groaned Walt.

"A fitting climax to her fannish career", I observed, handing Walt my hip flask. Neat soda water would do him a power of good in his present state.

Walt took a swig and then looked at his watch. "Bleary", he said, "Bob Shaw is almost due back from his psychiatrist...I think he's doing very well, by the way, though he still means to flee the country...and before he comes I want an earnest talk with you. I have tried to refrain from this course of action, which is against all my finer instincts, but I have no alternative. I have reluctantly decided, Goon, to avail myself once more of the inimitable facilities afforded by your versatile organisation",

Heck. I wish Willis would confine himself to words of not more than two syllables. I was working at a disadvantage as it was.

"My fee", I hissed, gripping him by the sticky collar of his duper shirt and pinning him against the wall.

"Put me down this minute", he ordered. "We'll discuss your fee when you've solved the mystery of why the rest of fandom have

chosen to ostracise us".

I flashed a glance at the Marilyn Monroe calendar. "Walt, if I tried really hard, would you...?"

"Your moustache has fallen off again", he interrupted with a grin.

Heck. I dived onto the floor and once more replaced my fungus. I ain't [illegible] the nerve to expose my [illegible] year lip after all [illegible] fists [illegible] clenched my [illegible] person responsible [illegible] of the nakedness. Age wouldn't save him.

"If I could just get my hands on George Charters", I grated. "I'd...I'd bung up his ear trumpet...I'd..."

"Funny thing about George", mused Walt. "He hasn't been here since the Heinlein fiasco. And it was just after that my mail started coming back unopened, too".

"I was just going to say the same thing,Walt", I lied. Willis is my best customer...in fact, he's my only customer.

Just then, Madeleine came in with a sack over her shoulder. She gripped both ends of it and miserably shook out the contents onto the floor.

"Oh, no", sobbed Walt."Not my OMPA mailing contribution. To think that Joy would do a thing like that to me".

Madeleine dabbed her eyes. "My article I SLEPT WITH WILLIS has been returned unopened by FEMIZINE", she sniffed. "Why,oh why?"

Suddenly we heard rapid footsteps mounting the haunted staircase.

James White came into the room with a brown paper parcel under his arm. He paused in the open doorway...a pitiful sight. Then, like a great Shakespearian actor, he took a pace forward, swept an arm majestically upwards and shouted...

"I am undone!"

"You mean -?" gasped Walt and Madeleine.

"Yes", he cried. "Carnell has sent back my latest story, Quinn illos and all. In fact, he hasn't even opened the parcel..."

"So it wasn't any use to get Conklin to say you were a Londoner", muttered Walt grimly.

The door opened once more, and Sadie came in leading Bob by the arm. She raised a finger to her lips with a warning "Sssshhh".

"There's my boy", she crooned, leading a gibbering Shaw to a secluded corner of the room, where he sat staring vacantly at Marilyn Monroe.

He was worse than I thought.

Sadie tiptoed over and whispered; "The doctor says it's a bad case of shock allied with acute frustration of the bowels and constriction of the bladder. He is to have a complete rest before he's even fit for a sea voyage".

Tears glistened in her eyes. Heck, folks. Beneath my dirty vest there beats an understanding heart. I laid a comforting arm

around Sadie and gave her a paternal kiss.

The next moment Bob slipped to the floor with a horrible "Duuuuuurrh," saliva dribbling down his chin.

"What's wrong with the boy?!" screamed Sadie.

"Give Goon his whiskers back," growled Walt, master of the situation as always.

"Tsk,tsk", I mouthed, as Sadie ripped the vagrant fungus off her lip and helped Bob out of the room.

A nostalgic look flitted across Walt's face.

"You know", he said, "these queer things all started to happen immediately after The Night Heinlein Never Came".

I wondered, too. Back home, in the seclusion of my den my mind stumbled back to the evening before Robert Heinlein was to visit Oblique House...

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We all sat back to enjoy our tea after the careful preparations we had made to ensure that Heinlein's visit would be a memorable one. Madeleine was applying a damp compress to Walt's left wrist, where he had strained it clipping several feet off the privit hedge. Bob and James had just returned from their unenviable task of temporarily depositing the loaded prozine kiosk in the shed at the back of the house. I was exhausted after my exertions helping Madeleine to fold the table napkins.

Sometimes I think Walt is apt to take my enthusiasm for granted.

"So I'll 'phone tomorrow", said Madeleine to Walt, "and hire a butler for the evening".

George raised himself to a sitting position and, rapping his crutch against the wall, signified his intention of wanting to take part in the conversation.

"Walt", he croaked, "I have held a great variety of, er, occupations in my time, and it has, er, heh heh, always been an ambition to be, er, a butler. It would be the fulfilment of, er, my wildest wish, if I could act as, er, butler on this most important occasion. Heh heh".

This shook Willis, folks. I could see that Walt didn't want to hurt George's feelings, as did none of us, but after all, Robert Heinlein was a pretty important person.

"I'm sorry, George", began Walt. George looked downwards, a spasm of resignation flickering across his venerable frame. There was silence for several seconds, and then Willis, doing the stupid thing and letting sentiment overcome his common sense,gave a big sigh and nodded to George.

With a terrific show of exuberance, George gripped the side of his bath chair, staggered to his feet and hobbled from the room, cackling happily to himself.

We looked at Walt.

"Listen," he said. "The best thing for us to do would be to apologise to Heinlein for George being absent tomorrow night.

We'd never live it down if it got around fandom that we were ill-using George, even though it makes him happy".

We nodded sympathetically.

As we were to discover, that was going to be the least of our worries.

I felt quite proud when I saw George the following night. He opened the door majestically to my ring, and I nearly collapsed in the airlock at the sight of him. He looked like a penguin; his remaining silver locks brushed back carefully over his pate.

"Welcome to Oblique House, sor", he said, addressing the hall stand.

"It's me, George", I hissed.

It hit him like a physical blow.

"Third time tonight", he complained."How do I look?"

"I gotta hand it to you", I cringed, pushing him gently out of the way as I passed. I liked his red waistcoat and buckled shoes...I hoped Heinlein would.

As I entered the drawing room, and noted the turnout of the members of Irish Fandom, I felt that this was the big time. Willis tapped his cigar out into the roaring fireplace, and Madeleine was handing out port.

Heck.

I crossed to the french windows and drew aside the curtains to see if our visitor was coming. I saw an unfamiliar figure flitting furtively up the path. I shouted excitedly.

"Hey, Walt. Here comes Heinlein, with a flat cap and a sack over his shoulder".

Walt rushed over. "Fool!" he gritted."That's the postman".

Gripping the man by the bag strap he pulled him through the window.

"Evening", whispered the postman. "Just as I was leaving the Post Office this telegram came for you, so I thought I might as well bring the morning's mail with me". He dumped a pile of letters on the carpet and dived back through the window.

Walt, with an air of foreboding, opened the envelope...read the telegram...screwed up his eyes..looked at us sorrowfully.

"Heinlein is not coming. His aeroplanes all got mixed up. He was taken to Dublin by mistake".

We groaned. It was a great disappointment, right enough.

The door opened, to reveal George leaning against the wall.

"He should be here soon", he croaked. "Oh, this is the greatest day of my life. Heh,heh". So saying the lovable sage clawed his way out again.

Madeleine, the really sentimental one amongst us, dabbed her eyes.

"How can we break the news to George?" she sniffed.

"Poor old thing," agreed Sadie, "it'll surely break his heart".

Walt leapt to his feet, that look of bliss on his face, revealing that his genius for improvisation had again reached the heights.

"We've made so many preparations, it's a shame to waste them all...and we don't have to!" He explained. "Let's pretend to George that Heinlein has come. George is so short-sighted that he won't know. It'll be worth it, just to see a flicker of happiness in his bloodshot eyes".

"Who's going to be Heinlein?" asked James, practical as always.

"Me", gritted Walt. "My visit to the USA in '52 will stand me as far as the accent is concerned. I have a fedora upstairs. If I also put on my new coat and hang a camera around my neck and have a couple of flashy suitcases and a loud tie, and ring the front door, he'll be completely taken in".

Spontaneous applause greeted this inspiration of Walt's. Was this going to be his greatest triumph?

We chuckled to ourselves as Walt slipped away. Moments later we heard the front door bell ring.After a pause, our door opened once more.

There stood George. This was his finest performance; for a full ten seconds he managed to hold himself upright.

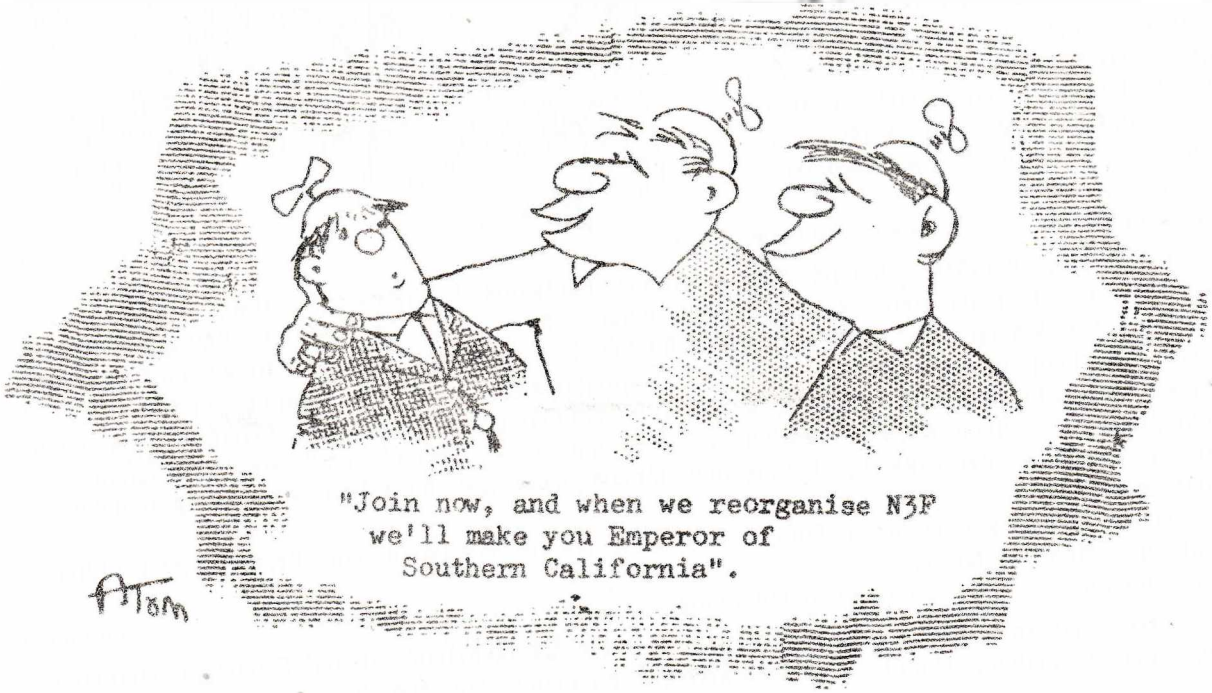
"Ladies and Gentlemen", he quavered. "Mr. Robert Heinlein!"

With a big grin, Walt swept into the room and began dishing out Heinlein hard cover editions, which I presumed constituted the entire contents of his Heinlein collection.

"Where's Walt?" asked George, looking very worried, trying to focus his optics.

I had to admire the verve and initiative shown by James White. He backed out of the room. In a few seconds he was back again, wearing an old torn pair of trousers, a black-stained shirt, his hair standing on end.

"Ah, there you are", wheezed George, looking at James. "Come and meet Robert Heinlein...But where is James?"



Bob Shaw, caught in the spirit of the thing, leapt out of the door and reappeared almost immediatly, wearing glasses and black pin-striped trousers. He went over to Peggy and gave her a couple of smackers, and grinned at George.

"Yes,yes", beamed George, taken in by Bob's clever acting, "here's James...But I can't see Bob Shaw".

Well, Peggy is a girl who, up to then, I had always regarded as highly intelligent and sensible, not given to hasty decisions. It must have been her sporting instincts which made her rush out of the room and re-appear as Bob. I could see that she had stuffed a pillow up the front of her jumper and a couple of rolled blankets down the back. I liked the added subtle youch of authenticity she gave the performance by munching a ham shank.

"There you are,Bob", said George, patting Peggy on the back. "We're all here now except, er, heh heh, er, Peggy".

I am still trying to find out who kicked me through the door. I found myself sitting in the hallway, and a rasping voice shouting in my ear..."Quick...you're Peggy!"

During my lifetime I have had to take a number of momentous decisions. Once, some fool asked me to jump out of an aeroplane... but my problem was the most crucial ever to confront me.

To impersonate Peggy...I should have to SHAVE OFF MY MOUSTACHE.

GHOD!....THE ENORMITY OF THE SACRIFICE!

But I just couldn't let Willis down. I ran upstairs to the bathroom. I clipped off my beautiful growth. I shaved my upper lip, blinking at the mirror through my tears.

Diving into Madeleine's bedroom I grabbed a dress, and with the manipulation of a couple of powder puffs my disguise was complete.

I would sue Willis afterwards, I consoled myself.

"You look delightful, if I may say so," croaked George. "You remind me of Lily Langtry, or Dame Clara Butt." He pinched my cheek.

Suffering catfish. I began to think I had made a dire mistake.

********** *********

Listen, folks. Some fantastic things happened that night. I want to tell you about them so that you can see what lengths we went to to keep George happy. It's important, too, because it has some bearing on the subsequent investigation. But get the situation clear before we go any further. Remember that Walt was "Heinlein"...Bob was "James"...Peggy was "Bob"...I was "Peggy". Bear all this in mind, because from now on things start getting complicated.

Now I'll take you back to the grim events of The Night That Heinlein Never Came.

********* ********** ********** ******

The shape of things to come was heralded when George entered with the drinks. With commendable foresight he brought in the

glasses on a tea-trolley, thus providing himself with a crafty form of support, of which he was obviously in need. He free-wheeled up to me and said;

"Here is your tomato juice, Peggy".

Heck. I fluttered my eyelashes coyly and sipped out of the little glass, surrepticiously adjusting a vagrant powder puff.Oh for a dirty great pint of Guiness.

Then I heard a horrible groan. Bob Shaw, the real Bob Shaw that is, had fainted. George, thinking of him as James, had given him a glass of water, James's favourite beverage.

But worse was to come. Bob is renowned throughout fandom for his ability to absorb beer in considerable quantities. George, well aware of this and anxious to please, had brought in a full quart bucket. Now he gave it to Peggy, thinking that she was Bob, see?

"Mr. Heinlein", cackled George, "come and see, er, Bob Shaw drink a quart of beer in one gulp."

What else could we do? We crowded round and offered encouragement. Peggy, her nose wrinkled, touched the frothy top with her little tongue...then she started to turn green. She did her best however. Oh yes. Though I did begin to get worried when it started coming out of her ears.

George's next chore was to hand round cigars to the men.

Once more Peggy had an admiring audience as she tackled a six-inch Churchill Special. It was unfortunate that she was stretched out behind the piano, and, confidentially, I thought things were going too far when I espied the whites of her eyes through a cloud of blue smoke. James, I felt, was most anxious to give his bride some husbandlike succour, but he was supposed to be Walt and had to keep up thr pretence. You had to look at everything through George's eyes.

The seconds ticked slowly onwards. The pseudo-American accent of Walt's impersonation grated horribly on our tortured eardrums. I felt sort of queer not being able to take a bite out of my moustache whenever I wanted, and I hated to have to have to use a falsetto voice every time George came within vocal range.

I regretted that since their honeymoon James and Peggy had been so...attatched. I kept having the feeling that maybe more was expected of me. But I had suffered sufficient ignominy as it was.

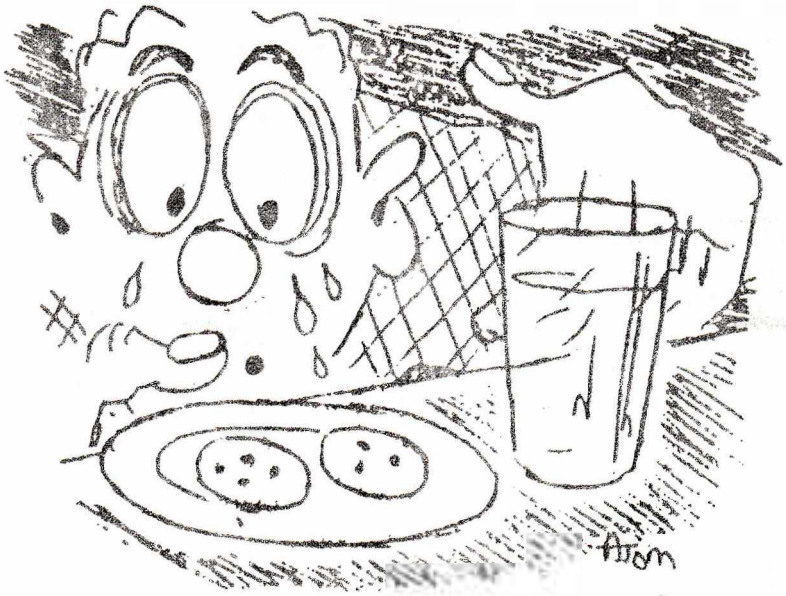
At long last George announced supper.

********* ********** ********** *********

Bob's cry of anguish haunts me to this day.

Let me tell you about it.

The table in the dining room was completely covered by one of the biggest displays of eatables it has ever been my fortune to behold...items ranging from the delicacy of Madeleine's coffee creams to the brutal reality of Walt's own specially baked gingerbread. In one corner of the table was set a little plate on which was placed three arrowroot biscuits and a glass of water. James White, as you know, is restricted to a very severe diet. Conversely, at the other end of the table, was a large tray with a mountain of cakes and sandwiches, fronted by a retractable grab, an innovation designed by Bob Shaw after a trip to an amusement arcade...the idea being that whilst eating with the left hand, he could produce a delicacy from the other end of the table by dextrous manipulations with the right hand, thus saving valuable eating time.



As James, (pretending to be Walt, remember), led "Heinlein" (Walt) into the dining room, we followed. To our horror James, by some dormant instinct, took his place by the frugal snack, and Bob sat eagerly hunched over his invention. The gleam of bliss in Bob's eyes as he reached forward was in striking contrast to the look of fortitude on James's face as he picked up his first biscuit.

In a second our plot would have been torn asunder.

With typical Bleary alacrity I switched off the lights and, amist the baffled shouts of alarm, swung the table round to place Bob, James, and Peggy in the positions to suit their aliases.

I switched the lights on again.

As I said, the groan of anguish from Bob was terrible, like the midnight screams of a dememted person, as he saw the thin biscuits staring up at him. But he was comparatively fortunate.Poor Peggy was now fully aware of what constituted Shaw in all his diverse facets. Already she had drunk a quart of beer and smoked a cigar...now she was faced with and even more monumental effort.Her task was to clear the table or cause everlasting humiliation to an

aged fan, too far gone to be able to live it down.

The most serious part of the affair though was the glazed look of frustration on Bob's face as the Grab careered recklessly over the comestibles, operated by the ardent Charters, anxious to keep Bob, (as he thought) fully supplied. Bob's demeanor foreboded mental disorders to come. I calculated that from the long term point of view Peggy's case wasn't so bad...a few weeks of fasting would see her in reasonable shape again.

Irish Fandom was sure getting itself all mixed up.

********** ********** ********** ******

I hope you'll all able to keep up with me. I can tell you that the events portrayed so far constituted the most nerveracking experience that ever befell me. It is a constant source of wonder to me that I am able to present the facts to you in such a clear and precise manner. Many folks would get lost trying to explain these complex details, but you can rely on the Goon to keep things straight, as always.

I must now relate the climax of The Heinlein Affair, culminating in the strange behaviour of George Charters.

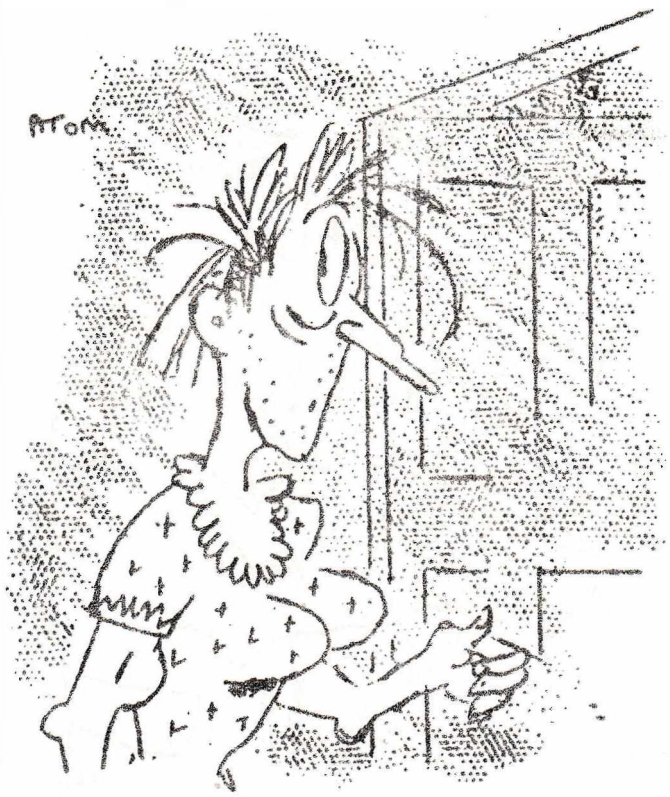
********** ********** ********** ******

We had hoped that George would go home, or fall asleep, or something. But he hung around persistently, delighted to be of service to "Heinlein". At about 2am it was obvious that the situation was desperate.

"Say, folks", drawled Walt in a Belfast-American accent that sounded like nothing on earth. "I guess I'd better hit the hay".

"Good idea, Mr. Heinlein", we chorused, and everyone left for their respective rooms.

I had to go home, because I was required for duty in my mundane occupation, so I hung around until everyone had retired. Then I crept into George's room to change. It was the only room I could go to,see. The others being occupied by Walt and Madeleine, James and Peggy, and Bob Shaw and Sadie...as their real selves I hasten to add.



I had just divested myself of Madeleine's dress when George,whom I had supposed to be fast asleep, suddenly sat up in bed, his night cap quivering.

"Brazen seductress!" he bleated, grabbing his shawl. "Shame on you, Peggy. Get thee behind me, temptress."

So saying he hobbled out of the room and entered the Willis bedchamber, intent upon making a complaint to the head of Irish Fandom.

I peered round the door, and saw George actually hopping out of Walt's room,

shouting, "No...no...I cannot believe it!"

I saw him crawl up the stairs and heard the sound of Bob's door being opened, followed by a moan of anguish. Then he apparantly opened the door of James and Peggy's room. There was a terrible scream of, "NO. THIS IS TOO MUCH!" and George flashed, yes, flashed past me and on down the stairs. Eventually I heard the front door being banged so vigorously that the fanlight smashed...

I couldn't begin to understand it.

Bleary was baffled.

********* ********* ********* *********

Well, folks, those are the facts. And you already know about the phenomena that followed that shocking night. Now follow my investigation for Willis. Read on and see the Goon in smooth rippling action.

********* ********** ********** **********

First I sent a coded telegram to Art, head of the G.D.A. in England, detailing him to approach selected fans over there and try to find out why we had been sent to Coventry. Next morning I saw a G.P.O. messenger boy screech to a halt outside my house. He rammed five buff envelopes through the letter box. Art had been on the ball. I ripped open the envelopes;

CHAOS AT RAINHAM....HARRIS BECOME
MONK.....ART.
CAMPBELL SHAVED OFF BEARD
LEFT AUTHENTIC...ART
ENEVER CUT DOWN PASSION
FLOWERS....ART
SHIRLEY MARRIOTT SEEN EMBARKING
BELFAST FERRY...ART
LONDON CIRCLE RUMOURED OFFERING
CHARTERS SANCTURY...ART.

Charters again. It seemed the key to the problem might well lie in Bangor,Co.Down, ancient seat of the Charters family; but it would never do to venture to that remote fastness without disguise.

After some hours deliberation I hit on the origional idea of passing myself off as a Max Brand merchant. Subtlety is our watchword. I fitted myself out in a long black overcoat, check cap and thick horn-rimmed spectacles and tucked a couple of hard cover Max Brand books under my arm.

As I shuffled nervously down the tree-lined avenue of Lancaster Place, Bangor, I saw the venerable sage himself, sitting back, grim of countenance, in his armoured bathchair. His gnarled fingers were lovingly

caressing the worm-riddled but of an ancient muzzle-loading flintlock.

He looked up as I approached. "Howdy," he growled.

"How do you do,sir," I breathed in a complicated accent. "I am authorised by my firm to give you these books, free, if you can produce one of our Max Brand publications."

"How do you know I read Max Brand stories, stranger?"

He peered at me suspiciously.

I laughed nervously.

"I sorta noticed the Bar 20 sign hammered onto the front gate," I explained. George takes this cowboy hobby seriously,folks I forget the medical term for his abberation.

"Heh,heh," said George, "heh,heh."

Putting his bathchair into overdrive, shouting the while, "Hi yo Silver!", he drove recklessly into his house, leaving the door open behind him. He turned left into the library. I tiptoed right into his study. I looked round keenly, grabbed his corespondence file, flicked through the pages...

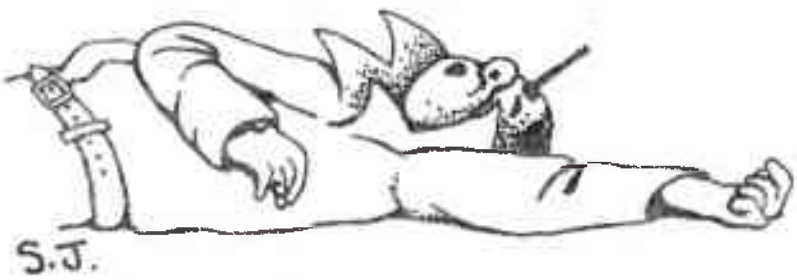
Ghod.

I stuffed the file into my pocket, rushed to the library door and locked it, left the two books on the doorstep as some sort of consolation, and rushed home.

I opened the corespondence file and read it with growing horror. No wonder we were all up the well known creek.

There were carbons of letters to the FAPA, SAPS and OMPA directorates, the Science Fiction Writers of America, the World Science Fiction Association, the ESFA, the LASFS, the Outlanders, the Derelicts of Toronto, the ISFCC, the N3F, Ken Slater, the London Circle and other respected fan organisations, including the Los Angeles Insurgents. I read the last one with pangs of anguish gripping my intestines...

> "....with a great personage like your compatriot Robeet Heinlein in the house, I should have expected the little known and generally unsuspected eroticism of Irish Fandom to have continued to remain decently concealed. Judge then the alarm of a hard cover merchant of my standing must have felt to behold beside his bed the panting semi-clad figure of Peggy White struggling to remove a strange item of underclothing. This was not all, however. Rushine indignantly to Walt's room to expostulate, I was shocked and grieved to find that respected professional author from Max Brand's own country preparing to enter the Willis bed, whilst it was occupied by the first lady of Irish Fandom. My one thought at this stage was to denounce this dastardly intrigue. I rushed up the stairs to the rooms occupied by the Shaws and the Whites. I shall say nothing of what I found in the first...Sadie is a young girl and easily



carried away by the blandishments of a successful professional author who has been to Paris and is a fully paid-up member of the British Interplanetary Society...but in this second room. First promiscuity, then adultery, and now this. You will understand, Mr.Laney, that..."

I could read no more. It was fantastic, ghastly, but I could see what had happened. George's mind had completely misinterpreted a perfectly innocent state of affairs. That night we had flogged ourselves mercilessly, made every possible sacrifice, spared no conceivable effort to make his remaining days happy...and then in a few unguarded minutes the whole edifice of well-meant deception had fallen on our own heads. Seeing what he had thought he had seen, the ancestral pride of the Charters had come to the fore. His keen sense of justice, his sincere belief in the fundamental clean-living principles of fandom, had made him cast friendship to the winds and take upon himself the stern task of publicly revealing what he took to be licentiousness on our part. Whilst all the time my bare upper lip bore, had he but known, silent witness to our innocence...to our selfless desire to enable George to think that he had butled for Robert Heinlein.

And there is the very crux of my dilemma. I have solved the case, only to be faced with an even greater problem. What can we do now? It is unthinkable that Irish Fandom should continue to bear unjustly the stigma of moral pariahs. On the other hand... how can we tell George the truth? His agony would be twofold... he would find that not only had he been hoaxed by a fake Heinlein and his hour of glory was a sham, but that he had made a humiliating spectacle of himself by falsely denouncing his friends to fandom. It would be enough to bow his grey hairs in sorrow to gaffa.

But after much deep thought the master minds of The Bleary Eyes have come up with a solution. This article reveals the truth to fandom at large..a special copy of this HYPHEN has been printed for George, containing seventeen of his columns, and we can tell him that their genius was such that fandom forgave us everything.

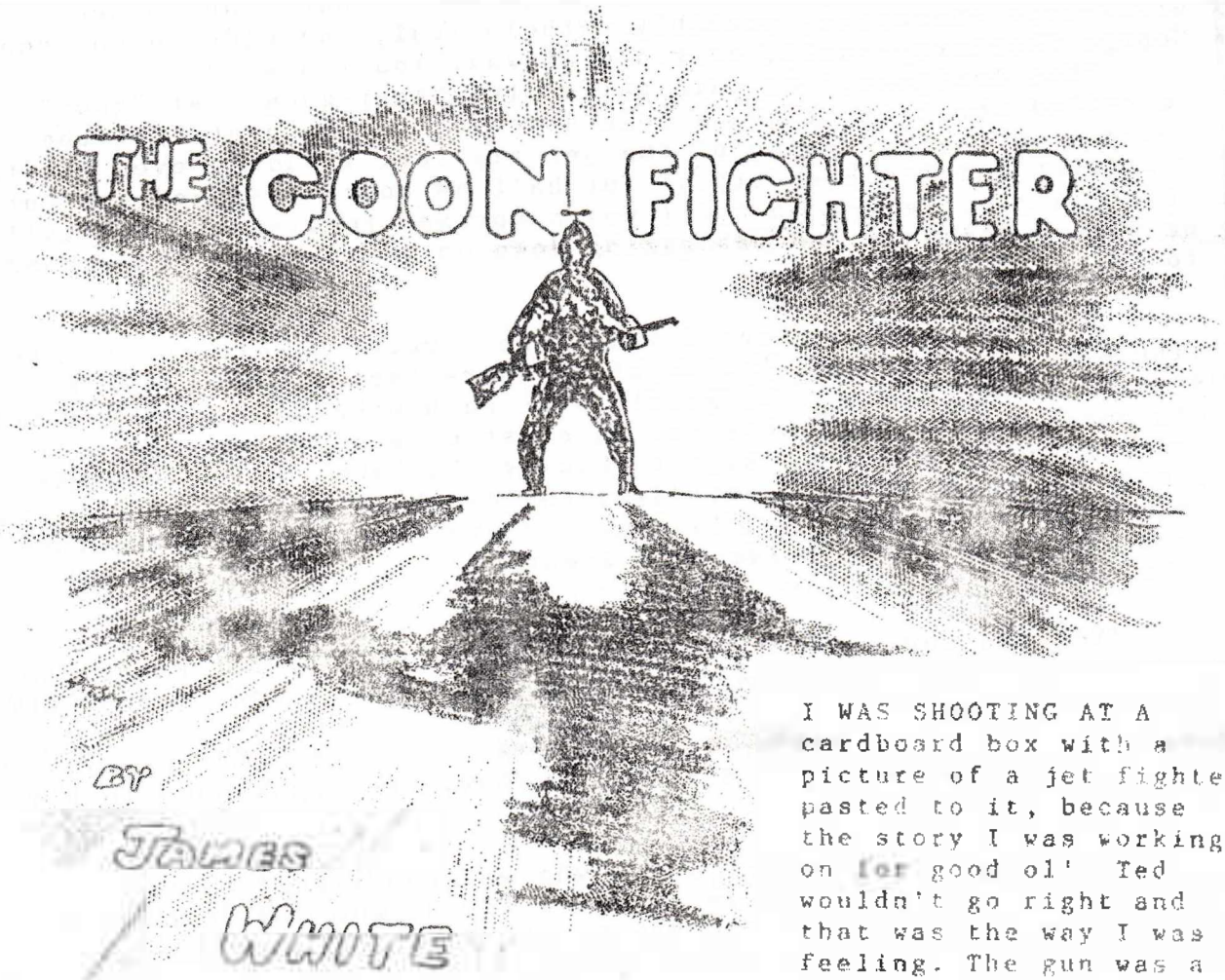
It remains to reconcile George to us. As I see it, the only way we can do it without telling him the truth is to modify his old-fashioned moral standards. To this great endeavour I am willing to sacrifice myself, but I need your help.Send me anything you can think of that might broaden his mind....banned books, French postcards, Marilyn Monroe calendars, anything like that. Selflessly I will sacrifice my leisure hours to studying them carefully and working out ways of showing them to George.

No, no. I don't want any thanks for this stern task. Just part of the G.D.A. service, that's all.

JOHN BERRY.

HYPHEN 16. 1956.

THE COON FIGHTER



BY JAMES WHITE

I WAS SHOOTING AT A cardboard box with a picture of a jet fighter pasted to it, because the story I was working on for good ol' Ted wouldn't go right and that was the way I was feeling. The gun was a .177 air rifle by B.S.A. - a really sweet weapon with adjustable sights---and the range was approximately three yards (my astigmatism is bad enough to make things interesting, and I've found that shooting is much better than playing the harmonica). I was just about to squeeze another shot off when HE appeared suddenly beside the work table, just outside the line of fire. This, with me, is an awful dangerous position to be in.

I could see at once that he was a fan: the old pullover, the worn sports-coat and the inkstains on the trousers were the honourable uniform of his calling. But there was a strange, hazy quality about him. His face was sensitive, almost aesthetic, and the eyes, though keen and mirroring both humour and intelligence, were hard to focus on---I could not, and cannot, say whether he wore glasses or not---and there was a peculiar familiarity about him. But the more I tried to place him the less like anybody he became.

He was clean shaven. Since John Berry I'm well disposed to all clean-shaven people. Hospitably, I motioned him to lie down beside me and passed him the gun. While he was aiming I said, "What's your name?"

He hesitated. His features stiffened. In a voice thick with suppressed emotion he told me his name.

"But that's impossible," I protested. "That's an ancient Greek-type character, possibly mythological, and older even than George Charters---well, very old anyway. You look---"

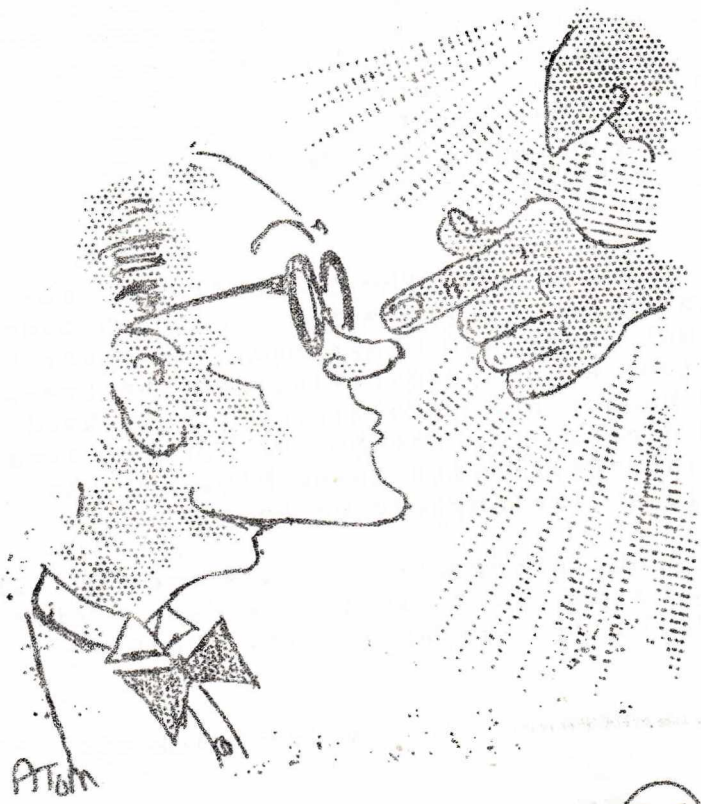
"Not Antigone," he said patiently. "Anti-goon." At "goon" he pulled the trigger and a hole appeared in the centre of the roundel on the port wing of the jet fighter. I hadn't even hit the plane yet and I'd been trying for half an hour. I sighed and put away the gun. We got up and I was surprised to discover how tall he seemed suddenly. He was gazing down on me sternly. He seemed to tower.

At 6'3½" and 13 stone I'm no mean towerer myself and I felt like making a fight of it. We stood there facing each other for several minutes, towering grimly over each other. I thought I had him once, but he must have had an elastic spine or something, because he strinched up higher than my absolute top. I towered--I mean tired--first and sat down, the ex-champion towerer of Irish Fandom, a beaten man. An old fan, and overtowered. He spoke then, in a great, sonorous voice. I'd swear he was carrying his own echo chamber.

"You are James White," he said. "Contributor, for money, to such professional magazines as New Worlds, Astounding, Hapna, and like that?"

I said, "Guilty." It seemed, somehow, the right word to say to that mighty voice.

"You are also the James White who was castigated by the unspeakable fake-fan Harris as a sex-fiend, who did involuntary service as a door-mat in the Bay Hotel, Portballintrae, while seeking material for the mighty Beacon Report, and who.." the tone to a sort of 'This Is Your Life' voice.."fought, actually fought, the dear departed neo-Eskimo Bob Shaw so that an aesthetically beautiful spaceship should appear on the cover of Slant 6--of glorious and immortal memory.. instead of an early prototype of a certain calendar embellishment? Are you, were you, that fan?"



"I was, am," I answered, feeling proud and kind of humble and a little ashamed of the vile pro type ms piled beside the typer.

"I think I can use you," he went on. "But tell me one thing. If given the chance, what

would you like to do to John Berry, alias The Goon, part-time policeman and dactyloscopic expert, and sinister brain--I use the expression loosely--controlling the fumbling tentacles of the Goon Detective Agency?"

I told him what I would like to do, and how many times I had tried to do it while playing Ghoodminton. It seemed to be the right answer, because he smiled. Then he began to talk rapidly.

"I can stand Berry," he said, "in small doses and providing he approaches me down-wind, but the G.D.A. is another matter. That ..must..go! That vicious, unholy, parasitic organisation whose operatives--mastermoroned by Berry--are picked from among the most bird-brained element in fandom. Why, one of his minions has pinions yet--a caged budgeriger raised behind bars, a goal-bird, stir-begotten! I, on the other hand, am the arch-enemy of the G.D.A., and the spirit of all that is good and wholesome and intelligent in fandom...dedicated to the noble crusade of bringing these aberrated jerks in dirty raincoats with their Marilyn Monroe fixations back to the true fold. As you must have suspected by now

"It says that this new fan group will have no bickering and a friendly atmosphere.....the rest is obscured by bloodstains."

I am somewhat of a super genius, a fannish combination of Doc Savage, The Shadow, and The Saint, and if you're going to write this up you'd better use quasi-quotes because, though I am an entity wholly unique in fandom, you wouldn't notice it because I'm so modest and unassuming." He sighed, then after a thoughtful silence. "And to think, a few months ago I saved Berry's life the night Heinlein came."

"Oh, you foo---" I began, then, "Huh? But Heinlein didn't come. And you weren't there either!"

"I was present," he said simply, "and so was Heinlein. In the confusion both our activities passed unnoticed, especially by such a superficial observer as The Goon. But I fear that even you have been basing your estimate of that ghastly affair on a quite erroneous assumption---viz, that the events of that night were merely a debacle of nightmare proportions instead of a cunningly engineered and brilliantly thwarted attempt on the life of one of the group. Listen."

He began pacing again.

It had started with word of John's intentions--he had stated that when his hundreth fannish-fiction story was accepted he was going to turn pro-- being carried to America via the Bulmers. At the subsequent emergency meeting of the Science Fiction Writers of America it had been unanimously decided to defend their livelihood at all costs. Lots were drawn, and Heinlein chosen as the hatchet man. In Ireland, Heinlein sent a cable telling Irish Fandom that he could not come, but he had been in Belfast all the time and that night was lurking outside Oblique House disguised as a postman. While an ICBM team waited in a secret clearing in the White garden in case he should fail and Berry's house, with Berry in it, should have to be destroyed.....

"With a few well-timed suggestions I set in motion the chain of events which were reported in HYPHEN 16. Heinlein could not act effectiely with everyone diguised as everyone else, and retired from the scene in frustration. Meanwhile I had protected innocent life from the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile by fomenting an indignant demonstration of householders in the Plush Park district calling for the Berrys to be moved. It was not difficult. The guided missile was of course launched, but it is programmed to descend on John's old Flush Park address only if John, or a reasonable facsimile, appears there. It will remain harmlessly in orbit around the Earth unless the new tenant decides to grow a moustache."

I said. "But...but why are you telling me this?"

"All us altruistic arch-enemies of evil and corruption have their humble scribes," he said simply. "Besides, I need someone

who will be able to call me up should the powers of darkness, typified by Black Berry, look like prevailing. You see, on the next fan night George is going to bring up a distinguised American visitor called Darrell C. Richardson, who wants George to collaborate with him on his next hard cover Cowboys and Indians anthology! Not just a mention, mind, but half the book credited to him. It will be the crowning achievement of George's distinguished career..."

He broke off, frowning suddenly. "But John will be there, and will, I fear, place his big flat foot in it and louse things up for George. If that looks like happening, you are to summon me!" The holes in his sweater enlarged as his chest swelled. He added, "You can do that by going unobtrusivly to the nearest window, opening it, and going, "Hoi!"

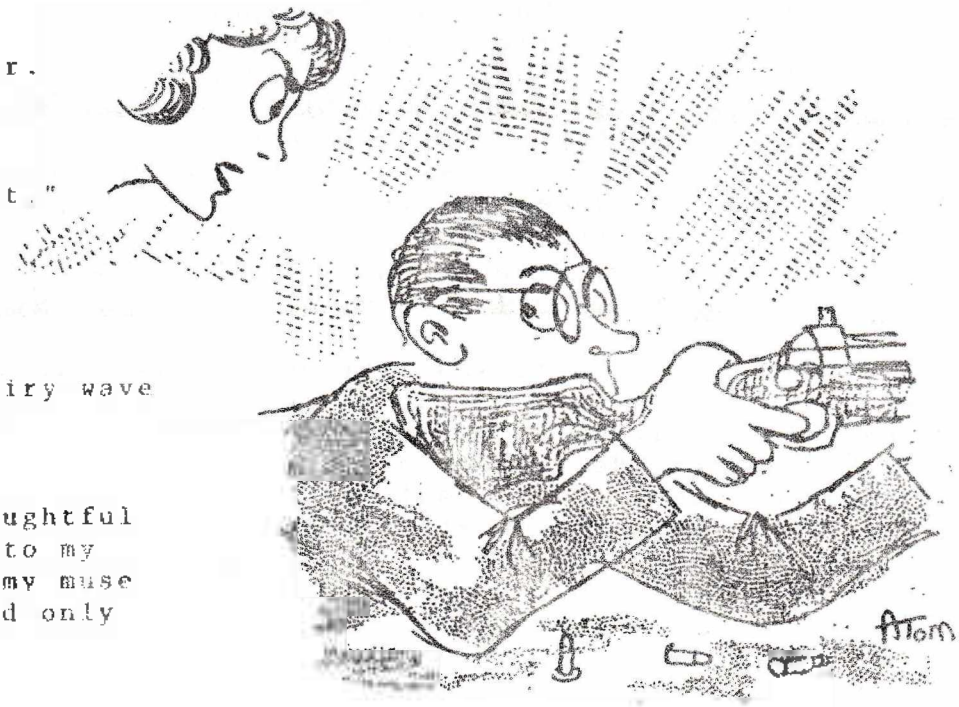
I said, "Hoy?"

"No. Hoi!"

"Uh-huh. Louder.

"HOI!!"

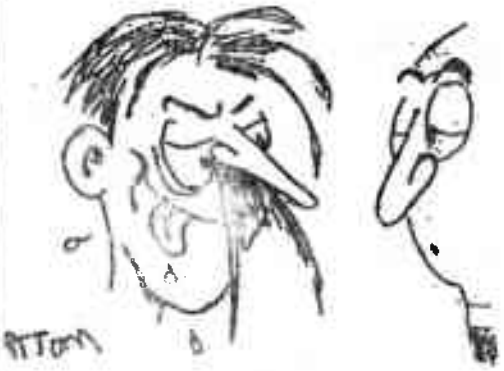
That's right," he said, over the sound of my window tinkling onto the doorstep. Then with an airy wave of the hand he disappeared.



I was thoughtful as I returned to my shooting, and my muse was interrupted only

by Peggy returning from visiting a neighbour. She put her head into the doorway, saw what I was doing, glanced at the unfinished ms. beside the typer, and said sweetly, "Five hundred words before supper, Buster, or you don't get any."

DARRELL C. RICHARDSON HAD TURNED OUT to be a real nice parson, offering only token resistance to our urgings to play Ghoodminton.Then quickly producing a monster bat that George had made specially for him. But out of respect for the Cloth our games had been



restrained to the point of politeness. That was before John came, of course, and when I heard his feet pounding up the stairs I felt qualms.

The door crashed open and John bounded into the middle of the room yelling, "Hi, folks!" I had to admire the gentle old-world charm with which George performed the introductions. John said,

"Suffering catfish,Mr.Richardson I'm sure pleased..."

Then he screamed shrilly and pointed. He had seen The Calendar.

I was rather proud of that calendar at that moment..or rather of the minature full-length suit of woollen underwear which Peggy had knitted to render Marilyn less exposed looking. (A visiting neighbour, while this tiny garment had been in the making, had come to entirely different conclusions regarding its purpose and had done the washing-up that night) It, also, had been done out of respect for the Cloth, but John obviously wasn't seeing it that way. All he could see was that he couldn't see what he wanted to see, see? He advanced growling on the now puritanical Monroe, lecherous hand outstretched to tear her modest garment aside.

MM' face and feet weren't enough for him, apparantly...Peggy, I must add, had knitted little mittens and a nightcap for her too.

I didn't see who it was that pushed the printing press on top of him, but during the subsequent lull in conversation Walter was successful in initiating a movement down stairs for tea. But out of sight was most definitely not out of mind. John, still dazed and semi-conscious (his normal mental condition) was intent on talking about you know what and who to our distinguished visitor. And somehow, somewhere, he had managed to get things horribly mixed up.

"I guess you look at the stars a lot, Mr. Richardson?' He wriggled in his seat and positivly drooled.

"Well, no," began Darrell C. Richardson. He shot a puzzled look at George and lifted one eyebrow.

"But as much as you can," John insisted. "Mount Palomar is pretty high up. Overlooking Los Angeles I bet. Hollywood.eh?" He smacked his lips loudly and slurped.

"I thought you mean't astronomical observations, Mr. Berry," said Darrell C. Richardson coldly.

"Oh, sure," leered John. "Heavenly bodies, eh? Yuk yuk." He nudged the Reverend Richardson knowingly, knocking his cup over so that the tea ran all down his black gaiters.

George winced and kicked Berry's ankle, but there was no stopping him. "Oh, Marilyn!" he chortled, a leer convulsing his face. Arms outstretched, lips puckering up and moustache twanging faintly he began dancing round the room outlining lascivious silhouettes with his hands. "She just wears Chanel No.5 in her bedroom, doesn't she?" he babbled. Nobody could stop him.

Our distinguished visitor reacted with clenched fists and a poker face -- a red hot poker face. George was writhing in embarrassment; the rest of us twitched in sympathy as he rose to go, saying he would be late for work. His shoulders were slumped, his face grey and haggard, and for the first time in his life he looked about half his age. I knew that he lied. I alone knew that he had a late pass for tonight, but I understood and kept silent. George was a broken man,that was obvious. Darrell C. Richardson would never let him collaborate on his anthology now. He would use his simple, homspun psychology and conclude that a man was to be judged by the company he kept; and that would be that.

Indeed, at that moment Darrell C. Richardson also got up, nodded a curt goodbye to George and went firmly into the hall. I heard him pick up the 'phone and dial. "Give me very long distance," he said. "I want to speak to the Reverend Moorhead in Bettsville, Ohio, USA.. Yes, a parson to parson call."

"This," I thought suddenly, "is a job for what's-his-name, and now is my chance!"

I waited only until George could have got clear of the house and then I went to the window and leaned out. I took a deep breath--I needed it--and said the magic word, "Hoi!"

"Yoo-hoo," said a girl on the other side of the street who was leaning against a lamp standard. She waved an unlighted cigarette at me. I ignored her, for there, high above the housetops, arms outstretched and beanie-propellor dramatically reflecting an arc of starlight...He was coming...

He landed heavilly on one knee and the top of his head, having snagged himself on the soaring steelwork of Carol's swing. -- which had been designed, strangely enough, to support the combined weights of Irish Fandom. But he sprang to his feet unhurt, saying loftill, "Ouch."

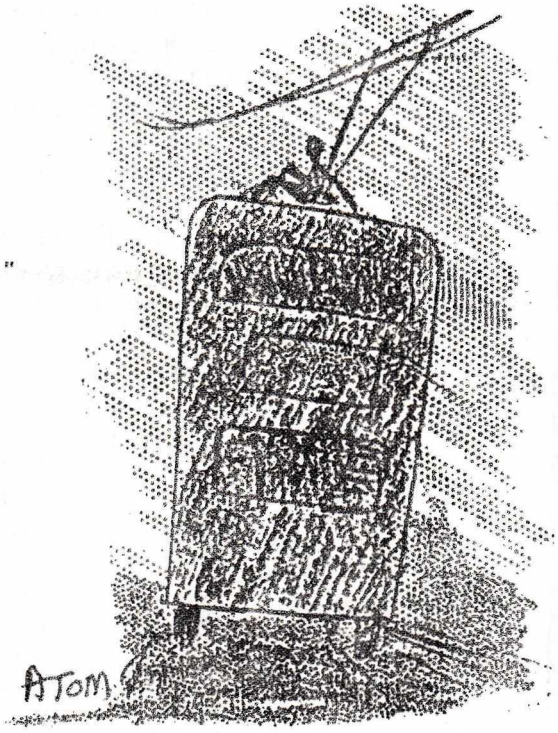
Stammering with excitement I began to tell him what had happened, but he held up a languid hand for silence. "I know all," he said, "up to the fact that even now Richardson is telephoning the Reverend Moorhead to tell him to circularise all Methosist clergy on HYPHENs mailing list to cancel their subscriptions.But fear not, for I, Anti-goon, have the solution to this trifling contretemps. You dressed tonight as you usually do for distinguished visitors, did you not?"

"Yes," I said wonderingly. "My new slate-blue gabardine over-coat, a homberg by Woodrow of London, and my brief case. Why?"

He waved the question aside. "The coat and hat will be enough. Fetch them. And I'll need some money."

"What! But I'm a poor starving pro-author----"

"At 6'3½" and 13 stones, starving?. Besides, you received a six-figure cheque--counting pennies and farthings--from Carnell yesterday. Quickly please!"



While prising open my fingers he continued, "This is what you have to do. Tell the gang not to worry, everything is under control, but to expect two visitors shortly..." He spoke rapidly for several seconds, explaining what was, he had to admit himself, a truly ingenious plan. He ended..."Don't tell John any of this, naturally, but if you think it will do any good you can try explaining to him again that this visitor is not the R.S.Richardson, renowned for his association with Astounding, Rory Faulkner and Mount Palomar. When the operation is successfully completed I will, of course, intercept George before he jumps into the river and send him back to the Reverend, who will by then regard him as a modern Florence Nightingale."

"Florence.....?"

"You know what I mean," Anti-goon said with an impatient wave of his hand. "Now. Do you understand your instructions?"

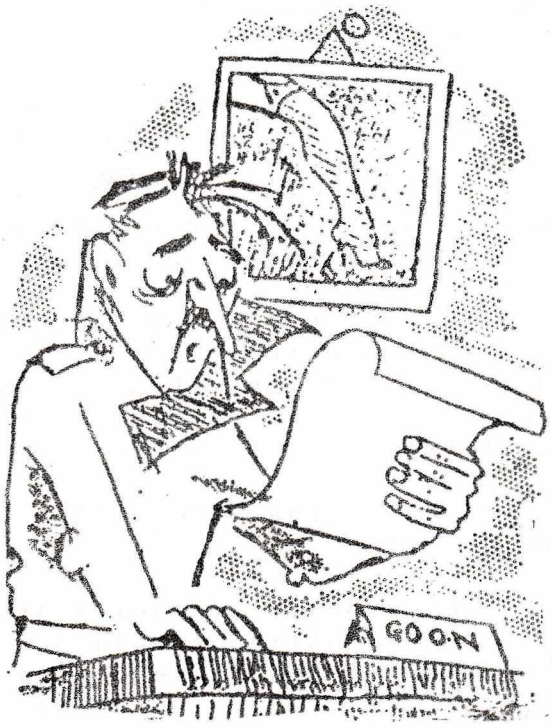
"Yes," I said, conscious that the awe I felt in the presence of this great fannish being showed in my voice. "But...but..won't you eait a second so that Walter and the others can meet you?"

"No," he said quietly. "I must remain a figure of mystery, un-self-seeking and working in hidden ways for the ultimate good of fandom. Besides, the others are a suspicious bunch, and they've better eyesight than you." So saying he took three or four limping steps, spread his arms and took off. He disappeared rapidly down the Upper Newtownards Road on the roof of a trolley-bus, having snagged an overhead wire this time.

I closed the window and quickly explained the plan to the others.

When Darrell C. Richardson returned from making his 'phone call he sat down in silence and stared so coldly into the fire that Madeleine had to go into furious action with the bellows to keep it alive. This was going to be ticklish, I thought. But Irish Fandom, George, and the awesome entity that was Anti-goon were depending on me...I spoke.

"Uh, er, Sir," I began, "I...we, all apologise for the embarrassment this unfortunate creature has caused you..." John had his pin-ups spread on the floor around the visitor's chair now. "But, so that you will leave us with a little pity in your heart as well as disgust, we had better let you know the shameful truth about this pitiable mass of sub-humanity at your feet."John Berry, the John Berry, has been called to London to assist the Yard in a complex investigation. This, well I had better explain the dark and terrible secret in the Berry family tree, and trust to your humanity and charity to keep it inviolate."



Our distinguished visitor was beginning to show interest, I saw. The Goon continued slavering over his photographs, oblivious to what I was saying since I was still using words or more than one syllable. I pressed on.

Berry, I explained, was a Siamese triplet..but not quite . The frightful, monstous thing which had occurred 28 years ago

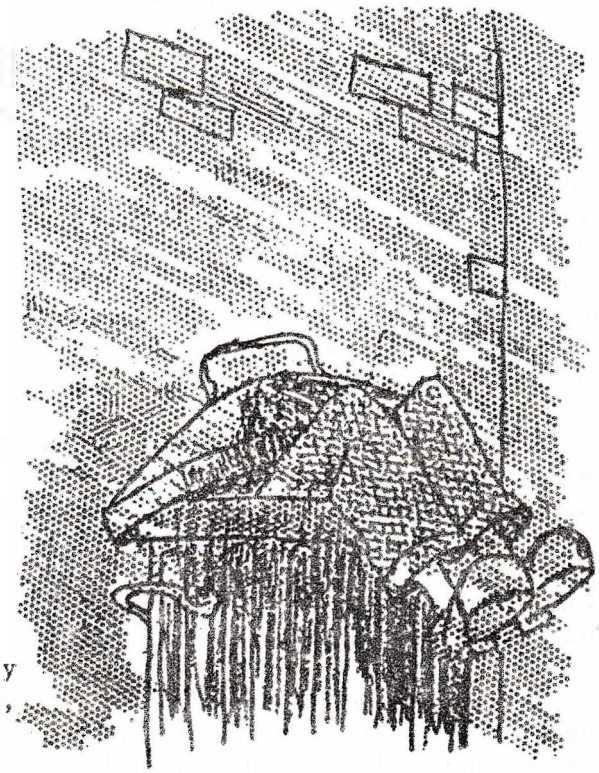
had driven thirteen obstetricians to drink and stamp collecting. One of the triplets born on that dreadful night had been the intelligent responsible guardian of the law we all knew; another had been a normal budgerrigar; but the third, the thing frolicing about on the floor, had been an alien something halfway between the other two.

"George, who looks after this poor thing and takes it out for walks, thought you might be disappointed if you did not meet John and hoped, in the honest kindness of his old heart, that it might take his place. With infinite patience and love he has been nurturing this bird-sized brain in this spindly body so that it can, for short intervals at least, pass itself as humam. It is a work of great charity that George has been doing, but alas, this kindly deceit has been uncovered. I beg of you, however, do not think unkindly of George because of it, for he was only---"

"I always did say that old George was a gentleman," Darrell C. Richardson said softly, a mist forming over his eyes. Suddenly he straightened up. "But I find this difficult to believe; a creature, half budgie and half..." He looked down at the grovelling and snorting figure of John, then said. "Well, maybe not too difficult. But have you any evidence that this is true?"

There came a pounding on the front door bell, the sound of voices in the hallway, and two men were ushered into the room by Madeleine. They regarded the gathering for perhaps a second in silence.

Anti-goon's face was shadowed by the brim of my homberg, my beautifully tailored overcoat hung open revealing a crisp white surgical-type overall. The other man wore a similar jacket, but no overcoat. He was big and broad; thick hairy arms bulged out of the garment's short sleeves. There was a strong aura about them of fish and chips. Suddenly, they went into action.



At a nod from Anti-goon his mighty assistant advanced on Berry. John started kicking and screaming, but tenderly the big man administered a quick rabbit-punch. With an apologetic look he mumbled, "Sorry, but this is what I'm paid for," and carried him effortlessly out of the room.

I thought, "Yes, and with my money!"

In a harassed, tired,disgustingly noble voice Anti-goon said jerkily, "Sorry. Not responsible y'know. Might turn on you, break things, bite somebody. Pity,but there it

is. These things happen." He turned abruptly and strode out. The abduction had taken precisely three seconds. It had been over too quickly, I was sure, for our visitor to notice that the hospital the two medical men had come from bore the peculiar name of "Ballyhackmore Supper Saloon."

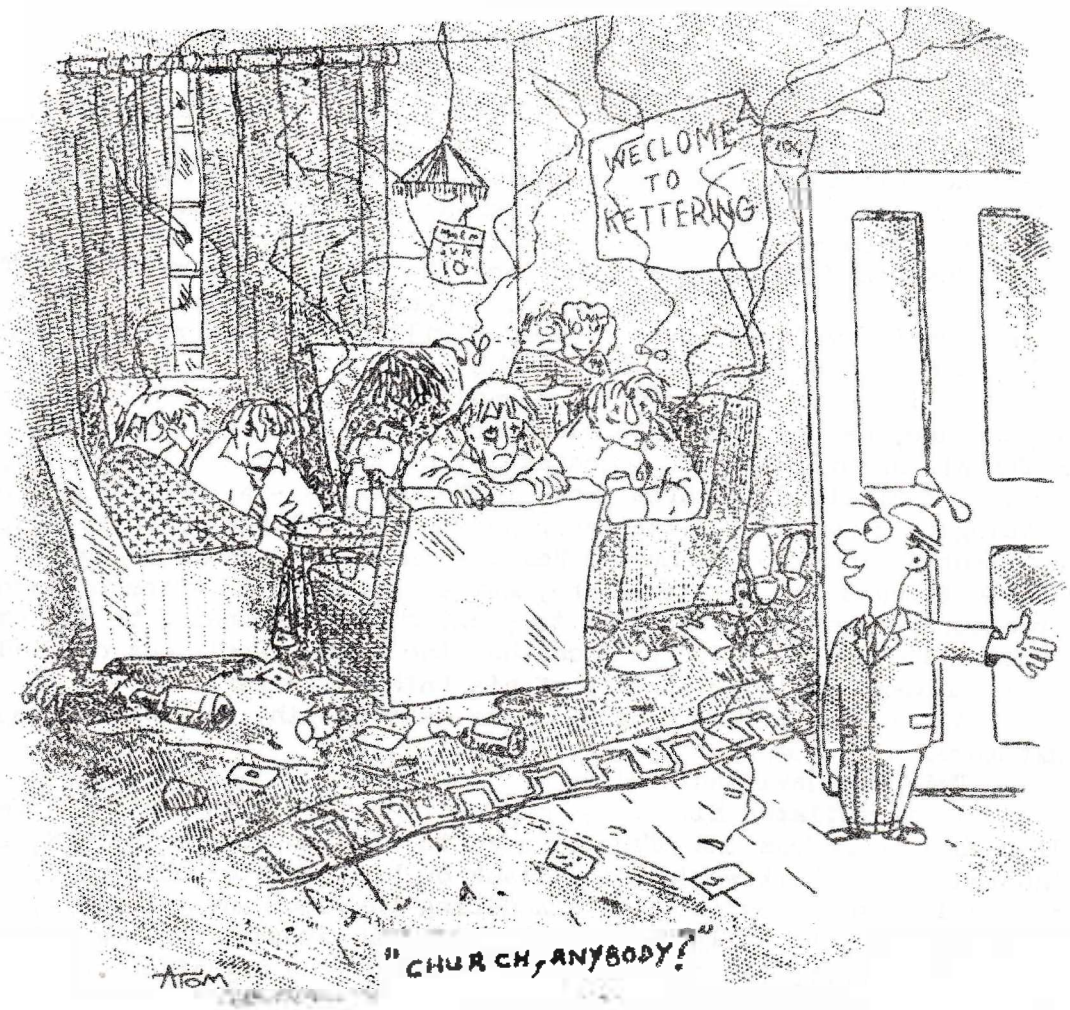
"Now," I said with a tremor in my voice, "do you believe us?"

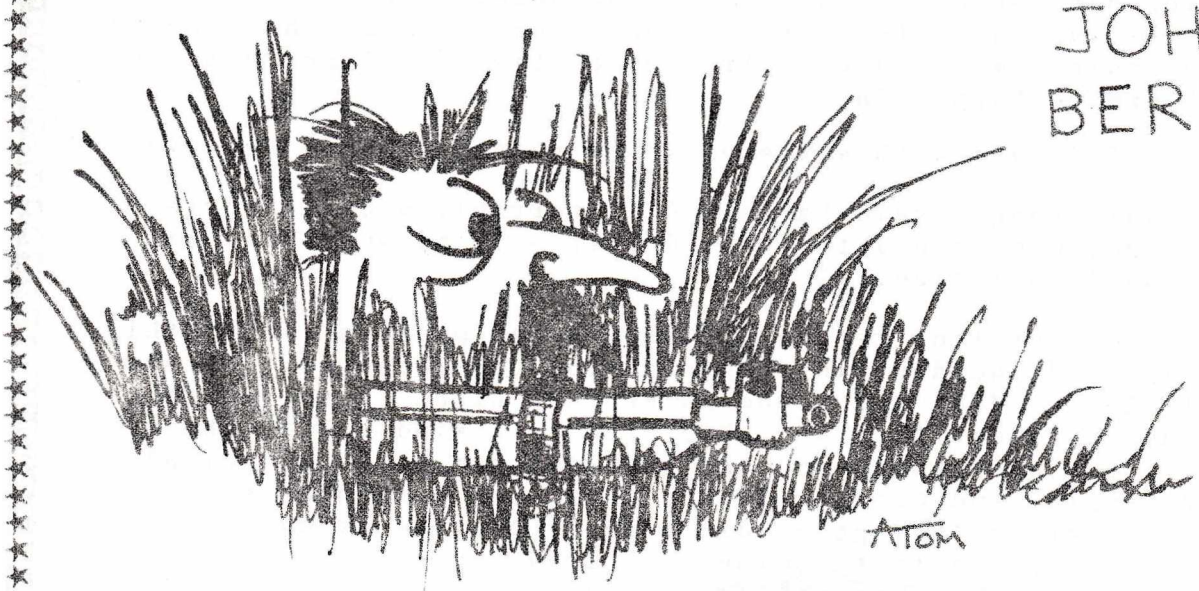
"I was wrong," said Darrell C., "terribly wrong. George is real George, George all the way. Oh, if only he were here so that I could apologise..."

With the smiling return of GATWC a few minutes later, this first reported incident in the Anti-goon crusade drew to a successful close. John was found later that night in the dustbin of an Amelia Street fish and chip dive by a kindly lady who worked in the neighbourhood, and she left him with the Animal Shelter people. And George, though he wouldn't reimburse me the money I had given Anti-goon, did however promise me an autographed copy of his forthcoming anthology. Everybody is happy now, and I can sleep peacefully at nights knowing that the days of the G.D.A. are numbered.

Just the same as I used to do before I knew that.

HYPHEN 17. 1956. James White.





JOHN BERRY.

'WARE ANTIGOON!

Once more, via the pages of HYPHEN, a scathing attack on the Goon has been made by vile pro and arch sex-fiend James 'Typer' White. For his malevolent activities he has allied himself as official scribe to the dreaded ANTIGOON, a character moulded on the Superman prototype, and named after Antigone, mentioned briefly by Walt Willis in his study of the Goon.

The story THE GOON FIGHTER, written by White, shows that ANTIGOON is a serious menace, and, looking ahead, I can state that the day will soon dawn when each individual member of fandom will have to ally him or herself under the banner of either ANTIGOON or the G.D.A.

It is obvious that Whites planning has been clever and methodical. Over a year ago, he fastened onto the innocent activities of the G.D.A. as a foible for his dribbling mind. Immediately, he sat down and wrote a 70,000 word novel (serialized in three parts in New Worlds - a prozine) his only motive being to convince fan that he possesses intelligence, skill, knowledge, a keen scientific brain, and money. Well, we all know he has money. In fact, James White flogged his scattered grey matter to death to write pro story after pro story, once even stooping to plagiarism (according to his editor). He ignored his blushing bride so much that the Goon, purely out of kindness, gave this innocent girl the benefit of his fatherly experience.

And so, after creating his name as a wealthy pro, White prepared the next move.

This was devilishly clever.

He ingratiated himself so much with Walt Willis that Ghod felt himself unable to refuse the offer of a White fannish mss for HYPHEN, and, like the man he is, Walt would not go back on his word to publish it, even when he found he would be publicly slandering the Goon and the G.D.A, which had served him so faithfully and so well. One can sympathize with Walt, faithful to the G.D.A, yet temporarily blinded by the magnificence of a James White article for HYPHEN.

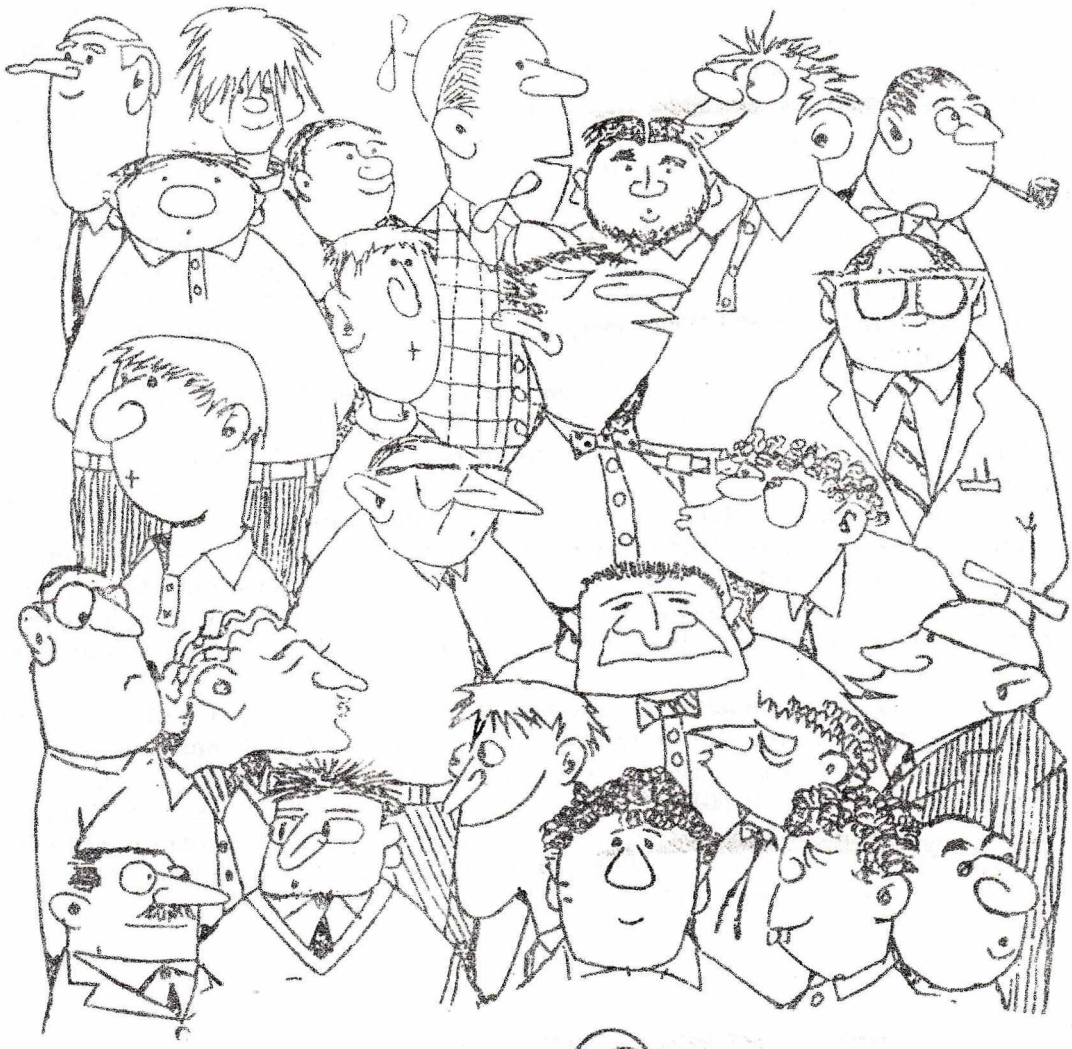
However, you G.D.Addicts can stagger back and rest assured that the Goon has taken preliminary steps to combat this cankerous growth.

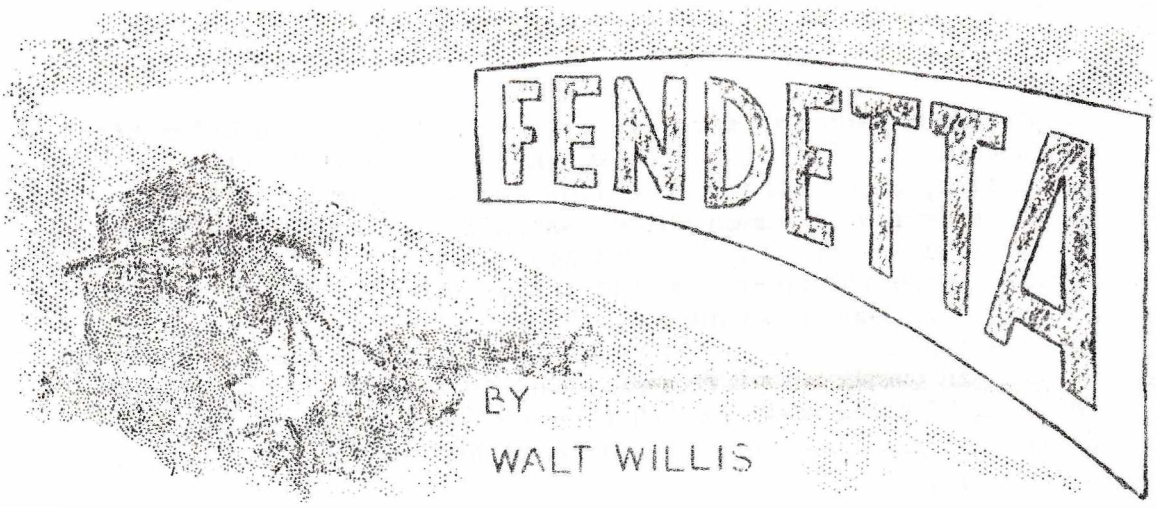
Here are a few of our plans, worked out in consultation with Art Thomson:-

1. To prepare as soon as possible a factual 'Classified Defamation' of James White. In this case, we shall not be restricted by convention, which tended to blight our previous defamations.
2. Print a review of James Whites serialized novel in New Worlds, by our literary critic, Pete Reaney.
3. Compile a special report on the inside story of James Whites typing honeymoon in London in spring, 1955.(Is it true that James was so keen on typing a story that Chuck Harris shared the honeymoon ????)
4. Publish in oneshot format a gripping confession by Peggy White entitled "I MARRIED A SEX MANIAC". (NOTE. The Goon assisted this distraught girl in the preparation of her memoirs ((it's smashin', honest)))

Finally, the Goon admits that James White, antiGOON scribe, has won the first round by virtue of the excellence of his story in the latest NYMEN.

But right will triumph.....





Last Christmas we were all invited to spend an evening with the Goon at his private residence. It's only about a mile from Oblique House so the others all came here first so I could show them the way. They had all been there before, of course, but I should explain that the Goon has cunningly taken up residence in a suburb with a street pattern as complicated as the plots of his stories, a maze impenetrable to anyone not armed with a secret chart and compass. The pavements are littered with the skeletons of enemies of the Goon -- bill collectors, process servers, etc -- who have perished miserably from exposure. I should also make it clear that the Great Man lives very democratically ; there is nothing about the house or its surroundings to indicate that anyone extraordinary lives there. In fact the Goon has cleverly contrived it so that his garden somehow conveys the impression that no one lives there at all.

However I eventually found my way to the mysterious semi-detached villa from which the tentacles of the Goon organisation slither all over the world. I pushed open the gate and let the others file past as I tried to shut it again. By the time I had found the other hinge the Goon had opened the door, and I followed the others into the darkened living room. After his appearance on the BBC's programme Saturday Night Out, the Goon had bought a television set of his own, the prices of them having dropped considerably about that time. We sat down and watched to see what the resources of the BBC had conjured up for our enjoyment.

Unfortunately, I had seen the film before, in the thirties. I wouldn't say it was the worst film I had ever seen, but I do remember that half way through the second reel the Manager had come round handing out free razors. It didn't seem to me to have improved much since then and while the fen were of course far too civilised to slash the seats of the Berry chesterfield suite, they were accustomed to the excitement and violence of ghoodminton on a fan night ; they were getting restive. I wondered if I might suggest that the TV be turned off.

And then, as my eyes became accustomed to the dimness, I noticed that there had been changes made since my last visit. The TV set was surrounded by a small barbed wire entanglement, with a length of heavy duty flex connected to it and a sign DANGER 250 VOLTS. Following the flex, I found it terminated in a glass fronted box screwed to the wall with another notice. TV SWITCH. BREAK GLASS IN CASE OF EMERGENCY. PENALTY FOR IMPROPER USE INFLAMMATION OF THE MUCOUS MEMBRANE.

"Goon," I said, "somehow I get the impression that you want the television kept on."

"That's right," said the Goon,"I'm studying the market."

"You're hoping to infiltrate the cinematograph industry ?" I said, startled.

"No", said the Goon," just to break into films. As a matter of fact I've already done it. I got an advance from a big movie producer just the other day."

"You did ?" I exclaimed. "Could I see it ?".

"Sure," said the Goon, starting to consult his filing system. He eventually found the document in the 'Pending' file under the sofa and handed it to me. I read it carefully. It appeared to be a one dollar subscription to Retribution from a fan called Richard Warner.

"Warner," I said, "the name is vaguely familiar."

"Tch tch," said the Goon. "I'm surprised at you, Walt. Of course you couldn't be expected to have my vast knowledge of the film industry but this fellow Warner is a big time movie producer, along with his brother."

"Are you sure it's the same one ?" I asked humbly.

"Of course," said the Goon, " didn't you notice he lives in America ?"

"Pretty conclusive, eh ?" I said.

"Yes," said the Goon. "I sent him copies of all the Goon stories yet published and I'm expecting any day now to get a cable from Hollywood asking me to play the lead. I expect you noticed that in all my recent stories I've been writing parts suitable for Marilyn Monroe ?"

"Well, the best of luck," I said resignedly. "Give my best wishes to Rick and Ferry and everyone out there if you can spare the time. But don't bank on anything too much. Those big time movie producers are unpredictable."

"Don't worry," said the Goon. "I wont let them put anything over on me."

....

Nothing more happened for sometime, except that the Goon put CB labels on his motor-assisted pedal cycle and began to go to the films three times a week. In fact, I had forgotten all about the conversation until he rang me up at the office yesterday.

"Walt," he said, " could you borrow your father-in-laws car and help me carry up some stuff from town this evening ?"

"Goon," I said sternly, " I seem to remember an article by you in Camber about my driving. It was highly derogatory."

"Gosh, thanks," said the Goon, " I thought it was pretty good myself. Six oclock this evening, then, at the Shankill Road Dye Works."

Curious, I borrowed the car and met the Goon as arranged. He was waiting on the pavement outside the Dye Works with two enormous carboys of some dark liquid, a grim and vicious look on his face. He motioned bruscuely at the carboys and we manhandled them into the boot of the car and set off for his home.

"What's that stuff for ?" I asked, changing into top gear carefully. The last time I had changed gear in the Goon's presence it had lasted him five thousand words.

"It's for a campaign in the cause of justice," said the Goon darkly. "You remember I sent Warner copies of all the Goon stories ? Well,

I took Diane to the pictures last night to show her what they were like before I took over, and guess what ?" His moustache stiffened with indignation and a car behind braked abruptly and skidded into a lamp-post, thinking we were going to turn left.

"What ?" I said.

"They've stolen THIS GOON FOR HIRE," throbbed the Goon. "They've changed the title a bit and put Alan Ladd in the name part and made a hideous travesty of the plot, and they didn't even mention me in the credits. I tell you, I was furious. If I hadn't paid for the seats I wouldn't have been able to sit through the whole programme. I complained to the manager, but he wouldn't even give me my jam jars back. So I'm going to strike at the Warner Brothers direct."

"How" I asked fearfully.

"With my trusty zap," gritted the Goon. " I have had the barrel specially machined to emit a jet in the form of the words UNFAIR TO THE GOON. I am going to spend the next year visiting all the cinemas showing Warner Brothers films."

"But Goon," I expostulated desperately, "that film was made long before you wrote your story. That's where I got the title from."

"Nonsense," said the Goon firmly," I know you wouldn't fob me off with a second hand title, Walt. You're just trying to protect your Los Angeles friends. I don't blame you, but I am determined on revenge. "

....

So there it is. I did my best to argue him out of it, but I don't know if I've succeeded. The Goon is very single minded. Anyhow, I beg the Worldcon Programme Committee not to book any Warner Brothers films. Those screens are expensive, and I happen to know that that zapgun jet is in Cinemascope.

Walt Willis.

The Bleary Eyes vo. 4

selected by John Berry

Watch for the Goon, he will return!