

DAGON

#695, APA-Q #604

February 2018

THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY

This is **Dagon**, a monthly fanzine of commentary on science, science fiction, fantasy, mystery novels, comic art, role-playing games (RPGs), and anything else that seems like a good idea at the moment, is published by John Boardman, 12716 Ginger Wood Lane, Clarksburg, MD 20871. My land-line telephone number is (301) 515-4271. The number of my new cell-phone, like that of its predecessor, is (718) 736-4901. **Dagon** circulates through APA-Q, an amateur press association (APA) which is edited once a month (if enough contributions come in) by Mark L. Blackman, Apt. 4A, 1745 E. 18th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11229. His telephone number is (718) 336-3255, and his internet address is <marklblackman@juno.com>. The copy count for APA-Q is 15 print copies.

Dagon also goes to others who have indicated an interest in its subject matter. Subscriptions are 10 issues for \$10 in the United States, and for \$25 elsewhere. I also trade with other amateur publications.

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The current version of "The **Dagon** Directory" begins on page 7 of this issue, and is accurate to the date of 17 January 2018. All readers should check their addresses and other information, and make sure that they are accurate. From now on, "The **Dagon** Directory" will be published in each January issue of **Dagon**, and if readers provide me with any necessary changes in information, it will be kept up to date.

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Our daughter Deirdre and I want to express our appreciation to all the people who sent us their memories and condolences on Perdita's death on 26 November. A great many relatives and friends were able to meet with us on the weekend of 1-4 December, and we appreciate their sympathy and remembrances.

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The two daily newspapers which I read, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, are by general agreement the two best in the country. (As you might expect, that general agreement decidedly does not include "President" tRump.) For that reason, I send clippings from these papers to **Dagon** readers whom I know to be interested in some of the topics in those clippings. However, other matters, now concluded, have occupied my time since about a week before Christmas. I had to lay those newspapers aside until I could find the time to read and clip them. I had that time by about New Year's, and will shortly begin to catch up on mailing out those clippings.

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For several months, controversy has raged in Washington about a report written by a British

espionage agent, Christopher Steele, who had been asked by a group of American colleagues to write a description of alleged efforts by alleged Russian spies to promote the presidential nomination and election of Donald tRump. That report has been in the possession of the Senate Judiciary Committee, which had refused to release it, probably because "President" tRump claims that the whole thing is a forgery. However, Senator Diane Feinstein (D-CA), the ranking minority member of that committee, has decided that the text of that report, which has been grandly called a "dossier", ought to be released so people can judge its accuracy for themselves. And so, on Tuesday 9 January 2018, Senator Feinstein made the report public. American espionage agents, who are acquainted with Steele and his character, seem to believe that he is careful and accurate, and they and Steele's report itself have obviously persuaded Senator Feinstein of this. As for tRump's opinion on the matter, we have all had ample reason to judge the accuracy of his remarks.

So now Steele's report has become a part of the discussion of whether Russian agents had been manipulating the 2016 presidential election. By the time you read this information, that report will have become a part of the national discussion of the real meaning of that election, and a consensus - which will not include tRump's views - might even have been reached. So it now appears that, in future presidential elections, we may not have one Democratic and one Republican candidate, but one Russian and one American candidate.

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Like most American daily newspapers, the *Washington Post* has in its Sunday editions a large number of colored comic strips. Most of these Sunday strips circulate all over the country. However, the *Washington Post* also has one color comic designed only for that newspaper. That Sunday strip, *Flashbacks* by Patrick M. Reynolds, deals with historical events from throughout Washington's history. *Flashbacks* ran in December 2017 a four-part series about "the Fenian submarine", a warship built for Sinn Fein, ("Ourselves Alone"), a secret society of Irish and Irish-American supporters of Irish independence. Sinn Fein paid John Philip Holland, a teacher, "to invent a submarine to sink the British fleet". Holland first began work in Paterson, NJ, where he taught after coming to America, and tested his first sub in the Passaic River, powering it by pumping a pair of foot pedals like a bicycle's. His second submarine was powered by an unreliable four-horsepower engine. It also leaked badly, and got stuck in the mud on its first trial.

In 1880 Holland moved to Manhattan, and set to work at the Delamater Iron Works at the foot of West 13th Street, on the shore of the Hudson River. The sub, described as the "Fenian Ram", would be designed to ram and sink enemy warships. Oddly, Reynolds's strip made no mention of a military submarine designed, built, and tested in American waters over a hundred years earlier. Like the Fenian Ram, it was designed to sink British warships. Its designer, David Bushnell, put the idea before General Washington during the American Revolution. Washington warmly approved the plan, and Bushnell went to work in a Connecticut shipyard to construct the world's first submarine warship.

Submarine exploration was not original with Bushnell, though its military application was. During the reign of King James I (1603-1625), a Dutch inventor had taken the king down to the bed of the Thames River in London, using a submarine vessel of his own construction, but if a military

application of the ship occurred to either man, we have no record of it. In fact, I learned of Bushnell's submarine at an unusually early age. My grandmother's sister Stella Bushnell, a teacher in Iowa, was fond of telling me of the noteworthy deeds of our relatives, and she did not neglect David Bushnell's submarine. Years later, when I consulted a genealogical record of the Bushnell family in the New York Public Library, I was surprised to learn that Aunt Stella had never told me about Simeon Bushnell, who helped smuggle enslaved African-Americans to freedom in Canada, and at last enlisted with John Brown but was prevented by illness from going on his Harper's Ferry raid with him. (Simeon Bushnell died of tuberculosis two years later.) David Bushnell's submarine had its first (and last) trial against a British warship in New York Harbor. Its crew of one was armed with a drill with which he hoped to open a hole below sea level on the warship. He also had explosives to attach to its hull. But the hull of the British ship had been sheathed with metal to prevent marine parasites from boring holes in it, and the drill could not cut through it. So the submarine plan was abandoned, and the explosives were taken overland and used to make mines that might sink British ships on the Delaware River.

A rumor about David Bushnell's post-war career suggested that he might have moved to the South and perhaps kindled an interest in submarines there. However it happened, the next use of submarine warfare was during the Slaveholders' Rebellion, when it was thought that submarines might be a useful way of breaking the naval blockade that was economically strangling the rebellious states. But the Rebels' subs were so incompetently constructed and handled that they drowned almost every man who went to sea in them, including their designer, a man named Hunley. The only Rebel submarine that actually sank a government warship also drowned its own crew in the act. And that was how matters stood when the Fenian Ram was under construction in Manhattan.

This new version of the Fenian Ram was designed to have a crew of three. It was launched in May 1881, and tested in New York Harbor almost daily. It was much more navigable than Holland's earlier submarines. However, Sinn Fein then decided to seek liberation from England by peaceful negotiation, and cut off funding to Holland. Some American Fenians decided to continue work on Holland's submarine, and took it overland to New Haven, CT. This version of the Fenian Ram is now on display in Paterson, NJ.

In Paterson, Holland got a \$200,000 contract from the U. S. Navy to build a new and better submarine. The new ship was to be called the *Plunger*, and was built in Baltimore and launched in 1897. However, because of defects in the *Plunger*, Holland returned the money to the Navy and designed yet another submarine. This boat was a success. It was built at the Crescent Shipyard in Elizabethport, NJ, and launched in 1898. After test runs off Staten Island, the submarine was commissioned on 13 October 1898. The Holland Torpedo Boat Company built submarines for the U. S. Navy, and also some for foreign powers. (We are not told whether Holland's company built any submarines for Germany, which used them in World War I.) John Holland died in August 1914; a monument to him in the form of one of his submarines stands in Westside Park, Paterson, NJ.

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The animated film based on Munro Leaf's *The Story of Ferdinand* has been released, with the title *Ferdinand*. This children's book, better known as *Ferdinand the Bull*, which has been popular

for over eighty years, was discussed in pp. 9-10 of **Dagon** #694 (January 2018), where I ventured my reasons for believing that *The Story of Ferdinand* is actually an anti-war tract. I have not yet seen the film, but it was discussed in several newspaper reviews. The film, a product of the Disney organization, “pads” the book with additional scenes, including one in which Ferdinand’s father, who is not mentioned in the book, is sent to the bull ring to fight, and does not come back. And in the book, Ferdinand is taken from the pasture to Madrid in a cart, but in the animated film, he and several friends commandeer a bus and ride it to the site of the bull ring. Such scenes, as the reviews describe them, do not really add anything to his story.

The impact of Ferdinand’s story, however, essentially remains in the film what it is in Leaf’s book. All the other bulls in Ferdinand’s native pasture hope to be chosen to fight before a large and enthusiastic audience in Madrid’s bull ring, but Ferdinand has no desire to leave off smelling the pretty flowers, and eventually succeeds in getting his way - and, of course, in refusing to fight to the death as the other bulls do, and instead returning to the flowers.

*

The latest controversy into which “President” tRump has immersed himself is some racist rants of which he delivered himself a few days before the January parade in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his efforts to establish in the United States a society in which skin color matters no more than eye color, and in which the constitutional guarantees of freedom and justice are respected and observed not because they have been law since 1791 but because they are right, proper, and American.

tRump was not in the least bit reticent about expressing his views. In a conference in the White House he expressed his reservations about immigration. He felt that America should not admit any more immigrants from - and I quote him - “shit-hole countries like Haiti and Africa.” (His exact words might have been slightly different from these, but I am not in doubt about the most offensive ones.) He also went on to wish that we could get more immigrants from countries like Norway. This has resulted in great hilarity in Norway.

We know that tRump has used these words because they were reported by Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL), the only Democrat at the meeting. Two Republican senators were also there, David Perdue (R-GA) and Lindsay Graham (R-SC). At first both of them said that they could not remember what the “President” had said, but they then changed their stories, thus admitting that their first reports about what tRump had said, had been lies. When they were next asked about the “President’s” words, they said they did not hear anything of the sort. They now said this because tRump said he hadn’t said anything like that, and they were obviously currying favor with their party’s leader. Their present stories, unless they come up with a third story before this issue of **Dagon** goes to press, had also been lies.

It is by now an obvious fact that tRump’s remarks on any topic mean not that those remarks bear any relation to what he actually said, but that they are what tRump, at the moment, wishes people to believe. And when he wants people to believe something else, his supporters simply announce that they now agree with his new beliefs, and always have.

And why do tRump’s opinions matter? He has been inaugurated as “President”, even though

his opponent, Hillary Rodham Clinton (D), got about three million more votes than did tRump. When asked about this discrepancy, Republicans resort to some 18th-century jiggery-pokery which makes no sense when they try to explain it.

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Albert A. Nofi has tried to supply me with some details about a book that I had raised a few questions about in *Dagon* #693 (December 2017). I had bought and read the book sometime in the 1950s, laid it aside, forgotten the title, and lost track of it. I did eventually recall the name of its "hero", Mony Vibescu. But during a phone conversation with Al, he suggested that its author might have been Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918). This guess seems to have been incorrect. Deirdre got to work on her computer, and printed out a brief biography of Apollinaire, including a bibliography. His full name was Wilhelm Albert Wlodzimierz Apolinary Kostrowicky - a name which indicates that, prior to World War I, Europe had not only one royal family but also only one noble family, whose members, like the royals, intermarried with one another without regard to mere nationality. The descriptions of the works attributed to Apollinaire include books which sound very much like the one which had attracted my curiosity, but their descriptions rule out the adventures of Mony Vibescu, which I had read sixty years ago.

I cannot recommend that book as a literary masterpiece, but would strongly recommend Al's books as well worth reading. Al is a historian I have known for many years, who has achieved a doctorate in that field. Military aspects of history have been among his particular interests. Among his books that I can recommend are his *The Gettysburg Campaign*, which deals with not only the actual battle, but with the events of Lee's penetration into loyal territory and his hasty retreat from his defeat. More general are Al's *The Civil War Notebook* and *A Civil War Treasury*, which deal with many relatively minor incidents in that war, but which reveal some significant and interesting events. For example, there are the histories of Elizabeth van Lew and Mary Bowser. Elizabeth was the daughter of a prominent socialite in Richmond, while Mary had been born into enslavement and bought at an early age by Elizabeth's father to be his daughter's playmate, companion, confidant, and eventually her body servant. This was a fairly common practice at that time; a slave-owning father would buy a child of the same age and sex as his own child, and hope that they got along. If they didn't, he would just sell the companion and buy another.

But it didn't work out the way Mr. van Lew had intended. The two girls became genuinely attached to each other, and Elizabeth persuaded herself that slavery was wrong and had to be abolished. When her father died, Elizabeth inherited Mary, and promptly gave her her freedom. Mary was then sent to a private school in Philadelphia, where Elizabeth paid for her education. It was about this time that the Rebellion began, and Elizabeth did what many women of good family did when war broke out. Inspired by the examples of Florence Nightingale in the Crimean War and Clara Barton in the Rebellion, she volunteered as a nurse. She served in two hospitals, one for Rebel soldiers and one for federal officers who were prisoners of war.

Elizabeth would converse with the Rebel soldiers in the hospital, and if they let slip any useful military information, she recruited couriers and passed this information through the lines to General Grant, whose troops were then besieging Richmond. In the hospital for federal officers, she

would procure people who could lead them through the lines and return them to the U. S. army. She recruited numerous couriers, chief among them Mary Bowser - men and women, enslaved and free, black and white, including her own widowed mother. After the war, the facts about her activities became generally known, and she was, as they say, "cut dead" by the defeated Rebels of her own social circle. Since she had spent a good deal of money in her efforts, she would have been in difficult financial circumstances if General Grant had not been elected president. He appointed her postmaster of Richmond. Also, the families of federal officers whom she had set free were able to help her out financially. At the end of the Rebellion, Mary went north, and historians have thus far been unable to trace her. However, the present Mayor of Washington is an African-American woman named Muriel Bowser. If she is related to Mary Bowser, no one seems to know for certain.

*

Other histories by Al Nofi which I have found interesting include *The Spanish-American War*, which was published in 1996 to be ready for the centennial of the shortest, least consequential, and most incompetently fought war in America's history. The only reason the United States won, was that Spain's forces were even more incompetently managed. German observers concluded that if American troops were sent to fight a war in Europe, Germany would have little to worry about.

Rudyard Kipling also misunderstood the effects of the Spanish-American War. It was his apparent belief that European nations seized regions in Asia and Africa so they could bring a "civilizing mission" to their populations, a mission which he grandly called "the white man's burden". What this "burden" meant to the troops sent to undertake this "civilizing mission" was understood otherwise by the actual troops. The Philippine Islands were America's most important tract of loot which America seized from Spain, but American troops created a notoriously demeaning reference to the people of the Philippine island Zamboanga. To the tune of "The stars and stripes forever", they sang, "Oh, the monkeys have no tails in Zamboanga." The Philippines are now independent, but American newscasters are still at it, pronouncing that island's name as "Zambonga". As for two other pieces of Spanish loot, Cuba and Puerto Rico, a sufficient answer is "Just look at them!"

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Maybe I'm being too harsh on the Germans in the above comments about how they would do in a major war. The 19th-century German statesman Otto von Bismarck once remarked, "The most important fact of the 20th century will be that England and America speak the same language." I feel that this refers not only to the English language, but to their political language - the fact that these two nations also believe in majority rule with minority rights, and in various principles enunciated in our Bill of Rights. But when Kaiser Wilhelm II came to the throne in 1888, he promptly fired Bismarck. Neither Kaiser Wilhelm nor Adolf Hitler paid any attention to Bismarck's recommendation, and Germany suffered horribly because of this neglect.

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The issue that excited Donald tRump so much that he introduced a new expletive into the

(continued on p. 10)

THE DAGON DIRECTORY

Subscriptions are indicated by the number of the issue with which the subscription expires. If this number is less than 695, your subscription has expired. To renew your subscription, see p. 1. Note that this rate may have been reduced since you began to receive **Dagon**.

Other designations are:

* - Please send me your nine-digit ZIP Code. Lately a few people's copies, which are not addressed with this code, have been returned to me, labeled "INSUFFICIENT ADDRESS".

C: Complimentary copy.

CAR-PGa: an active member of the Committee for the Advancement of Role-Playing Games (RPGs).

F: a member of my extended family. Recently I have been citing in **Dagon** information about family connections which may interest them, and have been sending copies of those issues to many of them. Some relatives may not have been sent those copies, and they should write to me and ask for them. The most recent relevant issues are **Dagonim** ##679, 693 and 694 (October 2016, December 2017 and January 2018).

Q: a member of **APA-Q**, who therefore receives **Dagon** as a part of **APA-Q**.

T: trade copy

This directory is accurate to the date of 17 January 2018. Please let me know of any changes, corrections, and additions that need to be made. Any additions and corrections which I receive after 17 January will be printed in the March issue of **Dagon**, and will thenceforth be part of future Directories.

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THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY (continued from p. 6)

language was at the same time familiar and unprecedented - immigration. It was unprecedented because its subject was about 800,000 people who had come into the country with their parents. These were mostly people who are here because their parents wanted a place where they could live without being persecuted by somebody for their language or ethnicity or religion. They grew up in America, attended American schools, prepared for American occupations, played on American sports teams, dated their American classmates, and served in the American armed forces. Most of them speak no language except English. They cannot plead Amendment XIV of the Constitution because, since they were born in some other country, they are not American citizens by birth. President tRump has repeatedly pledged that he will expel from the country all people in their situation. President tRump and his diminishing number of supporters speak of them as if every one of them smuggled themselves into this country illegally, and that they all have long criminal records. Whether they are Rohingya from Myanmar who are persecuted for being Muslims, or Christians from Egypt who are persecuted for not being Muslims, they are not wanted in the United States by President tRump...unless, probably, they are of Norwegian ancestry.

This is a gross violation of America's traditional standard for immigrants. Like my own family, who came here in 1638 because they were Puritans who were being persecuted by the English government, or like Royalists who came here about a decade later because Puritans had tried the king for treason, found him guilty, and beheaded him before a large and enthusiastic London audience, America has been what Emma Lazaus called her in her poem inscribed on the Statue of Liberty: "Mother of exiles." This was true when America was a series of English or Dutch colonies along the Atlantic coast, and it is still true.

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