

# ENVOY — EIGHT





# IDLE THOUGHTS OF

## AN IDLE FELLOW.

"Have you ever thought," mused Meek, "what a horrible mess our legal system is?"... "hrrmmg" replied the Professor sunk in his armchair. "I mean, it's a complete farce.. well at least farcical... look at the Jury System for one thing" .. "zzzz" from the corner... "we select 12 men/women whose only requirements are that they be householders... I know of cases where this has resulted in illiterates being called upon, and of a case where one of the Jurymen couldn't speak a word of English" he squinted into the end of his cigarette holder.. "even if we are so lucky as to have a literate, English speaking Jury, the standard of intelligence is far from satisfactory... why, there's many a case I've attended where it was perfectly plain that the Jury had absolutely no idea what was going on" he poked a pipecleaner up the stem of his holder, no result. "there should be some method of ensuring that the people called for Jury service are capable of understanding court procedure, or at the very least capable of giving a decision based on Law rather than emotion or morals" he inserts bent pin into his cigarette holder, "what is wanted is some way of selecting.. hmmm... perhaps some sort of an IQ test... say, the Jurors called to the Assizes complete a form upon arriving, those who complete it with a certain amount of success are selected for the Jury, those who get a low score are absolved from service...." he places a cigarette in his holder, "of course, some of the more intelligent ones might not want to serve on the Jury, and therefore they might try to falsify their ,er, exams... It is a moot point whether they should then be dismissed for dishonesty, perhaps even prosecuted under some provision of the perjury laws... on the other hand" he lights his cigarette . "on the other hand, a paper could be drawn up upon it was impossible to cheat, one of these ingenious things that cross-check themselves, yes, that's the idea.

Actually I can't see why we don't do away with Juries altogether, after all the Judge still has the final word... hmmm, that's another thing, these blokes in the legal profession know with far more certainty when a witness is lying, or deceiving, than any of our inexperienced Jurymen do... the Jury can be taken in by a plausible liar. " The Professor, recumbent, shows signs of irritation. "Ah, I have it!" exclaims Meek, "we'll do away with Juries, but we'll make every witness who takes the stand take a truth drug, or maybe we'll have them hypnotised, so that they can tell nothing but the truth, Ah, that's it, for a guilty man it would mean a quick conviction and so save the country money, for the innocent it would mean he would be completely vindicated. After all, that's all a trial is for, to ascertain guilt or innocence, and I see no use messing around all day, or perhaps for weeks, when a case can be quickly terminated. Justice will be served by this method far better than she is now."

The Professor opens a sleepy eye. "Poo, and fah!", says Meek, "I really can't understand the mentality that clings to antiquated



methods that I have just demonstrated, I do believe" he said, puffing furiously at a stinking Persian scented cigarette his mouth twisted in distaste, "that it is all a plot by the Barristers and their like, those whose livelihood depends upon the uncertain methods of administering justice that now prevail" he peevishly ejected the glowing end of his cigarette. "Agghhiii" yelled the Professor, as the flying brand lighted on his nose... "yowk, yowk, yowk" yelled Meek, as he fled terrified through the club, hotly pursued by a chair-wielding Professor.

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"Ven I vas in sevice wit der Kaiser" began the Herr Brovezzor, with a guilty glance skywards in a vain attempt to gauge whether or no the Writer had noticed his earlier slip from character. "I vuz chust kom out of kollege in der Spring mit my degree so proudly. Waveing too my hair" he added remeniscently "not balden like now; sigh,"

They ignored him.

He continued, unabashed... "Und ven we ver com to der Inn by der river, at der very place ver der Rhinemaiden vid noddings on used to lure men into der river, so it says in some poem vich vas taking the micky out of this bloke wit der Cherman accent, or mebbe it was der something like Iolanthe, it never minds anyhow"

"Ah" says Lindsay, with considerable satisfaction "it was  $\frac{1}{4}$  oz of H4K and not  $\frac{3}{4}$  oz..." she was speaking to Professor Groves, no-one was takeing any notice of the Herr Brovezzor.

Determinedly. "ve decided to halt for der night. Because it vaw the off-season for der tourists we found we had der whole place to ourselves. A very pleasant meal we had, then to the fire front ve four sourounded mit huge pipes from our college days making there most big clouds of smoke, with a stein by the side of us, for each, on der table.

"Den, den," he said, "der Inn-keepers daughteren kom in".

"hmmm, and perhaps a wee drop of sulphuric?" asked Lindsay... "Oh, yes, I don't see that it can do any harm" answers Professor Groves.

The Herr Brovezzor was not being noticed at all.

"Mein Gott", muttered the Brovezzor darkly, then "Laddies and Chentlement.." he drew himself up impressively, all 5ft4 of him, "I was about to relate the most famouse dirty choke in the whole Cherman compedium, "he paused dramatically, "You, you, have chosen to ignore me. Very well" vengefully "you shall now never hear it!" with that he did his best to stalk from the room. He stumped from the room.

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"Hey, Brovezzor, hey, Brovezzor" "Vy hello mine friends" "Gee, we're sorry about not listening to you... but you know how it is when HE is writing, we can't do anything about it" "never mind", says the Brovezzor doggedly shakeingo off the remnants of his accent, "I know how it is" "Uh, Professor," says Lindsay.. "uh, about that joke...?" "Ah," says the German Professor, "I'd be delighted to tell you.... It seems that there was this water melon....."



DREAMS are funny things.....

As, I believe the Good Doktor has pointed out in his many works....If he were alive to-day he'd undoubtedly find a heck of a lot more to write about.

I had a peculiar dream the other week, and, for some reason or other --- maybe just because it is Offtrail MPA --- I intend to relate somewhat of it. All I can remember. Who knows but that this might spark off some of you to relate the strange dreams that you - undoubtedly - have had.

You know how it is sometimes - you've just woken up but not fully...you sort of hang there suspended between sleep and full awakeness...well, the other morning I was in just such a state...drifting like...when I had this dream.

It started like this....there was a warning of some sort, a siren perhaps, and I knew, and everybody else around me knew, that a war was on....and the rockets and bombers were at that very moment well on their journey....there was a concerted stampede for the street, everyone was off to the shelters, shallow communal ones...except me. I stayed where I was. I was thinking, "This is it. An all-out war with atomics. I might as well stay here as go to the shelters, they won't be any good at all. I can't do anything - there isn't time to get out of the city, to look for some safer place - besides, there won't be any safe places this time". So, I waited. I waited in what was evidently a huge building by British standards, a skyscraper probably, and I was on a gigantic floor...of some store from the rows and rows of glass counters and piles of goods, rather like a great Woolworths, no, a place with more class than the average Woolworths...the room was at least 200ft by 400ft and had a highish, well lighted ceiling.

From the brilliant daylight that existed at the time of the warning the scene was suddenly, but unnoticed, changed to the semi-dark of a moonlight night. I was in the same room, but on a sort of low stair...the kind that rises about 6 feet and is just another level of the same floor...in the, sort of velvety, dark I could catch an occasional gleam of moonlight on the rows of glass counters. It was all peacefully quiet. Calm and normal.

The next thing I knew I was face down in the rubble of what I knew to be an ages demolished city; possibly the same city I was in before. There were other people near me - it was a pleasantly warm, brilliantly sunny, clean, fresh day. To my left I vaguely sensed a woman, unfamiliar to me, yet I was sure I had met her somewhere before...I was now convinced that the war was not going on...instead I knew that instead there was going to be a demonstration. One plane would drop one bomb. A gesture, I thought of it as.

I was thinking, "fine, at least that doesn't mean the end of everything, like a full scale war would".

Then I, we, saw the aircraft. It was low and slow, at about 2000ft and doing about 300 knots...it came in from the south-east and passed us to our right, going NW, and passed out of sight beyond the piles of rubble. It was not very large, it was about the size and shape of a Canberra, and was an unreflecting steel colour.



"The bomb" I thought. Everyone was looking in the direction where the plane was last seen. "The flash"...I thought. "Don't look!" I said, halfway between a shout and a normal conversational tone. A few heads turned - nobody paid much attention - I seized the girl by the shoulder and forced her head down and away from where I thought the flash would be.

Then the 'plane came back..faster and lower..It passed to our right again, heading SE...then, far away, it turned and came back once again..."Straffing?" I thought, stupidly...but it just went back over the hills of rubble NW again...towards where I thought the bomb was. I thought. "If that bloke doesn't watch out he'll be caught in the blast". Then.

The scene was a sealess beach..I knew it was a beach, a long wide, sandy beach. And someone says, "Have we lost then?" to which someone else, equally anonymous replies..."Yes, but so have they". and I stand and wonder what the hell they're talking about. Then.

Floop!. In an instant I know what's going on. ETs have landed on Earth and are/have taken over. The beach, till now only insubstantial, transforms into a solidity...still with no sea. And there are English traffic signals, many of them, standing all over the beach...then, things go insubstantial...but the beach, and the traffic lights, and the hurrying, milling people are still there. Then I notice what a lot of policemen there are about..English types! then..ploop!, a policeman is not human any more..still in full uniform he is an alien...He looks, ghod help me it was not amusing, like Pogo. All the policemen are "plooping" into aliens now...all over the beach. The crowd has stopped walking about and has been standing, restlessly, about. Someone runs at an alien/policeman shouting, he flicks out of existence about a yard away from him. The, so help me, Amiable alien ambles absently about his affairs, without blinking an eye.

Someone else shouts. "Sing, they don't like singing, Sing!" and dashes hither and thither like a march hare - we all stand and stare at him, confounded, until he blunders into an alien, and then he too vanishes. A murmur runs through the crowd.."like" I thought detachedly, "the sullen sea sucking on a pebble beach".

The a young girl, about 8 or 9 I suppose, starts singing... Pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop! the aliens in her immediate vicinity disappear.. More aliens materialise, they group up and advance threateningly. The crowd takes up the song..the aliens all wink out of existence. Another squad appears...my throat is dry, my mind is numb...I can't for the life of me think of a tune or a song to sing..desperately, I sing that blasted commercial.."Rowntrees Fruit Gums, yum, yum, yum"...Pathetically, I observed. But the crowd took it up and it sounds like a Greek chorus...we sing, I think, Star Spangled Banner...and Land of Our Fathers ( I don't know why) and a pop song too, which I can't remember...Then,

The scene shifts. It is a diamond shaped valley, about a mile long, by 3/4 mile wide, and about 200ft deep at its lowest. I know we are in Wales somewhere. At the bottom of the valley a crowd of people are milling about, mebbe 500 of them..but I know that they are not people, they are the last of the aliens.

A crowd appears over the north lip of the valley, - our lot from the south surges silently forward. I stand at the back of the southern crowd..on an elevation,perhaps a boulder, and from there I can see the whole "action"....

The two crowds put out tentacles ...reaching out east and west along the slopes of the valley---and when they meet they thicken...and move in on the aliens. All this while the aliens have made no sign..they show no alarm, as if they were quite unaware of our presence.

The crown sings. The aliens begin to wink out. I think to myself, "hmm. Singing to defeat alien invaders. That might make a good gimmick in a SF story". Then I suddenly realised that I've read a story that used that very same plot-line...the shock of this mental plagiarism woke me up.

And thats all.....curious eh?,

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THE CASE OF THE CRYPTIC COPTIC CABLE, or, TOBBACCO WOAD,  
or, A CASE FOR CATSEYES.

Catseyes Cheslin cautiously culled the cryptic coptic cable. "Cor" he said, "an aliteration!" and so it was. Its 16 legs waveing viciously in the direction of Mecca, it crawled back into the old AMAZING and disapered, never to be seen again. Except in this zine here, of course.

Nevertheless I was glad of the break, things had been rather monotonous of late. It was, by now, the second saturday after Easter. A dank, miserable day. The height of summer in fact.

I scanned the package again ( it was a package, but cable rymes so much better), After submitting it to a series of searching scientific analyses I put it to the ultimate test. I read the lable..er, that is, I attempted to read the lable. The language was entirely new to me, "translate-able only to a scholar of ancient Urdu," I thought, "or maybe to the illustrious Postal Authorities"...I opened the package and immediately solved part of the mystery, it contained a small sample of a rather rare Yucatanese mutated tobacco...together with a further note in an undecipherable hand. "I would venture a guess at the tounge it is written in" I mused "but the idea of a Chinese Mandrin residing in the depths of darkest Yukatan is rather hard to swallow....perhaps it is an ancient Mayan who writes..or maybe....hmmmm". I sniffed appreciatively at the tobacco...."at least, he has a good heart, whoever my mysterious benefactor is"...I quothe contentedly.

I was quietly puffing away at a pipe of the Yucatan tobacco, and had just observed, rather to my surprise, that the package bore a Salisbury postmark, when the door flew accross the room and half buried itself in the 15ft thick concrete wall. ( I had built it so thick with, strage tho' it may seem, just such a possibility in mind)...

Peering through a hastily puffed smoke screen from the



comparitive safety of the service lift (another thing I had thoughtfully specified in the plans) I espeyed an averagely built, averagely dressed, average sort of bloke doing his best to put the door back in one piece again.... a task predestined to failure, it was mostly matchwood by this time.

I swiftly summed up the situation. The chap seemed harmless enough, but the door sundering phenomena might be dangerous, it was obvious that I needed to know more about what was going on, this mean't questioning our...er, visitor. Without a seconds hesitation I pressed the concealed bell and summoned Dave.

The strangely familiar stranger reacted favourably, he enquired after me in an animated manner, but not with the air of one who wishes to collect a debt, or had illegal designs upon my person. I emerged from the lift shaft with the easy noncenance of a man who always enters his office in such a fashion, and allowed Dave to announce me..

No wonder the chap seemed familiar, it was N G W !. Goshwow. Do you remember the sensation it caused at the '63 Chicon when Willis confessed that for the last 12 years all his material had been written by NGW?, and do you recall how, when Donaho fainted at the news, 8 floors of the hotel collapsed, and how, when the police investigated after what came to be known as The Great Chicago riot, Harry Warner and.....oh, but you know all that...anyhow, this was the very same NGW. Gee, the world has changed since the dissolution of American fandom, hasn't it?.

So, NGW made himself comfortable, cautiously, in the visitors' chair; I sat behind the desk and lit up again, and Dave squatted in his usual position in the corner, one arm wrapped possessivly around the duper, the other engaged in twirling a Tibetan prayer wheel.

NGW stopped toying with what appered to be a lump of putty and tossed it casually onto the table, where it fell with a distinct Bclang". My problem" he said, "is a rather unusuall one" Observing that the "putty" was in fact a lump of malleable iron I was prepared to concede the acuracy of his diagnosis, I listened respectfully.

He continued "Now that Berry is so busy as Inspector General of the RCMP I am forced to turn to you for help" cheered by this overwhelming expression of confidence I signed to him to continue..which he did. "In a word, I am desperate"

I mentally doubled the figure I was thinking of.... "I did write you a note the other day " "AHA!" I thought. "...and I enclosed a sample of the herb I described. After I had posted it however I was still to worried to work properly, so, leaving RUNE 443 only half completed, ( 184 pages this week) I hurried up here to see you in person. Can you help me?"

I considered,...hmmm, "what" I wondered, "is the problem"... "Mr W," I said, "I would like if I may to go over the whole problem again..of course I did get the broad outlines from your letter..but I find it extremely helpful, in these difficult cases, to hear the whole story from the lips of the client..."

Impressed, I hoped, by my thouroughness, NGW then related the following tale, in considerable more detail of course, but these are the essential points.

It seems that the present NGW had had an ancestor who had been a bit of a lad in his time, gadding about the world



and having all sorts of adventures. Anyway, he had an accident on one expedition and was deserted by his guides somewhere deep in the jungles of S America, luckily for him he was discovered by the witchdoctor of the local tribe - who had never seen a white man before - and was adopted as a sort of mascot. The gist of the matter is that while he was there he learn't of a curious herb that the natives used to drug themselves with on special occasions...the property of which was to heighten the intelligence and mind power of the taker temporarily. Being something of an amateur scientist he experimented and finally discovered a way of preparing the drug so that it had no harmful side effects, and soon afterwards escaped down river, taking with him a supply of the herb and a few seeds and seedlings.

Thereafter the Wansborough family always grew a quantity of the herb in their greenhouses, and used it when they felt it necessary...all the while keeping its very existence a complete secret.

The trouble was that in NGW's time, just a week or so ago, the plants had been struck down by a mysterious blight, and had completely destroyed the crop. All NGW wanted me to do was to go and get him more seedling from South America.

"Do you," I asked, "by any chance ever read The Caribbean Tobacco Breeders Gazette? "What the heck has that got to do with it" NGW says, in some heat. "I cannot tell you now, but, do you?" "Well, no, of course not"...

"All right Mr W. I shall need an advance of course..." I looked meaningfully at him until the amount counted out into my sweaty little palm was about all the market could stand, "OK, now if you'll leave everything to me I'll see what I can do. I'll send you a report in a week or so"...and eventually he departed homewards.

I spent the following fortnight in Miami, and sent a few telegrams. Like.

"DA SILVA, PICO, LA TRIOS, CABBALAEROS; TOPIC, YUKATAN.

SEND SEEDS & SEEDLINGS OF MUTANT TOBACCO 2/749 PLUS BALE OF UNCURED LEAF TO NGW STONEHENGE ENGLAND".

You see, I was right in the first place, it was a Yucatanese tobacco that NGW had sent. AS I said to him, "in this game it's all a case of knowing your tobacco...er I mean your onions".

He was pleased enough. I bet you lot aren't.

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I've never gone out of my way to see a Gilbert & Sullivan thing...er, Comic Opera...but I have seen at least two via the TV...and I like them. The first one I saw was THE MIKADO. This I enjoyed greatly...the one I saw the other evening was the one called HMS PINAFORE.. this was OK, but. One thing jarred, probably a G&S fan could explain exactly why the plot ran this way..a farce?, anyhow, the thing was this. The "NANNY" or whatever she was supposed to be says "I mixed up the Captain and the Tar when they were babies. Captain is tar, and Tar is really captain." That's fair enough. But why is the captain's daughter about to wed Tar, a man as old as her father?.

# THE GREAT TEA CASE

I rested my weary feet on the callating table and slumped back in my chair. Dave was sitting in the corner, cross-legged on the floor, thoughtfully inspecting his reflection in the shining steel side of the paper cupboard.

"Y'know", I said, "now that John Berry seems to have packed up writing those fabulous "Goon" stories I'm wondering if he'd mind someone, me for instance, borrowing something of the "Goon" characteristics and writing some stories of the same type. You know, like Derleth did with Holmes for Conan-Doyle, or like Farlie did with Bulldog Drummond for Sapper. Maybe I could just put an advert in SKYRACK saying something like: "Please regard me as a substitute Goon Bleary, and bring your fannish mysteries to me"...of course fees...hmm, I don't particulaly want to be paid in photos of Herself (not with Herself passed on and all), or even BB or anything like that...maybe they could pay me in tobacco or stencils.

"I'd need a name of course, yes, I'd need a name...I can't rightly use "Bleary"...how about...hmm..Sherlock Cheslin? Ken Casey? Mark Sabre. ooof ghod, not that!..hmmhow, how about Goon Cheslin?...noo, Ken Bleary? Blakie?...Smokey? Or Catseyes Cheslin..that's not too bad..Catseyes Cheslin, the Yellow Peril of Stourbridge Fandom.

"Now that's settled...this room; it'll do as my office, just a few things moved around..hmm. Now, all I need is a case."

"Things have been very quiet around fandom for the last few weeks" I mused half fearfully, "Something is bound to happen soon...I mean it always does...things happen to people, they have to have someone to solve their problems..to pay their fees to...."

My fingers scrabbled, dolefully I thought, about at the bottom of an empty tobacco jar.

"Dave, go and scrounge me a few fag ends (I confess I was getting desperate), I can break them up and mix them with some dried-out tea leaves, and...." I turned slightly green, I'd smoked tealeave before.

"NO! By ghod! This is going too far!" I settled back in my chair and sucked at an empty pipe to soothe my nerves.

"What," I lectured, "would the Great Bleary do in a situation like this?"

"Meow" says Dave from the corner, rattling his chain pathetically, (he's gone all cat crazy since he read about Bardot being a sexy kitten). I ignored him.

"Now, if people won't come to me with their cases...."

"Mahomet" says Dave...

"I was just about to say that" I replied absently..."Of course, he'd go out and FIND a case".



I slipped his chain, "there's a good fellow Dave, go and find Uncle Ken a case".

Wearing a preoccupied expression he rose to his feet and shambled out of the room, down the stairs, out of the front door and away up the street.

"The lad," I murmured, "is nothing if not willing."

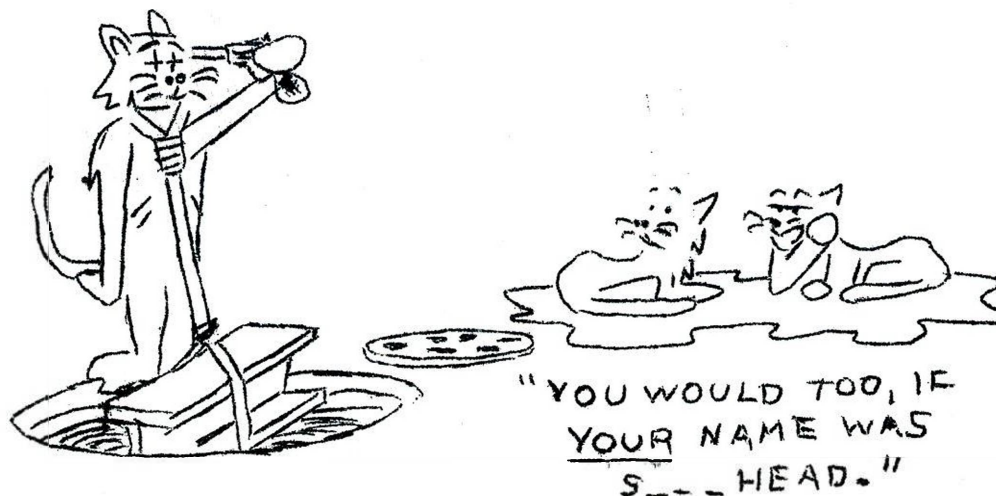
I didn't see him again for 4 days...he came back carrying a ruddy great wooden box.

"Your case" he smiled superiorly.

As he turned away (what else could I do?) I bashed him over the head with it.

Anyone out there got a kettle? The teas all over the floor and it's a shame to waste it.

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