

mly 28

THE WORKS

In many respects this is my first appearance in science fiction with my own fan magazine. I have, of course, been connected in the past with this particular phase of the field in literally hundreds of ways, but never before entirely on my own.

We shall pass charitably over the reasons for this departure. Suffice it to say that a great and swiftly approaching climax in human affairs probably primed the pump. And of course I want to get just a touch of hand in before everything goes blooie, setting down on paper a few of many thoughts and opinions that have been rattling around inside this skull these many years.

The selection of the FAPA as a channel for dissemination of these things is but natural. As one of the two founders---some might call it "abortionists"---I have a certain stake in the organization, and since the FAPA is fandom's sole surviving fragment---and a pretty solid one, I'll admit---it's only plain duty to put one's shoulder to the 20 mm. cannon and fire. Anyone injured in the process (and I trust there will be not a few) can't say that I didn't ring the alarm bell. I've had my finger on that particular button now for about nine years.

The arrival of the mailing previous to this one touched off a number of detonators ticking away silently within me for quite a few other mailings and needing only the proper sort of flame to start a chain of explosions. The first, clearing away, opened my weary eyes to the past. I pondered on the FAPA, its birth, life and future. Of course I could only see it within the context of stf. itself. And the perspective is by no means pleasant. Another, blasting heavily, lifted a stone from the well of memory. I shut this door quickly, due to a deep-seated aversion to the ghastlier nostalgias. It is impossible to have gone through the past ten or twelve years in fandom and escaped unscathed. Your battle-scarred correspondent has had enough, with the exception of these present sallies. He settled long ago for a chair in a warm corner and soft cake with which to massage his toothless gums.

What I must say, therefore, is said much in spite of myself. Every instinct within me lays down a barrage of advice to the effect that stf. is dead, that its structure has collapsed, as I said it would, leaving nothing but an illy assorted heap of bones and bodies. Well, cumsi cumsa---I have no objections to orating to the dead. At least they can't talk back.

Twelve years of life within the framework of stf. has left me with several very distinct recollections, everything else being a mass of vague, shifting impressions. disembowled from the past in an occasional conversation with a Futurian (genus New York), but difficult to correlate. These highspots, distinct, if few are: The ISA, the Third Convention, the Nycon, Chicon, Denvention, the FSNY and the LASFS.

I suppose I'll cherish those memories for quite a while yet, though I shall eventually have to bury them altogether in preparation for a better life. They were, I cannot deny, turning points of my own life. Through the ISA I met Sykora and recognized the futility of the organized kaffee-clatch. Via the same channels I bumped into Wollheim and Lowndes and met the only two people I can stand for more than an hour at a time. The Third Convention destroyed my faith in common sense. As an exile from the Nycon I saw in a flash the fundamental bogginess of the bourgeois mind. The Chicon established my belief in the four-wheel drive, while the Denvention annihilated a previous conception that Colorado was mountainous. On the other hand the FSNY proved beyond the boiled shadow of a doubt that no such thing as a docile mimeograph exists. My sole glimpse of the LASFS as a whole was through the bovine eyes of my fellow-Futurian Cyril Kornbluth and convinced me irrevocably that it is entirely possible for a dripping water faucet to disguise

itself as a biped. I've had my day as a prophet, too. Wrote a speech and went down in history (to oblivion) as the founder of a new world movement. World, indeed. It actually got as far as Australia and when last heard of had been taken up by a group of Maoris whose representatives in this country are the Deglerites.

The fact that the larger part of the speech has been entirely corroborated by the acid-test of history seems to have made little impression on the body stf. What happened? Who pulled the switch when the lights went out? Did I talk too loudly, kick too many arses around, pound too heavily on the table? Or couldn't you hear me for the rumble of cannon?

Ring down the curtain. Did anyone thing I was touched by the magic of predestination? And why not? Of course, any good mind based on facts and not half-baked opinions could have predicted the whole course of stf. lay seige to its ideas in the light of what was about to happen, rip it bodily limb from limb and dissolve the remainder in the nitric acid of world events. Any good materialists could have predicted the war, glimpsed distinctly the point at which it ceased to be a squabble between a collection of European pirates and became a patriotic drive for basic human rights, crunching stf. in its teeth as it chewed the earth in the process; tell in advance that Hitler would not have invaded England if he'd been invited in, with a ticket to supper at Buckingham Palace; that the Soviets would retreat at the beginning of the war since their military viewpoint dictates that a blitzkreig must come at its conclusion (as it will come); that Leningrad, Moscow and Stalingrad could not possibly have fallen to the Nazis for reasons as plain as an overwhelming Russian army; that the USSR would win the war and do it precisely the way it is now being done. Naturally, to people who base their conclusions on what they hear and not upon facts as obvious as Mount Everest rising from the Indian valleys, these things might have been surprising.

Well, let them writhe. And you writhe, too. I might, out of sheer kindness to the poor lay bare the future for the next ten or fifteen years, for you, but you've had your chance and I consign you all to the flames, the labor corps and what else you're in for. That's part of the penalty for being stupid, bull-headed, semi-fascistic, unscientific, downright deaf, blind, and dumb as dodos. The ~~rest~~ rest will come later. And you can be sure of this: When the roof comes crashing down I won't be under it.

There is one prediction I will make, however, mainly for the attention of those stf. fans interested in space travel. The first space ship will ascend from the territory of the Soviet Union. The general area has already been decided by historical determinatives, but I'd be risking things if I told you where. But as I'm not above a disturbing hint, you can get a fair idea of the exact location from the writings of Willy Ley.

There have been some moments of beauty, but they were heavily concentrated in New York. The residue is chiefly tripe, soft-boiled at that. After long and many-sided debate with myself, I can only ask, from the viewpoint of a doddering youth, the survival into a peaceful future of a complete library of fan magazines, Wollheim's large collection of stf. and fantasy and as many cover and inside illustrations originals as may be contained in a four-story building. These things I intend to utilize as diversion in my old age and the foundation of a thesis intended for a period in which I have nothing else to do and want to charge two-bits admission to a museum of stf.

It is preordained that this shall be so, barring my kicking off to another sphere, which would be deucedly inconvenient for the future of stf, inasmuch as I've appointed myself custodian of its virtuosity. Therefore you have little choice and are hereby ordered to appear at the corner of 42nd St. and Times Square on the first Monday following the establishment of the world state, bearing with you your entire stf. collection, including pros, fans, originals and correspondence, in addition to a supply of paper and pencils intended for preliminary cataloguing. Failure to show up will be construed as obstructivism and visited with punitive measures, including deprivation of mailing rights, access to typewriter ribbons, subscriptions to the pros, and, as a last resort, immediate induction into a national fan organization.

Wollheim and Ackerman alone are exempt from these conditions. Wollheim not because of friendship, but due to the fact that I shall have persuaded him to give his collection to some state museum by that time, and Ackerman because termites will have gotten at his stuff years before. We shall, instead, impound the termites and Ackerman and read their entrails.

While I am still in the Divine Mood, all fantasists, with the exception of Pafnir G. Schickelgruber, ~~will~~ who will not be available except in translation, are directed to build Slan Shacks in Nevada (as Kornbluth put it: "Who bombs Nevada?") and wait for the Coming. On second thought, Degler is granted leave of absence as he will have long since burned himself down to the ground in holy heat. And his ashes would be of no use at all, unless they might be mixed in with some scouring cleanser.

Ah, those will be great times. I can see it now. The LASFS, divided into three parts, each craning necks from the windows of a wedge-shaped building built in imitations of the outlines of Sykora's brain, which, as everyone knows is a four-sided triangle at odds with itself. Ackerman coyly bulging with pop bottles crowns Morojo Queen of the May, using his spectacles for a diadem. Morojo, grinning from nose to ear, supplicating favors from Oh High while at the same time manning two machine guns which she is levelling from all four hips at windrows of Yerkes and other opposition who are happily protesting. In the foreground, Speer, enthroned on a telephone pole distributes candied copies of a newspaper entitled the Speer Afroamerican in which the chief editorial violently denounces the accusation that during his sojourn in Africa he sired six brats, all somewhat suntanned at birth. An endless chain of sycophants eating this stuff, slowly turn a striped purple, while in the distance the diminishing line vanishes into a police van driven by Bob Tucker who is himself under arrest by three gigantic females, each with a Help Wanted sign slung around her neck. The left background is somewhat obscured by an immense, misty, amorphous shape labelled Sergeant Saturn, who on closer inspection is seen to be none other than Sam Moskowitz in disguise. Tearing through this blubbery mass are the agonised fingers of past members of the QSL striving to return from Limbo, the plainly marked door of which is seen behind them. Slightly above this tableau toots a small, shiny space-flyer with Vat 69 pouring from the exhausts instead of vapor, T. Bruce Yerke (or a reasonable facsimile) sitting astride its back issuing proclamation after proclamation denouncing himself. His penitent features are seen through the haze of pipe tobacco forming a halo round his head. Chained to the spaceship and directly in the line of thrust are Pogo and an unidentified, amorphous female member of the LASFS, each carrying gold-plated harps and singing Bringing Home The Sheaves. In the right foreground, Degler, his face concealed with

sixteen masks, each labelled with a different name, sits at a desk on which rests a telegraph instrument, busily clicking out manifestoes to the four winds represented by totally nude girls winking at a tall, slender, beardless fan on whose forehead is written in green ink the words: Fifty-seventh Variety. He is blushing violently and losing his pants.

Looming up in the general distance is a flight of dead fish, each carrying a sign in its mouth bearing the title of every fan club that has ever existed, the faces of every member painted in crackerdust on the shining scales. Slightly ahead of the parade, riding an empty Scotch bottle and clad in motley sewn together from discarded editions of Astounding Stories, while perched on his helmeted head are two giggling doves shouting, Peace, It's Wonderful!

Squatting on the roof of a large steel-riveted building in the middle background, just below a large sign with the words Science Fiction Press Inc. are Abbey Lu Ashley, her husband, E.E. Evans, E.E. Smith, John W. Campbell, the balance of the LASFS and Tairasi, all withering under the rays of a rusty contrivance made of two nails and a piece of string labelled AKKA welded by a beautiful girl with pink wings on which are stencilled the guarantee: 100% Virgin.

Standing about ten feet from the mural as it hangs on the north wall of the biggest comfort station in Cleveland Ohio, are the greybeards of the FSNY, cackling with laughter and applauding violently.

Until then, adieu.

MORE WORKS

FLEETING MOMENTS:

Living proof that even Robert Frost can make mistakes, whereas Robert P. Tristram Coffin and Edwin Markham are dead and can't be blamed. There is no point in going into the poetry. One might as well go to a lavatory. If these are beautiful thoughts I am Boss Tweed.

LIGHT:

Crouch's wailings for the warm depths of some dippy female are giving me the dry gripes. If he can't get a girl, let him join Ackerman in his celibate heaven and raise a few maledictions on the devilish spirit of enforced chastity.

BROWSING:

Who is J. Michael Rosenblum?

XENON:

If I could only read.

HORIZONS:

Where?

YHOS:

Yes, Art, but on the other hand---

FUTURIAN STATEMENT:

Degler may be 100 cents on the dollar, but if he crosses the New York City limits, I'm taking it up with La Guardia. I'm no woodsman.

GUTETO: Wanna bet, Morojo, dear?

THE PAPA FAN:

Well, Wollheim has to die someday.

AGENBITE OF INWIT:

I always said that man Lowndes would go hang.

SARDONYX:

Notice the bland schmaltz in his opinions on the members---coincident with his announcement for candidacy in the elections. Ha, Chauvanet, deucedly clever! Damme, sir, had I your fine city ways, I'd go far--- far away.

PHANNY:

?

BLITHERINGS:

Likes to call his shots, evidently.

MATTERS OF OPINION:

Slice it thick or thin, it's still Speer and we know what that means, don't we Jackie?

SAPPHO:

How's that again?

SUSTAINING PROGRAM:

I protest violently at this measly worm's anti-democratic racialism. The effluvium is the breath from a corpse. But we all read Hearst just for the funnies, don't we, kiddies?

THE NEUCLEUS:

Dead Trudy: Why the hell don't you strangle?

THE FANTASY AMATEUR:

This was better back in the days when fen were men and feuded.

BEYOND:

Check.

FAN TODS:

High-power. Oh, high-power. Shake hands with Widner, Norm.

MILTY'S MAG:

The day Rothman takes a firm stand on anything progressive, or stops letting our garden-snake fascists puke all over him, I'll will him my false teeth. So help me, Koenig.

FAN DANGO:

Slan Shack (Center?) is a subject on which I may speak with total authority, having been resident in quite a few. Conclusions: They're practical, but don't expect 'em to last. Into each house some little pig will come. Presently you'll run out. In my day it was either Wilson who apparently was raised in an outhouse or Hahn who can put a curse on a house from the word go. The Ivory Tower was the first and only large scale attempt of fen to live communally. Financially the project was a success. Pooling resources simply means reducing living expenses

all around. Incontrovertible as long as you have a treasurer with a soul of white and a heart like a banker's. Temperament has little meaning. The Ivory Tower, which housed such dynamic powerpacks as Wollheim, Lowndes, Pohl, myself, Kornbluth, Gillespie, et al, never exploded, though the foundations creaked a little now and then. Of course a bunch of bourgeois babbits can wreck anything. The first consideration when entering an Old Slan's Home is to junk hypocrisy---throw it out the window. Anything goes---quietly. Bar the Ackermans, the Morojos the other stiff-necked geese, the Ashley's and such hemilies, the Moskowitzian ignoramuses and the Pogo-Hornig adolescences---and the first step toward harmony and success is taken. For the rest, plain decency tolerance and universality of interests will suffice. It is possible to play poker and discuss intellectually. But you can't mix intellect or intellectuals with Main Street and the Great American Mom, calico, dear old dad, the Republican Party, small talk, bourgeois pecksniffery and the dull living habits of a large majority of our population.

EN GARDE:

You said it, kid. And I've got a pretty big shillaley, too.

FANTASTICONGLOMERATION:

Poor Ackerman. Sex-mad and can't get a woman. Bit it breaks out like boils---or letters from Los Angeles---don't it, Forry? Ah, but Kornbluth gave us an earful on the LASFS crowd (no offense to the Knaves). My congratulations to the last named group for heaving the tripe overboard. But you didn't finish the job, boys. There is a certain quick snip with a mimeograph allowed any reputable physician. As for VOM and its vomit, its would-be sexuality, the time has come to shred this stage settings for Ackerman public disrobings. What a laugh! Put these slavering adolescents in a room with some really hot wench and watch their smoke---blown away.

THE PHANTAGRAPHS:

Nice covers, ain't they?

TALES OF THE EVANS:

Nice guy, Evans.

WILT'S RAMBLINGS:

Fout.

HOW NOW, FANATICS?

by R.W. Lowndes

Note: The management takes full responsibility for anything nasty said by Mr. Lowndes. It's a pleasure.

You may have heard this definition of the fanatic: one who redoubles his efforts after having forgotten his aim. I speak to the revivors of the NFFF.

Time was when there existed a thing called science fiction. It was a fine thing, a form of literature that stormed the heavens, and the depths under the earth, sought out the secrets of man and his mortality and tried to look forward to greater tomorrows. And in that time there arose a large group of persons who said to themselves, and to all who would listen: let's get together on this; let us unite insofar as we can.

and work and dream together.

But that was in the olden days when science fiction was still being written and published. We called the group fandom and despite the clash of personalities and ideas and aims---indeed, because of it---fandom, in those days was a brave and expanding thing. So long as there was fertile soil wherein to sink our roots---a continuous production of tales which kept faith with the science fiction tradition, expanding, looking forward, presenting new concepts based on scientific discovery and the possibilities of great human societies based thereon---fandom grew and the several organizations had meaning.

What now, brethren---now that science fiction has long since departed to give way to thrillers based on psuedo-science, partly, but mostly upon the plot genie? What now, when more and more of those who remember what science fiction really was have departed---either into the nation's service, or, through severance with that stage of their lives?

The NFFF, to exist, needs and ever-expanding membership, needs new fans.

But the new fans are the product of the current decadence, either unable to procure real science fiction, due to the scarcity of copies of the elder writings or sheer lack of interest in the true lore. How can ye hope to find youngsters of today who can possibly develop into the tradition ye seek to perpetuate?

The answer is simple: you can't!

The NFFF is Don Quixote, pathetically seeking the realities of an obsolete order. Only a time machine could enable the NFFF to achieve its aim. And the NFFF has forgotten its aim; tilting at windmills, crying outworn slogans to the winds, evolving ever more grandiose plans, it shrills in the wilderness, unaware that none can understand save a pitiful few who remember.

I pity you, fanatics, but I will not join you. I remember and I shall keep faith with the tradition. And perhaps the day will come, in the postwar world, when science fiction---the stf. gone these many years---will come again.

When that day comes, then may those within the tradition bestir themselves and tell the neophytes, not only of that which was, but that which is, and may again be.

Until that day, adieu, fanatics.

Anybody got a time machine?

NOCTURNE FOR DOROTHY (1942) RWL•wndes

No more the lamplight-lighted, smokestrewn, the midnight-mantled,
Or wine-enwafted image of your eyes
Intruding welcomely:
I see the smile of you
When 4-inch headlines tell that Stalingrad
Holds firm, holds firm, and through this darkest night
The scarlet banners fly before the dawn;
I hear your voice
When all the cries for sudden, swift attack
Surge forth upon the Tory-laden air
To shake the jerry-built, enscoundreled palaces
And rock the roost of fools.
Amidst the dimmed-out streets you stride with me,
I see a prevue of the world set free.

SOUND THE CHARGE, FANDOM

By Donald A. Wollheim

I am told by John Michel, Editor of the Work, that my fellow Futurian, Doc Lowndes, has hammered out a withering blast at the NFFF. And I am told further that Michel, who insists that it not be in favor of the NFFF. I regret that I cannot oblige him. I am in favor of a national fan organization; I am a member of the NFFF, and I think it can manage to do things and go places.

It is true that so far as its record goes to date, it has been a total bust. Organized in a mad whirl of enthusiastic debate at Denver, its birth was also its liveliest moment. Then came a flurry of appointments, committees, projects, and ideas. Also came the first dead hand at the throat -- it was a single word: Bonfire. It colored, subtly and unconsciously, every act of the organization since. For it was not fantasy, not imaginative, not science fiction, not future-seeking. It was just stupid, dull, everyday, run-of-the-mill, street-corner cutish. A play on a seeming sounds of the initials B. o. n. F. F. F. It signified nothing. It exemplified the era of fan futility and piffle that then pervaded fandom (and still does to a certain extent). In short, it exemplified exactly the thing that the NFFF was designed to combat!

That set the pattern. Everything done thereafter was with the sinister, silly echo of Bonfire in the background -- a resounding heha to all one's serious works. Gradually the thing wound itself up into a knot, working out the usual godawful complication of a constitution, electing a staff of officers on popularity basis, rather than actual work records in fandom. And after one collapse, E. E. Evans grabbed control and tried to make the fuel-less machine work. For a period, revived life under EEE. Then the goblins carried EEE off; Ashley took theoretical control. Then death.

The thing was dead for a year or so. No one cared. Now it has been revived. There were two reasons for this: Evans came back from limbo, and Ashley wanted to spike Degler's Cosmic Circle breathlessness. So here it is with a new streamlined constitution, fixed high dues, new ideals, orders going out again to all corners, talk of projects again. And, of course, the same cadaver organ -- Bonfire.

I believe fandom needs a national organization. There are so many things to do -- fans must and can really create vehicles for stf themselves. They can change the existing fiction for better. They can expound so many living philosophies and credos from their reading. The NFFF, for better or worse, is here. Ashley and Evans have given us a skeleton; fans haven't opposed it. Rather than sneer at it, let us join it; let us then work tooth and nail to make it practical. Let us sweep out the old dead wood, officers or ideas; give the thing a better more living organ (and title thereto); democratize Evans' supporting Council by immediate elections now; declare absolute independence of all pro magazines; get in there and organize fandom from top to bottom to fight for a real futurian literature and readerhood now!

REBUTTAL TO THE ABOVE ARTICLE

Q. E. D.

RWL