

(i.e. 1945.)

Below is an account of a Friday-to-Tuesday spent in the company of fans following three years' exile.

I don't know how the hell I am going to write this. I am, as fans go, tolerably sane. After being chivvied around from Friday to Tuesday on a Kafkaesque tour of London it seems sufficient cause for rejoicing that I am not quite reduced to gibbering idiocy. But Michael says I must write about the time I had. Those of you who knew Michael will know the force of his personality. All I want to do is crawl away and hide for another three or four years from the Fury that is Fandom. But Michael says differently. Michael says to write all about the time I had. So here is all about the time I had.

I had instructions to meet the Sheffield train arriving at St. Pancras about 2130. I was to sit at the bookstall along with Benson Herbert and someone called Marion. (Not Marion Turner.) This was about the clearest instruction I received the whole time. There were only two bookstalls, which gave me a 50/50 chance of being in the right place. And there were only three couples who could be Benson Herbert-and-Marion. None of them was, of course. I got some funny looks about asking them. At the time I couldn't understand anyone resenting being taken for Benson Herbert.

Michael I recognised by the copy of *SECOND-JOB CRIMES* that he unsuccessfully tried to palm off on me on several later occasions. In case you are one of the 2% of British fans who have not met him, Michael is short, hefty, dark and jovial. The girl with him, a good-looking well-built wench, was introduced as Joyce Fairbairn. She immediately deposited three or four tons of baggage on me and departed on a search for -- she claimed -- a girl-friend. Michael and I rediscovered her some time later cornering a couple of Yank GIs in an alcove. The fans looked scared but virtuous.

Michael explained Benson's absence by the fact that a party was in progress at Drayton Gardens where a barrel of beer was being broached. What we actually found was no beer but an injunction to keep quiet as someone was having a baby. That was probably the most conventional thing that happened at Drayton Gardens during the week-end.

We were greeted by Benson himself, the kingpin of Utopian Publications. (Publishers of "FUTURIST FEMINITY", "CRIMES WITHOUT GOWNS", etc. etc.) He is small, sensitive of visage, fond of mixing different types of people like cocktails, and, on the surface anyway, very good-tempered. He introduced us to Marion, who is even smaller, very dark, good-looking and speaks with an attractive accent. Better still she doesn't speak much. It was a pleasant relief when the rest of us were talking even more simultaneously than usual to be aware of a silver oasis of silence in our midst. Quiet people should be protected from fans. Benson also introduced us to Ron Lane, a medium-built, spectacled Northerner, who spent the week-end getting lost and buying colossally-priced books devoted to such people as Henry Moore and Turner (not METurner, I am informed). As I was leaving for the Park Lane YMCA hostel where I was staying the night I was introduced to two more wenches, Ray and Sophie. I was to meet them twice again. Once at Bartorelli's restaurant when they held a conversation with Benson across a score of other diners, and again the next weekend.

Before I go on to Saturday, a word or two about 24 Drayton Gardens. Michael described it as an "anarchist house-hold", and if by "anarchist" is meant "wildly chaotic", I am bound to agree. Such things as the long-red-haired Bohemian who drifted in and out of the room while we were having tea one day, and did not, apparently, see us; the engaging idea of

having visitors spend every night not only in a different bed but in a different room; and my walking one morning into what had previously been a sitting-room to find a lovely young woman sitting up in bed and a flimsy nightgown --- these things do at least give a spice to life!

The following morning I met the others at Marble Arch. After waiting less than half an hour for them they rolled up, and we accompanied Michael in a bockhunt up and down Charing Cross Road. Apart from Joyce taking us all for a free ride in the wrong bus the morning passed fairly uneventfully. Joyce, Ron, Benson and I helped Michael considerably. Whenever we found a book with a title like "Of Two Worlds -- a Story of Love Transcending Social Barriers", or "Fantastic Tales for Teddlers", we passed it over to Michael at once. I must say that Michael was less grateful than he might have been for this assistance.

Around 1 o'clock we met Marion, Wally Gillings and Harold Chibbett and went for lunch. Since Michael was the sole vegetarian of the eight of us it was democratically decided to go to Lyons' --- to the Salad Bowl! Ron Lane and I, with no hankering for rabbit-food, raised a violent protest and formed a minority party for the a la Carte. At the last moment Wally also backslid and joined us. Over lunch he told us all about the rosy future of British science-fiction, and Wally and I told each other what a grand life is the Army life.

Harold Chibbett left us after lunch and after a lot of the usual indecisive arguing as to whether we should go to see the Russian musical, "Volga-Volga", we found it convenient to split into two parties, Marion, Benson and Wally leaving the other four of us at the National Gallery, where I learned how Michael Classifies People. He puts them in four broad divisions. People who like cats. People who like dogs. People who like both cats and dogs. And people who like neither. The only burning question now is how dogs and cats classify Michael.

We left the Nat. Gall. when Joyce began to feel hungry, a common condition of hers. We queued for the better part of an hour for a cup of tea and an eclair affair. The others were greatly amused when I bit my eclair and it spat cream all over my uniform. A withered old hag at the same table, of disreputable appearance and unquestionable lowlife, claimed it was the funniest thing she had seen since her grandfather got cut in two by a scythe on the day of the Waterloo celebrations.

When I had been wiped fairly clean we set off for Harold Chibbett's place. At the Piccadilly Circus Tube Joyce succeeded in losing 3d. of mine in the ticket machine. She then raised Cain with every official in sight until finally we found ourselves with 5 tickets for 4 people and the lasting enmity of the IPTB. Joyce had her revenge though. On the way back she took Michael and Ron through a secret exit of her own and avoided paying the 5/2 return fare. I, of course, never got my 3d.

At the Chibbett's we were warmly welcomed by Harold and Lily, and made the acquaintance of Maurice Hugi who was round borrowing MAZING QUARTERLIES. During the evening Roland Forster rolled up on his way back from LIA-leave, and time passed in the unobtrusive, maddening way it does when our kind of people are discussing our kind of topics. All too soon it was time for Roland to catch his boat-train; and Joyce, Ron, Michael, Maurice and I set out for the Bounds Green Tube with him. While in the train Joyce noticed Roland's Esperanto Star on his tie. So, sitting beside him, she began, above the roar of the Tube, to converse in Esperanto. They failed to understand each other. So she called Michael in to help. Then there were three not understanding each other. Finally she took out a pocket vocabulary --- and chaos became complete! Learn Esperanto and be understood anywhere!

A small voice strolled in through the ever-open door of 24 Drayton Gardens on Sunday Morning and asked one of the numerous inhabitants if 'they' were up. They weren't. And so Sam Youd strolls into my room, having arrived too early - very silly of him really, because we arranged the night before to meet at ten the following morning. Sam must have thought we meant it, and arrived at ten. So I take up the duties of host and show Sam round my latest bedroom - we change rooms each night, probably a device of our host to prevent us getting bored. All the rooms have two things in common however - a divan and an enticing library, the divan being big enough for two - this engendering a spirit of lively curiosity in the guests when they retired.

This time my library consisted principally of art books, notably a magnificent Blake which I exhibited proudly. The night before it was Matisse and Henry Moore, and books on printing, while Mike had Front and several Nonesuch for company.

Eventually I set forth on the hazardous trip to the bathroom, dodging a sort of Dantean sequence of wild eyed floating forms on the way. An amazing house, this the natives have apparently resigned themselves to a communal life in which all things are pooled from rooms and the clothes therein to the floating population which wanders in and out throughout the year.

In entering the kitchen in search of breakfast I observed that the population of 24 was religious - or at least observed Sunday. They wore clothes instead of dressing gowns. Fans being above such unspiritual matters as eating breakfast was soon over, altho it was a rather intense experience while it lasted - after all, porridge and rose hip syrup... and lime juice in tea. Vaguely discussing the days programme we wandered off over a broken down wall and an amateurish cabbage patch in search of a phone box, it being possible that a one of the lines in the London area might be free. It turns out that Bruce Gaffron is in Aberdeen visiting 'Obster who will be in London the next weekend, and so I have a long talk with Bruce's father. After answering all his questions about fandom (luckily I was alone in the phone box!) I attempt to disillusion him about this rumour of Manchester weather which has got around.. You know the way rumours spread.

By this time the less spiritual types amongst us begin to clamour for food, and after a preliminary lubrication of the tonsils we head for the SALAD BOWL; not without some protest from Sam and I, however. It must be confessed that at the SALAD BOWL there is a most interesting service, as you can take what you want, the price being fixed. This probably explains the attraction of the SALAD BOWL for a certain person, but Sam and I are not tempted, and retire to have a meal and not a mouthful of wet grass.

After dinner we found that we had planned to go to the International Youth Centre, none of us being members. For some reason we stick to this plan, despite the protest of Joyce. La Donna est Mobile. And how. After a ride in a taxi which held four the six of us marched into the International Youth Centre and Duke-of-York-wise marched out again to be phot ed on the steps by yrs. truly, after which we left for the Peruvian Embassy. After an enjoyable time there, someone mentioned that HG Wells lived quite near, and we dropped into a Tube station and phoned up him and some other friends. Mr. Wells was in

, and would be glad to see us, and after arranging to call later on we contacted a few other people. Alastair Crowley was easily reached, but as soon as the rapport was established he sent his astral body to see us, after which he immediately broke off. We couldn't discover why. Professor Joad was unluckily away from home, but we did manage to reach Laski and Beaverbrook, and arranged for each to be at 10 Downing Street at 4 o'clock. We weren't able to witness the meeting (of undoubtedly historical interest) in view of the immense crowds present.

After a futile attempt to persuade two strangers to fall into each others arms, we left for our appointment with HG Wells, and
We knocked at the door in Hanover Place,
'Twas oped by a robot in pretty pink lace
With Vaseline hair and a brass belly-case
And a frog-like face.

We ushered us in with a rattle and groan,
We climbed the Green Carpet behind his square dome
And entered a room fill'd with tone upon tone
And a two teathed comb.

Soon there entered our host clad in futurist style,
Non-utility, guaranteed to last for a while,
And he gazed upon us with a wondering smile,
At each guileless dial.

Mike Brake the silence right vigorously
With 'We be fans from the North, from the South, from the
Our mags be widespread, our tongues be right free, /See
Our abilities great, sez we.'

'We all like science-fiction, and all read your stuff'
(Someone said 'Nay, nay' and was quelled with a muff)
'We live for the future and this Utopian stuff'
Benson muttered 'Enough'.

'Well', said Wells, 'I'm pleased to meet
Such valiant souls, so young and so sweet,
But we can talk much more comfortably if we all take a seat
And have something to eat.'

'Bobby', he called, and Bobby clanked in.
'We're feeling quite hungry, please open a tin'
And tea being over he asked with a grin
Can I help you in-'

'I represent FIDO! said Mike with a shout,
And I edit FAV' said Sam with a pout,
'I'm known for GTIDH' said RL 'if for owt'
And Benson blushed and said nowt.

'What do you think', said we all in a burst,
Of the War, of the Peace, of the horrible Yearst.'

Would you like to kill Churchill if only thou durst
Do you expect the best or the worst.

Do you like chips or Japs or guns,
Or motors or cricketers and their many runs
Do you approve of Easter and hot cross buns,
Do you believe in ghost or puns?

We want to know why and wherefore and how
We want to write up this trip we trow
As editors we're short of material just now,
But otherwise we're quite a wow!

He started to tell us and went on and on.
But swore us to secrecy while under this sun,
But in any case among us there's none
Who dare use this con.!

So later that evening we softly arose,
And left Mr. Yell's in a state of repose
And escorted by Bobby who crept on his toes
Made a dash for the pubs before they could close.

after which

we went to the Vic and Albert Magazine - damn - Museum and contemplated
fireirons until sufficiently hardened. Then Joyce and I went to see
A DOLL'S FEST at the Arts theatre while Mike was psychoanalysed...
but that's another story.

goodbye

hic

RF

"COMMERCIAL"

This is the more-or-less official record of a weekend spent in London during August, 1945 by a varying and heterogeneous group of fantasy fans. The nucleus consisted of C. S. Youd of Eastgate on CMF leave, Benson Herbert of London, Joyce Fairbairn of Sheffield, Ron Lane of Manchester and J.M.Rosenblum of Leeds. Other participants included - R.G.Medhurst, Wally Gillings, Hal Chibbett, Maurice Hugl, Roland Forster Norman Lamb of Toronto, Syd Bounds and assorted spouses and things. This account is prepared sectionally by various people and, though true in spirit, need not be taken as absolutely accurate in fact. Sam Youd wishes it to be taken as "FANTAST'S FOLLY III" for the record, whilst J.M.Rosenblum points out that it is simultaneously "BROWSING" no. 11; thus causing a crisis in the Swisher files. Distributed thru FAPA and BRITish Fantasy Society mailings. Published from 4 Grange Terrace, Leeds. Accounts of various other visits and travels during the following weeks may be attached, or their publication will follow shortly.

Benson Herbert takes over, with

SUNDAY NIGHT.

"Up to the age of five, who was more mad at you, your mother or your father?"

Exhausted after a day of re-Joycing, Mike lay stretched on a divan in the Drayton Gardens basement while Sam read out the question coldly, incisively. No sooner had Mike wearily given the answer: "Each was madder than the other" when Sam continued severely:-

"Do Mickey Mouse cartoons give you nightmares?"

"Or would you rather be a fish?" interrupted the bored BH, shyly hidden ~~Sam ignorundrthehind~~ a mountain of fanzines.

Sam ignored the remark and went on with the scientific probing of Mike's character. This highly personal and more than somewhat embarrassing quiz came from a "know yourself" book by Gerhardi & Prince Leewenstein, the latter having personal connections in DG in the form of Miss Fifi Schuster, the literary agent in the attic.

Deeper and deeper probed Sam, while Mike desperately tried to answer without revealing too much of his long-distant childhood. After one and a half hours of grilling third degree, Sam read out M's character from the back of the book with malicious pleasure. M shuddered and denied the whole thing, demanding a repeat of the quiz. (Sam was the first to point out how inaccurate the blessed thing was, so there - JLR)

This time BH took the chair and went through the whole horrible rigmarole again, with one slight difference--M this time carefully gave different answers. The result however turned out even worse than before, and M was still dissatisfied.

The conclusion appeared to be that if only M had been a woman, he would have been a grand chap. As a male however he was undoubtedly a misfit, as he didn't fit into the book at all. BH claimed the book was infallible, and suggested that M had been registered as a boy by an ignorant doctor. (Take no notice folks, this is Benson's idea of humour - JLR).

M retorted by reading his own horoscopes, which made him out to be a government inspector. (The thing actually read, suited for a governor or inspector, something ought to be done about this Herbert humour! - JLR)

Browned off by M's elusive character, we emerged from the basement. Sam and B had a moment of horror when they paused at the top of the steps, turned and saw M's head apparently hopping upside-down up the steps without his body. This however was only an optical illusion, as M's face is symmetrical about a horizontal line through the bridge of his nose. Groucho-like, the eyebrows join up, and cannot be distinguished from his moustache. In fact M's face is definitely improved by inversion, as B found by standing on his head in the middle of the street. This ambiguity, coupled with M's uncertain sexuality, could probably be reconciled with a Dunne nightmare where backwards cannot be distinguished from forwards. On this theory, it follows that in a nudist camp, you could not tell whether M is walking backwards or forwards, nor whether he is standing on his feet or his head.

On top of this, you recollect that M gave two quite different account of his life when quizzed by Sam and B. We must suppose that in one case he recounted his past, in the other his future (second) childhood.

Past and future, backwards and forwards, up and down, man and woman ---it is all the same to Mike---a thoroughly symmetrical personality in four dimensions.

We three set off down the Old Brompton Road and entered the inevitable Italian cafe, where B was greatly embarrassed to discover two Polish girls who had created something of a disturbance on Friday night. Those present

recollect how one of the girls placed a cupful of water on the bed (sorry - divan) just as Benson was about to sit down. The girls insisted on carrying on a conversation across the cafe with Benson and even getting him to relay orders to a confused waiter. As a result we got the girls supper and they got ours.

On the way home, we discussed plans for the morrow, and made a vow to stick to a definite programme. The three of us outnumbered Joyce and Ron, and we felt that by firm resolve now, we could prevent spending the entire Monday at a street corner arguing where to go next.

However, on reaching Drayton Gardens, Joyce beat us to the draw, opened her mouth first, and torwly-bombed our plans to the Kensington breezes.

She and Ron had just arrived, supposedly from the Arts Theatre Club, though there was a suspicious air of camaraderie between the two, and Ron winced coyly under scrutiny. Had Ron been led up lovers' lane? Beginners

in re-Joycing get that way. Later on they shrivel and devlope spots, just as if they drank vinegar. Then they dry up, losing all their joyce, spin a cocoon out of pulp mags, hang on a branch of literature, and finally a moth emerges known as Fly-by-night.

The party broke up after a nightcap of rose-hip juice and monkeynuts.

MONDAY

Monday was the climax of a crazy weekend. The last night's analysis of the double-faced, double-sided, double-sexed Mike had created a warp during the night and consequently time was reversed on the Monday.

We began by going to bed. Not all the same bed, of course. To avoid confusion we had better begin at the end of the day, which was breakfast with the Drayton Gardens nunnery. Prim place, Kensington - they define sex as what the coalman puts the coal in.

It was to be an ocking day (to ock - to go in search of occult books; to be foyled - to be swindled into buying second-hand books), in spite of all previous plans to the contrary.

Joyce and Michael went to George Hedhurst's coal-mine in Finborough Rd., while the rest wandered to a phone box where Benson rang up every medium he knew. Then we took Lane back along the back lane. Ron filled his haversack with books purloined from Drayton Gardens and came with the hat to George's. There we found fans queuing up to go down the coal-mine, keeping a furtive eye on the closed doors of the pub which bulges out in the middle of the road a few yards away in front of George's domicile. Practically an annex. Now we knew why so many fans were there. At eleven o'clock, the coal-mine spewed forth fans like tooth-paste from a tube, and we reached the doors just as they opened.

Everyone talked ockistry except Norman Lamb, who appeared to have memorised the entire contents of Punch volumes from 1880 to 1890 and talked interminably without anyone paying attention. Norman showed great appreciation of his stories so they must have been bad.

There was a scheme afoot to materialise Lovecraft, and another to materialise the late medium Rudi Scheiner, who would then in turn

materialise Hugo Gernsback's maternal grandmother.

After the usual Italian lunch, eight of us packed into one taxi and repaired to Mrs. Harvey, a medium of Knightsbridge - a well-known psychometrist, short, plump, with piercing eyes, an air of bonhomie, and a huge black cat with iridescent hair. Her room is decorated with Red Indian masks and photos with spirit extras, and looks respetably phony.

She passed a tray around, on which we placed personal articles, a pipe from Syd, pen from Mike, cig case from Benson, and so on. Harvey picked up

one of the pens, turned it round and round, passed it rapidly from one hand to the other, and finally pressed one end of the pen on her forehead, closed her eyes, and began discussing the owner's past, present, and future in general terms.

She impressed most of the gang, but Benson, who knew her well from previous year, thought she was much better in a private sitting, though group sittings are undoubtedly more fun. Obviously in public she cannot be intimate. May be he was just annoyed as she told him that in personal matters he should have a one-track mind, which goes dead against his nature. Besides, Harvey didn't specify which track. The medium's voice deepened and harshened when she came to Sam; evidently she sensed a certain scepticism, but instead of passing over him quickly, she kept worrying him and probing deeper and deeper until poor old Sam showed signs of discomfort. Michael thought he was getting his revenge for the previous night.

Harvey interpolated that she disliked snakes -- Joyce giggled. Harvey asked how much we would take for the articles on the tray. We sold the lot for 7/5d.

The party grew restive towards 5pm, as we had an appointment with another medium at George's air-raid shelter. (note Benson's "poetic" descriptions of the Medhurst basement flat - JMR) So George went off first to open the door, and the remainder reached the rendezvous by devious routes, as no taxi could be found to take so many.

When we arrived, the medium was already sitting in a dark room with a girl called Yvonne. Now Benson had imbibed too much liquor and felt a pressing need which could not be met, as the only route to the requirement led through the séance room.

At last X Yvonne finished and Benson stumbled impatiently through the dark. The medium, Mrs Elliott, already began to talk of guides and suchlike, and Benson had some difficulty in persuading her that he had not come for a spiritual purpose but a physical one. Medium said it was ok as she could have a rest while Benson was out there enjoying himself. On this occasion her clairvoyance must have slipped, for she certainly had no rest, on account of Benson, who on his way back from the place of refreshment (sic) let in a kitten which played Holy Jake with Mrs Elliott's guides. It appears that guides do not like kittens, maybe because this one was indecent owing to a highly delicate operation just performed on it, and was probably full of earthly thoughts and spirits have a natural aversion from agriculture. The kitten however took a fancy to the guides and refused to depart, leading Benson a mighty dance under the tables and chairs. Benson, perspiring on all fours, thought he'd grasped the animal's tail once, but it turned out to be the medium's foot, and the guides were not pleased any more by that. Benson also introduced his head to some object in the darkness where no object should have been, but it was definitely harder than ectoplasm. The impact spilt a shower of pens and pencils from Benson's breast-pocket. These however were easy to find as Benson knelt on all of them several times. The kitten was eventually cornered under one of the numerous bookcases which George had seen fit to litter around the séance room. It was only then that the medium mildly remarked she wouldn't have minded having the light on all the time.

Feeling slightly prejudiced against Mrs Elliott, Benson staggered into the other room where George was talking about a non-pro séance the night before. It appears that on this delectable occasion a table rose to the ceiling, and a chair slid rapidly backwards through the door. This seems to have impressed George no end, perhaps because he was sitting on the chair at the time.

Thereafter till 10 pm we interviewed Mrs Elliott one by one, while the rest went out in relays to chew fried ectoplasm at the Lighty cafe.

Benson thought the sitting good except for the slight detail that Mrs Elliott didn't see eye to eye with Mrs Harvey. Elliott described Benson's

grandfather building up mental images of seven-pointed stars and policemen's helmets over Benson's head so vividly that B. was quite surprised when he came out bareheaded.

Joyce and George were impressed, but Joyce was foolish enough to take a complete record of her sitting in shorthand, the result of which is that nobody knows what happened. She spent the rest of the evening trying to read it out, but never got further than the middle of each sentence which kind of diminished the interest. It appears she further complicated matters by insisting on speaking Esperanto to the guides.

Later in the evening we got tired of talking to grandpops and asked Mike to shoot himself so that he could communicate through Mrs Ellictt. Mike however evidenced considerable lack of interest in scientific research and refused to collaborate on the plea that if we didn't hurry the pub would close (libel -- as if I am interested in such mundane matters as alcohol etc.)

He was quite right and the party reached Drayton Gardens dangerously sober.

And J. Michael Rosenblum tidily completes with the rest of Monday and

Tuesday....

Taking over where BH left off, we wended back to DG, accompanied by a very bedraggled stray cat which I spent the rest of the evening throwing out. A general discussion degenerated into Mr Herbert producing folder after folder of the criminal photographs his Utopian nudes are taken from, and animated discussion thereon between him, Norman Lamb, Sam Youd, Ron Lane & our Joyce. I was almost hors-de-combat on the divan behind them; remember I was a sick man, and the strain was telling. Eventually everybody had to be almost forcibly thrown out as they were, of course, occupying MY room. Wherever I go to fan confabs, the whole caboodle insist on adopting MY room as general meeting place - I remember throwing Gus Willmorth and Roy Johnson out of my room in Manchester once at 2.30 am ... but I wander.

Tuesday was our last day. Alas. The tentative - and how - programs consisted of bookhunting and assrted farewells. To start with, the Drayton Gardeners had arranged to meet the army in the shape of Messrs Youd and that Canadian from Birmingham, Sgt Lamb; at the Atlantis bookshop to resume an interrupted argument with the proprietor thereof anent occultism. At 10am we were there. Soon Mr Youd wandered in, but where was our stray Lamb? Just after halfpast in that gentleman wandered - with a terrific pile of books under each arm. Apparently he'd been up just after 5am, and waiting outside Foyles in Charing Cross Road when they opened. An hours hasty search had brought him nearly 30 books but I called him a gentleman 'cos he'd also obtained a couple on my behalf. Then he and I went through the Atlantis bookshop stock, whilst the others argued. Then he and I went round the corner to see Grafton and Co, where they keep a card index of "Utopias and ~~xxxxxx~~ Forecasts" which spells sciencefiction to any fan, whilst the others still argued. At Graftons one is sat at a table, looks at this card index, and is brought any book in which one shows interest. We had moderate luck but Norm had just obtained a copy of Fowlr Wright's "World Below" when Sam Youd wandered in after his final disagreement with Mr Houghton of the Atlantis, and wanted to fight Norm for the work. He seemed to desire it quite a lot.

As we departed this neighbourhood, Norm possessed three piles of book precariously fastened with string, and containing about 15 books per pile. Benson suggested dumping the lot temporarily at the office of Utopian Pubs. Norm heaved a sigh of relief and gaily acquiesced. So we did. For those who are interested, the office of Utopian is situate just behind the "I" of "White Lions" on a large sign in Cambridge Circus. Thence we lunched; the Salad Bowl again as I recollect me aright.

After lunch we had one seance left over from the day before. But Norm

preferred to continue his scavenging at Foyle's and its neighbourhood. So that left five of us - Joyce, Sam, Ron, Benson and little me, to go and see (or rather hear) little Tulip at her Retreat. Yes this was a lovely example of what a faked spiritualist seance should be like; though mind you, I don't say it was faked. Only that it appeared so. But it was priceless; a guardian female dragon showed us into the room, which was swathed in flowers and contained a pseudo-altar and numerous canaries; told us precisely where to sit, placing Benson in a lovely chair which emitted the most unearthly squeaks whenever he changed his position or his mind; and then brought out our medium. We were told to sing hymns, but after the first feeble attempt, this preliminary was dispensed with. Apparently fans don't know any hymns. Then the medium went into trance and gave forth as Little Tulip, with a fascinating lisp. There was something for everybody. Joyce is a medium but should get over her fear of spirits; Sam is a table medium and should practise that art; myself, I am a healer and have as guide a Red Indian medicine-man "with fevers right down to ze wound"; Benson is gifted with automatic writing should try it, and with practise might write a book in time; but the house was brought down when Ron Lane was solemnly informed that he owed somebody a letter. 50 letters might have been nearer the mark.

Back to Charing Cross Road and there the party split up. Benson went off for some medical treatment, whilst Joyce and Sam accompanied Norm to his railway station, carrying a large pile of his books each; and duly saw him off. What happened to Ron I'm sure I don't know but I went thru Foyle's books to make sure Norm hadn't missed any. He hadn't - hah! We rendezvoused once more and heard how Sam had refused to allow Joyce to pay his bus fare back from seeing Norm off, on the grounds that the conductor might think that she was keeping him. Joyce was fascinated by the idea of having a kept man and decided there and then to "keep" us all. So she took us off to have some tea, and of course landed us at the cheapest place she knew - a weird sort of mechanised cafeteria in which a moving band propelled your tray along whilst you ran along beside it trying to approximate its speed. Tea was quite a hilarious occasion; we were planning all sorts of weird publications amid great merriment, and before we had finished the adjoining tables were treating us as a free entertainment.

Then Joyce decided to take us off to a certain pub, with a certain reputation. Well she got us into the approximate vicinity with only two blind alleys entered, and then started making enquiries. We got some queer looks. Anyrate we found the place - closed. So twas another place of alcoholic refreshment we entered, seized a table and generally talked, drank and played pintable games till it was time to see about Joyce and I departing. Somehow as we emerged, Sam was wearing my trilby, and Joyce his army beret. And she sat on his knee all the way to St Pancras in a crowded bus.

There were no platform tickets being issued at the station; but a single look at the official and Benson, Ron and Sam trooped on to the platform with the two of us departing, the railway company obligingly brought in the appropriate train and we took possession of one carriage thereof. We continued to talk. Later people came into our carriage (no manners) so we adjourned to a truck on the platform till twas time to tata. I shall never forget our Joycey sat holding hands with Benson and Sam and wailing "But I don't want to go". I had to get her on to the train by brute force! The girl likes both London and fan doings; but I can't blame her cos so do I.

However she had a happy moment a little later, when a dear middle-aged couple sat opposite us took it for granted we were getting off at Nottingham and said that they had ordered a taxi to be waiting and as they lived near the university and we were obviously students, could they give us a lift? We thanked them gravely, told them we were travelling respectively to Sheffield and Leeds and that we were not students. They were awfully disappointed. So they left and at Sheffield so did Joyce and at Leeds I got cut with a large artilleryman and we walked to Chapeltown in the pouring rain and I went in home at about 4am and that was that. Cheerie till next time.