
Stencilled by Douglas Webster at Idlewild, Fountainhall Road, Aberdeen, from odds 'n' ends, bits of letters, & all the dirt, dup. by JMR; & issued with Fido. Amer.

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During the early days of May, a very strange missive appeared at the above address: a thin, rolled-up cylinder. The covering address said it was from DRSmith at Smith's address, but this didn't fool anybody - I well knew the Man From Mars might be playing tricks. Unrolled, the wrapper said "For Good Stationery..W.H. Smith & Son..1250 Branches" (no relation of DRS...but more of this later, if there's room). Inside was a long scroll which I unrolled like they do in the picture-books: written in red & black script of varying sizes was the following impudent statement--

-- PROCLAMATION --

To Whom It May Concern..

WHEREAS it has been brought to Our notice that one Richard George Medhurst has inaugurated a Campaign for Drawing the Fangs of Smith by calling him "Ray", and

WHEREAS We regard this as an unprovoked Aggression caused by the notorious Maliciousness of the said Medhurst,

WE HEREBY PROCLAIM the formation of a Society for Annoying Medhurst, which will diligently pursue a course of unremitting hostility to the said Medhurst and his fat-headed opinions.

Given under Our Hand this third day of May, A.D. MCMXXXI

Ray

Round about the 'Ray' were some classy lightning flashes which, not being Harry Turner, I won't try to reproduce. I should add that Membership to either the CDFS or the SAM may be had on application to D'webster, self-appointed Hon.Sec. of each organisation. I say "ray", implying "May not", because membership must be active & approved in each case by Dictator Medhurst of the CDFS or Dictator Smith of the SAM. (And if the Americans don't notice something just a teeny bit satirical in the whole thing, they should be suck.) DW hereby makes sure of his membership of the CDFS by remarking that when he took Latin at school, MCMXXXI didn't mean just very much. Shame on you, Donnie! Members of Group 2 ("the live-wires") of Ego's FAN MAIL will remember that the CDFS has been going strong for some while, with unprecedented results

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And now something which you probably won't find elsewhere. Doubtless I break all the rules of ethics & personal confidence, but . . . well, here's --
 CSYoud: "I was lucky enough to be unable to fall publicly for the Singleton swindle. /Sam made mention of it in FanMail, together with interesting remarks on American temperament (note number of US authors & fans who have committed suicide); but this was seen by only 6 people. Russell Chauvenet writes:- "Recently Earl Singleton... ..left fandom by the ingenious expedient of having his room-mate...mail around personal letters to certain key fans, announcing Earl's "suicide". This "suicide" story was pure bologna, but it was gulped down by all fans with the exception of myself and Art Widner, both of us being personal friends (?) of Earl, whom Earl had kept in the dark with the other fans. We thought there was something smelly in the tale and our investigations have revealed that Earl is not only in excellent health but also that he has left Cambridge and gone to Washington DC. Just at the moment I type this no decision has been reached - I am in favour of announcing the whole thing to fandom but am awaiting a letter from Art who is now due to give me his opinions. If you notice any report of "suicide of a fan" in England you are quite free to make suitable corrections, but don't go out of your way to announce the facts!" "

Which strikes me as very funny, especially when you remember Dictator

2/ Tucker's demise a few years ago (or was it Jack Darrow's?) However, there are some interesting details. For interesting (tut-tut, 'for instance,' I mean - I don't trust that Correctine either), why should Singleton engineer such a spoof (unless he had too much work to get through, in which case, why should he agree to spend an enormous amount of time writing a regular 3-page column for SPACEWAYS?), & more important, why should he leave Cambridge if he had a scholarship there? Probably Americans are crazy. . . . Then the latest (April) issue of Art Widner's mag FANFARE comes in, "Dedicated to Earl Singleton". Miske "explains" the suicide, and is quite ridiculous; but then Miske's like that, for he identified ES with himself. Lowndes expounds in a 'fey' poem, & is less ridiculous in that he says less. Art himself says he's somewhat ignorant in such things and draws a symbolic cover which would be rank bad taste but for the fact that it probably proves he had indeed considerable doubts about the "suicide" when he drew it. All in all, an interesting affair.

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JMR: "Incidentally, last issue of Gent must have slipped up on stf interest - new reader T. Hughes of Birmingham [Welcome to madness, THughes!] wants to know how it's connected! [This is a question which has worried greater minds. The Brains Trust were left yammering & quite nonplussed; & I am thinking of applying to Ray. Still, fans are connected to stf, aren't they? Stf. extract follows.]

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JACK BANKS: "Perhaps you'll permit a newcomer to fandom to air a few remarks in The Gent. [In general, only newcomers write remarks which can be aired in the Gent - what the oldtimers write is too hot!] Concerning Eric Hopkins' remarks on "The Final War" (I only read a part of this story, when about 13 years old, but still have vivid recollections of it). The point I wish to make is that a great debt is owed by S.F. to the German writers. Stories such as Bernhard Kellerman's "The Tunnel", first published in 1913, or the trilogy "Gas" by Georg Kaiser (1912-20) stand forth as notable novels. "Gas" deals with the mechanization of humanity by factory labour, & the attempt of a millionaire's son to liberate the slaves of industry. He fails, for the workers prefer the quick gain that machines bring, to natural labour in the open air. (There would appear to be an analogy with present conditions here.) The story ends with the extinction of all & everything by a pellet of poison gas. [Damn useful idea.] ***Other novels which do not seem to have been translated into English are Alfred Doblin's "Wadzeks Kampf mit der Dampfturbine" & "Berge Meere und Giganten" published in '18 & '24 respectively. In the words of a writer on German literature, the former "comes to epic grips with machinery", while the second is of "the age of the superman, with machinery supreme, A.D. 2700-3000". [With all due regard: if machinery were supreme, then superman...?] With the aid of the volcanoes of Iceland man frees Greenland from the ice, but nature takes its revenge. According to the writer quoted above, the author "subordinates the story to the problem of the mechanization of the cosmos". Then of course there's Thea von Harbou's "Metropolis", made famous by the film. [Haven't seen the film, but anyone who wishes to borrow the book from me is in for a sumptuous treat.] Considering the above examples, & then remembering Donald Vollheim's outright condemnation of "Druso" in Sep 34 W.S., without even reading it, merely because the author was German [DAV], like all michelists & many fans, is intolerant; but like all of us, he evolves, leads me to wonder what is the opinion of fans on the merits of German S.F., unobscured by prejudice. [Fans will also remember many other stories by Germans in the old WS - by von Hanstein, Gail, & several more.] ***By the way, I wonder if Spohr is a Nazi? [If he were, 'twould uphold Ragatzy.]

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CSY: does not seem to agree with friend Ragatzy, & probably brings politics in the Gent to a close, thus: "With regard to his anti-politics bunk, I think Eric is quite right. Possibly the best comment is Edward Hulston's in the latest WORLD REVIEW: - "I suggest that France fell because, following the 'Enlightenment' of the 18th. century, she put away the spirit. A fantastic degree of corruption was tolerated in politics

3/ and business. There were many honest persons, such as the great mass of toiling peasants. But there was another fault. These ordinary, honest folk, in common with ordinary honest folk the world over, especially in America [which is, I'm afraid, true, & significant], turned their backs upon politics. They did not realise that politics are life itself, and not some isolated pursuit like ballet-dancing [Shhh! don't say it in front of Harry Turner! or raffia-work!] " [That neither Sam nor Hulton realises is that Fido readers are just ordinary honest folk; so here endeth the politics lessons in the Gent. On to Altruism.]

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What do people read in bath? Do people read in bath? If so, why not? See
Psan Youd: "For bath-reading I prefer something very light, salaciousness not barred, but lightness essential. Angela Thirkell is excellent." [Ah]

Rita Pithan: "I nearly always read Railway Time Tables in my bath." [Ah-ha]

Doug Webster: "I used to rely on the Everyman MODERN HUMOUR, before a friend borrowed it for a week, about a month ago. [Boo-hoo!] Now I wouldn't think of being without some US fanmags, preferably TuPa or THE DAMN THING." [Oh-ho!]

Johnny Burke: "I do NOT read in my bath, I am glad to say: I think it's a deplorable habit." [Ho-hun!]

Eric Hoskins: "Don't talk about reading books in baths, you make me flush. You know how modest I am. I don't get it, anyway. How on earth - or in the bath - do you keep the water warm? [Full explanation of this esoteric question in my letter. Have you never heard of the Japanese, who light fires under the bath, with devilish forethought? They then read the Koran, but I don't know what they think about.] I always thought it was warmer in the South but I get quite cold after a time. Quite impossible to read in it. In fact, the only thing you can read in my bath is the evidence that it was about time I had one. I don't believe your marine (& as you dropped a book in) submarine antics and as for that barefaced & bulging-brained liar Burke... ..Curse your lying tongues! As for a girl [friend of Johnny's] reading Freud in her bath, why - it ain't decent it ain't. Serve Johnny right if she had dropped that in." ['Twas Johnny's Freud - "Psychopathology of Everyday Life". . . And now would everyone else please tell me what & why he reads or doesn't, in bath. Please.]

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JULIAN F. PARR: "...Reminds me. I was talking to Anton just now, about literature (Ghu knows how we got onto that subject, but anyway, there we were)

[Any fan who begins to talk about anything will find himself discussing literature within five minutes - nothing gholy about it], and Anton seems to be under some false impressions with regards to modern writing. He ses it is impossible to write a detailed, accurate account of, say, a working man's (or youth's, as he mentioned specifically) private life, without coming up against the censor of public morality [or Joyce - or Lawrence]. He wants to know (& you can include me in this) how you can give a full account of conversations among, say, a gang of youths such as we find anywhere, and retain the tone of the words without including the, shall I say, obscene references, which are often made. [You will find some useful tips in Orwell's "Down and Out in Paris & London" in the Penguins.] He considers it hardly possible, and yet I think that these obscene references and activities can be represented in their true light by inference or representation in a higher class of language. What do you think?" [Well, Gentlemen, what do you think?]

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THE SMITH: "After reading McTurk's biography of the original my contribution to the "game" consists of a suggestion that Youd bears a close resemblance to the young "Gigger" Kinling, in his flair for poetry, his now abandoned passion for the intellectuals, his enthusiasm for his magazine, and several other similar things, even his latest pro-Empire outlook." [Yngvi is a louse.]

THE YOUD: (I miss out his estimation of JTB, just as I missed out JTB's estimation of OSY. This sheet happens to be called The Gentlest Art, although you'd never guess it): "I always think of Eric and Herbert Hodge together, which is unfair to Eric. You are like E.J.O'Brien /thanks - can't be my activities or abilities.

though, they exist, in quite different directions, except that he's dead. Bill
Smith insists that I am another load, which is very flattering - Smith is nearer to
me, I think. /I don't. My God! Could I see the original Misch-Masch? /Yes/
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NOTE (L. Kope): For some while I have thought that, considering he's issuing a spec-
ialised sheet, Don Doughty is rather behind the times. Reviewing
the March ASTOUNDING IN THE May (sorry!) Fido is no good: he wants more pep &
speedier work. I have therefore decided to outline the contents of the next two or
three ASTOUNDINGS. This is simple to me: My knowledge of the psychology & logic of
Campbell's preferences in story-types, authors, & artists makes it child's play, &
with some personal knowledge of the authors, well . . .

April is easiest, being soonest after the one Don reviews last. 2-part
de Camp serial after the fashion of "Divide & Rule!"; you will appreciate that I
cannot give every detail of stories &c., acute though my penetrating calculations
may be. Rogers will certainly draw the cover for this: a pleasantly coloured
front: virile & full of action; reminiscent of my old nursery-book. He will also
illustrate the story, & he'll do the same with the lead-story in May, this being a
key-pee in Johnny Campbell's bonnet. Other stories in April by... let me see...
Miller (trustworthy), van Vogt (disto), Sturgeon... umm, about time for a von Rachen.
Walton, now doing a monthly, not an annual, Sir Den... getting more difficult...
Daneseon & Azimov; & a science article on astronomy - a lulu of an article. Illus-
trations poor except for some of Schneeman's - the ones for Sturgeon's yarn, queerly,
are going to give people nostalgic memories of SCOOPS, I think. In another picture
his giants are off! case, & in a third, strangely, he has given some wench or other
two faces (& very little clothes, the naughty fellow); presumably in anticipation of
the following month, May, when a two-headed man is due to appear. Schneeman that he
was going to get the latter to illustrate, but Rogers fooled him & did a much worse
job. From studying Campbell's psychology & Heinlein through his pal Ted Carnell, I
foresee clearly that the story will be by him, a long one, called "Universe". Schne-
man does most of the rest of the work - clever sketches but no more than sketches -
with Kramer looking archaic. I don't know whether it's really a secret, but Hein-
lein's pseudonym, MacDonald, has another story, roughly about atomic slag-heaps. Hein-
lein must be writing a lot just now: often two per ish or ASP, & sometimes one in
UNKNOWN. Russell's short is funny, & his Martians look like the Arn-Mother. Other
stories by Asimov again, I think Walton, & a collaboration; the next issue (June) is
rather, but I think somebody like Rocklyne cops the cover with a screwy time-travel
travel. To come back to May: Butch Campbell (but - I misspelled 'puzzle') thinks
it's about time the Heinlein History was straightened out, & so he will present a
complete diagram of same, showing that the coman race is going to get somewhere, but
not quite so far as it does in Arthur Clarke's "Raymond". . . With which, I leave you.
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PG from US: "Follows extract from Burke post-card: 'I'm afraid it will be no use send-
ing May stencils as we have been blown out of our office and are now in
another place... where it's quite impossible to get at the duplicator.' Do you know
your Scots poet? /Loathe the... / "Timor mortis conturbat me" / Doesn't sound like Scotch
to me... /Rigor mortis tenet May! Johnny suggests Michael but I fear poor old Mike
is broken down already!" /Which, in case anyone didn't recognise it, is the swan-
song of THE FANTAST, the best fannag England produced. Those who didn't take it
don't care, those who did will be thinking anything I might say. It had been arr-
anged that, when Sam was called up or got fed up (the latter happened first!) the
Mike & myself should take over, me stencilling, Johnny duplicating. Without a
duplicator it flops. With May, also, the Gent flops as quickly as possible. I had
been keeping it going in expectation of the day when Sam would throw the goods over
board, more to gain experience than anything else. I well know that the Gent can
be more popular with Fido readers than was Warbull, so we slide gracefully, we
do... I'll be back with another job next month, & then, I really think....."