

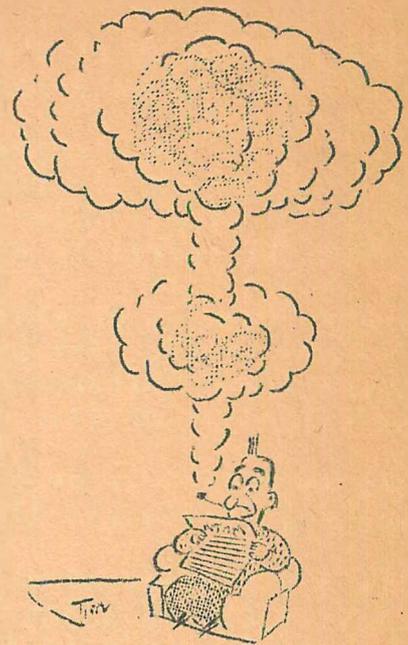
'GLOM'

#7

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Ashes to ashes and dust to dust,
If cancer don't get you the atom bomb must. (Arthur Kisner)

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Yen for trip to moon told;

Americans want souvenirs--by Robt. C. Ruark, LA Daily News, 27 Mar 47

Man's longtime dream of rockets to the moon has crouched behind many an excuse, such as the determination of life, or the lack of it, up there--such as the scientific itch to peek into the transoms of those spheres which whirl about us, in the interest of vaster knowledge.

It remained, however, for a German scientific writer, Willy Ley, to drop a finger on the most fundamental American urge to visit the moon. In his recently updated book, "Rockets and Space Travel", Herr Ley says that such a voyage is eminently possible.

An unmanned space ship could be followed swiftly by a manned ship, which would pay for the trip by bringing back lunar souvenirs for sale, says Ley, without cracking a smile.

In one short sentence, Mr Ley has neatly summed us up. We are the folk of whom it was said: "The Germans fight for Hitler, the Japanese fight for the emperor, and the British fight for the king. But as far as I can make out, the Yanks are fighting for souvenirs."

The opening up of the moon as a new and fertile field for the souvenir presents so many possibilities that a few should be listed, by way of warning.

I foresee great landing parties spilling onto the moon's surfaces, equipped with picks and dynamite, there to hack and blast at the planet's face until it eventually will become more lopsided than it currently appears.

Our already overcrowded closets will bulge with samples of volcanic rock. Opportunists, hurriedly latching onto a good thing, will be selling specimens of granite from Vermont and quartz from Colorado as gen-u-wine slag from the moon, and making a nice thing out of it.

Furtive little men will sidle up to you on the street, to offer, in an undertone, a real buy in hot rock from you-know-where, "fresh off the last space ship, mister."

For the first time in the history of the American souvenir hunter, he will not have his pants taken in a trade by the natives, since the best authorities indicate that nobody is living away up yonder.

The entire song-writing industry will be wrecked, as that battered synonym for June, croon, and spoon is betrayed pictorially as a frozen wasteland of weary grayness. And the Tin-Pan Alley boys are going to have one devil of the time making "Mars" or "Saturn" prove up as a satisfactory substitute.

Up until now the moon has been a very handy thing to have around at a safe distance, and I would hate to see a pleasant relationship spoiled.

* * * * *

Non-stretchable type--from the Weinstock column of the LA Daily News, 27 Mar 47. (There is no truth to the rumor the name of GLOM will be changed next issue to Daily News Digest.)

Pieces in the paper are supposed not only to be readable, but to be the right size for the space they're designed for in the paper. They rarely are, of course, and after a tortured session with the make-up man, adding a little to one story, cutting a little from another, Editor Cleve Cartmill came up with the paraphrase of the N.Y. Times, "I know, we print all the news that fits."

* * * * *

Selections for Shudderers--here is what E. Douglas Branch said of WHO KNOCKS a year ago April in the Chicago Sun Book Week: "Connoisseur" is a self-congratulatory word; with a pinch of blunt reality, the subtitle should read "for the addict". The reading of ghost and "mystery" stories multiplied and in extenso from adolescence to one's gerontic years is not the way of connoisseurship, which rolls the morsel about the tongue, ingests the savor, then takes a sip of black coffee. It is rather the way of the addict, of the gourmand for whom partridge every day for 30 days does not pall the palate. If Derleth and his loyal followers want their every bird to be plucked by a poltergeist and broiled by a banshee, they may have

it so. But in fairness to the initiated consumer it may be remarked that an anthology of belated and biased, secondary and tertiary choices is not a meet introduction to the literature of ominous ectoplasm. "Who Knocks?" is, rather, an anthology for the seasoned and unjaded, those who have already read the best of the ghostly kind and must continue to read that kind in a necessarily descending measure of merit.

Because, frankly, the stories in "Who Knocks?" aren't (with two exceptions) very good. Derleth has a horror of reprinting a story that is already in print; consequently such masters of the horripilating art as Algernon Blackwood, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, Sheridan Le Fanu, and Wilbur Daniel Steele are represented not by their miraculous best but by their run-of-the-mill. And, also, I have used the word "biased": the term does seem relevant to that constant drum-thumping which comes from somewhere in the mysterious and corpse-ridden brakes of Sauk City, proclaiming that the files of "Weird Tales" are alike to the chests of Ophir, and that the late H.P. Lovecraft is the supreme warlock of the witching hour. The Lovecraft-adulation puzzles me. Surely his "Rats in the Wall", which Derleth seems to consider his best short piece, is pallid besides Bram Stoker's magnificent story of the "Hanging Judge" who was king of the rats. Lovecraft is represented in "Who Knocks?" by a tale of the psychic residue of the Druids, embodied in a vague and slavering beast who bashes the hapless golfers who slice into the sacred grove. Can there be a theme (leaving out the plus-fours) more hackneyed?

((Interjection by Fja: I hold no brief for Lovecraft, as most of you probably know, not even being an addict of the weird; and his worship is about on the same level of incomprehensibility with me as a taste for god. But just, en passant, I might mention that in talking recently with Sylvia Richards, the girl who adapted HPL's "Dunwich Horror" to the radio for Suspense, she named "Rats in the Wall" as the story she'd really like to have done on the air.))

As for "Weird ((sic)) Tales", it is, for the Derlethian tom-toms, essentially a woodpulp magazine, and like all pulps committed to its particular genre. Its "good writing" implies, of course, observance of the formulae: lush foreshadowing; the assumption that the mention of "nameless horrors", unspecified, automatically sets the reader a-shivering, and the like. Derleth, in taking no less than seven of his 20 selections from that one pulp (Dashiell Hammett, incidentally, skimmed its cream before the drum-thumping started), lowers the literary quality of his collection and crowds out such masters of the spectral as De la Mare, Bierce, Oliver Onions and Edith Wharton. Among the stories presented, however, are a masterpiece--May Sinclair's "The Intercessor"--and an A.E. Coppard: there's no going wrong on Coppard. You will want this volume if you're an addict; if you're a browser you can do better.

((Paging all addicts: New-cum-jkt copys of this punk collection available from Weaver Wright, Bx 6151 Met Stn, Los Angeles 55, at the reduced rate of \$2 ea. The slightly better selection, SLEEP NO MORE, \$2.25))

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A Laff at My Expense (6c + return postage, to be exact)-- So, in my rôle of authors' agent, having submitted this ms. to most of the well-known markets where I thought it might stand a chance, I cast about for a lesser literary journal for the placement of "What the Cat Saw" by the dad of Aline Beeson (Aline being until recently one of our LASFS members). In a writers' guide I came across the name and address of a periodical put out in Chicago called HIS and in the market for shorts. "His," I hissed softly to myself, not loud enuf so König would get wind of it--"hm, His--I've never seen a copy but it sounds something like Pic or Peek or Sir! etc. Well, this gangsterish fantasy told from a feline's viewpoint might have a chance; think I'll send it there."

This is the letter I rcvd in return (incidentally, I'm preserving it in my files and consider it well worth the small investment):
Dear Sir: Enclosed is the manuscript "What the Cat Saw" which we will not be able to use since our purpose is to glorify God and to teach men the way of life through the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you.

* * * * *

MODERN MASTERPIECES DEPT--wherein Th' Youn' Foo out-davenports the invincible Sam Russell in relentless reviewing a book. The "book" is about 2"x3", with 32 pgs (profusely illustrated). Jonne's résumé will take U longer to read than the original volume.....

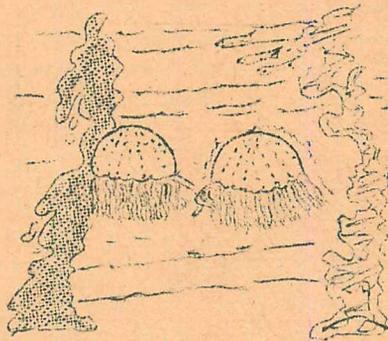
So I'm handed this huge volume entitled Moon Monster and asked to read it and then give an exhaustive review of it. The book being all of about 1900 words I thought it wouldn't be too difficult to do and so I agreed.

I had no sooner sat down to begin reading it than I had finished it and decided that an exhaustive review would entail writing the book all over again, and that is only a suggestion. But on with the review.

It seems as though there is a professor, Havelock by name, who can only be compared with Jane's father in the Tarzan books. He has invented and built a rocket ship which he calls "Havelock Torpedo". The author saves us the suspense of wondering if the ship will really work, by telling us that the prof. has already made a round trip to the planet Saranus, and has startled the world. It now seems that the world is breathlessly waiting for the "stratoplane" to explore the age-old secrets of the moon. And here the plot is introduced, I guess. I don't want to be quoted but I think that the plot is to prove that there really is a man in the moon. I may be wrong, there could be many plots or if the author will forgive me, there may be no plot at all. To get back to the characters. Prof. Havelock is a very practical man and knows everything that is going to happen before it does and is therefore never the least bit excited about anything. On the other hand, Jerry Wilson, his assistant, is young, eager and excitable. The other two humans in the ship are Roger and Cora, the prof's children. Cora is really a very intelligent girl; she must have inherited it from her father for the minute she says something is true it becomes true. Her brother, Roger, seems to be a little stupid as he contributes nothing to the future of the story.

At midnight one

night the "Torpedo" sneaks off toward the moon without telling anyone, why I am not sure. After traveling for several days they find themselves in weed which surrounds the outer belt of the moon. Suddenly for no reason at all they see what looks like a colossal octopus with



("Don't be so soft!")

huge flapping tenacles, staring malignantly from bulging eyes. (That's what it says, it says that.) This later proves to be important to the prof. as he realizes it means there is life on the moon. Jerry then wants to know what the air is like and the prof., after looking at his cage of white mice, declares that it is "Rarefied!"

And now the plot? is introduced. Cora sees what looks like the "Man in the Moon" and the prof. explains that the giants that lived on the moon millions of years back had hewn the face out of basalt. (They must have had a great sense of humour, these giants.)

Eventually they reach the surface of the moon and land. The mice are still very frisky and so the people descend from the "Torpedo". They find vegetation and little tiny cows, horses and sheep. Again I am not sure just why the author goes from one extreme to the other, but perhaps it is to let us know that he realizes that all sizes and kinds of things exist. If you don't believe me just wait until the next to the last page when we meet the Moon Monster.

The prof. and his friends wonder if there are any people and so----people appear, but very cleverly. Suddenly everyone is overcome with the lack of oxygen and so the three young people stumble back to the ship for oxygen tanks. When they return they find millions of little tiny men swarming over the prostrate body of the prof. and they are tying him to the ground. (Our author no doubt has read about Gulliver's travels in the land of the Lilliputians.)

The tiny men flee for their lives when Roger tells them to "shoosh". Jerry suddenly decides he will "go to Jerusalem", which leaves the two children to revive their father. Before they can explain to him what has happened a "gigantic monstrous reptile, a thing with three gleaming eyes (the author has also read the old fairy tale about little three eyes, no doubt), great paws, which were half flippers and with a hideous head that tapered off into a snout. And from its mouth a huge tongue licked." The monster devours a complete herd of cattle and looks around for more, but the prof. comes to the rescue and runs to the ship's gun, convinced that they must kill this

bird. (I know, I thought it was a monster, too.)

The young people help the little people climb aboard as the prof. shoots at the charging rhinoceros. (Is anyone as confused as I am?) Of course the monster is killed and the tiny people are grateful and want the prof. to become their king. Modest man that he is he refuses and they decide they had better return home, but they promise the moon people that they will return. (Oh yes, before the prof. and the moon people have all of this conversation the author informs us that they are unable to understand each other's language. Oh well.)

I don't know if this has exhausted the book but it certainly has me, and so I will end and let you figure it out for yourself. Perhaps if you were to read the book it would help, but I doubt it. You might read it anyway, though, as I only touched lightly on the high lights. It's an English book, written by Charles Ambrose, and put out in the Mighty Midget series. Really very interesting. May I recommend it? Thank you.

* * * * *

"Hold the Fort, Charles; or, Have a Thayer's Aspirin"--being a puzzling paragraf from a letter by Philip Wylie's favorite friend, My Mother: Friday morning when working out front, a middle aged woman, nicely dressed came walking down the middle of the street ((Westwood Park District, San Francisco)), and in her hand she had a glass jar she was taking something out of and sprinkling as she walked along. At first, that it was something for birds, but I couldn't see why in the street. My next was a suspicious thot, that it might be a powder to give us colds or make us sick. I heard that a powder was put on the window sills at Stanford for that reason. So this woman might have been a german or russian working for her country. Who knows? I smiled at her but she didn't smile back. ((This mystery has persistently baffled the most penetrating brains of Shangri-LA-fandom, including EEEvans, Russ Hodgkins, Arthur Cox and others. Ross Rocklynnne and his wife put forward the most logical explanation yet: That the unsmiling sprinkler was a catholic, blessing Staples Ave with holy water. I, myself, incline toward this theory as a reasonable one.))

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RADIO CONTACT WITH FIRST MOON PARTY--Tomorrow's News Today--"Above is headline," states article in LA, Herald-Express, 6 May 47, "which Robert A. Heinlein expects to see in The Herald-Express within the next 10 years. Mr Heinlein, a writer on scientific developments, has just predicted that space travel is coming and coming soon. A Herald-Express headline writer, with a fondness for Flash Gordon stories, thus willingly wrote this headline--Mr Heinlein's own words--to lead the following interview with him."

Travel to Planets Seen Soon, by Lyle Abbott: Robert A. Heinlein, whose skill lifted stories about the future and its science from the pulps to the slick paper magazines, is out today with a prediction that space travel is coming and coming soon.

As the man who writes of interplanetary traf-

fic from a great imagination and a deep knowledge, he was asked what it feels like to be now almost on the verge of space travel in actuality.

"All reasons combined and technology being what it is, I'm willing to bet on space flight within 10 years. Anybody want to put up money against that prediction?"

Heinlein thinks the first trip will be to the moon. The lessons learned thus will enable men to go to Mars, Venus, the moons of Jupiter and Saturn, which are big objects and in some ways like our earth.

Would Forestall War: Mrs Heinlein, the former Leslyn MacDonald of UCLA, shares his literary and scientific labors. She is not a writer, but coaches writers.

Heinlein's recent stories in the Saturday Evening Post were "Space Jockey" and earlier, "The Green Hills of Earth". Both picture drama and adventure, with the setting in outer space.

Heinlein says space travel will solve some of earth's present problems. "Now we have a planet torn with dissension and crowding sickeningly toward another global war. Space flight will open new frontiers, relieve our tensions. It will make all of us realize that we are citizens of Terra, OUR planet. Especially if we contact strange beings on the other worlds we will gain a feeling of brotherhood in being terrestrials.

Happier Viewpoint: "How soon will this happen? Soon, very soon. The experiments are going on now all over the world. Problems to be solved are only engineering problems and those of cost.

"Quite a few of us are already aware that there is the grimmest necessity in solving space flight, for the nation that is first to conquer space has an unbeatable advantage in the atomic age."

The author hates to think that it will take military necessity to bring about extra-terrestrial flight. "Let's think of pleasanter reasons," he said. "Some economic reasons are obvious--research of all kinds, especially electronics, weather observations in permanent orbit stations above the air; mining on the moon; souvenir and tourist trade.

Undying Urge: "But the most important economic reason is not yet guessed. Columbus sailed west for spices and brought back Boulder Dam, Detroit and the Empire State Building. Every great adventure of the human race has produced unexpected profits.

"What of that? The greatest reason of all is the itch to go and look. The long, long trail of the human race, our monkey curiosity, scientific zeal, boyish delight in the need to explore. It's stronger than the hunger of the belly; it brought us down out of the trees, made us experiment with fire, took us over the frightening oceans and up into the stratosphere and now it calls us out into the depths of uncharted space.

"Out we'll go with Galileo and Eric the Red and Magellan cheering us on to the planets, even some day to the stars.

"I don't expect to live to see that last. I'll be happy enough to see the headline in the Herald-Express: RADIO CONTACT WITH FIRST MOON PARTY." (7)

