

the ACOLYTE



THE ACOLYTE

AN AMATEUR MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SCIENTIFICTION

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* dles this phase of The Acolyte. *

EDITORIALLY SPEAKING

THE END OF A CYCLE. This, dear readers, is the last issue of The Acolyte as you have known it. It is not, I hope, the end of our association with one another.

I have been considering seriously for more than two years the termination of this magazine. The amount of sheer drudgery connected with its production in a quarterly issue of 200 copies cannot be imagined by one who has not himself undertaken something similar. Each issue involves at least 6400 pages through the mimeograph, at least twenty hours of stencilling, at least twelve hours of assembling and wrapping, and at least twelve hours of clerical details in connection with the mailing list. If one has anything else whatever to do, a chore such as publishing The Acolyte quickly becomes unsupportable.

Financially, the magazine has been very successful. For the past year and a half it has paid for itself every issue---supplies, lithography, postage, and everything else. Had it been conducted at a loss it would have dropped out of the picture long ago.

I am still interested in fantasy, still interested in attempting to attain the objective aimed at by every issue of this magazine: the furtherance of a literate approach to fantastic literature. I do not feel that The Acolyte, in its present form and under its present setup, is able to advance this aim any farther.

In order to conduct a successful magazine of this type, it is necessary to carry on a very large and active correspondence. If decent material is to be presented, it has to be sought out, or else written by oneself or under one's direct supervision. All this takes a fabulous amount of time, and time is a commodity of which I have very little. Until late 1943, I had time to conduct the sort of correspondence which inevitably results in a plethora of good material. Since moving to Los Angeles two and a half years ago, The Acolyte has been coasting along on the momentum given it in Clarkston. Personal solicitation has given the magazine some good material, it is true, but it has not proved an adequate substitute for an all-out campaign. We have some good material actually on hand, and other good items arranged for, but not in sufficient quantities to keep the magazine going without a drastic decline in overall quality.

Co-editor Russell's editorial duties have consisted largely of giving advice in the selection of material, of working actively in the actual editing, and of the writing of part of it. On several occasions when I have been stymied, he has helped nobly with the mechanical drudgery; but on the whole, his place in the scheme of things has been chiefly that of an advisor and inspirator. The bulk of the work on The Acolyte has been performed by myself.

Things have now gotten to the point where I have time to solicit the material for a good magazine, or I have time to publish a magazine. I do not have time to do both. And with The Acolyte's two-and-a-half year old momentum gradually petering out, it is evident that something must be done about it.

So, friends, this is the last Acolyte.

---FTL

---ooOoo---

THE BEGINNING OF A CYCLE. Being still desirous of publishing a magazine along the lines of The Acolyte, I have investigated the possibility of calling in outside help. After having considered a number of alternatives, I have struck upon one which gives excellent promise of success; which indicates a chance that The Acolyte may yet be able to go on to bigger and better things.

(continued on page 19)

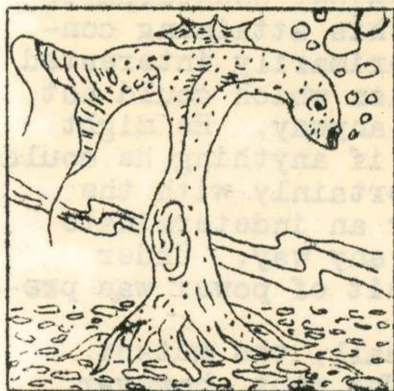
A DEFENSE OF THE NEW ADAM

by John Hollis Mason

-oOo-

(Note: The following is excerpted, by permission, from a letter written by Mr. Mason in 1943 to Donald A. Wollheim. We consider that it serves as an adequate counterbalance to Mr. Moskowitz's opinion of The New Adam as expressed in his article in our last issue. FTL/SDR)

---ooOoo---



HE generally held concept of the superman as a being without weakness or blemish is absurd. Such a being would merely have certain powers that homo saps haven't -- or in the same degree. He would be an improvement in certain respects over Homo Sapiens.

The associations that have grown up about the word "superman" are definitely objectionable. Both fans and writers are responsible for this, in my opinion, the subject having been discussed so much that the usage of the word has become extremely careless. As a consequence, I doubt if two fans are ever talking about the same thing when they get into an argument about whether or not such-and-such a story had a real "superman". One says yes, because the qualities possessed by the chap in the story tie in with his own picture of superior attributes, or with his own personal likings. In many cases, this fellow hasn't given the conception any real thought, is just unconsciously accepting the confused and absurd common associations that have grown up in connection with the word. This, I think, is the crux of the problem. It's arrant misuse of language, a thing in which science-fictioneers can be just as culpable as the canaille. The worst of it is, the word has so implanted itself in the minds of even the writers who don't consciously accept the loose associations, that they use it to describe something entirely different. Or maybe it's just the penchant for simple one-word labels to obviate the necessity of going into a more detailed--and accurate!--explanation. The liking for labels is all right, so long as the labels mean approximately the same to all who use them and are not applied to things they don't describe. "Superman", unfortunately, means as many different things to the people who use it as such lovely supra-abstractions as "justice", "liberty", or "equality".

I suggest the substitution of the word "mutant" for "superman". At least it conveys better the idea of change, and hasn't as many wrong associations--yet--as the other.

The mutant is the fellow who has certain abilities the previous species--which spawned him and to whose standards he's an abnormality--hadn't, or weren't able to utilise. But because he has some advantages is no reason to assume that they of themselves make him perfect. That is ridiculous. He only has a better chance of doing things his predecessors couldn't do. Whether these things help him to better himself, his chances of survival, and his pursuit of personal happiness, will be determined by the individual character of the mutant himself. It does not follow that because a man has special powers, he will use them the way you or I might use them. If he has been conditioned by his environment and previous experiences to a state where he finds undesirable anything the special powers might bring him, he'd in all probability not use them! This factor of individuality is what most people lose sight

of when they talk of a "superman". The word has become a symbol, an abstraction for something the very outlines of which are hazy, indistinct, and ever-changing.

First, then, Hall was a mutant. He was superior to homo sapiens in that he had superior mental equipment, the same as your radio would be superior to mine if you'd paid a thousand dollars and I'd paid seventy-five. The way he misused that power does not in any way alter the fact that his dual brains were better than homo sapiens' single one.

The New Adam is the first novel, so far as I know, that portrays the quest of a mutant being for personal happiness rather than hackneyed world conquest---a being whose mental and physical counterparts existed in two different women and forever forbade his attaining consummation in their synthesis. Hall was egoistic, primarily interested in personal happiness rather than a racial fanaticism which could not, as far as he was concerned, have been of any avail anyway. He might have taken the world militarily, but it's doubtful if anything he could have achieved would have survived his death, and certainly with the majority of his race not yet to appear on Earth for an indeterminate time, such a conquest wouldn't have helped them in any way. Under these conditions, Hall's decision against the pursuit of power was pre-eminently logical.

A frequent objection to The New Adam is that Hall, the mutant, committed suicide. Hall did not commit suicide. The fact, however, that he would die was inevitable from the very beginning. The means by which he could attain some measure of happiness--Vanny--was slow death to him, and he knew it, but his character demanded that he continue the intimacy as long as he could. What else was there for him, considering that he'd already weighed science, philosophy, and the rest in the balance and found them wanting so far as he was concerned? One cannot reasonably damn the fellow because his desires didn't parallel one's own.

All through the story, the futility of Hall's powers to bring him what he really wanted is stressed. He was frustrated in a manner which forced him to accept the more attractive half of his desire. And when the basically unemotional, unsympathetic Edmond permitted Paul to "murder" him, thus giving Paul the recompense his self-integrity demanded for the wrongs the mutant had committed against him, Edmond Hall had learned the meaning of justice and sympathy, than which there is no higher wisdom.

It is sometimes claimed that Hall was not a superior being on the ground that he couldn't adapt himself to the conditions of his environment. This is an erroneous conclusion, and I've already shown why in the section preceding this. The fact is that Hall did adapt himself. His early attainment of financial independence was ample proof of that, according to the "Acid-Test" of survival power.

Hall's mistake was in entering into a union which he was physiologically incapable of sustaining and whose effect on him was lethal. This caused his mental desire to give way to his physical---since he could never have the whole anyway---and in effect doomed him then and there, for his character demanded that he seek happiness in the most pleasant way. He was like Vanny when she said: "I am living in the only way that I can live. I am doing the only thing it is given to me to do. I do not think there is any higher wisdom than that."

The oft-heard assertion or implication that the book "wasn't satisfactory" seems to imply that Weinbaum didn't mean to achieve the effect he strove for in every portion of the book, because it didn't have the type of ending one would have preferred. Isn't it obvious the whole story was built towards that ending, that it was the only logical out-

come of the circumstances in which Edmond Hall was involved? With the type of character he had, he couldn't have escaped, and surely his character was not chosen without regard for the end in view. If I were going to write a story of a man entangled in a web of circumstances from which I didn't want him to escape, I would naturally select a character with facets to his nature (result of his previous experience and environment) that wouldn't let him escape the circumstances I intended to contrive. That's only basic plot logic. Lajos Egri's book, How to Write a Play (Simon & Schuster, 1942) gives a lucid explanation of this. In the character study of a being who's gradually being sewed up tighter and tighter by circumstances, the interest lies in the way he reacts to the closing net. If you allowed your man to escape in the end, it would be a radical divergence from the behavior pattern depicted all through the book. In other words, it would be poor writing. No, Hall couldn't escape. He wouldn't have been interesting if he had. If one wanted to write a story where the character did escape, one would have to pick a different type of character and contrive different circumstances for him. But such a speculation is outside our present frame of reference, and has nothing to do with The New Adam.

Regarding style, the meaning of all expressions seems to me crystal-clear. The selection of words and sentence structure conveys each thought clearly with no excess baggage or grammatical gaucheries. Altogether, the total effect of the book was that it was far superior to anything being printed in the current magazines, not excepting Amazing Stories. It was obviously never intended for other than book publication.

The poetry was on a par with the general excellence, and impressed me more favorably than any fantastic verse I've read for a long time. I won't comment further on this because I'm not familiar with the technicalities of poetry, but I know when it has that certain feel of the superlative, and that's sufficient for me. The poetry added very effectively to the story's atmosphere, as did the device at the end of chapter 16.

Donald A. Wollheim has said (in a personal letter), "Obviously both Weinbaum and Stapledon were writing allegories on human destiny." I won't deny that Stapledon was, but it seems equally obvious to me that Weinbaum's purpose was diametrically opposite to that of Stapledon. Weinbaum wrote a character study of a mutant being with extraordinary mental faculties and of his struggle for a happiness that was impossible in toto. His story can't be judged beside Stapledon's; they are as far apart as day and night. It's purely a matter of whether one's preference leans toward the character study or the allegory. Personally, I like both very much--separately. To say that one is better than the other only indicates that one's preference is for the allegory.

Nor did Weinbaum say or intimate that humanity was worthless. He was merely showing human frailties as they would appear to the admittedly unsympathetic and unemotional eyes of an alien. It is perfectly logical that such a being would be unwilling to overlook the shortcomings that most of us ignore as a matter of course.

All in all, The New Adam impresses me as being one of the best of the stories of mutants, and certainly the most literate thing Weinbaum ever wrote.

If a rubber-stamped date appears to the right of this paragraph, it indicates that your subscription has expired and that you will receive no further copies of The Acolyte until you send in a renewal.

AN APPRECIATION OF THE PROSE WORKS OF CLARK ASHTON SMITH

RICHARD STOCKTON



HE prose of Clark Ashton Smith occupies a singular position in American literature: he represents the culmination, the final flowering, of the style called décadent, either in America or elsewhere. He is in a direct tradition that extends back to Poe, and we may well be proud of the fact that he is an American. His writings, though delicate, are by no means restrained, rather being luxuriant in the extreme; and though some may dislike the mould in which his stories are written, it is not for those to judge their value, for they will remain one of the achievements of our era, and there will be not a few who will wish to have been his con-

temporary.

His literary form has its antecedents in Oscar Wilde's Salome, in Baudelaire and the other French poets of the décadence, in Poe's æsthetic theories, in Lord Dunsany's subtle colorings, and, in a measure, Walter Pater's carefully fashioned prose; but for anyone to infer that Smith imitates any of these styles would be a gross error; he is one of our most original authors. These brilliant writings, these jewelled works, are certainly some of the outré productions of this century; they are intense, highly concentrated; their words glitter like the scales of demoniac reptiles, lustrous, lacquered, metallic; their rich flow of verbiage strikes the brain and produces heavy, drugged visions, fantastic pageants of the senses all heightened and burning under the stimuli of his words. In his work is found an overwhelming luxury -- the atmospheres on his planets are voluptuous, warm, languorously scented and moist; air wherein may flourish monstrous plant-animals, and those strange, almost androgynous creatures so similar to human beings, odors, overpowering perfumes, subtle, exquisitely heavy scents, perhaps drugged, opium-tainted; -- one has the impression that drugs are the cause of the supremely gorgeous phantasmagoria that pass before one's vision, but rather it is the poisonous euphony of the liquid syllables that flow so smoothly and in such torrents through the enchanted ear into and over one's stupified brain; it is this that is the heady liquor that causes the intoxication; the drug-inspired visions of his work, the overwhelming, almost perverted, beauty seen everywhere. The inhabitants of his worlds, they that dwell in "jungles of poisonous and grotesque temples in Atlantis, Lemuria, and forgotten elder worlds and dank morasses of spotted death-fungi in spectral countries beyond earth's rim", in the "chaotic and incredible vistas of kaleidoscopic nightmare in the spaces between the stars", and in the "gorgeous, luxuriant, and feverishly distorted visions of infinite spheres and multiple dimensions" -- (to quote Lovecraft), remind one of Pater's statement: "a strange complex of conditions where as in some medicated air, exotic flowers of sentiment expand, among people of a remote and unaccustomed beauty, somnambulistic, frail, androgynous, the light almost shining through them."

He is not of his age; he dwells in his dreams, which are of marvellous textures and of wondrous designs: throughout the tapestries that are his dreams run threads of scarlet and purple, interwoven with

these are threads of gold, and this splendid fabric is overlaid with grotesque silver symbols, ideograms of unknown meanings. All through is a strangeness, a feeling alien, a cultivation of exoticism for its own sake.

He loves to see the light of a dying sun shine on the agate and onyx towers of cities long deserted; the pallid luster of moonstone; the iridescent gleams of peacock-feathers; the baleful glare and shimmer of dark opals, with hearts smouldering fires of forgotten and dimming suns, reflecting rich sanguine and murex-tinted rays; and above all he loves "the ultimate refinement that is close to an autumnal decay", the decadence attainable only to those civilizations of such great age as to have their very beginnings lost even in the most remote antiquity, that of which Verlaine said: "I love this word decadence, all shimmering in purple and gold. It suggests the subtle thoughts of ultimate civilization, a high literary culture, a soul capable of intense pleasures. It throws off bursts of fire and the sparkle of precious stones. It is redolent of the rouge of courtesans, the games of the circus, the panting of the gladiator, the spring of wild beasts, the consuming in flames of races exhausted by their capacity for sensation, as the tramp of an invading enemy sounds."

He belongs to that school of writers who fashion their work as jewellers, lapidaries, fashion inlay-work with jewels, lacquers, and enamels set in precious metals, exquisitely carved; as Pater composed his cadenced sentences: with finely chiselled words and phrases written on lozenges of paper which were carefully arranged and rearranged until their places were found; he is one of those to whom a word is like a rough gem, which he cuts and polishes, shaping it to its setting, the whole work being burnished until it gleams like intense, white-hot burning fire. In his work emotions are refined to burning jewels, reduced to their finest essence, quintessentialised; -- and this is noticeable in all of his work -- everything is vibrant, restless, and with the malignant glare of a serpent's eye.

It is not only the prose poem with which Smith has worked and which he has graced; he writes poetry; he is a sculptor of no little merit; his illustrational work is greatly prized: to him we may offer the homage that goes to all great artists, whether they work in minor fields or otherwise, for he is one of them.

THE BLACK TOWER

They shook their heads when told of my intention
To visit the old tower in the wood;
They said a monstrous thing was known to brood
Therein, a thing they did not care to mention.
I laughed at them, and following a track
Unused for years, I found the tower with ease;
It loomed amid a clump of twisted trees,
Leaning a little, sinister and black.

There was an opening with curious signs
Carven above it, and a spiral flight
Of dusty stairs which led up through grey gloom;
I followed these, but when I heard the whines
Of something hid in higher realms of night,
I fled, in fear of dark and nameless doom.

---Thomas G. L. Cockcroft

EUROPEAN HORROR FILMS LESLEY BLANCH

(The following is taken from an article, "Horror! Horror!" which was originally published in the March 10, 1945 issue of the British magazine Leader. It appears here through the courtesy of Forrest J Ackerman. --FTL/SDR)

-oOo-



THE question of a national approach to the macabre is curious. France, for all its Theatre du Grand Guignol, and notable exceptions such as pictures like The Fall of the House of Usher, and Vampire, of which I shall have more to say later, does not make much of a show. Neither does Russia--for all its understanding of the dramatic and fantastic. The supernatural, like the spiritual, has been ideologically unacceptable to the regime, which was busy achieving miracles by strictly materialistic means. In England, too, we have little feeling for the horrific. Our strong suit is fruity, smack-bottom clowning or charming sentiment.

With the exception of certain moments in Hitchcock's films, and The Tell-Tale Heart, a memorable picture, which Brian Desmond Hurst made, and which may be said to have made him, we have no horrific cinema; though, oddly, our literature abounds in the sinister.

But, sensitive to the horrific trends of today, Ealing Studios are now plunged into an all-horror program. They are making Dead of Night, which is a series of ghost stories, some famous, some unknown, all strung together by a connecting thread, the link being another thriller. Each episode is directed by a different director, in the manner of Tales of Manhattan. There is the episode where the young couple are almost split by the malign influence of an antique mirror, which reflects another room, and other personalities. As in a glass, darkly...there is the little boy ghost, who strays into a children's party, and evokes the ugly case of Constance Kent, the school-girl murderer who butchered her baby brother and only confessed years later. There is the golfing story ghost, in a light vein. Best of all, then, is the terrible story of the ventriloquist who becomes obsessed and possessed by his dummy.

This is directed by Cavalcanti, with Michael Redgrave playing the ventriloquist. Years ago, Von Stroheim played a ventriloquist, in The Great Gabbo, and even at its lightest, there was something unspeakably sinister about the puppet's nearly human behavior. To me, there is always a chill of terror in the rolling, vacant, yet fixed glass eyes: the papier-mache mask, the clever little tricks. The cracked gabbling wisecracks; the feeling that some sort of familiar inhabits the puppet and that it may, at any moment, assume a life and character of its own. It is upon these lines that the film develops, through a mounting crescendo of horror, as we see the wretched schizophrenic torn between himself, and the life with which he has imbued the dummy, until, at last, the dummy lives, and commands him, and the ventriloquist can only speak through the dummy's prattling tones. The coup de theatre which brings this sequence to an end is truly horrific.

Michael Redgrave, who always identifies himself wholeheartedly with each role he plays, has plunged from the dank neurosis of Uncle Harry straight into this pathological drama, and, I am told, shows signs of the nervous strain such roles impose. He is not content to

have the dummy handled by trick or wires, but has insisted on learning something of how to handle it himself, just as he does all the cross talk in his own version of the dummy's voice.

It is in Germany that the macabre quality has been best, and worst, expounded. At its best it is the romantic, bizarre tradition, founded in the novels of Hoffmann and Chamisso. At its worst, it is the various manifestations of Nazi ritual, mass-meetings, Gestapo iniquities and all their diseased inventions.

Cinematically, the best of the bizarre school of films centered round the Ufa Studios twenty years ago. Masterpieces such as Warning Shadows, Raskolnikov, The Student of Prague, Caligari, Dr. Mabuse, and Metropolis. Actors such as Conrad Veidt, Werner Krauss, and Peter Lorre. Directors such as Fritz Lang, Robert Weine, and Murnau. They have never been surpassed. Magic was an accepted force; there were the same assumptions of the supernatural, of the unfettered mind spinning its own web, as we find in all surrealist painting, or in Gothic novels like the Castle of Otranto. I believe that this hey-day of the German cinema derived direct from their early nineteenth century romantic writers, Tieck, Hoffmann, Heine, and Chamisso. The gap of a century was bridged by film directors like Robert Weine. His films may be said to have taken up where Hoffman's tales left off.

It is with rage and apprehension that I read of a modernised version of The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, which is to be made this year in Hollywood. By Pommer, it is true, who made the original film: but without Conrad Veidt, without Werner Krauss--without the whole mood and tempo indigent to the particular time and place from which it originated. While certain stories can be told and re-told, interpreted and rendered successively, this particular film cannot. It was an expression of a state of mind, and one which was found in Germany of the early twenties, but which is not, I fancy, to be recreated in America of the forties, even though Pommer himself is the resurrectionist.

I do not want to seem a vinegar-puss who dotes on European classics just for the sake of snubbing America's mass commercial approach. It is all a question of disorientation. I should feel just as badly if, say, The Riders of the Purple Sage were to be re-made by a French film company. Even if Colorado crags were rendered satisfactorily by the Alpes Maritimes, and Gabin wore chaps, I should resent one nation tampering with something which was so essentially the outcome of the people, traditions, and soil of another.

A noticeable exception, however, is Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde; a story which anticipated the schizophrenic chatter of Freud's disciples by half a century. Three different versions of this ghastly tale of mid-Victorian London have been made in Hollywood, and each was admirable in its way.

In March, an extraordinary film called Vampire is to be seen at the Film Institute's private showing. But as it is likely to be shown to the London public later, at the Academy, I shall speak of it here, for it is one of the strangest, most poetic, and truly horrific pictures imaginable. Vampires have always been the great standby of the horror-mongers. Bram Stoker's Dracula has been made in many countries. Bela Lugosi's version was the classic example of horror. This picture has no connection with it, however. It was originally known as The Adventure of David Grey, and was made in France, by Karl Dreyer, in 1931.

Now, in writing of this picture, I am aware of the hopelessness of my task. I am like the bore who tries to recapture his dreams at the breakfast table. To me, having seen the film, it is violently bloodcurdling, and haunting too. To those of you who have not seen it, what can I say? There are no stars, and not much story. Its quality all depends on the degree of emotion which sound, both music and

strange silences, and visual image, arouse in the spectator. It is an essay in the macabre, and has a pale, still, dream-like quality. The characters move in a pale world. There are none of the dark shadows of tradition, and it is interesting to note that it was Dreyer who made La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc, a film which though historic and not horrific, was again remarkable for its pale quality, where white was used, deliberately, to achieve effects as some directors play with shadows.

In Vampire, everything seems swathed in mist, everyone moves slowly, as if in a trance. Spectral shades are seen faintly, flitting over the grass, disembodied shadows, cast by no one. There are the grotesque revels at the flour mill; the grinding, jiggling music which animates the awful shades. The squat little figure of the Vampire, risen from the tomb to dominate the living and rather like an old housekeeper in her respectable Sunday black, is far more sinister than all the horrors which make-up might devise. In and out of this miasmic world creatures of flesh and blood drift, menaced and overpowered. The film is full of dreadful implications, such as the bat-like doctor's hint of web-hands; and all his paraphernalia of blood transfusion merging with the mediaeval legend of vampirism.

There is a ghastly sequence where we see a corpse-eye view of the world, as through the glass panel on the coffin lid. With horrible clarity, we feel ourselves identified with the corpse as it is carried to the church. The faces, peering down as the lid is screwed on; the growing clangor of the bell, as the strange perspectives of the landscape pass overhead, trees, and branches, and the church tower looming up, overhanging and awry. All this is unspeakably terrible in the manner in which it conveys the corpse-eye view, or rather that of the living, or still conscious creature who is imprisoned in the coffin. This is pure horror. Yet I am doubtful of its reception. The border line between the horrific and the grotesque is slight; slighter still, between the grotesque and the ludicrous. Audiences must be prepared to view this picture with the eye, rather than the reason, as a series of poetic images and implications rather than a logical drama---that is, if they care to view it at all.

It's no schools matinee; but if it's horrors they're after, this has Messrs. King Kong, Caligari, Karloff, and Lugosi beaten at the start.

THE ELEPHANTS' GRAVEYARD

All day he tracked the dying elephant
Through shaded avenues of living green;
And hidden creatures caught his gasping pant,
And snakes hissed at him from their jungle screen.
Parrots and birds flew off with grisly cries,
And writhing phantoms mocked his burning eyes.

The swift night came. And then at last he burst
Into the graveyard of the elephants;
Saw monstrous revels, glimpsed a thing accurst,
And fled before the frightful occupants.
Fled off on heavy feet, his hulk an awful size,
With writhing trunk -- an elephant, trumpeting shrill cries.

---Arthur F. Hillman

THE ACOLYTES

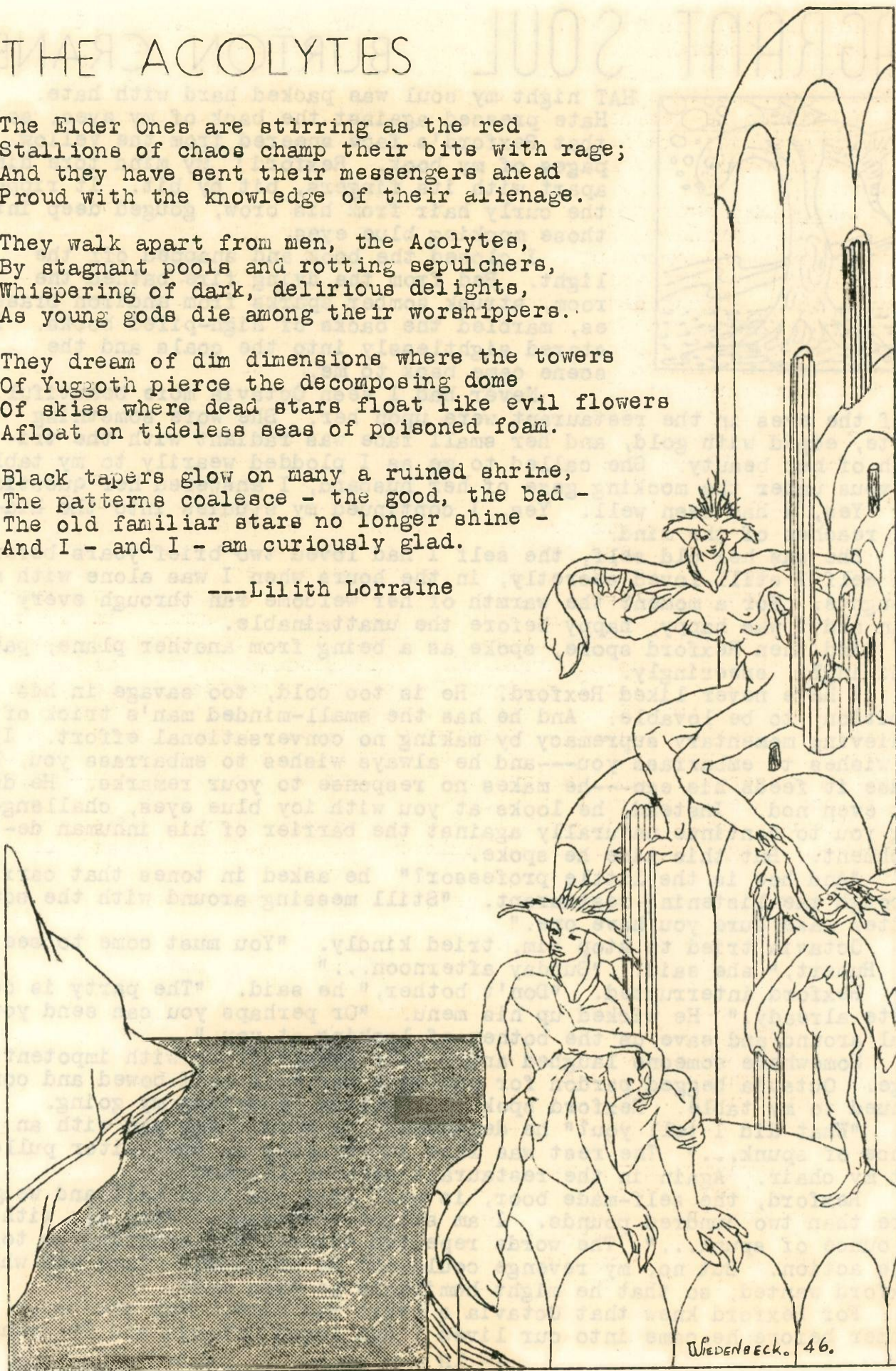
The Elder Ones are stirring as the red
Stallions of chaos champ their bits with rage;
And they have sent their messengers ahead
Proud with the knowledge of their alienage.

They walk apart from men, the Acolytes,
By stagnant pools and rotting sepulchers,
Whispering of dark, delirious delights,
As young gods die among their worshippers.

They dream of dim dimensions where the towers
Of Yuggoth pierce the decomposing dome
Of skies where dead stars float like evil flowers
Afloat on tideless seas of poisoned foam.

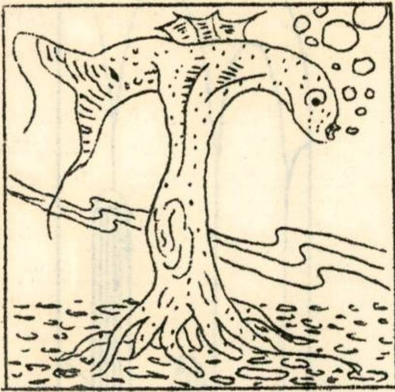
Black tapers glow on many a ruined shrine,
The patterns coalesce - the good, the bad -
The old familiar stars no longer shine -
And I - and I - am curiously glad.

---Lilith Lorraine



VAGRANT SOUL

BURTON CRANE



HAT night my soul was packed hard with hate.

Hate pressed against the back of my eyes, so that Rexford's face sneered from the yellow pages of my book. Rexford! My mind tore him apart with its fingers, bit by bit. It ripped the curly hair from his brow, gouged deep into those mocking blue eyes.

I closed the book and snapped off the light. Red from the dying fire bathed the room, struck somber sparks from andiron brasses, marbled the backs of high-piled books. I stared sightlessly into the coals and the scene came back to me.

Never had I seen Octavia more beautiful. Half the eyes in the restaurant were upon her. She wore something white, edged with gold, and her small face was radiant with the triumph of her beauty. She called to me as I plodded wearily to my table. Nervous under the mocking gaze of her husband, I answered her questions.

Yes, I had been well. Yes, I continued my studies into the hidden reaches of the mind.

She was her old self, the self I had loved two brief years before, the self I still loved secretly, in the hours when I was alone with my thoughts. For a moment the warmth of her welcome ran through every vein and I was happy, happy before the unattainable.

And then Rexford spoke, spoke as a being from another plane, patronizingly, sneeringly.

I have never liked Rexford. He is too cold, too savage in his ambition, to be lovable. And he has the small-minded man's trick of achieving momentary supremacy by making no conversational effort. If he wishes to embarrass you---and he always wishes to embarrass you, because it feeds his ego---he makes no response to your remarks. He does not even nod. Instead, he looks at you with icy blue eyes, challenging you to continue naturally against the barrier of his inhuman detachment. But this time he spoke.

"And how is the little professor?" he asked in tones that carried through the listening restaurant. "Still messing around with the soul? Better make sure you have one."

Octavia tried to stop him, tried kindly. "You must come to see us, Hubert," she said. "Sunday afternoon..."

Rexford interrupted. "Don't bother," he said. "The party is complete already." He picked up his menu. "Or perhaps you can send your soul around and save us the bother of looking at you."

Somewhere someone laughed and I felt myself flush with impotent rage. Octavia begged pardon for him with her eyes as I bowed and continued to my table. Rexford spoke to Octavia, speeding my going.

"What did I tell you?" he demanded. "A worm! Any man with an ounce of spunk..." The rest was lost in scraping as the waiter pulled out my chair. Again in the restaurant someone laughed.

Rexford, the self-made boor, is well over six feet tall and weighs more than two hundred pounds. I am slight, delicate. "Any man with an ounce of spunk..." The words repeated themselves, spurring me to take action. But no, my revenge could not be physical. That was what Rexford wanted, so that he might humiliate me even more.

For Rexford knew that Octavia's heart was mine. For one happy summer before he came into our lives I had loved Octavia and Octavia

had loved me. But my life is of the mind and my income of the smallest. When Rexford, handsome, rich and assured, swooped down on her, she struggled but briefly.

The coals were growing gray. Only a few small flames flickered about the edges of the clinkered mass. I was cold and the hour was late. I laid aside my book and opened the heavy curtains over the doorway to the hall. The wall opposite was white and bare and there, outlined in rosy flame, I first saw Tsung.

Tsung! His was a benign face, the lines of stress and hate erased by the passage of immemorial years. As I started back, half-frightened, he smiled at me from the wall, wavering and uncertain, and, though I had never seen him, I knew him.

"Tsung!" I exclaimed. "The great Tsung! My friend from Tibet!"

"Across the miles," he said, "our souls have held communion. Now that you are deeply troubled, I have come to you. Tell me, my friend, ---his unseen hand gestured toward the fireplace and I led the way--- "what do you plan to do?"

His presence in the high-backed church-warden chair I sensed rather than saw. I put more coal on the fire and it blazed up brightly but the outlines of his form remained vague. It was as if he willed me to see him, even though he were not there.

"What do I plan to do?" I repeated. "What do I plan to do? So far, I have made no plans."

Tsung shook his head, as if in pity.

"It is too bad," he said. "The woman is sweet, sensitive, a worthy mate for a soul such as yours. The man is only a single step above the hyenas and jackals and partakes of their nature." He shrugged. "Pride is to be condemned in one of your understanding but a too great humility is likewise to be regretted. You must act."

"But how? I am poor, weak, without influence save over a handful of students in advanced psychology. Rexford is rich, an athlete, a trustee of the university and the president of corporations. What can I do to hurt him?"

"For years I have watched you," said Tsung, "and for years I have taught you. You have been a devoted disciple and little by little you have approached the goal of complete enlightenment. Tonight you shall have your reward, for tonight I shall teach you to leave your body and to take another." I said nothing and he smiled. "If you wish, you may take Rexford's body."

I laughed. I am afraid that I laughed cruelly.

"Good!" said Tsung. I see that the spirit is there. Now hearken hearken well, for this is the mighty secret, the secret that advances you into the tiny circle of the chosen souls: Lie on your bed and breathe deeply, so deeply that the room swims about you. Then, at the end of a long expiration, strike yourself here." I could not feel him but his hand guided my own to the spot. "That will free your soul. Go to Rexford. When he has breathed out deeply, strike him in the same spot and force his soul into the darkness. If you wish, you may keep his body forever."

"But Master," I cried, "could he not take back his body?"

"He does not know the secret. There are many souls seeking bodies but they do not know the secret. They can take empty bodies but not those with a soul in possession. Still, they try without knowledge. Have you not felt your heart catch, as if it had missed a beat? 'Twas only some lonely unclad soul seeking a habitation. But you will never be such a one, for you have studied will, you know the secret, and you can always summon me across the miles."

For a moment my future swam before my eyes. Then I spoke.

"Tsung!" I exclaimed. "Master!"

There was no reply. Tsung had gone.

For a poor, partly-enlightened mortal, it is hard to resolve to do what men call dying. Thrice I brought myself to the point of action filling my lungs so full of oxygen that the senses reeled. Each time I could not bring myself to strike the freeing blow. What was it like in that region which Tsung called "the darkness"?

Once again I went through the preparation, breathing deeply. Once again the vertigo seized me. But this time I struck the blow. It was not painful. For a single moment my mind knew a great peace.

My soul left its body slowly, reluctant to quit its accustomed envelope of flesh. In the dark of my spartan bed-chamber it glowed and I saw it in the mirror over my bureau. It was a silvery shape perhaps four feet tall, a foot wide at the upper end, slimming to nothing near the floor. As I watched, startled, it changed shape, took on the rough outlines of the man I had been. When I laughed, realizing that I might give it any shape I chose, it returned to its natural outline, that of a pollywog.

My body lay on the bed, breathing sterterously, like a man after a severe heart attack. I tried to stroke it, feeling a vague need to comfort it for my desertion. My hand--projected for the purpose--passed through its head. I realised with panic that I was completely without substance in the physical world. I could neither touch nor be touched.

Without any sense of effort, my soul passed through the window and into the darkened street. I have since learned that my speed was governed only by my wishes. I might have thought myself into Rexford's bed-chamber a mile away and been there ere the idea had taken full shape. But at that time I did not know and my progress was that of a man along a gusty street improperly lighted. I could hear the gelid wind tearing through the writhing branches of the trees and banging at shutters--- but I could not feel it.

Thus it was that I came to pass the maternity wing of the Colston General Hospital and to discover souls in that awful state which theologians have suspected and have named purgatory. There were thousands of them clustered about the great building, souls shaped like pollywogs glowing faintly silver. They were massed on every side, squirming on the roof, overflowing through the windows. Although I could not see through the walls, I knew without being told that they packed the hospital solid, crawling over one another like palely luminous slugs.

My first impression was that they were little, and in truth they were. Whereas I towered four feet and more from the ground, the largest of these had about the volume of a basketball and most were not much larger than a tadpole about to become a frog. I loomed above the nearest like a giant, for these were the little souls, the partly-developed souls, the souls of animals that would become men, the souls of men little better than brutes, the souls of those who pass through life without ever being aware of the pulsing meanings in the surrounding universe.

As I watched them I felt a wave of fear run through them, followed by a raging cataract of hate. They were conscious of their inferiority and wildly resentful. There were no voices, of course, but their thought impulses beat upon me with the violence of a shrieking mob.

"Look! A Thinker!"

"What chance do we have to win bodies if he is here?"

"Down with him!"

"Mob him!"

"Wipe him out!"

The festering bed of worm-souls surged toward me. I did not run, for I did not know the danger. Until a soul marches far along the road to enlightenment each transition requires a period of readjustment and I was still too young in the twilight of the spirit to remember that a

soul, though without substance to a mortal, can be tough and muscular to another soul.

The slithering wall of clamoring worms rolled over me and I knew, for I went down beneath them. Projected hands beat at me. Teeth gnawed. The crawling weight of them held me.

Frantic with fear, I fought my way upward, flinging aside the smaller ones smashing at the larger. But again they hammered me down, burying me with their allied weight. Could a soul be killed? Yes, by another soul. Despairingly, I felt that slight grip which we hold upon our beings gradually slipping away. And then I saved myself!

It was all but unintentional, that flickering motor-thought. It spun across my consciousness naturally, without plan.

"If I were only out of this," I thought, and in that instant I was. I found myself miles away, a few tiny souls still clinging to me like leeches. I plucked them off and crushed them. They squirmed for a moment and were still. Yes, even a soul may die. If it were not for the eternal warfare among souls seeking bodies, the very heavens would overflow with them, for the course of life is upward and the beetle-soul of today is the butterfly-soul of tomorrow and the snake-soul of the years to come. There is ever an oversupply of developing souls, coming from nothing and yearning to the heights.

But the course is sometimes downward. A weak man-soul now and again grows weary of battling for a body among the snarling, gouging applicants about each woman in childbirth. Thus the soul willingly goes down the ladder. Most dogs, Tsung has told me, have souls that were once the souls of men.

And Tsung has also told me that the master-souls, those few who know the secrets of the universe, never bother to strive for the body of a babe unborn. Instead, they dispossess the souls of men and women partly grown, so that their continued growth and enlightenment may be assured. The great soul, the master-soul, tries always to pick a good mind, a quick mind, in a strong body. At times he errs, but the record is high and if his growth continues, the time comes when the soul again realises itself and may look back on one or more of its previous incarnations. I have not yet reached that state. Tsung tells me that the time is near.



INVISIBLE in the darkness of Rexford's bed-chamber, I listened. The man's voice rasped at the wife beside him.

"And so," he sneered, "you want a divorce, a divorce so that you may marry the futile Hubert!"

Octavia said nothing and the jeering voice went on.

"What a wife you have been---cold, uncooperative, your mind always dwelling on the little professor! I wonder that I have put up with you as long as I have."

The woman's throat was clogged with emotion

"Rex," she said, "you're a beast, a cold, greedy beast! You take, never give. Now you won't even give me a divorce!"

Rexford's slow laugh lashed her and she began to sob.

"No divorce," he said. "You are decorative, a real credit to me. I enjoy watching you hate me so impotently. And I'll never give you to Hubert."

They said no more. In a few minutes Rexford's breathing lengthened and I moved to his side. One, two! The third breath came long and shuddering, so I struck!

The soul which left the body surprised me. It was so very small, no more than the length of my hand. I seized and held it.

"Rexford!" I told it in thought waves, "I am taking over your body. From this moment forth you will battle with the millions of worm-souls for a new body---and may that battle be long! May the centuries pass as you grope in the darkness. Do you know who I am?"

He knew. Almost like a thought-whisper came his reply: "Hubert!"

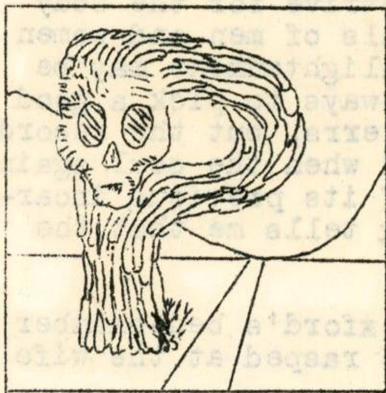
"If the struggle to be a man again proves too great," I told him, "you might try the body of a skunk. I'm sure your fur would be long and glossy." Then I threw him from me. As I slipped into the body he had left, he was still huddled in a corner, watching. But he could not hurt a soul as powerful as mine.

The winning of Octavia was a long, discouraging process, for a woman who has once fallen out of love does not easily change. At length the night came, however, when she came to my arms eagerly, passionately, and we were one both physically and spiritually. Never had I dreamed that the love of woman could be like this.

In the stillness of the night, as we lay in delicious amorous half-sleep, she said: "Rexford, it is as if your soul had changed. You are not the same man." So I told her and she did not spring back from me in revulsion. Instead, she ran light fingers over my body, caressing, cajoling.

"Tell me, darling," she said. "Tell me the secret."

And I told her, indicating that secret place, the knowledge of which can save a soul a million years in purgatory. So she laughed and kissed me again and the honeyed hours drifted on.



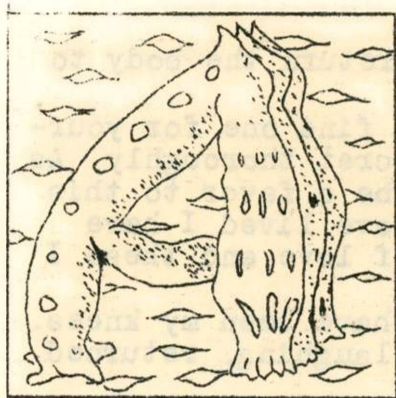
ERHAPS a year later disaster struck us. Not in all that time had I thought of Rexford or wondered what form he might have taken. Early in our honeymoon of the souls I had drowned Rexford two cats but beyond this had thought precautions needless. And so he struck back at me.

Our night of love had been long and Octavia and I did not arise until mid-afternoon, breakfasting lazily over the newspapers. And there, in the Globe, I found a brief paragraph, a paragraph destined to change the courses of four souls.

"Members of a special committee of the American Psychological Society," I read, "arrived in this city last night to interview Prof. Hubert Blake, Kinsley professor of psychology. It will be recalled that Prof. Blake's recent paper, challenging the existence of the human soul, has raised a furor in academic circles, for the Kinsley authority had long been considered the foremost American champion of the theory that man has a soul and a sure promise of life after death..."

In a blinding flash I knew what had happened. Rexford, the real Rexford, had not given up his revenge. Instead of fighting around mothers in childbirth he had sped across the city to the abandoned body of Hubert Blake. He had taken it as his own, and for a year had been working stealthily to destroy the Blake reputation as the most advanced thinker in the American psychological world.

Perhaps I was over-sensitive. Perhaps I should have realised that Rexford's actions made no real difference. Suppose Blake were discredited. Suppose his former colleagues laughed him to shame. How could that hurt the present tenant of Rexford's body, cradled each night in blonde loveliness, the happiest man in the world? How? But it did. I resolved to put an end to Rexford's imposture, to drive him forever from my former body.



GAIN I held his little soul in my hand and again I laughed at it.

"Rexford," I told him, "the game is up. Shall I crush you, wipe you out for all eternity? No, I shall not do that. For one destined to grind on the wheel of life for so many million years---and your soul is so small that ten eternities were scarce enough to bring you to enlightenment---the intended punishment would be a mighty boon. So I shall let you live and struggle. But never again will you inhabit this body that once was mine or that body that once was yours."

I could feel the little waves of hate streaming from his midget soul as I flicked the soul from his cat and stuffed him within its frame. Then I shut cat and Rexford into the closet and sat down to write.

There were two letters, one to the Associated Press, the other to Kinsley University. In both I reaffirmed my belief in the existence of the soul, repudiating as a stupid imposture the paper Rexford had issued in my name. I enclosed both letters in envelopes, addressed and stamped them. Then I put the cat into a pillowcase and descended into the street.

Dawn showed in leprous patches beyond the roof-tops as I dropped the letters into a mailbox and strolled to the subway station. In the pillow-case Rexford whined uneasily in the cat's body and a few sleepy-eyed workman turned to watch me as I passed.

"Just a cat," I told them. "It's gotten to be a nuisance and I'm going to kill it."

I went down into the subway. I remember the jump, but I do not remember when Rexford and I hit the third rail. For a moment or so my soul stood watching in the hysterical crowd which looked down at the charred bodies of Hubert Blake, professor of psychology, and his pet Persian cat.

"He must have slipped," said a woman, and turned to hold her little boy more firmly.

One tender finger of morning light played on Octavia's sunny head, sweetly tousled on the pillow. For two long minutes, a soul unclad, I waited in our bed-chamber, glorying in the woman that was mine. Rosy with sleep, one rounded shoulder slipping out of her nightdress, she lay there in inviting abandon. Even my bodyless soul was stirred and I moved to the side of Rexford's first body, avid to strike the blow which would let me claim that slumbering beauty.

I struck the blow and tried to slide inside the body.

Nothing happened. Something blocked my progress.

Again I tried. The result was the same.

Had I forgotten the secret? No. I could remember each stage of the process. Only a few hours before I had used it to place Rexford's soul within the cat.

Again I tried, and this time felt a monstrous chuckle. Little by little a soul slipped from the Rexford body. But what a soul it was, towering upward until it seemed to spread out across the ceiling of the room.

Once more I felt the chuckle and knew the soul with which I had to deal. It was Tsung!

"Master!" I said.

"Quite right, my son!" said Tsung. "I have been watching you for more than a year and, strange to tell, have felt an unaccustomed emotion, envy. So I have taken a liberty and have assumed Rexford's body. Your pleasures, I have been happy to learn, have been quite as

great as they seemed.

"But the body!" I gasped. "Surely you will return the body to me!"

"Nay, nay, my son!" laughed Tsung. "You must find one for yourself. It should be no trouble, for you know the secret thoroughly. As for me, I shall stay here for some years. It will be a favor to this beautiful girl, for in the many centuries which I have lived I have learned all the nine hundred eighty three secrets of love and these I shall teach her."

I pleaded. I begged. I sank to what should have been my knees. Tsung only laughed, and when he had grown weary of laughing, returned to Rexford's body.

When I saw his hand reach over to her and saw Octavia's sweet eyes come expectantly awake, I fled the room. I could not bear it.

I must finish with my writing, for my husband will soon be here and will require me. Yes, I am still the soul you knew as Hubert Blake but I have taken Octavia's body. If anyone is to learn from Tsung the nine hundred eighty three secrets of love, it might as well be I.

LITTLE-KNOWN FANTASISTES JAMES SANDOE

10. "THOMAS INGOLDSBY"

-oOo-



RICHARD Harris Barham (1788-1845) began writing when an accident confined him to his parsonage in Romney Marsh. But he had written nothing of consequence when a school friend, the publisher Richard Bentley, asked for his help in filling the pages of Bentley's Miscellany which began in 1837. As "Thomas Ingoldsby", Barham started a series of tales in verse and prose ultimately collected in the three series of Ingoldsby Legends (1840-47).

The Ingoldsby Legends are almost as firmly a part of the English heritage as Lewis Carroll's fantasies or the Bab Ballads of W. S. Gilbert, but they are far less well known in this country

This is neither surprising nor especially unjust for they are excessively uneven in quality, marred by mere topicality and impossible to read in bulk with much comfort. Still, the best of them deserve a more general fame than they have had here where they have been almost entirely ignored by the anthologists who would have most interest in them.

In subject the legends are fairly diverse. Most of the tales involve the supernatural and the source of many of them are the Acta Sanctorum or Legenda Aurea. Occasionally, though, Barham hit upon a local or timely matter to berhyme (vide "The 'Monstre' Balloon" or "Mr. Barney Maguire's Account of the Coronation"), observed a domestic crisis ("A Legend of a Shirt", "The Lady Rohesia") or retold a familiar story ("The Merchant of Venice", "The Babes in the Woods"), the last with especially trying archness.

The manner of the stories is an adaptation of the manner of the French conte. Barham had an almost appalling facility for the brisk line and a bouncing rhyme, and his tales prance along in a manner wonderful and exhausting. Their tone is rarely serious however grim or grisly the subject, although in an occasional prose tale (notably "The Leech of Folkestone"), the humor is reasonably subdued and the object

of terror pursued more sedulously.

Barham's antiquarian interest is reflected in the fiction that these tales have been gathered by Thomas Ingoldsby from his family papers. He has supplied little bridges of observation in this vein between various of the tales, but this device is whimsical rather than consistent.

The most striking quality of the tales, verse or prose, is the persistingly light treatment of grim subjects. "The Hand of Glory", an early tale in verse, tells how a malevolent old woman contrives a magical entrance into Tappington Hall for a murderous band of burglars, tells how they cut a throat, commit a robbery and how they are pursued, caught and hanged, while the woman is tested, found a witch and snatched suddenly from human justice by the Devil. The tale is nohow comic intrinsically, but Barham, by his interjections and comparisons, but even more simply by quick metre and frequent rhyme, makes of it just what W. S. Gilbert a few decades later made of the terrifying history of Gentle Alice Brown. Here is the finale (sans a characteristically punning "Moral") of Barham's tale:

There's a horrid old hag in a steeple-crown'd hat,
Round her neck they have tied to a hempen cravat,
A dead man's hand, and a dead tom cat!
They have tied up her thumbs, they have tied up her toes,
They have tied up her eyes, they have tied up her limbs;
Into Tappington mill-dam souses she goes,
With a whoop and a halloo!--"She swims! She swims!"
They have dragged her to land, And everyone's hand
Is grasping a faggot, a billet, or brand,
When a queer-looking horseman, drest all in black,
Snatches up that old harridan just like a sack
To the crupper behind him, puts spurs to his hack,
Makes a dash through the crowd and is off in a crack!
No one can tell, Though they guess pretty well,
Which way the grim rider and old woman go,
For all see he's a sort of infernal Ducrow;
And she screamed so, and cried, We may fairly decide
That the old woman did not much relish her ride!

The Legends have been many times reprinted. The most complete edition seems to be the one published in London by Routledge in 1894; this and other collections should be fairly easy to come by. An occasional story appears in an anthology (Dorothy Sayers reprinted "The Leech of Folkestone" in her Second Omnibus of Crime, 1928). Still others (The Jackdaw of Rheims, one of Barham's best, and the more familiar tale of Jerry Jervis's Wig) have been published separately in specially illustrated editions.

Barham is of interest here for his concern with the lore of witchcraft and demonology; but his distinction is only occasional (if not then negligible) and his interest relatively slight.

EDITORIALLY SPEAKING (Continued from page 2)

-oOo-

A cooperative editorial board, consisting of a number of fantasy enthusiasts in the Los Angeles area, is going to take over the start made by The Acolyte and attempt to develop it into a full-fledged semi-professional magazine. At this writing, the plans are not worked out in sufficient detail to make a full announcement; enough spadework has been done, however, so that I can state that the next issue you
(continued on page 24)

FORREST J ACKERMAN FANTASY MARQUEE

STRANGLER OF THE SWAMPS. (Producers Releasing Corp.) A ghostory laid in a bayou. An innocent man who is hanged returns in spirit form for vengeance on the community that wrongly condemned him to the noose. Frank Middleton, who once played Emperor Ming in the Flash Gordon serial series, is the vaguely seen wraith who visits his wrath on the terrified townsfolk. Rosemary La Planche, Miss America 1940) now portrays the sweetheart of Swampy River who offers herself as a sacrifice to the spectral strangler when her lover's life is at stake. Touched by her devotion, the phantom killer decides to call off the vendetta and reform. Being ectoplasm, it is not difficult for him to re-form. Capsule comment: Strangler of the Swamps ... bogs down in the fogs.

---ooOoo---

THE FLYING SERPENT. (PRC) Geo. Zucco, Egyptian priest of the past forty-eleven Mummy movies, deserts his famous formula of "9 tanna leaves" for a formula plot reminiscent of The Devil Bat. Locale is Azteca rather than Egypt, Zucco plays with feathers instead of tanna leaves, and the bloodsucking bat is replaced by none other than Quetzalcoatl. Quetz is a savage beastie, half bird, half reptile, possessed of a terrific pride in his plumage. Mad archaeologist Zucco, who keeps Q. captive in a cute stucco cave, swipes feathers from the flying serpent and plants them on persons who displease him. You see, Geo. has discovered the treasure of Montezuma and wants to keep Monte's mazuma all for himself. When Quetzalcoatl flaps forth to regain one of his filched feathers, he (the winged reptile) works up a terrific thirst and has himself a sanguinary soda while he's about it --straight from the victim's jugular. In the end, of course, Quetz gets Zucco in the throat. Though Q. impressed your reviewer as a very unimpressive god, being no bigger than an eagle, the vampiricreature was quite interesting to watch as it raged about its cage in rather realistic fashion, breathed smoke, and arrowed through the air. The flying serpent was explained as a hangover from the age of dinasaurs. A dino-soarer as it were. A. Hyatt Verrill would probably weep, and you might prefer to stay home and sleep unless, like me, you'd get a kick out of seeing the mythological monsterette in action.

---ooOoo---

THE FACE OF MARBLE, a Monogram picture with one gram of its light plot referring to the title. John Carradine is seen as a scientist--sane and reasonable, for a novelty--whose attempts to bring life to the dead bring instead disaster to the living. At one point in his process of revivifying a corpse, the face assumes momentarily a wax-like pallor. False advertising gives one the impression that the picture is about a person whose face perhaps becomes as hard as granite, making him invulnerable (until the last reel). But the film is a hodgepodge of black magic and white science, with an ambiguous ending. It is all right for a semi-solid Great Dane to disdain walls and closed doors and walk directly through them; but when the experiment backfires on the doctor's wife and turns her into a quasighost, one wonders by what sleight of hand she is able to transport a perfectly material lot candle through a wall with her? Rating: Nothing marbulous.

---ooOoo---

THE STRANGE MR. GREGORY. More ham from Monogram. Edmund Lowe is a

vaude-villain whose stage magic has a tragic parallel in his private life. He masters a self-induced state of catalepsy, "murders" himself, pointing the crime to a man whose wife he covets insanely, comes back as his own brother (a fictitious character whom he creates) and nearly gets away with his nefarious plot. But he winds up in a plot in the local cemetery. The show is dead, too.

---ooOoo---

BLITHE SPIRIT. (Guest review by Virginia Wright). Blithe Spirit is a wonderfully funny comedy in technicolor. Noel Coward's production of his own fantastic farce loses none of the barbed wit or effervescent humor in translation from stage to screen, but gains an eerie fascination. Plot: A medium is called to the home of a novelist to conduct a seance. Unknown to her, the writer is interested only from the standpoint of research. He is writing a book about a homicidal medium and wants some first hand information about the tricks of the trade. What he gets is a good deal more than he bargained for, as Madame Arcati conjures up the shade of Elvira, his first wife, a spectre whose interest in the bedroom has been slightly modified for the screen. Elvira's presence is highly irritating to Ruth, the second wife, despite the fact that she can't see her. At first she puts her husband's strange behavior down to alcoholism, but when the ghost of the first wife proves her presence by some fancy manipulation of the furniture Ruth decides it's time to get her exorcised. The attempts of the medium to get rid of the apparition she has summoned are enormously diverting, and when she finds herself with two ghosts on her hands (the first wife having killed the second) she really goes into an act. This British importation should on no account be missed.

---ooOoo---

CATMAN OF PARIS. This is the picture which Weird Tales writer Ray Bradbury had the opportunity to script--and rejected the offer. How plot might have fared with Bradbury's flare for kids and complexes is problematical, but Catman emerges as an undistinguished offering in the genre of Jekyll & Hyde. Laid in pre-aspirin days, the hero periodically suffers headachy spells. He sees black lightning and a lashing sea photographed in negative, and the next thing you know someone in the vicinity is clawed to death by a great catlike creature. Well, it turns out not to be the hero after all, but his pal, who has nine lives--eight down and one to go. If you have seen several other man-into-monster pictures, you will probably enjoy a cat-nap during the screening of Catman of Paris. (PRC)

---ooOoo---

AN ANGEL COMES TO BROOKLYN. Slightly humorous fantasy with cast of unknowns. One, the leading man, looks incredibly like stf writer Ross Rocklynne. An angel comes to earth to bolster the faith of an aspiring actress who believes in miracles. Masquerading as a magician, angel can, of course, accomplish miraculous feats. Funniest sequence, however, is a purely wacky one: A woman clerk is wrapping a fox fur, and the fur jumps out of the paper, off the counter, and onto the floor, where it arches its back and defies her to capture it. In a closeup it slyly winks one eye at the audience. There are also a couple of nice views of the earth, suspended in space, as seen from heaven. Rating: Innocuous. (PRC)

---ooOoo---

WHITE PONGO. Corn in the Congo, with a cast of authentic Harlem natives. An albino ingagi figures on account of his pale skin he ought to rate a tete-a-tete with a white girl who's wandering around in the jungle with a safari of scientists. Safari so good. But Big Black (played by a Hollywood wolf in gorilla's clothing) covets the dam fair-zel too, and makes a monkey of himself battling over her with White Fur. This picture was reviewed from a hasty glance at the stills outside the theater.

HOUSE OF DRACULA. There is more ham than bat in this phantasmagoria. The deathless Dracula (John Carradine playing Bela Lugosi's original role), the shaggy wolfman (Lon Chaney Jr. carrying on the character created by Henry Hull), Frankenstein's monster (Glenn Strange as a poor man's Karloff) and all the lads combine to give Onslow Stevens and his hunchback assistant (in real life, beautiful Powers model Poni Adams) a bad time. Dracula, who is suffering from longevity and photophobia, wants to go on the wagon. People are beginning to avoid him for a wino, because of all the claret he consumes. ((Port your helm there, Ackerman; you're giving us too many puns!)) Dr. Stevens fatally cures him with a strong dose of sunshine, which reduces the Count to but a skeleton of his former self. At the end, the Frankenstein monster, now endowed with the strength of a hundred men and the microcephalonic brain of whoever misconceived this abortion, has a housewarming: He burns up the mad scientist's mansion, and destroys his indestructable self by fire for the third time in this interminable series. I fear there is no truth to the rumor that Universal's next sequel will be called Frankenstein Meets the Atomic Bomb.

---ooOoo---

No truly great fantasies emerged during the preceeding quarter. During the next three months we may fare better with some of the following: The Beast with Five Fingers, Bedlam, Methinks the Lady, Angel on My Shoulder, Dark Mirror, Man in the Moon, No Other Man, The Beginning or the End?, Last Man in the World, Tarzan and the Leopard Men, The Cat Creeps, Lost City of the Jungle, Brute Man, Dragonwyck, Chant of the Voodoo, Brave New World, Bride of the Rain God, Chamber of Horrors, The Mad Game, and Dead of Night.

BROWSING WITH BOB

W. ROBERT GIBSON

(And here we present the first installment of yet another Acolyte feature. The title describes the column quite accurately; Gibson, who possesses one of the best fantasy book collections in Canada, will meander through his shelves from time to time, setting down thumbnail reviews and occasional undescribed titles for the edification of the bookshop haunters in our midst. Sometimes the book will be a common one, sometimes not--it will all depend on what Bob happens to examine. We hope you other collectors get as much good out of Bob's tips as your editors have. --FTL/SDR.)

---ooOoo---

Jane, Fred T. THE INCUBATED GIRL (Tower Publishing Co., London, 1896, 374 p.) Novel of a synthetic girl, the earlier stages of whose creation had been performed in ancient Egypt and left for posterity, so that the right person would produce a goddess. The wrong person, a brilliant but conscienceless experimenter--finished the process, the incubation, and much of the girl's education. A good part of the book deals with her finding herself--and humanity--in London. (Jane shows some bitterness about the sins of magazine publishers) In the end, the experimenter has learned all he could from her developement and attempts to vivisect her, her latent goddess-hood bringing him to a well-deserved end.

Black, Ladbrooke. THE GORGON'S HEAD (Sampson Lowe, London, nd, 250 p.) Wacky fantasy involving the discovery of a Gorgon's head

by an archaeologist (who stiffens himself and a party of bandits) and its removal to England. The effect of the head was not permanent. This story contains many amusing episodes, among which may be mentioned the instance of the wealthy matron who so ardently admired a certain motion picture actor that she acquired him as a portrait statue of himself.

---ooOoo---

Emanuel, Walter. 100 YEARS HENCE: SOME EXTRACTS FROM THE HOURLY MAIL OF A.D. 2000. (Everleigh Nash, London, 1911, 76 p.) Profusely illustrated by John Hassall. This paper bound pamphlet was published at 1/- as an adjunct to an exhibit at the "Festival of Empire" in the Crystal Palace, London, in 1911. Satirizes the then present with remarkably little mercy. No fad, and few advances of the day fail to elicit a more or less oblique reference. Since the exhibition in question was produced by the author and cartoonist, it may be imagined that the affair was somewhat sprightly.

---ooOoo---

Yates, Dornford. THE STOLEN MARCH. (Ward, Lock & Co., London & Melbourne, 1930, 319 p.) A fairy tale for adults, dealing with an imaginary country located between the borders of France and Spain. The surveyors of both countries having always been carefully deflected, each thinks the other has made an error, if indeed they notice the discrepancy. Four people visit the place, and in depicting their adventures the author leads the reader through a whole range of emotions, from tenderness through laughter to considerable tension; and the protagonists barely escape with their lives. This is a novel which might well be considered by Famous Fantastic Mysteries for reprinting. Not only is it a fine story deserving of wider renown, but it is a natural for Finlay illustrations.

---ooOoo---

Renard, Maurice. NEW BODIES FOR OLD. (The Macauley Co., New York, 1923 308 p.) This novel deals first with the transfer of brains from body to body, and eventually with the transfer of personality alone, and to any body. The work strikes a high in grotesque terror when the chief proponent of this practise transfers his personality into an automobile and loses his sanity therein.

---ooOoo---

"Seamark" /A. J. Small/. THE AVENGING RAY. (Hodder & Stoughton, London 314p.; The Crime Club, Doubleday, Doran, Garden City, NY, 1930, 287p.) Deals with a mad scientist who has discovered rays which destroy the cohesiveness of any material and nullify gravity. He plans to use this power to destroy the world as its punishment for straying away from God, but is thwarted at the last moment. ((Your editor recently picked up a copy of this story and read it. It is his considered opinion that this is a book which no fantasy completist should be without, and which no discriminating reader should willingly be found dead with. --FTL))

---ooOoo---

Mundy, Talbot. JIMGRIM. (Hutchinson & Co., London, 312 p.) This may be Mundy's best attempt at science-fiction. A man who takes the name of Dorge sets out to conquer the world, using secrets left by an extinct scientific civilization. Grim, hero of many of Mundy's other books, foils him at the cost of his own life. The story was also published in seven installments in Adventure, commencing November 15, 1930.

---ooOoo---

And until next issue, good hunting to you all. --WRG.

EDITORIALY SPEAKING. (concluded from page 19)

-oOo-

subscribers will get will be wholly unlike any fan magazine you have ever received. In content, it will greatly resemble the palmier days of The Acolyte, plus...; in format....well, shall we let that be a surprise?

Each subscriber to The Acolyte will receive one copy of the new magazine for each copy of Acolyte he still has coming on his subscription. New or renewal subscriptions will be entered at the rate of 25¢ per copy, five for a dollar.

Due to the difficulties of making the transition, there will be no summer issue of either The Acolyte or the new magazine. The first issue of Acolyte's successor will appear on or near the 15th of October 1946. Subscribers who do not feel like waiting that long may have their subscriptions refunded by so requesting.

And, in the event that our plans should fall through, each subscriber will receive an explanatory brochure, which will be accompanied by a full refund of his outstanding subscription.

But I don't think we'll have to make any refunds.

---FTL

---ooOoo---

THE ACOLYTE INDEX. I intend to have my personal set of The Acolyte bound. Since I don't want to bind them without an index, I am going to compile one; and, since I'm going to have to type it out anyway, I'd just as soon type it on stencils as on paper, and run off a few copies. Any of you who would like one may have it for the asking, provided that you enclose 3¢ postage with your request. I don't intend to run off more than 50 copies, if that many, so I'd suggest that you order early to make sure you won't be left out.

---ooOoo---

---FTL

TO OTHER FAN EDITORS: It is unlikely that the new magazine will be able to accept exchanges, due to the difficulty of dividing them equitably among eight or ten active co-editors. On the other hand, I want to go on receiving your magazine, and will appreciate it if you will continue to send it to me. As soon as possible, I shall prepare a form letter to those of you who have exchanged with me, giving more details than I have room for here, and either enclosing a subscription or making some other arrangement. In the meantime, I hope that none of you let me skip an issue of your magazine, and that you feel free to bill me for anything sent me during the interregnum between The Acolyte and the new magazine.

---FTL

---ooOoo---

A NOTICE. The article, "Stanley G. Weinbaum: A Critical Appraisal", as published in the last issue of The Acolyte, was condensed without the knowledge of the author from a longer essay. Its author, we learn, objects to this abridgement, which he feels has in some instances altered his opinions, and intends to publish it in full elsewhere. Interested readers are advised to write Sam Moskowitz, 446 Jelliff Ave., Newark 8, NJ, who will tell them where and when the complete version will appear.

---ooOoo---

ANOTHER NOTICE. Since 1942, The Acolyte has carried on its title page the notation, "Accepted material is subject to editorial revision when necessary". This ruling is still in force, and will continue in force with the new magazine as well. Prospective contributors who object to this would do well to make special arrangements with us, though we've never revised or abridged anything that didn't need it

---ooOoo---

AUF WIEDERSEHEN. We will be with you again--in a new dress, under a new name, and with a handful of new associate editor--in October 1946. Until then, good reading!

---FTL/SDR

THE PACIFICON

FRANCIS T. LANEY

Los Angeles is shortly to be the scene of an event of prime importance to all readers of The Acolyte. The Fourth World's Science-Fiction Convention--the Pacificon--will be presented here on July 4, 5, 6, and 7; and bids fair to be an occasion which should be missed by no one who is seriously interested in fantasy and science-fiction.

I believe that our local chamber of commerce has built up enough of a reputation for Los Angeles so that I need not dilate on the more mundane attractions of this city. No matter what you are interested in, you will be able to find it in wholesale quantities here or near by. No locality in the United States can offer any more enticing attractions to the vacationist.

For the lover of fantasy and science-fiction, Los Angeles will be the mecca of meccas. The convention itself will present a varied program which is certain to interest any fan. In addition to various open discussions on subjects of common interest, a banquet, and a miscellany of other events; the convention is to feature a major talk by A. E. van Vogt (author of Slan, World of A, and many other great stories).

Apart from the formal program, the Pacificon will afford an unparalleled opportunity for fantasy addicts from all over the United States and Canada to meet, compare notes, swap books and magazines, and otherwise enjoy each others' company. The greater Los Angeles area is also filled with second-hand book and magazine stores, where many of the attendees will no doubt wish to spend much time.

The sponsoring body of the Pacificon is the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, the oldest and most active local club in the fantasy world. Its attractive downtown clubroom will no doubt be a secondary center of attraction during the convention.

Full details may be obtained from the director of the Pacificon: Walter J. Daugherty, 1305 West Ingraham, Los Angeles 14, Calif.

The editors of The Acolyte hope to meet a large number of you here July 4, 5, 6, 7.

VAMPIRE'S LULLABY

Sleep, deep in your silent grave,
Dream of the crimson feast you crave,
'Til hunger bids you wake
And you must forsake
The place where you have lain.

Dream, dream of your stealthy flight
Into the shadowlands of the night.
Sharp fangs meet soft white flesh
And you return refreshed,
Your lips a scarlet stain.

Sleep, sleep in your sombre bed,
Earth of your homeland above your head,
'Til the moon on high
In the velvet sky
Will call you forth again.

---Tigrina

BANQUETS FOR BOOKWORMS

RANDOM HOUSE ANTHOLOGY. Though originally announced for this month (April) Adventures in Time and Space: An Anthology of Modern Science-Fiction Stories has been postponed, due to production difficulties, until June. Edited by J. Francis McComas and Ray Healy, this volume comprises an outstanding selection of the very best stf to be found in the magazines, and is definitely worth waiting for. (See this column last issue for a listing of the table of contents. Its publication will definitely be the book event of 1946.

---ooOoo---

CROWN ANTHOLOGY. The Best of Science-Fiction, edited by Groff Conklin, appeared rather without warning a couple of months ago. It, like the Random House anthology, is compiled from the pulp science-fiction magazines, but in the opinion of this reviewer is an inferior production both as regards quality of manufacture and selection of stories. It unquestionably gives a broader coverage of the field than does the McComas-Healy book, but it is doubtful if this is truly a point in its favor. The Random House editors did not allow themselves to be swayed by sentiment, and chose their selections on the one criterion: Is this a gripping, readable story suited to the modern reader? Conklin on the other hand attempted to cover the whole array of magazine stf, and as a result has seriously weakened his compilation by the inclusion of a number of stories which, while no doubt outstanding in their day, are pretty pitiful when compared to the more recent material. Conklin, moreover, was given one of the shoddiest pieces of bookmaking that I have ever seen. The cover is attractive and reasonably substantial, and the type and layout are satisfactory, but the volume is printed on paper little removed in grade from the cheapest newsprint. The purchaser of a \$3.00 book such as this should be given decent quality paper, instead of sleazy junk more suited to an ephemeral pocket book. Despite its flaws, The Best in Science-Fiction is definitely to be recommended. The reader of modest means, however, who intends to buy only one of these two collections, is urged to wait and purchase Adventures in Time and Space. If you can, though, buy both; the selections do not duplicate each other.

---ooOoo---

S. FOWLER WRIGHT. Connoisseurs of fantasy have been given a double treat this spring by the publishing renaissance of S. Fowler Wright, who is this reviewer's favorite science-fiction author. The April 1946 issue of Famous Fantastic Mysteries carries a reprint of one of Wright's better novels--The Island of Captain Sparrow. And Wright's own publishing house: Books of Today, Ltd., 44 Great Russell Street, London WC-1, England has brought out, for the first time under Wright's name, The Vengeance of Gwa, a primitive man story of supernatural implications which was previously published under the pseudonym of Anthony Wingrave. This 8/6 volume is highly recommended. Listed on the jacket of this book is The Witchfinder, also by Wright, described as "a remarkably varied collection of short stories by a master of this difficult craft". It is published at 5/-, and if these tales remotely approach the quality of New Gods Lead, it is a must-buy item. My copy, unfortunately, has not as yet arrived.

---ooOoo---

W. OLAF STAPLEDON. A lithographed circular recently received from Pa-geant Book Store, 108 4th Ave., New York City 3, offers new copies of Stapledon's great Last and First Men postpaid for \$1.98. I do not know what edition this may be, but it is definitely a

bargain as compared to any other quotations I have seen on this volume. This is science-fiction as Lovecraft might have written it.

---ooOoo---

ARKHAM HOUSE. Since Arkham's new catalog appeared but a very few weeks ago, I shan't list the proposed titles this time, but will advise interested readers to write for this pamphlet. (Arkham House, Sauk City, Wisconsin.) Since our last column, two Arkham House titles have actually appeared: The Doll and One Other by Algernon Blackwood (\$1.50) and The Hounds of Tindalos, a collection of shorts by Frank Belknap Long (\$3). The former contains two wholly new short stories by the great master of weird, and is of course definitely worthwhile. The Long volume is easily the best Arkham House book since the Wandrei anthology, and no discriminating fantasy lover should fail to buy it.

---ooOoo---

BUFFALO BOOK COMPANY. This new company has actually published John Taine's The Time Stream, which is available from the publishers at \$3.00. It is a competent piece of bookmaking, and is worth getting if you like Taine. I don't. Order from 123 Edna Place, Buffalo 8, New York.

A letter received from Donald M. Grant of the above publishing group indicates that the high price on their brochure, Rhode Island on Lovecraft, to which I took exception last issue is due to the high cost of production, and that the markup over cost is not out of line. I am convinced that Buffalo Book Company is innocent of any attempt at profiteering, and that the high price is largely due to their failure to get competitive bids on their printing. This does not justify the price of \$1.00 for so undistinguished a pamphlet. Nor should fantasy collectors be expected to pay for the mistakes of beginning publishers.

---ooOoo---

NEW FANTASY SERVICE. James V. Hevelin, 3761 Third Street, Riverside, California has inaugurated a cost-plus dealership in fantasy books and magazines under the auspices of the National Fantasy Fan Federation. The avowed purpose of this service is to drive down prices through competition, and is one which should be lauded by all fantasy collectors. Hevelin buys, sells, or exchanges--and collectors should investigate his service for themselves.

---ooOoo---

THE CURSE OF CAIN, the murder novel by Acolyte contributing editor Duane W. Rimel, is now available. (David McKay, Philadelphia, \$2). This is a most unusual murder mystery in that it is narrated in the first person singular from the point of view of the murderer, yet manages to maintain enviable suspense and mystery until the final denouement. (It is not fantasy.)

---ooOoo---

MARGARET STAVELY, another regular Acolyte contributor, is also now available in book form. A collected edition of her poems, including some that have appeared in this magazine, is available from The Hobson Book Press, 52 Vanderbilt Ave., NYC at \$2. Clement Wood says of her, "She will probably be one of the half-dozen American poets remembered as speaking for the atomic age."

---ooOoo---

LITTLE-KNOWN FANTASIES. James Sandoe has tipped us off concerning three little known works which very likely will be of interest to most Acolyte readers. I quote from his cards: "Poetry of the Supernatural", in Earle Walbridge's Literary Characters Drawn from Life (New York, H. W. Wilson Co., 1936) p.169-192; with a foreword by Edmund Pearson, p.169-70, setting the very modest limits of the list. It is, in my rougher phrase, a dilettante's casual check list. But it has some interest still.

Anthony Trollope (1815-1882), author of the Barsetshire novels and many others, also wrote The Fixed Period (1882), the story of an imaginary country in the year 1980. His prophecies of the growth of invention and scientific ingenuity, says Michael Sadleir (Trollope: A Commentary. London, 1927, p.419), are not inspired. A steam tricycle that travels twenty-five miles per hour; a cricket match with sixteen players a side and a steam-bowler; and an apparatus for the mechanical reporting of speeches are among the more daring flights of fancy. The main theme of the story depends on the voluntary suicide of all persons over sixty, which system of willing self-sacrifice quickly and thoroughly breaks down. It is probably an exceedingly difficult book to find, and perhaps not worth the search as stf since in that aspect it is a minor work by a major novelist in another sort of novel. But Sadleir notes that it was serialised in Blackwood's Magazine from October 1881 to March 1882. Blackwood's, as a standard magazine, can be found in most large libraries.

In connection with prognostications of the atomic age, someone should be interested in Wings Over Europe, a play by Robert Nichols and Maurice Brown, produced in London in 1927 or 1928 and by the Theatre Guild, New York, in December 1928. Its concern is the peace of nations, its scene No. 10 Downing Street, and its protagonist the Shelleyan physicist who has cracked the atom. The play ends with planesful of atomic bombs hanging over most of the civilized world. A donnish melodrama, but if a faulty play an effective one on the stage. Burns Mantle condensed it as one of the best plays of its year.

FANTASY FORUM THE READERS

BOB TUCKER replies to Mick McComas' letter in last issue's "Banquets for Bookworms":

It isn't my intention to start an argument nor initiate a discussion on the pro and con of cut-rate bookselling, but I should like a few words to show that I'm perhaps only half as stupid as Mr. McComas of Random House implies in his letter.

I'm well aware that reprint editions of several good books are available at lower prices, and I own several such. I am able to discern the difference between an original edition and a reprint by the quoted price, as undoubtedly are other readers of both my article and the cut-rate catalogs. These catalogs contain cut-rate reprints as well as originals. I should think my article implied as much.

I have a copy of Six Novels of the Supernatural for which I paid \$3.50 at a local bookstore, last year. I am inclined to believe that my article was read too hastily for I did not state that book cost \$2.69. It was included in a group of books with prices ranging up to \$2.69. The catalog price for Six Novels is \$2.19.

I can partly understand McComas' irritation at cut-rate firms for his reasons stated, but it happens to be something a part of the American scene known as "shopping". Whether one is buying a book or a box of oatmeal, if the identical item is offered for less across the street, we walk across the street.

I do not, however, understand another part of his protest. I note that the cut-rate dealers offer current books published by Random House. I may be naive, but I assume these books were sold to the cut-rate dealer by Random House.

FAN DEALERS ARE SPRINGING UP RIGHT AND LEFT, IT SEEMS. THE LATEST IS ROBERT BLOCH:

For the benefit of readers and lovers of fantasy, I advertise the following Sensational Bargain Offers:

ODYSSEY - Homer, famous Greek fantasy author.

FIRST EDITION of Modern Library, cond. fair.....\$12.00

ILIAD - Homer - sequel. cond. fair (no cover)..... 8.00

A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT - Twain

Rare book (pub. before 1900)..... 27.50

WIZARD OF OZ - Baum - story of wizard, witches, and tin robot.

illustrated. cond.????..... 30.00

THE BIBLE - rare AUTOGRAPHED EDITION..... 75.00

RAGGEDY ANN - weird tale of animated rag dolls.

illustrated in color - cond. poor..... 25.00

MOTHER GOOSE - strange adventures of Little Miss Muffet

and Giant Spider, etc..... 33.98

GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES - amazing stories of giants, ogres, etc..... 15.00

AESOP'S FABLES - rare 188th edition - fantastic yarns

of talking animals..... 60.00

GYPSY ROSE LEE'S DREAM BOOK - occult lore, palmistry,

fortune-telling, etc..... 45.00

These are just a few of the many startling bargains available in my ~~booklet~~ fan list. Also bound copies of National Geographic Magazine, Boy's Life, etc. As an extra inducement, the first 100 fans buying merchandise to the amount of \$50.00 and over will receive FREE a cover from either ASTOUNDING, WEIRD TALES, or AMAZING STORIES. I personally rip off the covers from the magazines myself.

EXTRA! BACK ISSUES of the FT. McARTHUR camp newspaper, at \$25.00 a throw!!!! While they last!!! Hurry!!!

If I get any offers on this stuff, I am going to prepare a little deal whereby those who are interested in life on other planets can buy MARS candy bars at \$1.00 apiece.

---ooOoo---

RAYMOND E. RIPA, 38 $\frac{1}{2}$ Franklin St., Newport, Rhode Island, actually has something to sell. This is actually a paid advertisement:

All of the following books are full sized, cloth-bound editions, in excellent second hand condition and complete with original dust wrapper except where otherwise noted. Please send cash, money order, or check with order, and add 5¢ per book for postage, up to a maximum of 25¢ postage. Any additional charges will be paid by seller.

CONOVAN'S BRAIN, Siodmak 1.25

THE MYSTERY COMPANION, anthology 2.00

BEST GHOST STORIES OF M. R. JAMES35

OUT OF THE SILENT PLANET, Lewis 1.50

THE UNINVITED, Macardle75

BEST GHOST STORIES (The Haunted Omnibus)75

SLEEP NO MORE. Anthology edited by Derleth 2.00

THE WEREWOLF OF PARIS, Endore.35

GREAT TALES OF TERROR AND THE SUPERNATURAL (Random House). 2.00

CREEPS BY NIGHT, Hammett75

WORLD'S GREAT MYSTERY STORIES, Cuppy35

TALES OF TERROR, Carloff35

THE BABYONS, Dane (no dust wrapper) 2.00

THE GREAT FOG & OTHER WEIRD TALES, Heard 2.00

SPEAK OF THE DEVIL, Anthology of Satanic Tales 2.25

SIX NOVELS OF THE SUPERNATURAL (Viking Portable Library) . 2.00

25 STORIES OF MYSTERY AND IMAGINATION, Stong75

THE WAVE, Blackwood (no dust wrapper) 1.00

JWEL OF SEVEN STARS, Stoker (no dust wrapper) 2.00

AYESHA, THE RETURN OF SHE, Haggard	1.00
STRANGE MANUSCRIPT FOUND IN A COPPER CYLINDER	3.50
THE CROQUET PLAYER, Wells	1.00
THE LOST WORLD, Doyle35
52 TALES OF MYSTERY HORROR & DETECTION, Sayers	2.00
JUMBEE & OTHER TALES, Whitehead	2.50
THE EYE & THE FINGER, Wandrei	2.50
LOST WORLDS, Smith	2.50
MARGINALIA, Lovecraft	2.50
7 OUT OF TIME, Zagat (Argosy excerpt)75
THE NINTH LIFE, Mann (Argosy excerpt)75

---ooOoo---

FRITZ LEIBER DESCRIBES HIS FORTHCOMING ARKHAM HOUSE COLLECTION:

Just got the completed ms. of Night's Black Agents off to Derleth. He says it will go to the printers shortly, will be out some time in 1946. Barring surprises, there will be no change in the line-up. There will be two major sections:

Modern Horrors: including "Smoke Ghost" and "The Hill and the Hole" from Unknown Worlds; "The Automatic Pistol", "The Phantom Slayer" (retitled "The Inheritance"), and "The Hound" from Weird Tales; "The Dreams of Albert Moreland" from The Acolyte; and "Diary in the Snow", previously unpublished, a rather longish short which I rewrote this summer.

Ancient Adventures: including "The Sunken Land" from Unknown Worlds and a 25,000 to 30,000 word short novel of Fafhrd and the Mouser called "Adept's Gambit". I forget whether you've read the latter in ms. In any case, it's a version completely rewritten this fall, a tale of magic set around 200 B.C. in the Selucid Empire---in it, a curse is laid upon Fafhrd and the Mouser that any girl they kiss or otherwise amorously invest be changed, respectively to a sow and a giant snail for the duration of such investiture. A most indelicate and irritating curse, which they are some time in laying. It introduces those unpleasant thaumaturgic twins, Anra and Ahura Devadoris. It's the most-revised story I've ever done--Lovecraft saw the first version and was very encouraging--Derleth may use some of his remarks on the jacket, he tells me.

There may be one other story, a brief yarn titled "The Man Who Never Grew Young".

The title for the book comes from Macbeth (Act III, Scene 2):

Light thickens; and the crow
Makes wing to the rooky wood:
Good things of day begin to droop and drowse;
Whiles night's black agents to their prey do rouse.

Now I will have to get busy revising and expanding Conjure Wife for Arkham House.

---ooOoo---

Our lone New Zealand reader, THOMAS G. L. COCKROFT, comes up with some more information on the Mi-Go:

...a London magazine, Holly Leaves, The Christmas Number of the Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News, 1937. On the contents page, the following appears: "The Trail of the 'Abominable Snowmen' - page 37. From the painting by Reginald Cleaver. These creatures have been much in the news lately, having found a way into the august correspondence columns of The Times. They have even received a certain amount of mockery from the pens of irresponsible humorists. Our artist has produced a serious study of the discovery of the mysterious and supposedly 'abominable' tracks in the Himalayan snow."

Turning to page 37, we find the picture, which isn't at all bad, and underneath it the following caption:

"The Trail of the 'Abominable Snowmen' / A mystery of the Himalayas. In the strange land of Tibet there is current amongst the natives a belief in some monstrous creatures for which their name, translated, is 'Abominable Snowmen'. Many travellers in the region, including members of the recent climbing expeditions which have sought to conquer Everest, have not only heard from their porters of these alleged monsters, but have encountered at high altitudes tracks in the snow, apparently of naked human feet, which give startling support to the local stories. The most recent of such encounters has been related by Mr. Ronald Kaulback, who states that at a height of about 16,000 feet his party came upon five sets of tracks which looked 'exactly as though they had been made by bare-footed men'. There are no bears (whose foot-prints are not unlike those of a man) in the district, and a theory that they might have been the dug marks of snow leopards going slowly is discounted by the unlikelihood of ~~five~~ such animals travelling in company. One of Mr. Kaulback's porters claimed to have once met an 'abominable snowman', whom he described as being like a man, white-skinned, naked, and with long hair on head, shoulders, and arms. This seems to tally with the most probable theory yet advanced, that there are ascetics in the high mountains so inured to climatic conditions by their mastery of Yoga that they can in fact live naked at such heights. Such persons would be nearly as extraordinary as the 'abominable snowmen' themselves, and the mystery remains unsolved."

I'm inclined to consider this sufficient proof that "Abominable Snowmen" did not originate with Lovecraft, whatever liberties he may have taken with the concept.

---ooOoo---

BOB TUCKER, again, this time with a remark on the Perdue quasi-history

About the Perdue history, has anyone realised the as yet undeveloped potential of this remarkable thing; properly assembled and interestingly written, what an article for a national magazine it would make! Harping on the theme of "look what amazing things writers predicted ten-twenty-thirty years ago...that you are reading of in newspaper headlines today", such an article would prove an amazing service to science-fiction. An experienced article writer, working with Perdue or anyone familiar with the history, could turn out something that might hit anything from Coronet to Look magazine.

---ooOoo---

E. HOFFMAN PRICE, on the other hand:

It is unethical and loathsome to pan the work of a fellow writer a constructive rebuttal or commentary is one thing, and yelling, "Quit printing that crap,"; that is something else--something I'm actually incapable of, because tastes vary. What drives me wild, or bores me silly, or seems futile and stupid blah may be intensely interesting to someone else. A magazine that is always 100% fascinating to ME may be unchristly boring 70% of the time to 70% of the readers. For readers to damn or yelp, well, I can't blame them too much; but for a writer to lambaste another writer--that's different. The reason that I have only 430 yarns in print instead of 515 to date is that editorial assistants panned the 85 yarns that went to the recent scrap paper drive. But, those editorial assistants were paid to read and pass judgement; they did their duty as they saw it, and I can sincerely say they erred on the generous side, as far as I'm concerned. Since some 60 of the mags I've contributed to have folded, since many an editor who bought my stuff has been fired--and editors are fired for not making a magazine show a profit, i.e. for buying too many of the wrong mags.---I suspect that the editors and their assistants weren't doing their duty as rigidly as they might have, when it came to my mags.

But having had 85 mags bounced makes me a bit inclined not to grip

about what another fellow is getting into print.

But since you have, by your own unaided processes, and by considering the opinions of readers other than myself, decided against Perdue's compilation, I wish to add this bit---and without in any way implying that Perdue should or should not get the rest of his compilation into print. All I wish to say is this: while it may be fascinating, stimulating, worthwhile (if you think so, it automatically and RIGHTLY becomes so for YOU), I feel that Perdue's "narrative question" when he set out with his compilation ascribes entirely too much significance and weight to fantasy fiction, in that he implies that fantasy writers may have a peculiar "vision" that other people, and other writers, do not have. I don't dispute Perdue's right to hold this opinion, or rather, this opinion which seems implicit in his presentation; I merely say, for my money, he's riding ahead of his horse. Fantasy is amusing if you like it, and sometimes I do like it. But I cannot for the life of me see that the fantasy group of writers have, or might have, or should have, a bit more of the seer in their make-up than, say love-pulp authors. Love pulps and westerns and detectives and adventures are also fantasy; wish-thoughts, pipe dreams, catharsis as Bloch puts it. No more and no less is the seer function behind them than in weird or science-fiction.

Look, in 1932 I wrote a yarn of Arabia Deserta, of the ruined capital of Balkis, Queen of Sheba (some call her Makeda, some, Balkis Makheda, etc.), the dame who had an affair with King Solomon. Pure wild imagination, ruins of prodigious bulk in unexplored "Abode of Emptiness." Lo, in 1934, a French aviator en route from Damascus to Djibouti, sighted titanic ruins in the abode of emptiness.

((Price cites two other striking examples of prognostication which are omitted due to lack of space.))

And again: Office of War Information wrote Adventure, saying, IN THOSE MINDANAO GUERRILLA YARNS E. HOFFMAN PRICE IS RUNNING, ASK HIM TO USE FICTITIOUS PLACE NAMES. HIS FICTION IS VERY LIKELY TO PUT FILIPPINO PATRIOTS ON THE SPOT BY CALLING THE TURN ON SOME OF THEIR UNDERCOVER DOINGS. I can document this one.

And the payoff: Colonel James F. Pichel, who was a lieutenant with me in the coast artillery 21 years ago wrote me after our forces landed, saying he'd picked up back numbers of my Mindanao guerilla yarns written in 1942-43-44 and was amazed how I had called the turns, just sitting on my pratt, "looking from my window and down at the roof of the Community Liquor Store."

Do I mean, I am a seer, I am in touch with the infinite?

Lord, no. Merely means that by dint of digging into FACT, and then logically setting facts into a fiction pattern, and doing this often enough, you're bound to closely parallel an actual event every so often---and sometimes, anticipate it by a few days, a few months, a few years.

I predicted that (1) Rommel, 70 miles from Cairo, would not take Cairo in less than 60 days, if he ever did take Cairo; and (2) that he wouldn't take Cairo, but would get his goddam pants blasted off. And I had \$100 at stake. If Rommel had advanced, the yarn would have bounced back like that. Rommel had to retreat or my yarn was a dead duck.

I called the invasion of Leyte, but missed out by 30 days. That's fairly close. All I had to do was to pretend I was MacArthur's staff, then sit down and write a story THAT WOULD HAVE EVENTS AND ARGUMENTS SUCH THAT THE STORY WOULD BE IN PRINT BEFORE ANY ACTUAL EVENT COULD CONTRADICT WHAT I SET FORTH. That is, I had to predict what would not happen 60 to 90 days in the future. True, I did not set specific date --BUT IN THIS CASE, I HAD \$500 AT STAKE EACH TIME I GUESSED. My 30

day miss wasn't held against me, that once. Has any fantasy seer ever had \$500 penalty for poking out his chin at the wrong time?

I missed Bataan badly. It fell far sooner than I'd reckoned. That cost me \$50.00.

You may say that I am begging the question in that I did not set a date for any of these events. Technically, you are right. But my NEGATIVE predictions had an implicit time limit; if the landings in Leyte had come 30 days sooner, for instance, the editor wouldn't even have read the ms. That is, after all, predicting and to a date--and I backed it with a bigger bet than any fantasy author ever had to put up each time he guessed or predicted.

But did I muff it as to V-J day? Man, man! However, I HAD NOT PLACED ANY STORY-BETS, OF YOU GET WHAT I MEAN.

I repeat, this doesn't mean that I believe myself more of a seer than is the average stf author. I merely say, nuts, ain't none of us seers--only I hit it oftener because I scrutinize more facts, and use a good deal less "let's pretend" in the basic argument of my story.

And it is a damn sight easier to predict spaceship cruises to Luna, and assign a date---keep on writing "space ship lands on Luna" and give it a different date each time; you'll finally get on the target--than it is to figure what the general staffs of two armies WILL NOT HAVE DONE SIXTY DAYS HENCE.

I grant, I pulled a number of boners along with the bullseyes---which just serves to drive home my point: there's no significance even when you are right.

I still haven't said Perdue is wrong in following his line of thought; I haven't and do not say you shouldn't print it. All I've said is, I, another guy like Perdue or you though my tastes are a bit different, don't agree with the implications of Perdue's compilation. And, so what? Friendly controversy, airing one individual's opinion; and not belittling the taste of Ackerman, who thinks the compilation is a great and worthy project. Damn it, it may be; and for him, IT IS because he feels that way about it, and the same for Perdue.

LAST MINUTE REMARKS.

In many ways, I feel a touch of sadness as I type this, the last stencil of the last Acolyte. Despite the natural weariness that has accumulated while I've sat here and pounded out something like 450 other stencils, I have a feeling that after the new magazine is well under way, I'll look back nostalgically to the informal days when I'd just roll another stencil into the old LOSmith, and presto--there'd be another page of my beloved brain-brat.

The new magazine will need large quantities of material, especial articles dealing with various critical and bibliographical phases of fantasy, or with the literary personalities of the field. I hope to do a large amount of personal solicitation for material, but why wait to be prodded? Why not send us that article today, to assure its appearing in an early issue of our new semi-professional fantasy magazine?

We are also very anxious to receive good artwork--which need not be designed with the limitations of a mimeograph in mind. Those of you who can draw are urged to write for detailed specifications of what we need.

I forgot to mention in the regular editorial that the Wiedenbeck illustration on page 11 is based on an incomplete preliminary sketch drawn by the late Seth Fleming.

Well, the time has come to say so long. But in October we should be back--bigger and better than ever. We hope so, anyway. If the new magazine gets the support given this one, it is certain to be successful.



RETURN TO YUGGOTH