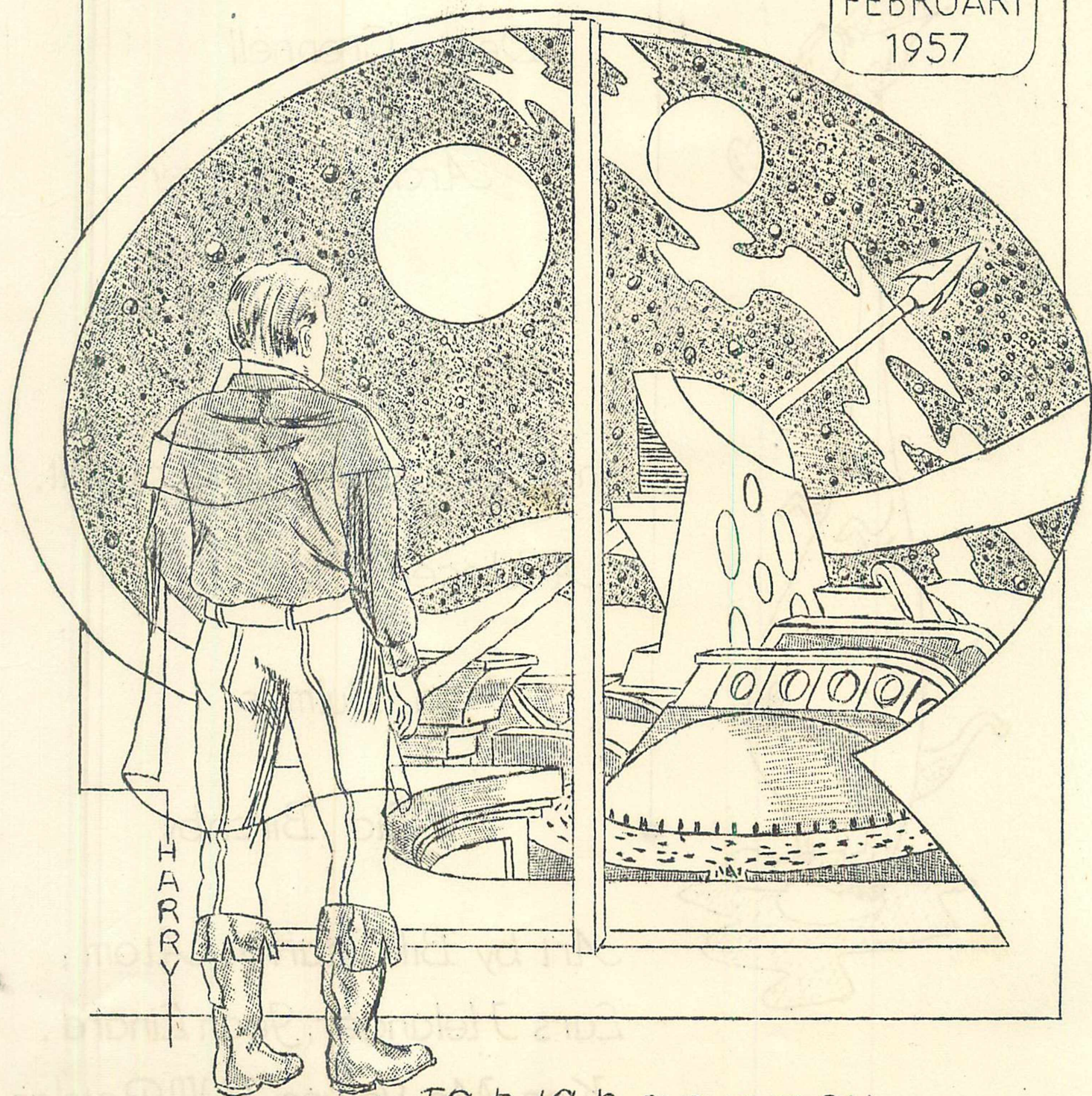


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JANSEN J., 229 BERCHEMLEI, BORGERHOUD

Nº 15
FEBRUARY
1957



HARRY

A FARVAN PUBLICATION

ALPHA 15

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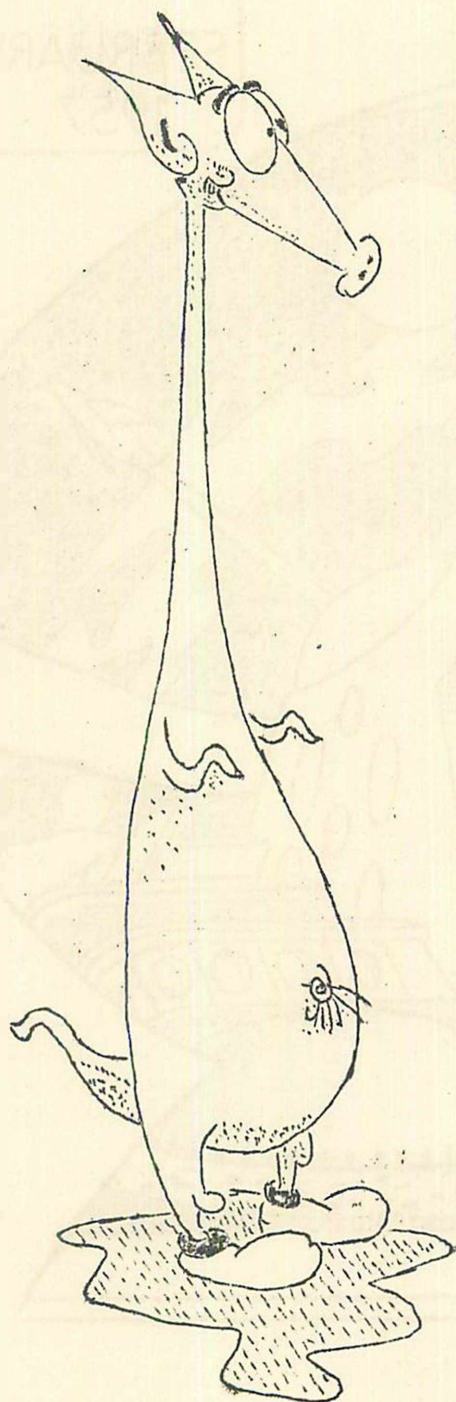
Jan Jansen
and, if space and time permit,

A. Vincent Clarke

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Sid Birchby

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WITH DINTLE AND GUDGEON THROUGH DARKEST PARONOMASIA

DEAN A. GRENNELL

Walter A. Willis, writing in a recent issue of Bob Tucker's *Le ZOMBIE*, mentioned various troubles British fans have with their postoffice. Many things verboten to UK mailers, such as clasp-type envelopes and exposed staples, can be used here in America with perfect impunity. However we have restrictions with Britons may not have or on the other hand, maybe they do.

Perhaps the chiefestmost ultraparamount commandment of the USPD is : "It shall be clean !". The powers that be apparently are firmly convinced that the ultimate foundation-stone of the nation would crumble for all time if the mails ever carried an unclean word, picture or thought.

This peccatophobic attitude can get pretty ridiculous at times, particularly since the boys have a hard time finding a reliable yardstick against which they can measure a given specimen and say this is mailable and that isn't. Often as not it is a case of how determined the defendant may be and how good a lawyer he can afford.

I remember an advertisement in a photo magazine that caught my eye once. It was brief and succinct. It said, "Wanted : negatives." Curiosity got the best of me and I dropped a postcard to the address given and asked, "What kind of negatives, huh ?"

Back, in time, came a reply. The envelope was the pre-stamped kind you buy from the postoffice, the paper was cheap lined "tablet-paper" as coarse and yellow and porous as an old issue of *PLANET*. The writing was with a blunt lead pencil in a hand something less than what you might call fine old Spencerian.

The crux of the message was more than a little ambiguous and evasive. I don't recall the exact wording and of course I've long since lost the letter but the writer (to score a clean sweep, I've forgotten his name as well) said he wanted "clear, sharp negatives of the female, either indoors or outdoors and they MUST be unretouched. Also want to buy negatives of male and female in action.

It was obvious that this boy was writing with the possibility firmly in mind that postal inspectors would probably be included in his audience. He carefully refrained from saying what particular species of bisexual organism the females were supposed to represent. In a pinch, he could have claimed he was asking for snaps of guppies if it came to that.

Point was, he knew what he wanted and the reader was supposed to be a man of the world and know too. I confess that I idly toyed with the thought of writing that I had a large stock of negatives of males and females in action and I would send him a sample upon receipt of a couple dollars or so...I had nothing on hand of the sort which (I presume) he wanted but if he had sent money in such a case I could have gone out to my uncle's farm and shot a few negatives of roosters chasing hens or something.

However, as so often happens, all I did was think about it and not a great deal of that. I showed the letter to a local photographer and he kept it--probably with about the same idea I had--but his wife found it in his coat and lowered the boom on him, thinking that he was preparing to unload some pinuppy pix he'd snapped of her.

It is possible that he may have thought to unload some otherwise unusable by-products of his commercial processing department. He developed and printed rolls of film for people and some of the most astonishing scenes used to turn up now and then amidst all the out-of-focus relatives and decapitated progeny. People, apparently wanting a souvenir of their mad youth to treasure into their old age and equally apparently believing that the people who develop and print films become so blase that they never notice what they are doing (a fallacy if there ever was one) would include pictures on their rolls of the sort that the close-mouthed negative collector probably faunched to acquire.

When these turned up---not often but occasionally---the photographer made it a practice to include an equal number of blank pieces of film in the delivery envelope and if there were inquiries he would blandly say that they must not have turned out. However they did turn out and the character in question had a shoebox partly full of the things, complete to detailed enlargements of sections of some. He was, in sober truth, something of an odd-ball. °°° The asterisks denote a time-lapse during which I have been trying to recollect if I ever knew a photographer who was not an odd-ball of some sort or other. If I have ever known such, he has slipped my mind and it seems hard to believe I could forget such an outstanding figure.

The chap mentioned above eventually sold out his commercial processing business to another fellow, equally odd-ball if not more so. Unlike the first one, the successor ran afoul of the postal authorities. A friend of mine who works in the postoffice made brief mention of the case once, saying that they had orders to hold out all of the fellow's outgoing mail, first-class and otherwise. The postal inspector, upon opening it, found that the guy was exporting not only portraits of his less-inhibited patrons but of his wife as well (the photographer's wife, not the postal inspector's !). That anyone would pay for pictures of the photographer's wife is faintly incredible because she was perhaps five feet tall and must have weighed close around 14 stones and there were folds of fat that hung from her ankles and flapped about her shoes as she walked. I guess, like the man says, it takes all kinds.

Oddly enough, had I gone through with my faintly-contemplated idea of victimising that negative collector, I would in all probability have been guilty of using the mails to defraud and that is an offense of some magnitude. I recently read, with the keenest sort of delight, that some publisher had been fined and/or jailed for publishing a magazine or book or something that was not obscene. It seems that he had advertised it as if it were ("comic-books! Pocket-size! the kind men like!") and they scragged him for using the mails to defraud.

There is, in any field of endeavour, an occasional operator whose imagination is of a scope and breath far beyond those of his contemporaries. Such a person it must surely have been who first conceived the idea of purveying "art studies" in the form of exposed but undeveloped film. Obviously he could not be prosecuted for mailing an obscene photograph inasmuch as there was no visible picture on the film whatsoever. True, the silver halides of the film's emulsion had been light-joggled in such a manner that, properly manipulated, they could be used to produce pictures whose innocence was perhaps debateable. But one might as well prosecute everyone who had ever mailed paper or pencils on grounds that said paper and pencils could be used for producing obscene pictures.

At least that's the way they had it figured. Unfortunately, the postoffice carried it clear to the Supreme Court and they didn't see it that way, ruling that it violated the spirit if not the letter of the law.

America has a man named Anthony Comstock to thank for its rich heritage of blue-nose traditions and sanctimonious restrictions. In his own specialized way, he was perhaps the oddest odd-ball of them all. There is an article about him by Archie McFedries in the January 1956 issue of True which sheds considerable light on the censor mentality. Ideally, one imagines a censor to whom the custodianship of the public's morals is entrusted to be a veritable paragon of virtue, clean-minded, scrupulously fair and normal to a hair in all respects. Ideally, a censor should be like that and if they were, there wouldn't be nearly the objection to them.

Most people will agree that there is some slight necessity to keep things out of the public eye which trespass the bounds of good taste. The reader may recall the scene in Kornbluth's "The Marching Morons" wherein the 20th-century hero averted his eyes with a shocked gasp from an animated billboard. And even if you wouldn't find that objectionable, there must surely exist a point at which you'd boggle...laxative ads on commercial televisions, for instance. It is bad enough now to be peacefully leafing through any of several national magazines and come without warning face-up with a portrait of a lady joyously screaming to the four winds, "My constipation worries are over!"

Before Comstock, there were few if any laws governing the use of the mails. He bulldozed the legislation through under the Grant administration: a bill prohibiting the mailing of obscene material with a rider which forbade the giving of information on contraceptive materials and practices. A quote: "President Grant, figuring that the good will of the reform element might kill his whisky breath in the super-proper Midwest, made Comstock a Special Post Office inspector with a nationwide beat."

Once in power, the rigour of his moral uprightness knew no bounds to speak of. Another quote: "One day, for example, Comstock, in his capacity as a special Post Office inspector, was doing his job behind the mail slots of the St. Louis Post Office by scanning letters held up to the light, his eyes peeled for traces of obscenity. What he could make out of one letter fascinated him, and abruptly he tore it open. The writer, a traveling man, was suggesting to his wife that since business was rotten they not have any more kids. When the man came home, Comstock pinched him, hustled the poor guy off to court testified against him and chivvied the judge into fining him \$ 500."

I seem to recall that even so staunch a defender of censors as G M Carr has gone on record already with the advice "if you don't want babies, don't make them..." It would be interesting to observe the state of her objectivity if a latter-day Comstock had got her a \$ 500 fine for her thought.

To judge from the article, Comstock's normality was at least open to question, with evidence indicating a passibility that he was something of a fetishist and the possessor of a fairly well-developed Oedipus complex. Quoting some more:

"His parents were teetotaling, flint-eyed puritans who were graet believers in the race of man. ...Everything he did in later years, he once told a reporter, he did in memory of his mother. He considered every obscene remark, every spicy picture, every undraped woman a personal affront to her. ...When he was 27, and still a shipping clerk, he met a girl named Maggie Hamilton---an undersized, emaciated old maid 10 years his senior. He married Maggie because she reminded him of his mother. ...What with Maggie's frailness and Anthony's rigid views, about the only thing they seem to have got out of marriage was polite companionship. ...Asice from Maddie and his work, there was just one thing that attracted Comstock---pretty vases. Sometimes he would sit for an hour, after Maggie had gone to bed, admiring a piece of crockery that had caught his eye. He once told an associate that he found a certain satisfaction in following the soft curves of a vase".

But while Comstock may have been queer for decency, he had no passion for honor. No depth of cheating, lying and deceiving was too great to sink to in his crusade to cleanse the world of feelthy peectures. Witness this further quote:

"One day Comstock got a tip that hot pictures were being sold in the back rooms of saloons. For a moment this stopped him, because the pornography boys now well aware of Comstock's activities, were allowing only the regular patrons through the swinging doors. "Terrible Tony, however, was not to be outwitted. He contrived a piece of strategy that gave New York a belly laugh. One day Comstock and three other vice agents drew up to a Brooklyn juice joint in a hearse. Together they trooped in, dressed in black and sober of mien, loud in grief over a dear "brother" they had just laid away. "The saloonkeeper took one look at the mourners, waived his rule against strangers and asked what it would be. "Rye "said Comstock. While the drink was being poured, the reformer wandered into the back room and came upon a supply of dirty pictures. "Here!" he shouted to the other agents. "Here's the stuff we're looking for!" "For several days thereafter Comstock and his squad of fake mourners drove around New York in the hearse and put the slug on more than a score of sympathetic saloonkeepers. Then one day, after word of Comstock's latest dodge had got around, a real hearse with genuine mourners stopped at a grog shop on the waterfront. When the mourners filed in, the proprietor and several bar flies almost murdered them."

Nice guy, huh? If I were permitted to hazard a guess, I'd theorise that Comstock deep in the stinking crevices of his nasty little mind, probably got a tremendous kick out of pornography but, on account of his tightly-repressed childhood and his somewhat spartan wedded life, the sensations boiled and bubbled up into a great inner turmoil of guilt and self-accusation. Only by presuming that everyone else shared his own warped attitudes and viewpoint and taking steps accordingly could he ease his own guilt-pangs. Quote :

"The newsman loved Comstock. He was always good for a story when other news was shy, and their accounts of his activities kept readers laughing. Occasionally---and as a special favour---the man with the big blue nose would open up his huge office safe and show a reporter the vast collection of pornography he had acquired in his campaigns. No doubt he had destroyed a lot of his seizures, but he had kept plentiful samples of the juiciest portions, and these he exhibited with a great deal of relish."

It is a stimulating subject for speculation to reflect that although the odds are astronomically against any given pair of gametes uniting to form any given individual...despite the jillion-to-one odds against the formation of even one person...there are at the present something like two billions people in the world who did get formed. The odds were all against the birth of an Anthony Comstock and yet, somehow, he came along anyway, to serve as a focus and rallying-point for blue-nosed sanctimony. The merest biological mischance and he would never have known existence.

If the thought hasn't yet occurred to you, I'd like to suggest that the life of Anthony Comstock presents in itself a powerful argument in favour of planned parenthood.

And the very idea must set his mouldy bones to spinning down there like some sort of ghastly subterranean armature. Pleasant thought, what?

o o o o o o o o o o o o o

Briefly, I would like to salute the unknown benefactor to the sons of Adam whose spark of genius it was that created the Buick port-hole. For full many and many a year now the little chromium rings on the fenders have been vying with the imitation fox-tail for the distinction of being the most non-functional and vulgarly ostentatious thing on automobiles. Fake Buick port-holes can be bought at any auto-supply store, as can imitation Cadillac tail fins so that the owner of even the most ancient vehicle can bedeck it out and be as ghastly and unsightly as if he could afford a new one. For a long time the privilege of sporting four port-holes was reserved solely for Buick Roadmonsters---err, beg pardon, Roadmasters---and for the less scrupulous of the social-climbing set which stuck them on Fords.

However, in 1955, the Buick people decided to let down the bars and they decreed that henceforth only the lowly Buick "Special" would be restricted to three port-holes. The Buick "Century" and the "Super" would join the "Roadmaster" with four.

Now this is all very well for owner of Centurys and Supers but it must have been a cruel and undercutting blow indeed for the legion of proud owners of Buick Roadmasters, who had sacrificed and struggled and saved to amass the extra \$ 500 or \$ 1.000 that separates the lordly Roadmaster from its lesser brethren. As long as only the Roadmaster boasted four holes, for that long even the veriest clod capable of counting to four could recognize them for the moneyed aristocracy. But now...

Well, I want you to know that there was at least one Roadmaster owner that did something about it. I don't know his name but I saw his car parked in the next unit of a motel not long ago. I gave it a passing glance and an eye-popping double-take. He had performed a bit of skillful and judicious plastic surgery upon the fenders (or wings) of his 1955 Roadmaster and it was no longer a mere common run-of-the-mill four-holer Buick.

No sir, by jing. It was a five-holer !

There is, in the breast of some men, a surging, indimitable and unconquerable spirit which refuses to accept defeat and makes me want to fwow up.

Dean A. Grennell

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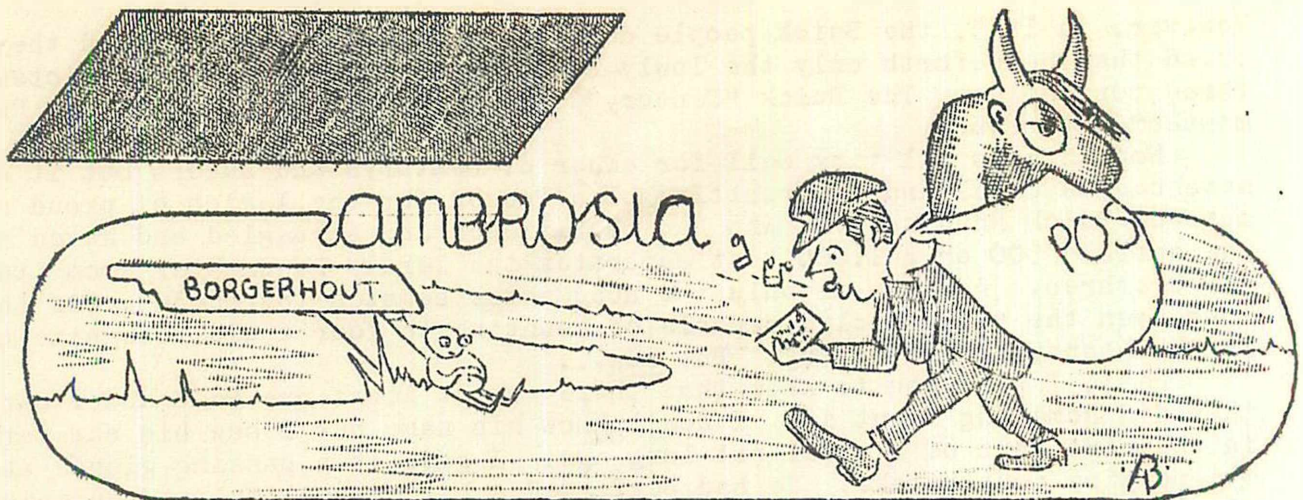
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MAGAZINES & COMICS

WRITE TO

KISCH NEWS CO.

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California.





Bill Harry, 69 Parliament Street, Liverpool 8, England.

...My favourite illo was the Harry Turner, and not because of the piece of crackling either, I'm used to that sort of thing. His style of drawing and use of wheelpen intrigue me, I can sit back and admire his headings for ten minutes or so. Started to collect Harry Turner originals, and I now have about half a dozen of his NEBULA things. First met him at the SuperManCon, but I was only an innocent neofan then; shortly after, I heard about the Fantasy Art Society. I wanted to join, but didn't. Maybe it was because they didn't advertise or spread any info about themselves in the fanzines---but apart from a FAS newsletter I didn't hear of the Society again. And I still don't know whether it exists or not. Anyway, I am now chairman of the Liverpool S-F Art Society, so if you know any budding artists, let me, or them, know...

...Seems I musta been blind or something. Maybe I was sleepy or drowsy or punchdrunk when I was reading ALPHA 13, 'cause I don't remember reading Eric Bentcliffes letter. Suffice to say, if I did, I would have written in. Still, I don't suppose it's too late for me to get my two cents worth, so here goes.....whoa, in a sudden burst of genius I reached over to my fanzine pile and fished out a copy of the issue in



question, just to see what it's all about..... aha, yes, yes I see now. I met Eric on the way to Kettering and was struck by his friendliness, he's a very nice chap and I don't hold it against him, but I don't like what was in those two sentences of his. I have a great respect for the German people. There's a beautiful German girl in my class, who I just

can't help admiring. She has a wonderful personality, a sense of humour, and a wonderful German accent. The fact that she is German does not prejudice anyone against her, despite the fact that my father and the fathers of two other boys were killed by the Germans in the last war. There's a Polish boy in the class who is always talking about the war, reading books like "The Scourge Of The Swastika", and painting pictures of brutal German soldiers. Yet he has no enmity with this German girl--he realises she is of a different generation---People should not be blamed for their fathers sins..etc. Did you see "Carousel"? A girl has been jeered at and taunted most of her life because her father was a thief, children her own age look down on her..Yet she is guilty of no wrong. At the end of the film she is told to "hold her head up high" and to go into the world and make something of herself, and not to carry the burden of her fathers guilt. The German people have paid for the war, their families died, as ours did, their cities were bombed more than ours were, theirs was a country against the world. Now it is all over,

the Japs play baseball and speak with American accents, the Italians chew gum made in USA yet Germany is still suffering from the effects of the war --- there is still a Russian zone. If the Japanese and Italians can be forgiven, why not the Germans.....

Bill Harry

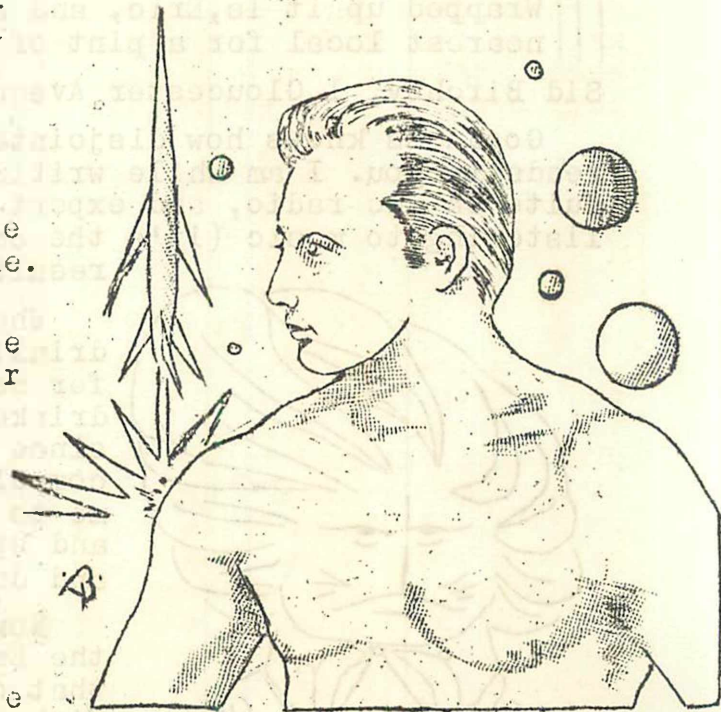
Now for a word from our sponsor....I'd like to thank Bill first of all for typing up the first page of Ambrosia, as well as doing the stencil for the cover. This was all part of a brilliant idea of mine while still knocking around in hospital, and which might have come off if my shoulder hadn't started festering when the doctor pronounced it 'as good as new'. Actually, the full story of crashing scooters should be told here I suppose, but as I have given most friends a personal letter on the subject, and some fans thought it worth while to devote some space to...let's try and forget about it. (Which, unfortunately for me, isn't always easy, especially after carrying something heavy...)

Looking through my correspondence files I found several more letters on the German question as raised in that issue of Alpha...an issue that seems to stem from ages and ages ago. I'm not going to add more than one letter to it. I feel that the symposium more than covered the matter, but I guess Eric Bentcliffe deserves a chance to have his say....

Eric Bentcliffe, 47 Alldis St., Great Moor, Stockport, Ches.

Thing that most interests me in this issue is Of Major Importance. Which stems from an extract which you cat-footedly printed. Walts letter is a fairly cogent one and as it comes first I'll make a few words in reply and hope you'll do me the favour of printing them. First, I'd like to reiterate that the section of my letter in question was not intended for publication and was printed without permission.... most of us are apt to be a little freer in personal correspondence than when we are writing for publication and I'd probably have put things a little more diplomatically if I'd known Dave was going to put my foot in it for me.

For Germans as individuals, I've no definite regard or disregard, there are good and bad just as in any other race and I judge them as I get to know them. For Germans as a race, I've no great liking... just as I have little regard for anyone who toward big-headedness... instance: The Aryan Master Race. Germany of today may be very different from the Germany of yesterday, but racial characteristics do not change completely in just one decade, and there is still a strong pro-Nazi element in Germany. I agree with Walt that the past should be forgotten ...although,



I must qualify here and say that the past must be forgotten if it bears no referent to the future. I'd like to leave the second (and first) world war buried beneath a wreath of friendliness, but if one is to try and get a realistic picture of the near future one must take the past into account. I hope there will never be another war, I pray there will never be another war but I refuse to stick my head ostrichwise in the sand and pretend that there never was a war.

As far as Fandom is concerned I was curious to know when I wrote the letter to Dave his reaction to the statement I made. Gerfandom has arisen so swiftly that very little is really known about it and its participants... you could say I was fishing for information just as Joe Gibson has been doing in VOID. The reaction I've had has been a little more positive than that which Joe got... although it's noticeable that only one German fan (by birth) has written in (or had his letter published). I didn't, in the extract (nor in the rest of my letter to Dave) condemn Gerfandom as Julian seems to think, I merely asked a question... one very familiar to s-f fans, 'What would happen if...?' You might read that extract through again, Julian. If any Gerfan did start boasting about the number of British he'd shot, bombed or wiped out during the war, I'd do my best to ignore him unless he got too offensive, then I'd probably tell him where to go. But, let me hastily add, that if any of the UK fen started boasting of the number of Germans he'd blasted into eternity I'd be equally as eager to verbally sit on him!

Paul Enever's letter was a very interesting one and probably the most relevant of the lot. I agree with just about every word of it.

In conclusion, let me say that I intend to judge Gerfans as and when I meet them and get to know them, and the latter I'd like to do.

Hmmm....Guess that about puts wraps on things.

Eric Bentcliffe.

||| Wrapped up it is, Eric, and so let us not walk, but rush, to the nearest local for a pint of that ...no, let's have Sid instead:

Sid Birchby, 1 Gloucester Avenue, Levenshulme, Manchester 9.

Goodness knows how disjointed or otherwise incoherent this letter reads to you. I am while writing listening to the 'Casse Noisette' suite on the radio, and expert though I am at writing letters while listening to music (it's the only way to get a free flow of ideas) the result is apt to need editing afterwards.



When I say the only way, I mean apart from drinking while writing, which I'm told works for some folk; but not for me. I'm not a heavy drinker at any time (it's three generations since the English ceased to be a nation of compulsive drinkers) and drink usually sends me to sleep, after a swift period of febrile and spurious jollity. Music is far cheaper and doesn't give me the same hangover.

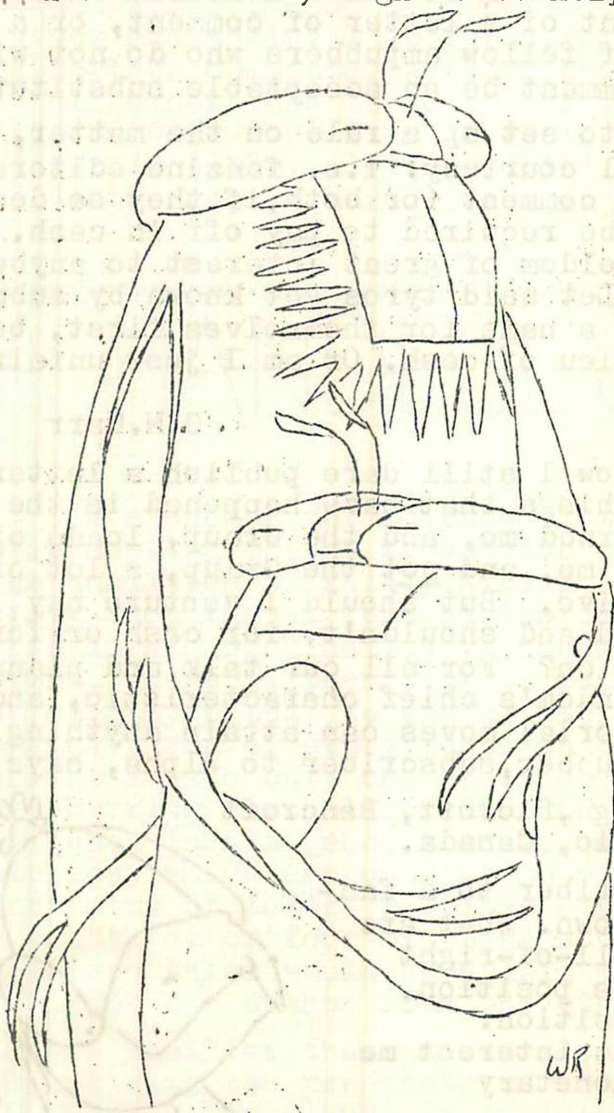
Now that I think of it, I wonder just how the English attitude to drink differs from that of, say, the Norwegians, who drink like fish whenever they get a chance, or the Americans, who don't really enjoy their booze, but get through a surprising quantity of it?

It's not just the result of teetotalism, although the latter was once dry, and the former still virtually is. Because although the English don't drink much, the Welsh and Scots do. Or rather, I should qualify that by saying that whereas when an Englishman wants to go to pieces, he does not necessarily turn to drink (sex-crimes are quite popular alternatives nowadays) the Welshman or Scot is still most likely to do so.

Interesting. It may be the operation of the alcoholic equivalent of Gresham's Law. The bad beer has driven out the good, and booze generally has become so debased as a euphoric and such bad value for money that the English have decided to try something else. Not so the Welsh and Scots: you'll observe that both are inhabitants of mountain countries, which are admirably adapted for the distillation of moonshine of real pre-war potency.....

Sid Birchby.

Personally, I believe that the change-over is due to increasing possibilities in spending one's 'free' time in varied ways...for amusement one no longer relies on the local, but visits the cinema or listens to radio, nowadays even watch TV...hobbies both in collecting, and handicraft, which were unknown or nearly so at the turn of the century, have spread to every level of the community. And of course, high taxes help the trend along...



I, for instance, have found a pleasing hobby in fandom...both in publishing, writing and reading. It uses up the money I might spend on booze, and it takes up the time I might spend drinking even if didn't run off with the cash.

Although of course, there are some drawbacks. I try to please everybody and yet people who should normally be petting each other, give forth divergent opinions on a story...

Greg Benford for instance:

"Sorry to say, I didn't read ENTER THREE WISHES. I did try, honest I did, fellers, but after I was through with Archie and part of Nigel, my courage gave out and I was left with a feeling of 'move on, clot this will put you to sleep'....."

Whereas Larry Bourne acclaims:

"ENTER THREE WISHES was superb. I take my hats off to the two persons who did a good job and I give raspberries to the third churl who destroyed the lovely ladies. Such a spoil sport indeed. The best part of this to me was...the illustration. Man, what a babe....."

Which is probably the reason why ALICE does so well.

microscope tries to strangle its operator. I particularly liked scene in the story where Captain Unger is swallowed by his motor-car, but then I've a warped sense of humour. A neat ending, too.

EXPENDABLE is saved from the ordinary run of fanzine fiction by its treatment. The theme is one I've seen by amateurs several times. A man has discovered, really knows, about the plot being hatched against humanity by the myriads of small creatures that inhabit the earth: the moths, the ants, even the caterpillars. All very frightening! Thank goodness we've got the spiders on our side.

PLANET FOR TRANSIENTS deals with the future earth after the atomic wars when it is realised that the planet belongs to the mutant races, the runners and the bugs. Humanity has to exist closed in in shielded suits and helmets. Time to get out.

PROMINENT AUTHOR and THE BUILDER are tales much alike in their theme and construction, relying on the snap ending. In THE BUILDER especially this doesn't succeed in trailing the reader in suspense and if you can't see what's coming two or three pages off, then go to the bottom of the class. I've read THE LITTLE MOVEMENT before and thought it a reasonably good story. A Sturgeon or a Bradbury might have developed the children in the tale to a greater advantage, but the main characters who overcome the alien's plot are not children anyway.

A scientist trying to preserve the arts by creating life from musical energy is the plot of THE PRESERVING MACHINE. Unfortunately the animals resulting have their own ideas on how to live and adapt themselves to their environments admirably, changing somewhat in the process.

THE IMPOSSIBLE PLANET starts out in a big way, with an old woman wanting to travel to the legendary planet Earth, but the story is again not developed to its best advantage. The old woman is ejected from the story in an extremely tritish manner and the punchline suffers from its limited appeal to American readership and also the ignoring of the possibility of parallel worlds. That this theme is familiar to Dick is shown in UPON THE DUMB EARTH, a story which must have bewildered even the author, and EXHIBIT PIECE, one of the best stories in the book which suffers slightly from the artificiality of characterisation. Dick conquers this difficulty best in THE COOKIE LADY, a story very reminiscent of Ray Bradbury in his Dark Carnival days.

PROGENY, a picture of the impersonal future where children are state and robot controlled, and THE TURNING WHEEL, a story which defies definition in its scope of eastern religion and western science, combined with an accepted SF background and a fannish touch almost complete the survey and the book. The fannish touch is a play on a writer who was very much to the fore in SF circles a year or two ago by dint of his book on dianetics. The Bards are the dominant class on the Earth and they swear by their prophet, the great Elron Hu. Nice touch.

Almost completes, I said. THE INDEFATIGABLE FROG presents a new twist on the Lilliputian theme and is one of the best stories in the book, along with IMPOSTOR, a fascinating story about a robot duplicate whose job it is to destroy the world. For once the Dick flair for leading his reader up that garden path pays off handsomely -- with dividends. I'd like to think of this story as by the mature Philip K. Dick of whom we have not yet seen a great deal. The promise is there throughout this volume, realised in IMPOSTOR. I hope to see much more proof of his talents.

Recommended in the calmest possible manner.

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Interesting. It may be the operation of the alcoholic equivalent of Gresham's Law. The bad beer has driven out the good, and booze generally has become so debased as a euphoric and such bad value for money that the English have decided to try something else. Not so the Welsh and Scots: you'll observe that both are inhabitants of mountain countries, which are admirably adapted for the distillation of moonshine of real pre-war potency.....

Sid Birchby.

Personally, I believe that the change-over is due to increasing possibilities in spending one's 'free' time in varied ways...for amusement one no longer relies on the local, but visits the cinema or listens to radio, nowadays even watch TV...hobbies both in collecting, and handicraft, which were unknown or nearly so at the turn of the century, have spread to every level of the community. And of course, high taxes help the trend along...

I, for instance, have found a pleasing hobby in fandom...both in publishing, writing and reading. It uses up the money I might spend on booze, and it takes up the time I might spend drinking even if didn't run off with the cash.

Although of course, there are some drawbacks. I try to please everybody and yet people who should normally be petting each other, give forth divergent opinions on a story...

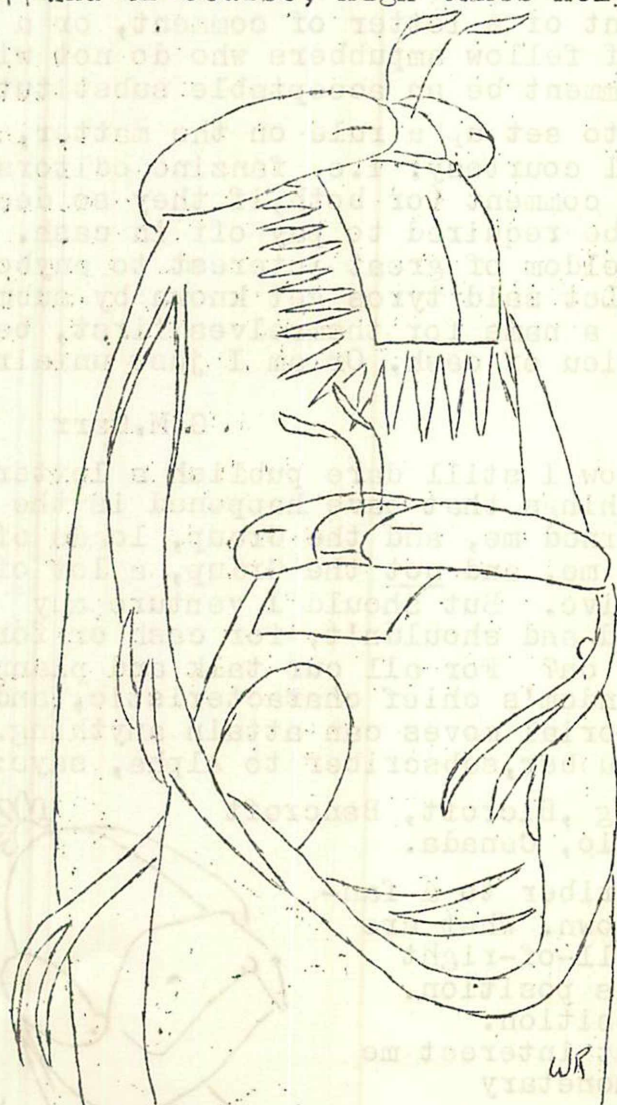
Greg Benford for instance:

"Sorry to say, I didn't read ENTER THREE WISHES. I did try, honest I did, fellers, but after I was through with Archie and part of Nigel, my courage gave out and I was left with a feeling of 'move on, clot this will put you to sleep'....."

Whereas Larry Bourne acclaims:

"ENTER THREE WISHES was superb. I take my hats off to the two persons who did a good job and I give raspberries to the third churl who destroyed the lovely ladies. Such a spoil sport indeed. The best part of this to me was...the illustration. Man, what a babe....."

Which is probably the reason why ALICE does so well.



Backstage of the previous ALPHA (which many of you must have thought to be the last) I made some comments on subscriptions, fanzines, free copies, and so forth. This of course drew forth quite some comment, and I am very sorry that I haven't had time the last month to dig out the various letters. One of the few that have been uncovered comes from the ever sprightly

G.M.CARR, 5319 Ballard Ave., Seattle 7, Wash.



...Another topic for comment is your mention of letters of comment in lieu of cash for Fanzines. It seems to me that this problem is confined to fmz sent to non-pubbers because obviously a fanzine sent in exchange requires neither a letter of comment nor a cash subscription. Perhaps if the problem were defined on that basis, it might be more easily solved. Because the way it is, I suspect that the majority of fanzines are sent to other fan editors either as outright trades, or else in the hope of promoting one. And certainly, with the cost of amateur publishing being what it is, no fan with an ounce of sense expects another ampubber to subscribe with money to somebody else's fanzine. No matter how good it is.

With fellow ampubbers excluded, that puts the problem up squarely where it belongs: to the non-pubber who receives a fanzine. Will said non-pubber reciprocate to the extent of a letter of comment, or a few nickles of cash? Or, in the case of fellow ampubbers who do not wish to trade fmz, would a letter of comment be an acceptable substitute?

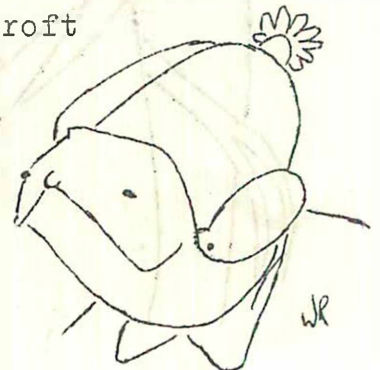
I suggest that if we are going to set up a rule on the matter, that we recognise a sort of professional courtesy: i.e. fanzine editors be permitted a choice of trade or comment (or both, if they so desire) whereas non-pubbing fans and neos be required to pay off in cash. Letters of comment from such are seldom of great interest to anybody except the writer and the editor. Let said tyros get known by submitting material for the fmz and make a name for themselves first, before accepting a letter of comment in lieu of cash. Or am I just unfair to the neos?....

G.M.Carr

After all this time, I wonder how I still dare publish a letter like that one. Among the many things that have happened is the advent of Contact. Which has earned me, and the Group, loads of applause, and which has brought me, and not the Group, a lot of catcalls. Oh well, I'm still alive. But should I venture any further into this maze of should and shouldn't, for cash or for free, publisher's ethics and so on? For all our talk and planning would be in vain...apathy is fandom's chief characteristic, and it would seem that only dictatorial moves can attain anything. However, let's see what a non-pubber, subscriber to Alpha, says:

Arthur Hayes, c/o Dominion Catering, Bicroft, Bancroft
Ontario, Canada.

I sometimes wonder at the subscriber to a fanzine, one who doesn't publish his own. What are his duties? his rights? Maybe a bill-of-right should be drawn up to determine his position. A ctually, I view myself in this position.
1/ Subscribe to those fanzines that interest me after I've made individual issue monetary



contributions. 2/ Write a short letter on each issue received. 3/ Not expect an answer from the fanned. The next issue received will serve as an answer, unless some particular information has been requested. 4/ Not expect every letter sent in to be printed. 5/ To be able to say what I want to say, good or bad.

Should I want more rights, then I should get in the publishing game and go broke like the faneds. Then I'd be in a position to do some demanding.

Should I not like a fanzine, after getting a subscription, then, when the sub runs out, let it run out. I won't support a fanzine that is too much disliked by me. I expect the faned to keep some kind of record that will let me know when my sub expires. I still think a s.f. fanzine should deal more with s.f. than jazz or other unrelated subjects. Old fashioned?.....

Arthur Hayes.

Far from being a Bill of Rights, the above looks like a Bill of Obligations. If after this you don't get invitations to go onto every fanzine's subscriber's list.....

I assume that Arthur means under no 5 - that he wants to be able to say a mag stinks, without as result of this having his unexpired sub cancelled without further ado. I don't know about other faneds but myself, when I do get one of these letters (and they crop up now and again) I do reply, together with the next issue and request further comments. Arthur, how about going on a crusade and inviting all other fans to join your fanzine supporting society?

And with that I am going to close one of the shortest Ambrosias run in Alpha...letters dated, others filed....I regret it as much as you do, be sure. Force majeure!

Fanzine

A HANDFUL OF DARKNESS.

REVIEWED BY JACK WILLIAMS

I'm a sucker for science fiction anthologies, and I had been present at a meeting of the Leeds club when Les Jefferson had been extolling the qualities of Philip K. Dick. It was with something approaching alacrity then that I felt at the chance of reading some of Dick's stories this in his book called "A handful of darkness" published by Rich and Cowan. These fifteen stories range from tales of which the genre can be rightly proud, to one or two efforts which are no worse than the ordinary run of story found in the general science fiction magazine, whilst I rate only one story as being outstanding, the garden-path, red-herring punch-line IMPOSTOR. Dick reminds me greatly of Richard Matheson in his general style, and notwithstanding Matheson's bizarre stories, which are usually outstanding in a field of their own, their portraits of future possible worlds are often similar if not identical. Given three or four of these stories to read amongst a collection of Matheson tales would have left me quite perplexed in attempting to sort out one author from the other.

The familiar theme of an advance scouting party exploring an alien planet with the prospects of Terran colonisation to follow is employed in COLONY. The planet is idyllically perfect or is thought so, until a

microscope tries to strangle its operator. I particularly liked scene in the story where Captain Unger is swallowed by his motor-car, but then I've a warped sense of humour. A neat ending, too.

EXPENDABLE is saved from the ordinary run of fanzine fiction by its treatment. The theme is one I've seen by amateurs several times. A man has discovered, really knows, about the plot being hatched against humanity by the myriads of small creatures that inhabit the earth: the moths, the ants, even the caterpillars. All very frightening! Thank goodness we've got the spiders on our side.

PLANET FOR TRANSIENTS deals with the future earth after the atomic wars when it is realised that the planet belongs to the mutant races, the runners and the bugs. Humanity has to exist closed in in shielded suits and helmets. Time to get out.

PROMINENT AUTHOR and THE BUILDER are tales much alike in their theme and construction, relying on the snap ending. In THE BUILDER especially this doesn't succeed in trailing the reader in suspense and if you can't see what's coming two or three pages off, then go to the bottom of the class. I've read THE LITTLE MOVEMENT before and thought it a reasonably good story. A Sturgeon or a Bradbury might have developed the children in the tale to a greater advantage, but the main characters who overcome the alien's plot are not children anyway.

A scientist trying to preserve the arts by creating life from musical energy is the plot of THE PRESERVING MACHINE. Unfortunately the animals resulting have their own ideas on how to live and adapt themselves to their environments admirably, changing somewhat in the process.

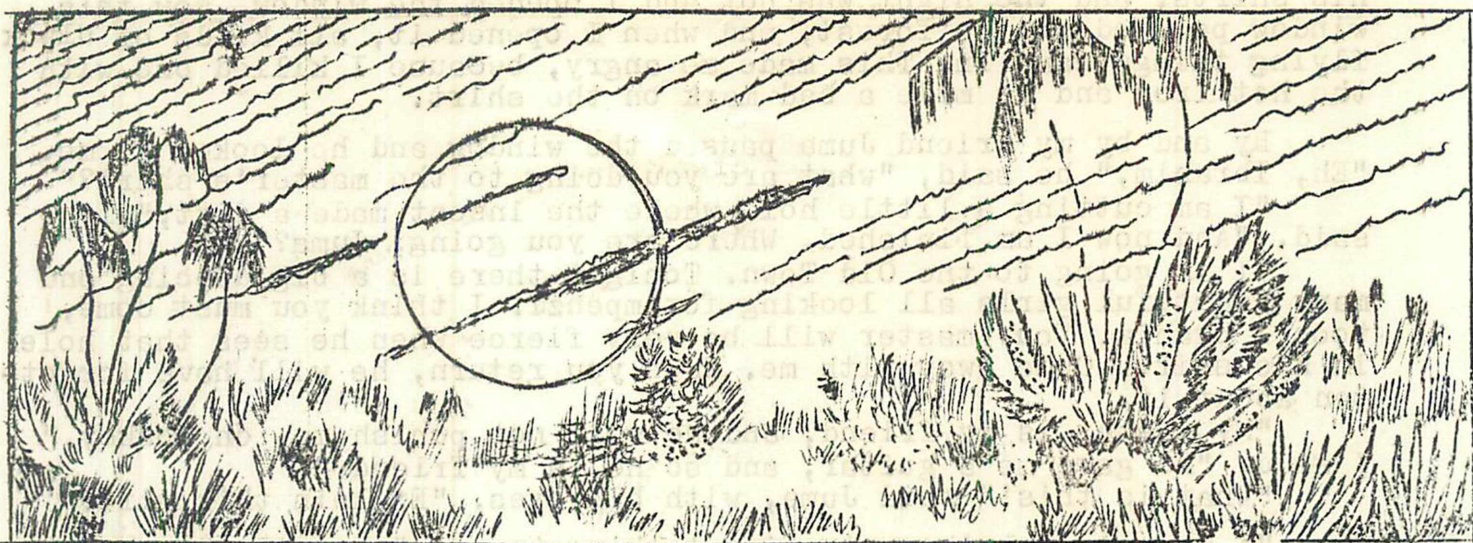
THE IMPOSSIBLE PLANET starts out in a big way, with an old woman wanting to travel to the legendary planet Earth, but the story is again not developed to its best advantage. The old woman is ejected from the story in an extremely tritish manner and the punchline suffers from its limited appeal to American readership and also the ignoring of the possibility of parallel worlds. That this theme is familiar to Dick is shown in UPON THE DUAL EARTH, a story which must have bewildered even the author, and EXHIBIT PLACE, one of the best stories in the book which suffers slightly from the artificiality of characterisation. Dick conquers this difficulty best in THE COOKIE LADY, a story very reminiscent of Ray Bradbury in his Dark Carnival days.

PROGENY, a picture of the impersonal future where children are state and robot controlled, and THE TURNING WHEEL, a story which defies definition in its scope of eastern religion and western science, combined with an accepted SF background and a fannish touch almost complete the survey and the book. The fannish touch is a play on a writer who was very much to the fore in SF circles a year or two ago by dint of his book on dianetics. The Bards are the dominant class on the Earth and they swear by their prophet, the great Elron Hu. Nice touch.

Almost completes, I said. THE INDEFATIGABLE FROG presents a new twist on the Lilliputian theme and is one of the best stories in the book, along with IMPOSTOR, a fascinating story about a robot duplicate whose job it is to destroy the world. For once the Dick flair for leading his reader up that garden path pays off handsomely -- with dividends. I'd like to think of this story as by the mature Philip K. Dick of whom we have not yet seen a great deal. The promise is there throughout this volume, realised in IMPOSTOR. I hope to see much more proof of his talents.

Recommended in the calmest possible manner.

SW



K. McI



SOME SATURDAY NIGHTS



Some Saturday nights those Uganda men had a big music and dancing time down in the Old Town. Eh--ee ! this was very good. Everyone who liked singing and laughing went down there. The beer was as strong as hornets !

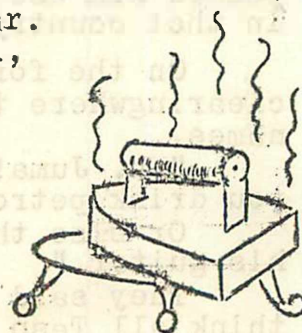
I mean down the hill, the other side of the swamp and far away from the white mens' bungalows. I mean over there among the banana trees where the digging plots are, where they grow the black peppers and the tobacco. I mean those places where the men sit outside the huts all day and watch the women dig.

Oh yes, that's the place to go on Saturday nights. Those Uganda men call all their friends and cousins and they say:

"Let's do the dance all night. There's a lion in the forest and we must frighten it away. We'll all dance, and we'll all sing, and that will frighten it away."

This thing they say every time, yet nobody has seen a lion in this country since before the war.

But ha-ha, they say, never mind,
doesn't that show how
much we frighten him?



SID BIRCHBY

Well, there was a night in my master's house when I was ironing his shirts, and the night was hot and I opened the window. Now this window pointed at the forest, and when I opened it, all kinds of black flying things came in. This made me angry, because I killed one with the hot iron and it made a bad mark on the shirt.

By and by my friend Juma passed the window and he looked at me. "Eh, Ibrahim," he said, "what are you doing to the master's shirt?"

"I am cutting a little hole where the insect made a dirt," I said. "And now I am finished. Where are you going, Juma?"

"I am going to the Old Town. Tonight there is a big dancing and many beautiful girls all looking for mpenzi. I think you must come, too, Ibrahim. Your master will be very fierce when he sees that hole in his shirt. Come away with me. When you return, he will have forgotten about it."

"My master is my friend, and he will not punish me, oh monkey." I said. "He gave me a guitar, and so he is my friend."

"What is this!" said Juma, with big eyes. "Explain this gift!"

"I do not want to waste time talking to you," I said. "My master also makes a feast tonight. He will play jazz records for his friends, and they will drink and dance and perhaps sing a little, but not make a shout like your friends down the hill."

"I know what records are," said Juma, "but what is 'jazz'?"

"Jazz is a music that comes from America," I told him, "and my master says that it is very fine civilised music, and much better than your hut-music. He says that I am foolish to listen to you, and he has given me this guitar so that I can learn to play jazz."

Now this is a twisted part of my tale, because when Juma heard that I had this guitar, he thought, ay--ee! this is the noise we need down in the Old Town, and he began to draw me to go with him that night saying that I must teach them all how to play properly, so that my master would not hear any more bad noise. But he did not tell me this plan. He drew me to it like a snake drawing a bird. Ah, that Juma!

In a little I said: "Very well. Perhaps I shall come. My iron is now cold and I have no more charcoal for it. Yes, I shall come."

So I went with him to the master's garage behind the house, and I unlocked the door.

"Wait here," I said. "I must take a gift to the dancing, because I am not a Uganda man but a Teso man."

"Phaa!" said Juma, "There is a very strange smell in here, which is not altogether petrol. What is this place?"

"It is nothing. It is the home of Studebaker, that is all."

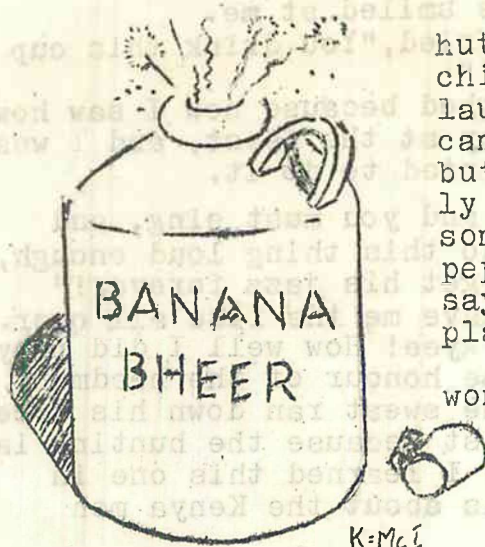
I said this because I did not want him to know that in the dark part of the garage there lived a very fine place for brewing my banana beer, where the master could not see it. I did not talk again, but I pushed him one jerrican, and locked the door. There are many thieves in that country who like to steal beer."

On the forest path down the hill we met many men going to the clearing where the huts stand. Some of them knew us and called out our names.

"Eh, Juma!" they cried, "what are you carrying in that can? Do you drink petrol to make your legs dance?"

Or else they cried: "Oh look at that mountain man! Ibrahim and his guitar."

They said this thing because the Teso country is my home and they think all Teso men live in the Mountains of the Moon, which are nearby.



So everyone was happy and laughing at the huts and then I saw a lovely girl who was putting chicken and bananas in the cooking pots, and I laughed and was happy, too. This was a girl who came some Saturday nights from the next village but every time she came, her mother looked closely at me and spoke sharply to her, saying: "Get some more water!" or "Fetch me that bundle of peppers!", and I could not say what I wanted to say, which was, "Come and listen to my guitar-playing by the river."

This night I looked strongly at all the women who put the food together and the old mother was not there.

"Eh, you girl with soft eyes like a calf, where is your mother tonight?" I called to her. Then she was shy and looked away and I said it again.

"My mother is sick with the cramp," she whispered.

Then I was happy, ho-ho, and I played my guitar and danced in front of her, singing the song of the girl whose lover met her by the river. This is a song I built myself.

Then the men with the drums arrived, and there was a big shout from everyone, because now the big dancing could start. There was old Josefi with the drum Olomu, which was as long as a man's body but no rounder than the thighs of a young girl. This Olomu was made from the trunk of a tree covered at the ends with cow-hide, and inside it was a charm to bring good luck.

First Olomu began to roar 'Hoom Hoom Hoom' and we began clapping. Then the smaller drum, Kawenzi, which was like a small log of wood, sang 'Terum Terum Terum' and this was the sign for all the hand-drums to sing. Old headman made his metal dulcimer sing 'Hello' and the girls replied by shaking their gourds, in which they had put some beans.

"Come on!" shouted Juma, "the circle dance is starting!" He took my arm and tried to pull me into the ring, but I did not want to go.

"There is this girl," I told him, "She is going to the river with me." I did not know if this was true, but I hoped that she would do so.

Juma laughed and looked at this girl: "Little gazelle, listen to this foolish man! You will wait while he dances, won't you?"

And she giggled and turned away, and pretended to make work with the fire.

So I went with Juma and the others and we made a circle and we stamped out feet, and when the drums spoke we leaped in the air. The old women who did not dance stirred sparks from the fires, and we roared like elephants at mating-time. There was no better noise that night in all the Old Town!

Soon there was a cry from these men: "String-plucker! String-plucker!" and I felt hot in my belly because they wanted me to play my guitar. The headman shouted this thing first and that meant that I was a guest he liked. He liked my music because he could accompany me on the big bass lyre.

"Yes, mountain-man, yes!" they all cried, "play for us!"

Oh, I was burning in two places at once then. I wanted to play for the headman, who was a very fine musician, and also wanted to play just



K-M-L

for the girl.. I looked at her standing outside the ring in the shadow-light of the fires, and I thought she smiled at me.

"Don't look at her!" this friend Juma cried, "You drink this cup of banana beer and you forget her! You play!"

Juma had opened the jerrican and I laughed because now I saw how he had tempted me out of the bungalow to play at the feast, and I was glad because now I knew that I had always wanted to do it.

"Yes, I'll play!" I cried. "I'll play, and you must sing, and everyone must dance! Ah--ee! Perhaps if we do this thing loud enough, my master will hear us, and then he will forget his jazz forever!"

I snatched the beer and that drinking gave me the fire all over. I leaped into the circle and began to play. Ayee! How well I did play that night! First I played a song made to the honour of the headman, and he liked it and played his lyre until the sweat ran down his face. Then I played the Teso song that means a feast because the hunting is good. And then the song I like best, because I learned this one in the army, the one called "Polan", which tells about the Kenya men going away to fight the Germans in Poland.

Everyone joined in the chorus, until the birds flew out of their roosts and fled into the forest. Juma sang beside me until his voice croaked like a frog, because he has been my driver-mechanic in the army and he knew this song well. That headman, he was an ex-askari too, and he played his lyre so hard that the strings broke. Then we all stopped to drink and make water.

"Ho!" I thought, "this is fine feasting! Now I am strong enough for my cooking-pot girl."

"Oh, no! Sing and play again!" they cried, but this time even Juma with his croaking frog's voice could not stop me.

"No more," I laughed, "there is a time for feasting and a time for drinking. There is a time for singing with men, and that I have done. Now it is time for singing with women, and this I must do alone."

I picked up my guitar and walked over to the shadows where this girl stood quietly looking at me.

"Your cooking-pot smells good," I said. "What is your name?"

"It is Bengeria", she said, in a small voice, and then I was happy, because that was the name of a love-song I knew. Soon I should sing it to her.

Many songs and many sighs later, we came to my room near the garage. The feasts were over, the cooking-pots were empty, and the beer was finished.

But I smelt trouble. There was a light in the master's house. "Wait here," I said to Bengeria, "I must go to see what my master wants."

Oh--oh, and when I went into the house, he was waiting for me, and he was angry. This night all his friends came, and first they saw the hole in his shirt and they laughed at him, and then he played the jazz records and there was so much noise from the feast down the hill that nobody could listen to them. So because this made him look small in their eyes he punished me with many words, saying that I made animal noises in the Old Town, and that it was bad when friends came to listen to real civilised music and broke their ears with animal noises from drunken Ibrahim and his monkey friends.



"Oh, master, oh effendi!" I cried "I tried hard to play civilised music, but that Juma made a trap for me."

I told him all that had happened to me, though of course I said nothing about the girl.

"That is how it was, effendi," I told him. "Now I must give back your guitar. I do not deserve it. I must manage with my own music."

When I said that thing, my master's heart softened.

"Oh, never mind the guitar," he said. "I don't want it. And as for what's happened, we'll forget it this time. I guess jazz is just not for you."

"Thank you, effendi, thank you!" I said with happiness.

"But mind now! You tell your friends, no more of that noise round here, not on my jazz nights. And not unless they grow up and learn what rhythm means. It beats me what you think music is for! Off to bed now!"

"Yes, effendi, thank you very much effendi, goodnight effendi!" I said, and I said this thing very loudly, because I thought I heard that cooking-pot girl giggling outside the window.

- - - -

Sid Birchby.

CONTINENTAL FANDOM 2



JEAN LINARD

Here I get a rare chance to see some Creole, not only elsewhere than in your magazine, Linard, but more important fact, in Alpha which is however supposedly written in English. I don't like the idea, of course not, as loving your Creole within the mag yourself are running only, I neatly dislike it when quoted

or evoqued anywhere else. But our godfather Jan-Jan wishes a personal column done, and anyhow you've to be introduced somewhere, besides in your wonderful BAH, MOO, ARF (all provisional).

You know how all it starts, don't you. You're a French. First, you're french and your name is Linard, or something. For a lot of forgettable years, you love imaginative and creative and attractive and distractive and such readings. That's your rights, but you've got not, under the hand, and for good reasons, what you'd enjoy to read. You're a French, ain't you; but to be a French is nothing, the funniest thing is living in France. In fact it doesn't much matter you're french, and personally you've nothing against the idea, while to be in France, is quite another fact.

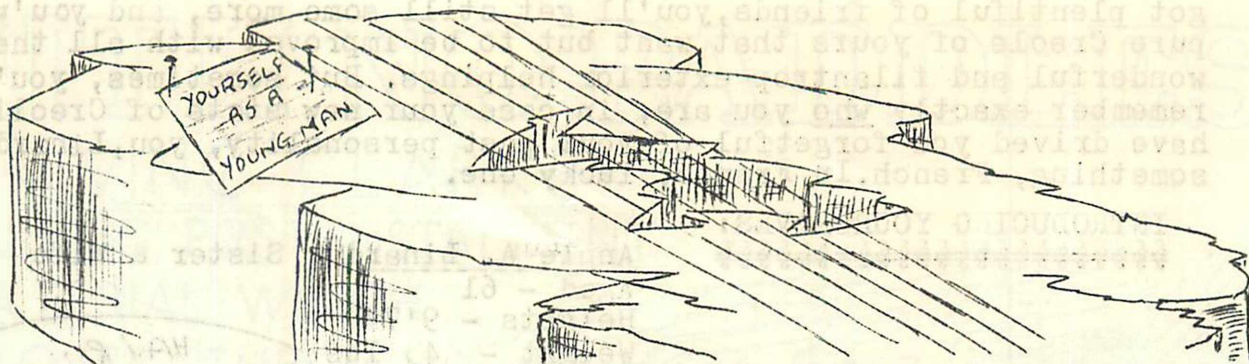
Some people edit rare french translations from novels that you love. Hardly one 50th of the original production. Two promags run some translations from stories which you love, mixed with lots of others,

and all this is rather meagre. No doubt on that: the reading matter is overseas. Well it is overseas, and after all, things could be worse: there could be not reading matters at all. The difficulties, if any, are 1^o/ getting some of those reading matters, and 2^o/ choose these that have got plenty of pictures and images in it, for the problem underbears some subtle shades of languages as, of course, you don't grasp the original tongue they spoke and write overseas. There's a slighter third point: you can try to learn their language. But naturally you're not a gifted man, you're old, and just any idea of self study is bothering you beyond any worthwhile consideration. So it is how it all starts, remember. You arrange to procure some rare comics and you begin trying to figure out, to puzzle out, to make a stab at translations, to guess out the meaning of massive chunks of Overseas' language, muddling through an occasional sentence with the help of a not-too-trusty dictionary, for this way increases the pleasure of difficulties a lot.

You're all alone. Nobody's nearby to help you. Time goes on. You grow older and older. Incidentally you happen to get some rare overseas novels. Certainly enjoyable and valuable novels, but these overseas guys didn't care to put illos nor pictures therein. Your method of taking a guess gets worn out here, and you feel more and more french, without hope for any help, when you find somewhere The Address To Write To. The guy (whatever may his name sound) hasn't an overseas name, sure, but not just he suddenly comes to send you abounding and regular letters in an apparent overseas tongue, and all of a sudden he uses to treat you just as you were his best friend for thirty years -- as you were Himself in fact, but besides he keeps on sending you some sort of pulp product stapled and oddly illustrated. The product is written and drawn in the terrible overseas language too, and the name they use for it is zine, which from the taking-a-guess method probably comes from amazine or such. Little by little, you Linard or something, are lead further and further in the field, the fandom and the first knowledge of the tongue, your 'interest' increasing just the same as vocabulary and things. From the zine, you dig out plenty of addresses of overseas people who CLAIM for you to accept benevolently other zines of theirs. Even though you don't read everything in them, you accept, and more, CLAIM for news zines, news copies, new ishes and so forth.

Time goes on; trouble, then, is you grow somewhat younger and younger but it doesn't really matter. In the meanwhile you got so absent-minded that incidentally you've married your own sister. And you begin to understand more of amazing things, among which one of the worst is you begin onto trying to do letters in the overseas language. And time keeps going on, while you get rare other books; even if they're rare, in your continent, books are books, and that is that. You come to understand more and more, although you're getting still younger each day from other. Overseas people don't always understand your letters, that is besides way you had thought of it. But they're natively indulgent: they run zines. And time goes on faster and faster. You're snowed by letters, by fanzines, by your own answers to be done, that pile up to your desk lamp. You acquit new correspondents yet. They, imprudently, even find that habit of yours interesting, and begin to speed up their rate of reply, just as you begin to slowup yours, as time gets away and as you grow childish with all that science fiction, those religion, sex, politics, racism, semantic, trade, astronomy, films, Fine Arts, and problems of internationalship they chat about in their zines.

And you start to classifying your letters according the supposed urgency. Which is the first step on the long way to delaying letters more out of habit than anything else, and on the getting-in-fandom routine.



Naturally, you keep absent-mindedly on being a french, in France, but the matter is naught now, as some delicious individuals of any sex risk their good money for you, to forward you some rare back issues of overseas promags, others fanzines and things. They come to tell you, someday, that they're beginning to understand your overseas language, thus they're improving, thanks to you, which disconcert you a lot, but they call it Creole and then you get conceited. You're a Frenchman proud to getting out of his miserable condition: You know how to write Creole. From that moment, how not to augure of yourself Linard publishing a zine in pure Creole? It appears to be the more speedy, practical and sure medium, if any, to get accustomed to the real overseas language. But will correspondents be agree with that? Won't they reproach you, besides Creolity, the lack of experience in their own field, your actually grown babyish mind? So you ask for their opinion, you Linard. Sure, the pool occurs to gather but favorable encouragements, that is what they usually say, at least, but why should you deprive yourself of such a pleasure than learning in glee? Thus you do a zine, or sort of. In Creole. You call it BAH. Or MOO. And it's free. You're not very proud of it, for reasons to be guessed above, and so you make it free. When/If people come to improve its contents with any contribution of any sort, it will sure get better, and so people will have to pay to get it, so people would have better never contribute. But now you've hope.

On the other hand you're asked, you Linard, for a personal column in an eminent fanzine of overseas language. What has your overseas language to do with this magazine? Anyway you would for sure sound still a worse sot than you happen to be, if you wouldn't use any personal column to broadcast to every fan of this eminent publication that they may get BAH (provisional) too, on a simple letter for it. Free, you precise. Remember, FREE. Owing to its bad writing, for it is however, according to you, poorly supplied with material (provisionally) and perhaps too much chattering. By the same way you take the chance on asking for any letter, even hostile, from any correspondent or/and fan 'interested' in Creole, or in whatever you could trade or do with him, or her. In your turn, you CLAIM for contribution too, and you carefully see that your address is well given under your personal so impersonal column. And you keep on screaming "Help" to people, and in reality, you Linard are a cheeky blighter to try getting acquainted with such nice folks by the means of your fairly ignoble language. For you persist upon claiming for trade, exchange of anywhats with old prozines, fanzines, any pocket-book, any back issues of Asf (even badly damaged), of MAD too, any used anthology or hard cover, although you know this is not very polite nor fair, but waiting better gestures, this will more surely lead you to possible improvements.

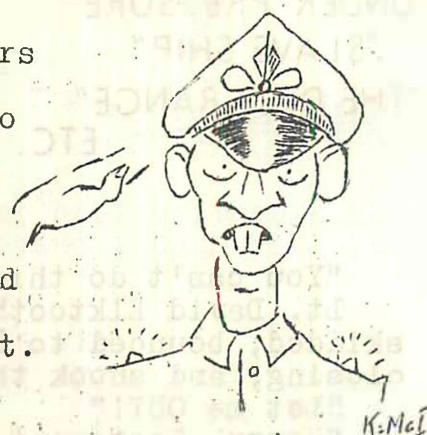
Here was the way it all started. You were a french. You were in France. And alone. And this was precisely your luck, as from now you've

Then there had been the exercises in breath-holding. He'd protested wildly, uselessly, as they plugged his mouth with putty and told him to signal when he felt the need to breathe...and he had swallowed the putty. The dreadful suspicion hit him when they gave him swimming lessons; it grew as he was put into a pressure chamber full of fish.

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He was stubborn. He had gone through five years of the toughest conditioning processes known to Man to qualify as a Space Marine. But he was also intelligent. His mother had always said so. He held out for three days and three nights, nights of sleepless tossing and turning, watching the waters of the canal gurgle redly across the porthole. Then it was forced on him. Earth needed him, needed his qualities, in space or in water. He would knuckle under for the sake of his planet. In later years men would look at his statue and remember. "Admiral Elktooth! He won the War against Mars in their own canals!"



"Let me out!" he screamed, beating on the barred door of the brig. "Let me out! I'll be an underwater spaceman!"

Four days later they let him out.

P A R T T W O

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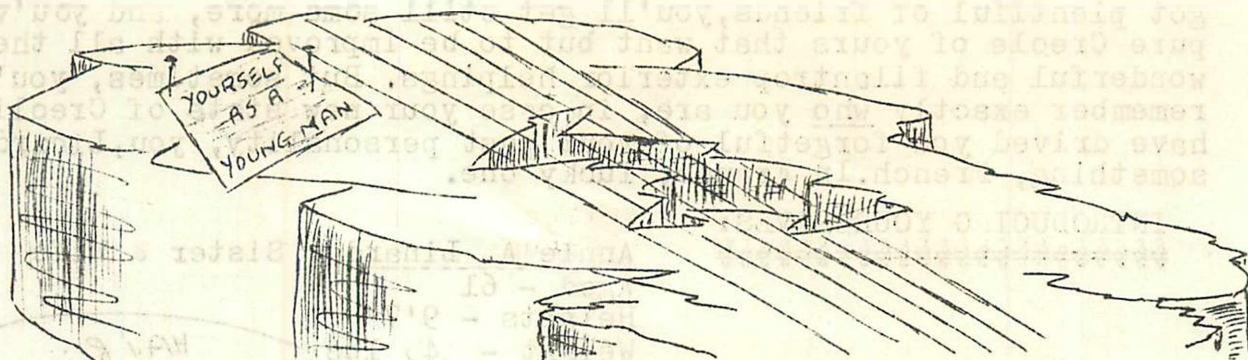
"They've probably filled you weeth propaganda about the Martians." Vrok Toosa, the Tibetan who was his messmate looked gloomily at him. "It ees not true what they tell you at the Academy. The Martians do not drink blood, for instance. Bet is only the bones they love to crunch."

David stirred restlessly, looking at the red waters slipping eternally past the port like blood pumped from a mighty heart. "Guess they tell you plenty at the Academy that isn't exactly so. How about the Martian weapons? The bubbles, for instance?"

"Oh, sure. Those, they are true. Let ees the chief weapon. They are huge bubbles, you understand, coated with oil. The submarine enters one, and falls in the air inside - bomp! Difference in pressure changes causes mechanical strain - per'aps bends if you are working outside on the 'ull. If you are near the bottom, the submarine might break open."

"But they're licking it?"

"Oh, sure. We shoot the bars of soap. The oil is dispersed, the bubbles burst - woosh! The Martians, it is said they mix puncture-



Naturally, you keep absent-mindedly on being a french, in France, but the matter is naught now, as some delicious individuals of any sex risk their good money for you, to forward you some rare back issues of overseas promags, others fanzines and things. They come to tell you, someday, that they're beginning to understand your overseas language, thus they're improving, thanks to you, which disconcert you a lot, but they call it Creole and then you get conceited. You're a Frenchman proud to getting out of his miserable condition: You know how to write Creole. From that moment, how not to augure of yourself Linard publishing a zine in pure Creole? It appears to be the more speedy, practical and sure medium, if any, to get accustomed to the real overseas language. But will correspondents be agree with that? Won't they reproach you, besides Creolity, the lack of experience in their own field, your actually grown babyish mind? So you ask for their opinion, you Linard. Sure, the pool occurs to gather but favorable encouragements, that is what they usually say, at least, but why should you deprivate yourself of such a pleasure than learning in glee? Thus you do a zine, or sort of. In Creole. You call it BAH. Or MOO. And it's free. You're not very proud of it, for reasons to be guessed above, and so you make it free. When/If people come to improve its contents with any contribution of any sort, it will sure get better, and so people will have to pay to get it, so people would have better never contribute. But now you've hope.

On the other hand you're asked, you Linard, for a personal column in an eminent fanzine of overseas language. What has your overseas language to do with this magazine? Anyway you would for sure sound still a worse sot than you happen to be, if you wouldn't use any personal column to broadcast to every fan of this eminent publication that they may get BAH (provisional) too, on a simple letter for it. Free, you precise. Remember, FREE. Owing to its bad writing, for it is however, according to you, poorly supplied with material (provisionally) and perhaps too much chattering. By the same way you take the chance on asking for any letter, even hostile, from any correspondent or/and fan 'interested' in Creole, or in whatever you could trade or do with him, or her. In your turn, you CLAIM for contribution too, and you carefully see that your address is well given under your personal so impersonal column. And you keep on screaming "Help" to people, and in reality, you Linard are a cheeky blighter to try getting acquainted with such nice folks by the means of your fairly ignoble language. For you persist upon claiming for trade, exchange of anywhats with old prozines, fanzines, any pocket-book, any back issues of Asf (even badly damaged), of MAD too, any used anthology or hard cover, although you know this is not very polite nor fair, but waiting better gestures, this will more surely lead you to possible improvements.

Here was the way it all started. You were a french. You were in France. And alone. And this was precisely your luck, as from now you've

got plentiful of friends, you'll get still some more, and you've got a pure Creole of yours that want but to be improved with all these wonderful and filantrop exterior helpings. But sometimes, you've to remember exactly who you are, in case your new state of Creolity would have driven you forgetful of your past personality, you, Linard, or something, French. In France, lucky one.

INTRODUCING YOURSELVES:

~~~~~

Annie A. Linard : Sister & Wife

Aged - 61

Heights - 9'7"

Weight - 45 lbs

Hairs - dark violet

Eyes - Pure blue

Profession - Anathesist

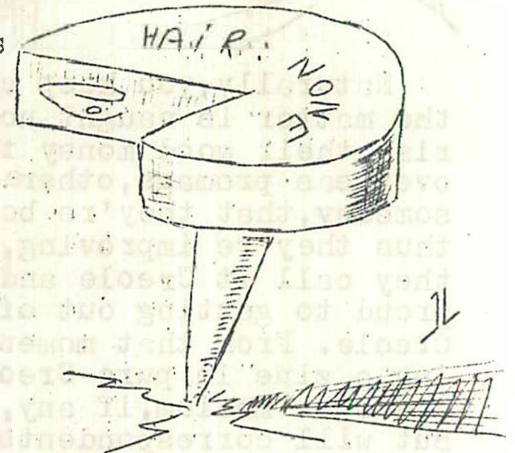
Regional accent - shade of Vosges stress

Hobbies - your hair. Sleeping. Reading. Study of English and Italian. Insane literature. Cinema. Getting photos, old ones.

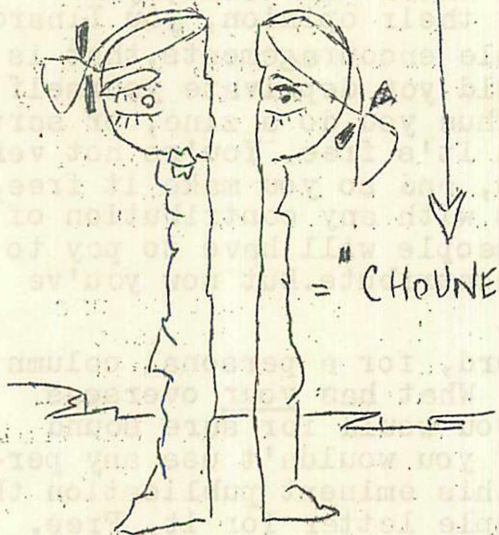
Birthday - 30th of every June.

Smile - Frank

Aversion - Any spiders



ANNE + MARIE =



Jean J. Linard: her brother, though her husband, or her husband though her brother.

Height: 0 km, 00169

Tons: 0,095

Hair: none: convertible wig

Eyes - Pure blue (more about your eyes in BAH)

Craft - Anesthisied

Regional accent - mimetic, sort of.

Hobbies - None, except for Foto, painting, magnetic spires, complete tape-recording, guitar, beautiful songs-making, pure jazz, (all sorts), all sorts of pretentious literature the most stupid the most interesting, strong preference upon movies' poor scripts, phenomenologies, and applicable epiphenomenologies, improvement of Mankind, fonetic, everyday's life languages.

Birthday: no born individual.

Smile - special.

Aversion - indistinct ones.

Your address is (Annie & ) Jean LINARD

24 rue petit

VESOU

Hte Sne

FRANCE

CONTINENTAL PUBLICATIONS (FAMILY OF)

MEUH - VINGTKAT - SFAIRA - ALPHA

CONTACT - TIOT - FANJAN -

DISTANT COUSIN:

VOID



# WITH NO PADDLES

A VINCE CLARKE'S

THRILLING FIRST INSTALMENT

OF A SERIAL WHICH

EXPLORES THE

BRAND NEW

WORLD

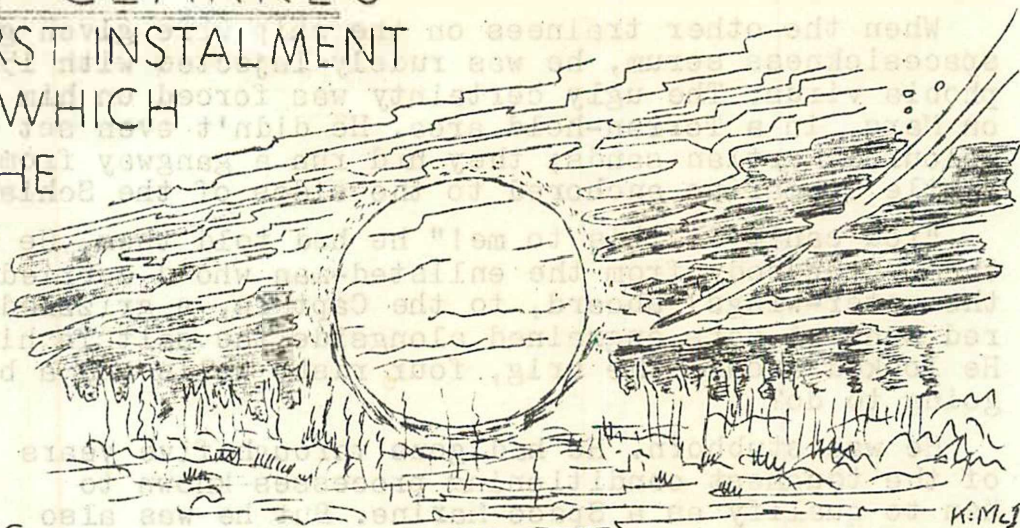
OF

"UNDER PRESSURE"

"SLAVE SHIP"

"THE DEEP RANGE"

ETC.



## PART ONE

"You can't do this to me! Ouch!"

Lt. David Elktooth, U.S.Space Marine, hit the floor of the brig, skidded, bounced to his feet, reached the door too late to prevent it closing, and shook the bars frantically.

"Let me OUT!"

"Sorry, Lootenant."

"You don't understand. It's all a mistake .. a terrible mistake."

"Commander's orders, Lootenant."

"I shouldn't be here at all... cooped up in a leaky, stinking tin can..." David realised he'd made a mistake. The faces of the enlisted men in the escort froze, and with smart about-turns they stalked up the echoing metal corridors.

David sank on the brig bunk and rested his throbbing head in his hands. When the brass at the Space Academy had told him that he'd been seconded to the tough Navy Arm, on a top-secret mission, he'd naturally thought that it was to the Space Navy Fleet that he was posted, guarding Terra against possible Martian hit-and-run raiders. Now that the War had been carried to the surface of Mars itself, the enemy was desperate.

The feeling of pride, of being singled out from the other cadet officers for an extra tough assignment had stayed with him as he had marched aboard the Luna ferry and through blast-off. It had sustained him during the stomach-wrenching manoeuvres which ended in the transfer to Fleet Battleship EISENHOWER II a thousand miles above Grand Base in Plato.

The first cold feeling of doubt had made itself felt when they issued him with his battle-kit (Marine Active-Service-Area 23/R)... two needles and a pair of polythene water-wings.

"What the hell's this?" he had demanded of the Sergeant-at-Arms.

The Sergeant had exchanged one of his needles for one with a sharper point.

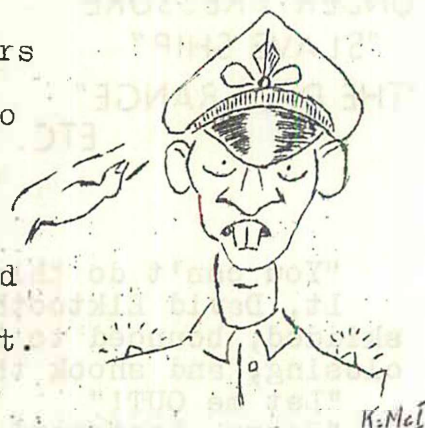


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## P A R T   T W O

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"But they're licking it?"

"Oh, sure. We shoot the bars of soap. The oil is dispersed, the bubbles burst - woosh! The Martians, it is said they mix puncture-



solution with their bubbles now, but us, we have a secret weapon aboard."

"We have?" David brightened. "What is it?"

"That I am not allowed to tell you at present." Vrok Toosa sighed. "Me, I am here to watch it. They think I make good reports. It was all a mistake. When I enlist, I tell them I spend five years contemplating my navel. They think I am a Tibetan Naval Observer. It is a peety."

"Don't get gloomy. Here, have a barbitrate. What other weapons have the Martians got?"

"Oh, they 'ave nets, the supersonic water-eater, the wave straightener, the --"



"ACTION STATIONS" blared the annunciator. "CRASH RED! ACTION STATIONS ALL PERSONNEL!" A siren wailed eerily somewhere in the ship. "ENEMY SUB AHEAD. ACTION STATIONS!"

David found himself jammed under the mess-table, three men on top. The sub tilted crazily, racing for the bottom where the Martian radar-sonar would be confused by irregular masses of silt washed from the desert. The lights flickered, and somewhere a series of detonations shook the ship.

"They shoot the soap" hissed Vrok Toosa's voice in his ear. "'Ave your needles ready. If the 'ull breaks and you are caught in an oil bubble..."

The sub lurched, dropped sickingly. "WE ARE IN AN ENEMY BUBBLE" shouted the annunciator. Metal groaned and creaked. "OPERATION WASHDAY! FIRE TUBES EIGHT THROUGH TWELVE." More detonations.

"The secret weapons!" Vrok Toosa dragged David to his feet, hurried him to porthole. "You help me watch!"

"What the hell is happening?" demanded David. The port was a crazy kaleidoscope of red and white.

"The torpedoes, they contain secret powder discovered from ancient history. Called detergentry; will act upon oil...aaah!"

The submarine hissed through water again, oddly pink and bubbling water. "We're free!" shouted David. "We're ..." A twisting lurch, the scream of tortured metal. Forward, the racing engines died; the floor heaved and David went sprawling. Two people trod on him, and someone put a foot in his mouth. He wrenched free; somewhere, he heard Vrok Toosa's voice, calm amongst the pandemonium. "The detergentry has affected the lubricating of our own engines... they are seized up..." Someone else trod on him in the semi-darkness. In a burst of anger he grappled with the figure. It hit back at him with surprising vigour, tried to stagger away. Davide reeled dizzily; in that moment of contact he had felt two protuberances near its chest...a woman! No women were allowed on the sub; it must be a Martian fighting female, one of the beautiful spies he has read of in the SPACE ACADEMY JOURNAL!

He dove, caught the other near the door. They rolled over in a confusion of arms and legs; a lashing blow struck the side of his head and pain lanced across his eyes. Then his fist connected solidly and the other slumped.

Swaying, David knelt across the figure, trying to see through the





bloody haze over his eyes. The annunciator was bellowing again, but the noise of shouting men, explosions and the thunder of more detergent torpedoes drowned the sense. Someone who must be Vrok Toosa was cursing in staccato Tibetan monosyllables at his side.

"Vrok! Vrok! I've caught a spy. A female! Look for me! Is it "Passion-Queen" Pzychovana, red-haired temptress of the Southern Ice-Cap?"

There was an uncanny silence; the whole ship seemed to wait for a breathless moment on Vrok Toosa's reply. It came, and even years of navel contemplation could not keep the tremor from his voice.

"My friend. Eet ees the Captain wearing his water-wings."

### PART THREE

"You can't do this to me!"

Cadet David Elktooth, US Space Marine, hit the floor of the brig, skidded, bounced to his feet too late to prevent the door closing, and shook its bars frantically.

"Let me out! It was all a mistake. Let me out."

NOT

TO BE CONTINUED

A.V. Clarke

# LONDON

## EET SEPTEMBER EES

### 6, 7, 8 & 9

# KINGS COURT HOTEL

LEINSTER GARDENS

BAYSWATER

B+B 20/- PER PERSON PER NIGHT  
LUNCHEON 4/6 DINNER 6/6

CONVENTION MEMBERSHIP. 7/6  
ENTRANCE FEE 7/6

ALL BOOKINGS MUST GO THROUGH

TREASURER

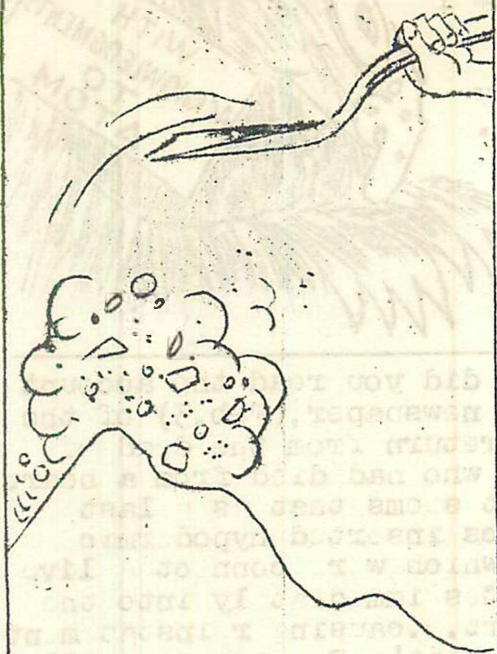
BOBBIE WILD  
204 WELLMEADOW ROAD  
LONDON SE.6

CHARLES DUNCOMBE  
82 ALBERT SQUARE  
LONDON E 15

I'LL BE THERE, HOW ABOUT YOU?



Jan said to fill in this space ....O.K! Don't go away.... I'm doing my ~~da~~ best ... be through in a minute!



...Er, Letter Column... what Letter Column? Oh yes! I remember now.. Writing with words and stuff...from people who think that ...or do not think that ...or think.. or don't think...or suggest...or don't care a damn ...or love you and your 'zine ...or love you and don't care very much for your 'zine ... or love your 'zine and hate your guts...or have something to say, and say it... or have nothing to say, and say it ...or ... eh? who? well don't bother me with it right now, cantona see I'm busy? Put him to bed in the next column ....what's that?..Too much for that space?well tell him to button up a bit..keeping on like that, just who does he

NUTS  
TO  
YOU  
FANDOM'S  
ANSWER TO  
EINSTEIN  
K=  
MCI

I'm THROUGH !!

What else can you expect from such poor construction?

...But now that I'm here I realize that I can't stay very long. This space-filling is pretty thirsty work, I think perhaps he's on page 45 Who? Why Mpenzi of course, whoja think I meant?

Isn't he the guy with all the booze?

Before I go, I must warn you to be sparing with the banana bheer for two very good reasons. Firstly, Sid says it's % terribly potent, and secondly, there can't be such a lot left after last Saturday night! So I must hurry! Maybe if I took along a buckshee shirt .... or perhaps some insecticide..... Ah well! Over now to page 45.



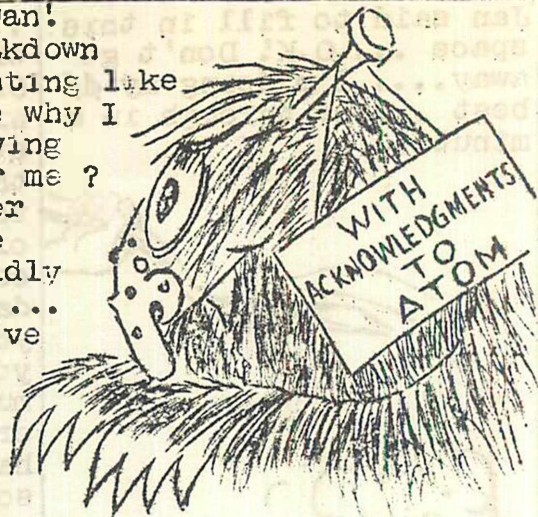
The space below is reserved for Jan to swear in; couldn't think of a nicer place...y'see, it's soundproof! Poor feller..I guess he's been quite harassed of late...what with looming deadlines, impending breadlines and inevitably, receding hairlines..it seems that all he needs now to

ensure that he's garliated for good.... is something like this!....Which reminds me: Just what DOES happen to fen who disappear? Everybody knows that old soldiers fade away but this is ridiculous! Could there be the nucleus of a ...Hm.m..... By-the-way, How do you grind frost?

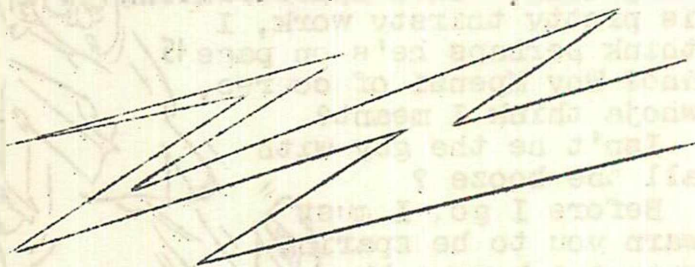


Not you...you fool, get back to Eyesix....G'wan!

Isn't it enough that J.J. has a nervous breakdown already without all and sundry B.E.M. boo hunting like mad! 'Tho' come to think of it, I don't see why I am expending such solicitude in this undeserving direction ... after all; what's J.J. done for me? He's the most delightfully vague bod I've ever nearly encountered, and brother!...is this some distinction! Why, even the runners up are wildly and devastatingly frustrating! Y'know what.... He suggested this layout just to (he says), give me an idea....the only idea worth a gold-braided damn that has occurred to me to date is the one I shall put into operation immediately this goofel is done: I shall go out and buy a Luger mit a plentiful zooply ovf der ammunition!



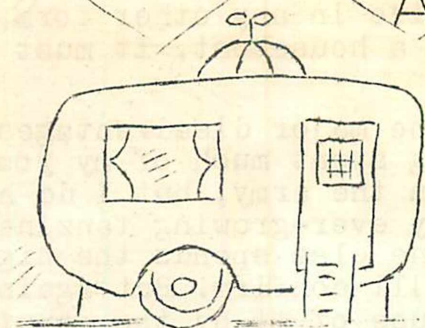
By-the-way, did you read the account in a Sunday newspaper, (Feb.3) of the remarkable return from the dead of an American who had died from a heart attack? It seems that as a last hope, the docs inserted hypodermic needles to which were connected live electric wires immediately into the stilled heart...causing reinstatement of the life beat! The man is still alive!! It will recalled that the films 'Frankenstein to:' (Karloff & Clive) 'The Electric Man' and 'The Indestructible Man', both Lon Chaney Jr; contained the theory that electricity was indeed the spark of life. Could be this experiment will change the present concept of life and death.



....and now a word from T.J. above. No, Not Terry Jeeves, but our old palsy-walsy Tank Jetson. The word: "O.K. youse guys! ALPHA'S out and so'm I...so watch it! I'll get da bum who fingered me if it's the last thing I do. Some er youse punks don't know me yet...but ya will..ya @&!! ya will! So they figgered me for tn' patsy.. hub? O.K.O.K....so that's salright! but youse just wait till September 6 - 9 at The Royal Hotel, Russell Square.

Y'know....I said some pretty uncharitable things about J.J. back there...and now, after due consideration, in which the mental image of him appears before my 'mind's eye' as a benevolent, altruistic and .. efficient entity, I'm forced to conclude that what I said back there... .... is true!





# ARCHIE MERCER'S

## THE SHORT

## SHORT

## CARAVAN \_

When I was about thirteen, we went and lived in a caravan for a couple of years. There were five of us - two parents, two boys and a small dog. Myself and my brother went to boarding school for three quarters of the year, admittedly, and in the summer they used to dump us outside in a tent (an existence I loved). But during the colder holiday-seasons, when we were all cooped up together willy-nilly, treading on each other's toes the whole time, the result was something that I cannot in all honesty recommend as the ideal way of life.

However, I still liked the idea on principle, and for just one or two people who don't require a lot of extra lebensraum it somehow seems the obvious choice. So when I got fed up with living in digs, I looked around till I found this one. A move I've never regretted for an instant.

I own the thing myself, of course. If you rent one owned by somebody else, the convention is to pay through the nose for the privilege. I'm not talking about holiday sites - genuine living sites as well. The owner may well expect five pounds a week or more - and, the housing shortage being what it is, he gets it, too. I'd certainly place the letting of caravans for hire in the racket class. If you can buy a couple of vans for, say, five hundred pounds apiece, and find a site the local council will let you keep them on for living in, you're made. Even if you only ask two pounds per week apiece - which as caravan rents go ranks practically as a free gift to the occupant - you'll have entirely recovered your original capital after five years. Very nice - for the owner. But if you own your caravan yourself, it costs you only a few shillings site-rent per week, no rates (they're levied on the site-owner, not you, though of course you contribute indirectly through the rent), and you're sitting pretty. Technically you can be turned off the site at short notice - but in practice the only people you have to fear in this respect are the local councils, not the site-owners.

In Britain, I should say, the majority of caravan residents are young married couples waiting till they can get a house. They don't care for the caravan life on principle - they'd get out tomorrow if they could, but in the meantime their (rented) caravan is the lesser evil. They're eager to barter the extra housework involved in larger accommodation for the room it gives them to spread themselves. Others live in caravans because they have mobile jobs. Unless they can live "on the job" though - like circus people, rural road-repair gangs, etc. - their existence is rendered difficult by the aforementioned councils, who love setting limits to the number of caravan-dwellings in their area, and do so at every conceivable opportunity. It is not, therefore, always easy to find a semi-permanent site where one wants to. The "hard core" - people like me, who live in a caravan from choice - is relatively small, and mainly restricted for obvious reasons to single people and childless couples. Even there, it isn't



necessarily a case of never wanting to live in any other form of accommodation. Personally, I'd rather live in a houseboat. It must be the rock-and-roll that gets me.

Lack of space is, of course, one of the major disadvantages of caravan life. I'm used to it myself, having spent much of my younger days at boarding school and afterwards in the army, but I do have difficulty in accomodating such things as my ever-growing fanzine collection in accessible positions. When someone else spends the night here, things get really interesting - as Jan will confirm. But again, it's not so much the LACK of space as the misuse of it by the manufacturer. A caravan, generally speaking, is designed to suit the manufacturer. He's all right - he doesn't have to use it. Some are of course better-designed than others, and mine happens to possess what is surely one of the most useless designs of all time. Next time you see a streamlined-looking caravan on the road (or anywhere else, for that matter) don't admire it for its beautiful curves - think rather of how very much more convenient it would be for those inside if they could have the use of the extra volume of space those curves deny one. Not to mention the impossibility of having the interior rearranged when the floor at the ends - when the beds or something are removed - reveals itself as a gentle (and nonsensical) curve. Lockers usually abound around the walls- I've got eight of them, whitewashed by the previous owner and the blasted stuff still flakes off continually, no matter how often it's brushed down - even washed. Yes, lockers - but not QUITE the right shape to hold ANYTHING in particular. They do - have to - but it's awkward. I can't imagine what the designers thought one'd want to put in them. There's no space to put dishes, for example. Or a water-container of any description. (You have to create your own space for that.) Alongside the wardrobe there's a row of shelves. Nice big deep shelves - with a nice ridge along the front of each one so that it's impossible to dust it out properly. Of course, I can't in all fairness blame the manufacturer for failing to foresee that his product would one day contain seven hundred gramophone records. But I can blame him for the beds. The space under the beds is extremely useful to put things. But when it can't be got at without lifting off all the bedding AND a heavy and awkward spring-mattress-divan-bottom effort first, its usefulness is largely nullified. So the things go on top of the bed instead. Not the records - they go in a thing I had specially built. It stands in a space the designer didn't allow for, assuming instead that a four-berth caravan would need four accessible berths. I have only two - the others lean against the wall and gather dust in their innards.

Of course, this isn't universal. Some vans have pull-out drawers beneath the beds, special dish-holding lockers, built-in water-tanks and all that. As I say, mine just happens to be worse designed than most - that's all. It's still better than a room in some mundane type landlady's house.

The mod.con. angle is of course up to the individual occupier. I have mains electricity in mine, with bottled gas for cooking, and a water-powered 'frig'. (Evaporation principle.) The water I fetch from a tap - though some vans on the site have it piped right inside (and pay for it, of course.) Plumbing is up to the site. Once I used to empty my sewage straight into the Thames, up here the council collect it faster than I can supply it. Caravans, being small spaces, are very easy to keep warm (Ellis Mills differs with me on that point.) Having thin roofs, they are in summer very difficult to keep cool, which is



perhaps more to the point. The answer would seem to be - in summer, camp out in a tent.

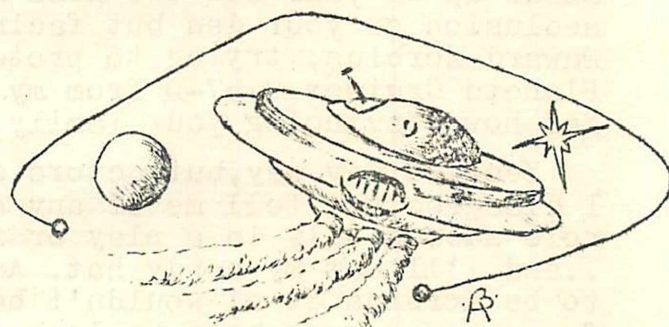
One final question is the matter of mobility. Strictly speaking, a caravan to qualify for the title has to be mobile. Even though it may spend years and years on the same site until it eventually grows into the ground so to speak. Mine is mobile. I've proved it - by moving it. Not once, but twice. After spending a couple of years on the banks of the Thames I hired a car (plus driver, natch) to tow it to Lincolnshire. We unshipped it from its stilts, dug it out of the resultant pit, packed the outhouse inside it, and were away. That night I was in Lincolnshire, a functioning establishment. The next day I got the outhouse back up - proving that THAT was mobile, too. It blew down that night, of course, but such things are only to be expected. Eventually I did another flit, four miles along the road from Swinderby to Hykeham. And here I've stayed ever since, in the metaphorical shadow of the nearby Malleable Iron Works. But if ever the time comes for me to once again shift the Mercatorial base of operations, you can be pretty sure that the old hulk will be rolling along behind as merrily as ever.

Unless maybe somebody starts a fannish houseboat colony somewhere.

Archie Mercer.

# YET

by ERIC  
BENTCLIFFE



On The Lakeside Looking In... and what do I see... water? Yes, of course there's water and when the water stills, the fish to roost. There are reflections.

The thoughts running through my mind are cast and pictured on the silvery mirror below.

Thoughts of the other night when I went to see FORBIDDEN PLANET, and thoroughly enjoyed the very excellent photography and effects but bemoaned the acting, just as I usually do after seeing a science-fiction film. It seems to me that the one big fault with all the s-f movies so far has been the fact that the actors involved just can't bring themselves to believe in the parts that they are portraying. In fact, I think the only s-f production of any kind that I have yet seen in which the characters really came to life, was the BBC TV presentation of "1984". There's a reason for this I think, "1984" is 'in character' with the present day, although it's set in the future there is nothing 'fantastic' in it.

An actor can get the feeling of a part when he knows that such



things as the author portrays have actually happened. We haven't yet had a Big Brother of course, but we have had his prototypes (Hitler, Stalin, etc) and the mores of 1984 have existed in the past... not all together perhaps but they have existed. About the only 'futuristic' thing in 1984 are the Telescreens and these are such an obvious extensions of today's facts (don't anybody write in and say 'but they already do exist'... I know they do but apart from us folk with a yen for new developments I doubt that many people do) that they are comparatively easy to believe in.

It's not easy to believe that you are Edward Morbius on a planet several billion light years distant from Earth, and that you are the only survivor (apart from beautiful but not so dutiful daughter) of the United Planets ship Bellerophon, on a strange and alien world. As Walter Pidgeon had to do in FORBIDDEN PLANET. I've a fair regard for the Pidgeon acting ability but in this film he was about as convincing as a South Sea Islander taking a bath in the arctic and shouting "this is lovely". You could say this Pidgeon is a homing bird and performs better in his own coop. But personally I don't blame him too much for the inadequacy of his portrayal of man-turned-Superman-Morbius, nor the other actors in the piece for their equally unconvincing performances. It's just about impossible to really believe in a character who's not only light years distant in space but several centuries distant in time too. It is relatively easy to imagine that you yourself are the principal character in a novel in your own mind...but just you stand up on your own two hind legs in front of the family, or in the seclusion of your den but facing the mirror, and say to yourself "I am Edward Morbius, trying to protect my daughter and the men of the United Planets Cruiser C-57-D from my own Id". Then read a few lines and just see how convincing your family or your mirror thinks you are!

Yes, you may say, but actors should be able to overcome this difficulty I disagree, you tell me of any actor who has succeeded in portraying a role successfully in a play or film based outside human experience—so far...and I'll eat my candy hat. Any actor who could really believe himself to be Morbius et al wouldn't be able to play more than a couple of performances a year, he'd be locked up too much of the time in an asylum.

Think too, of the difficulties of portraying such a role in front of a doubting audience (if theatre) or cameraman/director/scene shifters/visiting celebrities (in the case of movies). The atmosphere wouldn't be as conducive to a fine realistic performance as if you were acting something 'shared' by the lookers on. To make it simpler, let's take a film a little less far-fetched than FORBIDDEN PLANET. Let's take just any old film involving Flying Saucers.

Can't you just imagine our actor working up a fine sweat of concentration preparatory to giving forth with his all and a cameraman clapping him on the shoulder and saying 'look Mac, you don't really believe in those things, do you?'. Or the resigned expressions on the faces of the cast out of camera range as he welcomes the aliens to Earth. Or even, the disbelief that leaps into his face when the gorgeous Blonde Ruler of the Saucer People asks him to come and see her etchings.

I don't think we are going to get believable acting in science fiction films until the subject matter becomes fact. Not without hypnotic treatment for the actors first, anyway.

The ripples...water stirred by an embryonic wind, stillborn...die out. Another reflection....

(next time around.)

Eric Bentcliffe



# LAST PAGE

18.2.57



Dear Jan,

I hope you will like the enclosed drawing I had Bill Harry do on stencil. It is supposed to be you studying the effects of the latest Alpha on the world. Personally I think he did a wonderful job.

I guess a word of explanation is necessary here. As you should know best of all, I haven't been doing much letter-writing lately, and especially I have neglected commenting on fanzines. But your mag (and thanks for the advance copy) presented me with a godgiven chance to see a letter of comment in print, before anyone else comes in with a better one. What the heck has happened to your paper though? The first couple of pages are the usual ALPHA stock, and then you switch to a

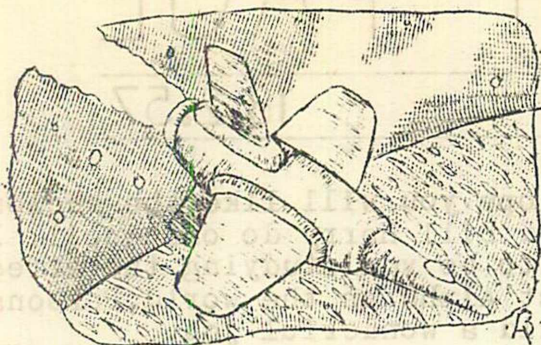
new sort which although whiter, isn't a faned's ideal for duplicating. You'll lose some of your plumes that way (§ I thought they'd be feathers§) after everybody's been saying how well-produced A usually is. Unless you get it much cheaper, I can't make out why the change... (§ It's not only cheaper, it's the only reasonably priced stuff I could lay hands on.§) On some of the pages the drawings which would have come out marvelous otherwise have suffered from being presented on this light weight paper. And art-wise - I must say you've done quite a good job on the mag. Variety - and excellent work from the people there.

Did you really run that contents page off way ahead of the rest of the issue? And where's Ken Bulmer? OK, so you run to 36 pages already and don't want to overdo the size, which with all your other commitments I'll readily grant you....but leaving out Ken??? (§ Yes, the contents page went off in early January, and has earned this issue the nickname of "Blackmail n° 1".§)

Your statements elsewhere indicate that the cover is dated a bit anyway. Bi-monthly indeed! It's been nine months hasn't it? Though you do have a tremendous backlog of excuses stacked away ready for instant use when someone starts accusing you of tardiness. Why don't you write an editorial about it - most fans will greet you as an exciting new fiction writer who manages to put a fascinating quality of true-to-life detail in his stories. For honestly, if I didn't know you better, I'd begin to doubt the whole sordid drama myself. But then, it did get spread over fandom fairly thoroughly, didn't it? Most fans should have read about it by now, and though some still aren't certain as to whether Belgians have their femurs in their shoulder someplace, they'll have caught the essential details of disablement.

So this is the Dean Grennell article you've been holding back so long. Nice of Bob Brees to type it up for you. There are some errors or typos there, which shouldn't be done to a nice guy like Dean, but I guess he won't be too fussy this one when you've told him Bob is one





of the local fans, and this is a first-aid service to accidented fans.

Six pages of Ambrosia certainly isn't the regular fare for us, and we'll have to get some fish and chips (§ chocolate and eggs?§) to conserve our strength - and I doubt whether you gave full attention to the pay-or-else discussion. But yes, with the letters all over the place except where they should be (in the A file) the time to sort them out would be enormous. Why don't you relax and dream up a new filing system that will keep each and every letter in its department. So that

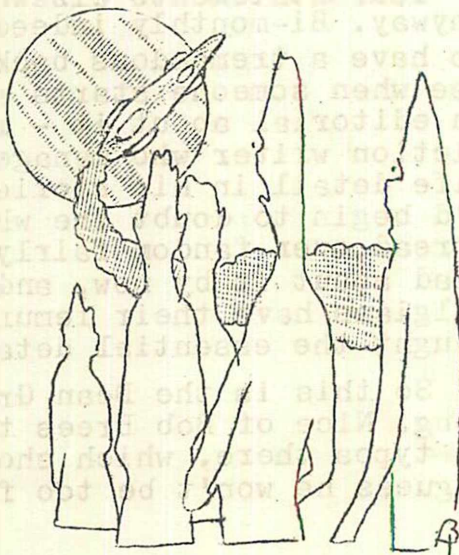
when you need letters on Alpha, a flick of the thumb will get them out the same applying to your other sundry publications. With of course separate partitions for the various discussions, or comments on the different items and authors. You could dispense with some, for instance Jack Williams. His review is well-written, it reflects his opinions in a well-defined way (not the doubtful sort of stuff where reviewers seem to be uncertain about their own opinion of a book) but as is usual with this serious type of material it won't draw many comments, so no separate section.

Sid's story should cause consternation in some places after your mention that you didn't want to run fiction anywhere. But this is fiction surely. Though of course it's entirely different from the usual type found in fanzines. That is probably the reason why you ran it, but what reply are you going to give to people who want to know about Clarke's serial? (§It's too damn good to miss out!§)

And how come you introduce Jean Linard after the need for introduction has passed? (§ It was intended to be in the issue that would immediately have followed that June '56 one. And it would in all probability have beaten Jean to the draw, too. But it did pose a sore problem re editing. Should I have edited out the errors, or should I keep the Creole flavour? I have run it this way, only editing out what were obviously typos, as a sort of monument to be best new fan of the past year. §)

You are going to get your knuckles rapped when Bobbie sees your Loncon advert. Didn't you know that lunches are 5/6 at the King's Court Hotel? And that you'll be causing many fans to go short on food advertising it at this cheap price, because they didn't bring enough cash with them? (§ I already suffered this fate after last issues CONTACT went out. Now I know where the 'Wild' comes in. §)

This is a crazy way to do a column, with all sorts of divisions on the page. Tell Ken to clean his typewriter keys next time around though. But add to the letter all sorts of praise, you don't want to loose him as artist, just for that little criticism, and he sure done a fine job on the illos thish.





I assume that Archie's article is a sort of logical result of Athey's letter last time. The title alone denotes its connection. But in all honesty, how many fen will remember that far back? It is a nice exposé on caravan life though, and the description of the cramped space forces me to repeat your often asked question: How does he manage to play at OE for OMPA in that caravan of his???

Surely you don't agree with Eric's statement that we won't be getting good sf on the screen, until such time as it isn't sf anymore? I'm looking forward to what others think about this aspect of the films we've had so far.

The worst grumble about Alpha is the one that should please you most. Where the heck is Jan? Sure you've got Last Page - and one or two lines in the letter column - but it isn't enough. You're losing touch, boy. And I must admit that the idea was tops - but it didn't come off quite as good as you'd hoped, did it?

Yours,

*Jan.*

P.S. I've been hearing all sorts of rumours about a drastic change in your spare time activities...or to be more correct...in the time available! Is there any truth in this? I mean to say, we know that Rosa's had a terribly lousy job where it concerns working hours, which had you spend most of your evenings alone. With of course plenty of time free for fanac - stencilling stuff and all that. And I guess that a change in job on Rosa's part would drastically cut into your spare time. OK. But just what is happening? Are you intending to drop out altogether (either by choice or by force?) or just cutting down a bit? Dropping the APA's to concentrate on Contact? Or holding out on your Alpha's? Heck you ought to know this interests me, and undoubtedly all the other fans around, so do drop a line won't you?

*Jan.*

(§ The rumour that I am dropping any publishing activity is to be taken with a pinch of salt. As a matter of fact, pour the whole tin or carton on it. There has been a lapse in correspondence, growing worse as time passed, which will probably be still in effect for another couple of weeks, in order to recuperate from the present lot of fanac. But publishing will go in the meantime...There has been, or rather will be, a radical change in free time, with more plotting and typing being carried on during the lunch hours (two in my case) and slightly less over the weekend, where only the Saturday will remain entirely free. Rosa is planning to change jobs this next month, but it is not yet definite, and this uncertainty, more than anything else has been the cause of lack of news from here, what activity there has been especially concentrated on getting Alpha out and seeing that Contact keeps meeting its deadline regardless of what does happen. This involves devising new methods of work, and I think I've found the perfect answer to that. However, what use saying so and so, when the next month may turn everything topsy-turvy? Let's await the big event (and don't say: calamity!) and see. In the meantime, Alpha will be around again May, probably together with the second issue of Contact for that month. Until then, all the best.§)

*Jan.*  
*WHO ELSE?*

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ME



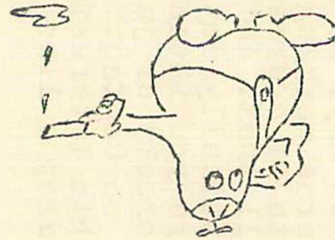
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ILLO BY LARRY BOURNE

Read Clarke's newest serial inside \_\_\_\_\_ page 23