

aug. 1055

Nº 13

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is published by Pete Campbell,
60 Calgarth Road, Windermere,
Westm., England. 6d a copy,
10¢ USA. Subs exchanged.

Art editors: GEORGE WHITING and
DON ALLEN.
Crossword editor: DEREK WILLIAMS.

meda

YE NOTICE BOARD---

GEORGE WETZEL, 5 Playfield St, Dundalk 22,
Md., USA, has for sale a set of 25
hard cover volumes of PUNCH, the U.K.
humour mag, for 25 dollars. Each vol
contains a six-month run of the mag;
they are mostly consecutive through
the 1850s and 1860s, with a few in the
'80s.

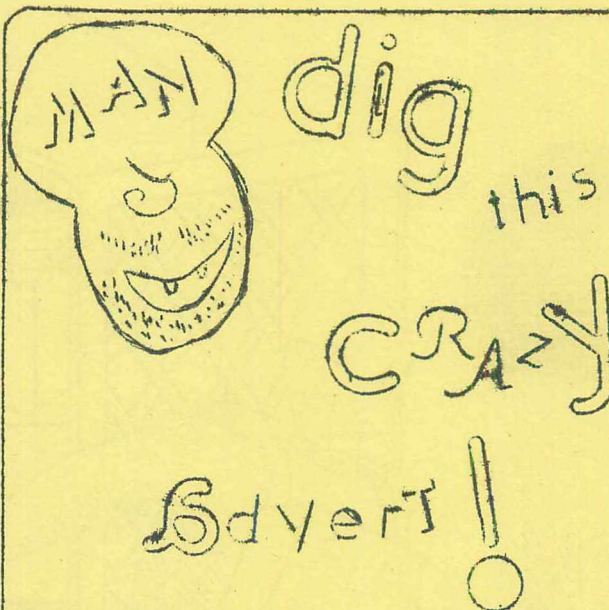
George also would like to contact Anglo-
fans with an interest in supernatural
and fantasy writers (notably MR James,
Blackwood, Machen).

LARS-ERIK HELIN, Kaggöledsgatan 8,
Gothenburg, Sweden, is a teen-ago fan
and would like contacts in the English-
speaking countries. He's active in a
group of Swedish fan-clubs.

ANDROMEDA will fold after No.14 is out.

X-WORD ANSWERS---

ACROSS: 1 rockets, 4 Jupiter, 7 continent,
8 rod, 9 log, 10 pandaw, 11 box, 12
epicure, 14 maypole, 15 inflate, 17
tallies, 20 electrons, 21 amp, 22 trio,
23 showoff, 24 UUU, 25 silence, 26
extra. DOWN: 1 revolver, 2 amiable, 3 seion, 4
tears, 5 pathway, 6 radate, 11 bro,
13 electrode, 14 metronome, 15 lapetus,
16 snowsum, 18 lost fat, 19 Neptune,
24 UUU.

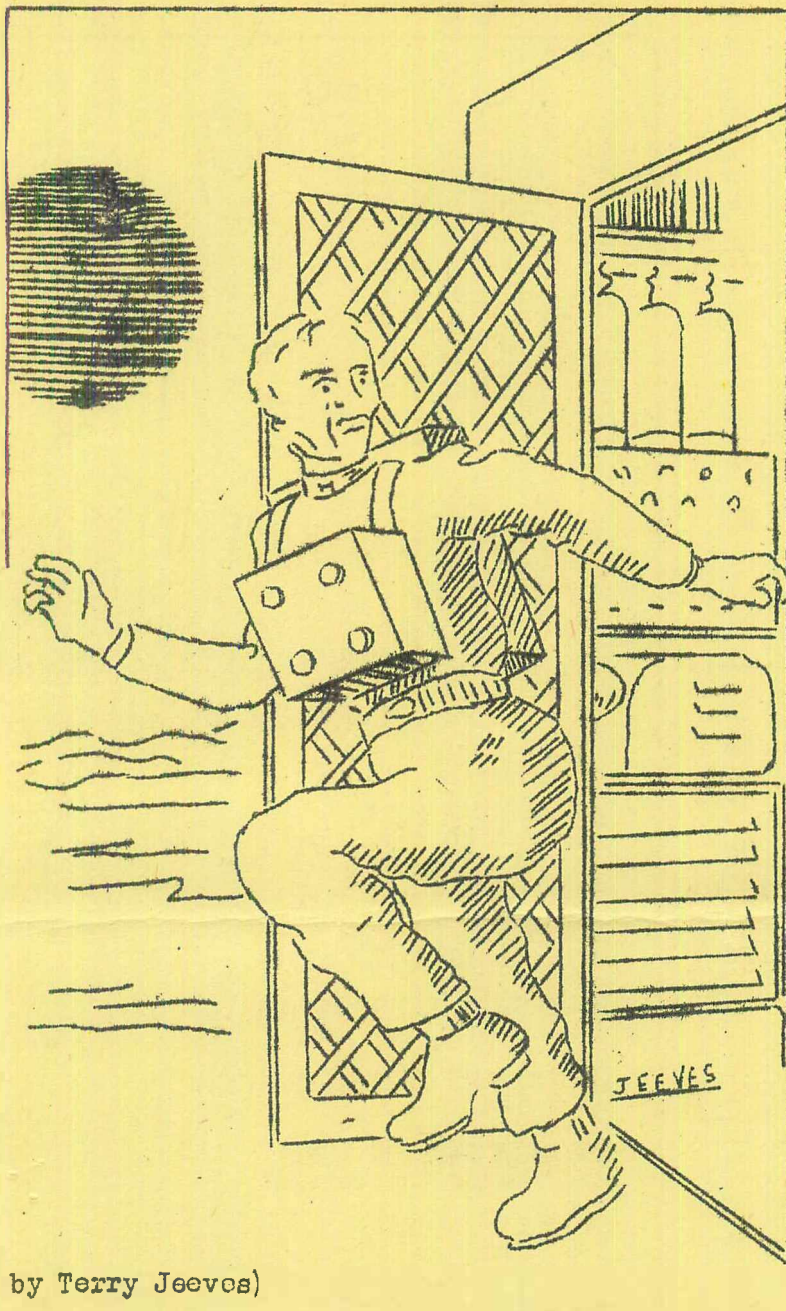


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(illo by Terry Jeeves)

Lost in Time

by TOM A. B. WHITE

IT IS THE year 2180. In the Time Travel Research Institute, Operator 69 is making the final adjustment to a new long-distance Robot machine, prior to its first trip--a leap of five million years into the future.

The institute is a magnificent and imposing pile of chromium and marble, built as a memorial to the discoverer of the time-travel principal. Over the main entrance in letters of gold are the words of his epitaph:

"From this site in the year 1980, Mark Setty disappeared whilst testing a model of his invention, the first successful time-traveling machine."

In the ground floor laboratory, Operator 69 completed the loading of the automatic cameras and stepped over to the control board. When he pressed the master switch, the machine would travel into the far distant future, remain for a few minutes, and then automatically return.

The hand of the chronometer moved to the hour and the switch was made. The robot traveller hummed as the valves warmed, and then vanished.....

Mark Setty was happy, and with cause. From a comparatively unknown and struggling scientist, his exhibition of the first successful Time Travel Machine had made him overnight the most famous person in the scientific world.

Now with an improved model of his machine, he was about to venture on a journey two hundred years into the future. The machinery was strapped to his body; although the weight was over fifty pounds he had decided upon this method as the most suitable.

As the clock struck the hour, he closed the switch. He became blind and deaf, enclosed by blackness. Only his brain remained alive. There was -- or seemed to be -- a brightly lit room, then all was blackness again.

He found himself gasping for breath and shivering with intense cold. He was standing within a metal cage, around the side of

STF X-WORD

(answers on front page)

CLUES ACROSS.

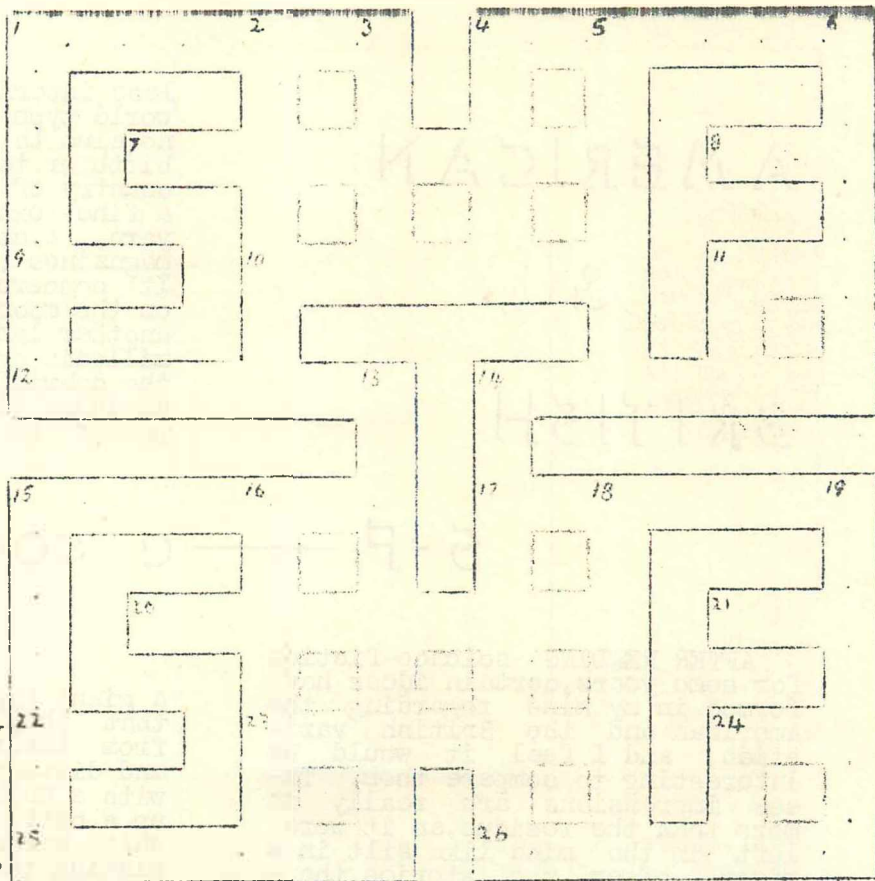
1. Propulsion units.
4. Mass 318.4.
7. Land mass.
8. Jovian beauty spot.
9. The navigator uses it.
(But not to sit on).
10. Does not provide the forestry man with music!
11. Snake.
12. Applies to either sex.
14. Ancient symbol of procreation.
15. Distend.
17. The man in the moon probably would be.
20. Atomic planets.
21. Measurement in damp weather.
22. Prefix for a crowd.
23. Boaster.
24. Yews.
25. Space is full of it.
26. Thrust out.

LOST IN TIME (continued)

which were chattering gauges and meters. Cameras whirled and hollow rods took soil samples. In sudden panic he blundered to the door and opened it, staggering out into the air.

He was on a flat, featureless plain of fine grey sand. There was no sign of life of any sort. In the black sky a huge red sun glowed dully. The world was dead. Not one drop of moisture remained, not one spark of life; no rocks nor trees, nor any remnant of man's handiwork. In all directions stretched the plain, without variation.

He sank weakly to his knees. The icy air tore at his throat, and his heart pounded with the exertion of moving a few paces. Dimly, he realised what had happened -- the machine behind him was a time-travel machine! The glimpse of the lighted room was a fact! He had arrived at his goal in the year 2180, only to be



CLUES DOWN.

1. We do it all the time.
2. Dignify.
3. Heir.
4. Ridicules.
5. "Why Pa, ta." (Anagram).
6. Stars do it.
11. Little relation.
13. Important part of a valve.
14. Moon meter. (Anagram).
15. Two million miles from Saturn.
16. Nova. (1.3.3.)
18. What the obese space traveller will have
19. $17\frac{1}{2}$ times Earth.
24. Use. done.

caught, by a sardonic twist of fate, in the field of a machine moving into the far distant future.

Weakly, on hands and knees he crawled back to the latticework door, to be greeted by silence. The meters were stopped, the valves dead. The door was fitted with current breakers as a safety device; the machine would never return.

Mark Setty gasped out his life on an Earth which had seen no human life for a million years.

AMERICAN

&

BRITISH

S-F ——— a comparison

by BOB LINDON

AFTER READING science-fiction for some years, certain ideas have formed in my mind regarding the American and the British varieties, and I feel it would be interesting to compare them. These impressions are really no more than the residue, as it were, left in the mind like silt in a river, after the stories themselves have probably been forgotten -- and are therefore not a reliable guide except to my own personal idiosyncrasies. For example, one American story may make such a powerful impression on me that hundreds of other stories with an opposite point of view may pass unnoticed.

In any case, comparing American and British s-f can be quite fruitless in some ways. Many British writers write for U.S.A. magazines, and perhaps write for both British and American publishers under different names. William Temple, John Boynton (John Boynton Harris), Arthur C. Clarke, John Christopher (Christopher Yould), Bertram Chandler (John Whitely) -- to mention only a few -- write in both with the idiom of both. Moreover, cross-fertilisation takes place; ideas are taken from other authors and expanded and much science-fiction springs from a common tradition --- Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, etc.

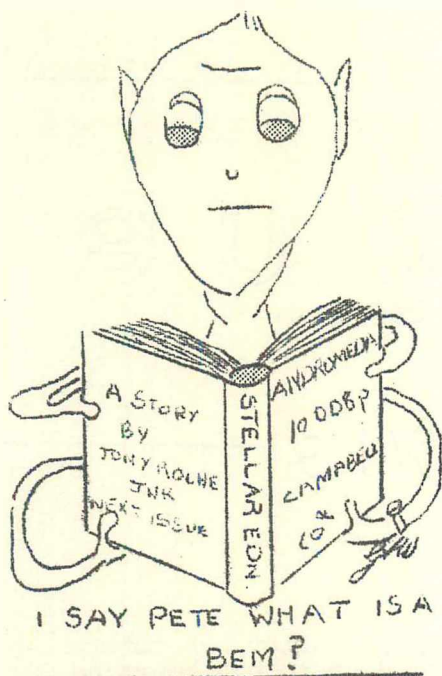
However, when all that has been said, there still remain differences. Even the British author who writes for American magazines writes in a different fashion from the native-born American. This type of author (the British writer who publishes his work in America) develops a sort of time-

less international citizen-of-the-world type of story, which gives no clue to the land of the author's birth or to any of the characters' country of origin. There is, as a fine example of this type of yarn, a story I have read in two magazines (one British, one U.S.). It concerns a spaceship landing on the moon and finding traces of another landing centuries, if not millenia ago. After turning over the debris, space-suits etc., and deciding that whoever these other people were they were certainly

a giant type, the crew realise that they could only have come from their own planet in the dim and distant past. The story ends with a member of the crew holding up a bottle with a picture of a white horse on the label, and wishing that he could decipher the script. In the American version the author merely changed the last line or two, so that the crew-member now holds up a package with a camel on the front, and wonders what was in the packet.

It is quite understandable why British authors develop this approach when writing for publication in America. American publishers would not take kindly to a hero with a British background, while at the same time the author cannot feel himself entirely at home making his hero American. This reminds me that a cartoon in PUNCH drew forth comment in an editorial in an American s-f magazine quite recently. The cartoon by Sprod evidently showed a crashed spaceship on the moon, and one spacesuited figure saying to another "Ah, well, thank goodness we still have our sense of humour." The editor commented saying that one of the basic assumptions is that a spaceship flying the Union Jack will be the first to reach the moon. He felt that this prediction may be parscos off the orbit, but he approved of the humour. Personally, I don't think that that was the artist's intention at all -- I feel the Union Jack was just another crack -- i.e. no-one-but-the-British-have-this-sense-of-humour sort of thing.

What are the differences be-



tween these national types of imaginative fiction? In the first place, American s-f is on a much vaster scale than British. Spaceships are huger, concepts are wider, journeys are greater and catastrophes are more embracing. Even the characters have generally a touch of the superman about them. Stories move along at a faster pace and violence is very near the surface. British s-f is more intimate, almost private, cosy and less savage; more concerned with the individual. America has the pioneer tradition still, and a spaceship pilot is likely to be a big, broad-shouldered giant with great hands and gentle blue eyes. The British space-pilot is often a nasty little rat trying to hide his weakness from the world.

American s-f is far more sentimental about children, women and old people; it is as if the writers have an ideal conception always present in their heads and are trying to write up to it. Yet there does not always appear to be this idealisation — Americans can be truthful to the point of brutality. A critic writing in *THE OBSERVER* said an American s-f story made him feel as if he was eating chocolate fudge mixed with bits of copper wire (Theodore Sturgeon's "Chromium Helmet" was the story). In contrast, British s-f seems almost to ignore children—although there are some fine stories about teenagers. This sentimentality and idealisation extends to women and marriage —

there is never an unfaithful wife and rarely an illegitimate child in American s-f.....although much more promise of illicit bliss. In British s-f women seem to be more feminine but almost entirely sexless. The numerous women writing s-f in America even the balance—however much the male writer insists that their women are spacehands, mechanics, pilots etc. the women writers centre their tales about the feminine interests.

Although American writers seem more preoccupied with present political and sociological problems—the machine, fear of dictatorship, hatred of communism, advertising, big business, they do seem more ready to explore other types of social organisms—anarchistic, syndicalistic and straightforward utopian. The average British author seems to miss both of these extremes, though we do get stories of authoritarian societies quite often, along with a sort of society halfway between the two—the corporation or trust form of social organism. Another critic in *THE OBSERVER* spoke of the American utopian story as a tread-softly-lest-you-step-on-my-dreams sort of yarn.

With regard to violence, both American and British authors use it rather more than I would like, but in American fiction it seems part of the action, whilst British writers use it in a controlled fashion—cruelty, as it were, instead of brutality. I can't do better than quote Alistair Cook in this respect. In his book *A GENERATION ON TRIAL* he says of the Americans "In a nation of a hundred and fifty millions of mixed blood where it often appears that sheer energy is the only specific for survival, violence is never far below the surface. In good times it explodes in its surface form of sentimentality—in bad times it finds its true level and brutality is accepted as the one sure path to power."

Finally, I am of the opinion that these two types of story are complimentary one to the other. If American s-f is too expansive, concerned more with background, British is too cautious, mostly concerned with characterisation. One acts as a foil and contrast to the other, and I only hope that the help given by the British magazines (which don't appear often enough for my liking) to the development of native science-fiction succeeds in creating even more typically British fiction.

cranoque

by BERT LEWIS

Derrick was never a talkative chap, but usually after his return home from one of his summer walking holidays so dear to his heart, he seemed ready enough to tell me some of the highlights that had made the greatest impressions.

This time, however, he had somehow withdrawn from all efforts of mine to make conversation on the subject. His face still carried the tan acquired from three weeks of Eire's sun and winds, but one thing struck me rather forcibly: under his new tan there was a drawn look of a strange nature--I could say of suppressed fear, almost as if he had aged since I saw him set out on his holiday nearly four weeks before. I also thought I could detect a few strands of white in his shock of rich auburn hair.

Somehow I felt I must find out what was behind this change in my friend. It was not idle curiosity, but rather a conviction that it would help him if he could share his burden and so halve it. And as his close friend, I felt he might tell me what otherwise might prove to be bad if kept penned up indefinitely.

It was with this objective in mind that I finally cornered him on his way home from work one evening, after we had both been detained with some work that had overlapped from the holiday period.

As he had to pass my home on the way to his, I managed to persuade him to call in for a drink. Over this I gradually brought the conversation round to his holiday. He tried to turn the subject but I was adamant.

"Look here, Derrick," I pressed, "you cannot go on like you have been doing those last few weeks. Since your holiday you have shut yourself off from everybody, and only succeeded in making yourself and all the office staff very uncomfortable."

"Sorry, Bill," he replied, "but I just couldn't bring myself to talk of the experience I have had. Although I suppose you are right; perhaps it would be better if I could tell you about it."

"Afraid I've been through a bit of an ordeal -- in fact I feel I could do with another holiday right now, to get over it!" He warmed to his subject as he talked.

"As you know, I had decided to spend this holiday walking in southern Ireland: I had even learned a few basic phrases in Gaelic to help me get along better with the local inhabitants in the out of the way places."

For over two weeks I had a marvellous time, seeing things I had before only dreamed existed, in a countryside that was a continuously unfolding vista of indescribable beauty and interest.

CRANOQUE

It was about the Tuesday in the last week. I had decided to put in as much walking as possible that day, to enable me to reach one of the main towns before nightfall. By mid-afternoon I realised that this was impossible on foot. I was descending from one of the low foothills and before me lay a small hamlet on the shores of what appeared to be a good-sized lake. In the middle of the lake was a rugged island on which was built one of the Irish cranogues or lake-dwellings. In case you may not have heard of those, they're remnants of the Middle Ages, when the nobility had to build their homes on such islands to protect their families and possessions from the wandering bands of marauders.

The difference in this case was that it was not possible to make out any definite shape of the dwelling itself, due to a mist-like cloud that seemed to cloak most of the island and reached down to the sand and shale at the water's edge.

This mistiness intrigued me no end, and with many an inquisitive glance across the water, I descended to the houses clustered along a wooded shore of the mainland. Local inhabitants were conspicuous by their scarcity, but breaking through a clump of trees I came upon a young colleen gathering wood into a bundle. As apparently she had not seen me I spoke to her.

"Good evening."

She sprang erect, looking at me as if she had seen a ghost.

"I'm sorry if I startled you, but I was wondering about the island over there," I said. She either did not understand me or was too startled to answer, so I tried again. Pointing to the island I ventured the Gaelic word "Cranogue?"

At this, the colour drained from her rosy cheeks, and then from her lips burst a stream of Gaelic.

"Oilean Cheoidh, na daoine a contonn ar oilean cheoidh. Daoine aith is eadh iad." With this outburst she grabbed the bundle she had dropped and ran like one possessed in the direction of the cottages, gasping out as she ran, "Aith, aith."

I did not know whether to laugh or run after her. I ended up by shouldering my rucksack and making my way towards the houses where the girl apparently lived, glancing towards the lake on my right, now more curious than ever. It seemed that my crude 'Cranogue' was something to do with her 'Oilean Cheoidh', but what, I was later to learn in a surprising way.

As the girl had entered one of the cottages, I decided to try the first of them. My knocking, however, brought no reply, so I travelled further down what appeared to be the main and only street. All the houses faced towards the lake. Again I knocked upon one of the doors but still without avail, although I could have sworn I saw someone move in the dim interior of a room. This was a bit disconcerting to me, a stranger, and as I walked along this little street I felt eyes watching my passage. Someone must have seen me---but someone who did not intend opening their door to me.

By this time the late afternoon was turning to the chill of evening, and I had no inclination to spend the night out of doors, altho it would not have been the first time I had done just that. So again picking up my rucksack I made my way along that strangely silent street -- strange insofar as it was devoid of the sounds one associates with the normal activities of home-life. It was as if the coming of evening had brought a cessation of all the normal sounds of village life. It was with determination therefore that I decided to try a larger house at the far end of the hamlet, one that seemed different somehow, more modern in this old-world place.

My loud knocking brought to the door a typical Irishman but one

who seemed rather out of place in this countryside; by this I mean that he was dressed differently from the local inhabitants--his suit looked as if it must have been bought in one of the large English towns, and I would say at a fairly good quality tailor's at that.

"Good evening," I ventured, in as friendly a manner as I could. "I wondered if you could possibly put me up for the night, as I'm afraid it is impossible for me to reach the next town before night-fall."

He looked at me with a twinkle in his blue eyes. "Good evening to you too mi boy; sure we can put you up, but there's no need to knock the house down to get inside of it no less." He held open the door for me to enter. "Come right in and make yourself at home. You are quite welcome to anything we have to offer." And with that remark he shut the door--rather forcibly, I thought--then fastened it with two very large bolts.

The room was reasonably large but not over furnished. In the open hearth was a fire that seemed to send a glow right to my inward parts. Two high-backed fireside chairs were placed one on each side of the fireplace; the floor was of bright coloured tiles. At one side of the room was a large carpet, and in front of the fire a thick rug.

A smallish woman entered the room from another door. She looked neat and clean and, like the man, reminded me of English things in the way she wore her clothes, and her hair-style looked as if it had been used to beauty-parlour treatment in the past.

"This is my wife," the man informed me.

She smiled sweetly. "Good evening to you." Her voice held only a trace of Irish brogue, but her face bore every mark of the Irish colleen. She began to busy herself with the preparation of the evening meal.

My host spoke again. "My name is Patrick O'Brien. You have probably noticed that I seem a bit out of place here in this village; we have only been here for three years." He seemed inclined to talk freely, and I listened with interest.

"I have lived most of my life in England. Most of my working life I was in charge of construction works. I seem to have had a good way with workmen, particularly Irish labourers. A few years ago I found an aunt had left me this house and a nice little legacy to go with it; so I decided to retire. Yes, I can see you are thinking I look young to be retiring. I am quite a way off sixty yet, but it looked too good to be wasted, out here, so here we came."

I was very pleased to find such a friendly host, so I thanked him and introduced myself.

"My name is Dorrick Forbes. It was very good of you to offer the hospitality of your home to a stranger. I was beginning to think I would have to spend the night in the woods. I had almost despaired of getting accommodation. I tried two houses higher up the road, but either there was no-one at home or they did not wish to open their doors to a stranger. You did not seem to mind opening your door to me, although I notice you keep it well barred at night, even though it is not really dark yet."

At this, Patrick's face became more serious. "To a stranger that might seem unusual," he explained, "but in Ballinashee one does not walk out much in the evenings, or leave one's doors open for anyone or anything to enter." With his last phrase, his eyes held a strange look. His face brightened up, however, as his wife brought in a large pot of steaming Irish stew.

I have never known that famous dish smell so inviting. He sig-

CRANOGUE

nalled me to draw up a chair, and for ten minutes conversation flagged whilst we set to with hearty appetites in the consumption of that homely repast.

Supper over, we instinctively drew our chairs towards the warm glow of the fire. I brought the conversation round to my arrival there. I told him of my encounter with the little Irish girl and my puzzlement at her odd behavior. Also of my interest in the cranogue. I told him of the girl's outburst in Gaelic and, as near as I could, told him what I thought she had said.

"Yes!" he exclaimed, "I should think that any one of the local people would have answered something similar to the girl. It means, 'The people who live on the misty island---oilcan cheoidh---....they are a strange people.'"

"Are the people often seen, then?" was my query.

"As far as I know, no-one living has ever seen them."

"Then why do they fear them?"

"Why do people fear ghosts, even though they may never have seen one?" I saw his point.

He continued. "In a place like this, one does not have to see something to be afraid of it but the fear can be there just the same and just as real."

"Does anyone ever go out to the island to see whom or what lives there, to find out for themselves....surely it would be quite simple to row out to the island in a boat. It is only about half a mile from the mainland."

The lines of his face became hard. "Listen mi boy, there's no boat along the whole of these shores, and if there were no one would ever dream of using it to go out to the island."

Perhaps my upbringing had made me a little more skeptical than usual about such things, so I pressed him for more details. "Has anyone ever tried to go there?"

"Well...yes." His reply came a bit hesitantly. "About ten years ago. A local boy by the name of Shamus McNally, on holiday from his college in Dublin, decided it was a lot of heathen humbug which should be settled once and for all. So one day he rowed out to the island in the only good boat in the district. He never came back... Two days later the boat was seen drifting back towards the mainland. Empty. Its owner decided it should never happen again and forthwith proceeded to break it up. No sight or sound of Shamus has been seen or heard to this day. That is why you will not see a boat anywhere along the lakeside."

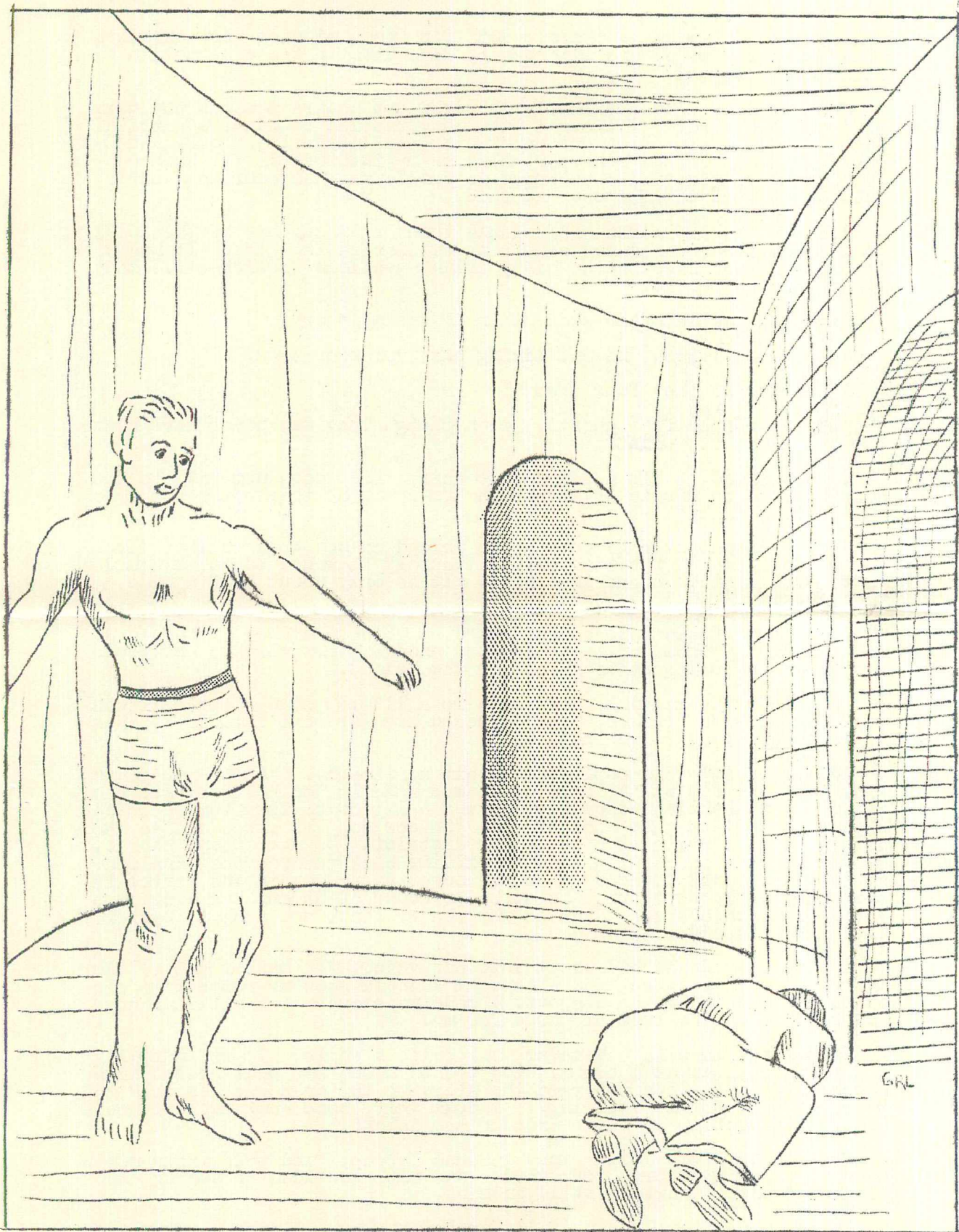
A note of sadness had crept into his voice. The matter was to him of great significance, so I thought I would show my respect to his opinion by dropping the subject. I made my excuses for a tiring day, and retired to the room prepared for me.

It was not to sleep, however, for quite a while. I, who normally drop off to sleep in a few minutes, tossed about for what seemed like hours. I just could not forget the story of the cranogue, as told to me by my host before retiring. I felt that, come what may, I would find out something of the secret of the island.

Eventually I did sink into a sound sleep, and woke early next morning feeling very refreshed---and with the idea of seeing the island at close quarters still in mind.

A fine breakfast, beautifully cooked by Mrs. O'Brien, put me in fine feeling, so voicing a desire for a walk along the lakeside,

illustration by Geoff Lewis



without mentioning the cranogue, I made my way out into the morning sunshine.

Without appearing to hurry, I made my way along the north side of the lake, away from the houses until they were hidden from view by the trees. I found myself standing on a small strip of sand. Facing me was the island, and right opposite where I stood was just visible a similar sandy slope.

I figured that, being a good swimmer, the nine hundred yards of water separating me from the island would offer no great obstacle to my plan. On dressing that morning I had put on a swimsuit under my clothes, so that it was a simple matter to divest myself of my walking rig-out and make ready for my swim. On top of my swim-suit I fastened my belt with its leather pouch and bowie-knife. This I decided to take in case I may need it for an emergency, although what form this might take I had not the faintest idea.anyhow it was there in case it was needed.

So with this light load I slipped quietly into the cold waters of the lake and struck off for the sandy shore ahead.

As I have already said, the island seemed to be shrouded in a strange mist and even as I approached its shores the mist still hung over the rocky formation. My easy approach did not bring any better view--in fact the mist seemed rather a little more dense.

I turned over on my back to see what the little hamlet looked like from that view-point. It sparkled in the morning sunlight like a jewel resting on an emerald cushion; but this was hardly the time or place for sightseeing, so I started out once more for the island.

A few minutes of strong swimming brought me within what I considered to be wading distance of the beach, but I found that I couldn't touch the bottom with my feet. I had to swim within a yard of the sand before I could do so, and even then it shelved very rapidly downwards. Once on the solid ground again, I stood up and took in good deep breaths. Then, pressing the water from my suit, I set foot on the rocky path up which I must climb before I could discover what lay at the summit of the mist-enshrouded island.

The path started from a large rock, which was worn slightly flat, either by the weather of the years or by the passage of many feet. As I stepped onto this stone, something made me turn to look once more at the little village I had just left so secretly. But to my amazement I found I could no longer see any sign of Ballinashco. In fact no land was visible at all. It was just as if I had landed on an island in the middle of a vast sea. All that I could see was the water of the lake, broken up into little choppy wavelets. It was beyond my comprehension. For a moment I had the uneasy feeling that I should have heeded the warning of those simple people and let well alone. But I think my natural curiosity was the deciding factor, although it was with mixed feelings that I turned my back on Ballinashco to make the climb to the ramparts that I felt must tower well above me.

The way up these cranogue approaches was usually in the form of steep steps in rough hewn rocks, set in the form of a zig-zag path, sometimes doubling back on itself--apparently made thus to throw off the attacking parties that must at times have attempted to make assault on these island homes, with the hope of worthy loot as a reward for their efforts. Most of the path was now overgrown with vegetation through lack of use over the intervening time since it was occupied so many years ago.

It took me nearly ten minutes to scale this rocky approach. At the end of the climb I was feeling the effects of doing such a job without the protection of a pair of shoes. Even a pair of light sandals would have been very welcome at that moment. The efforts and discomforts were soon rewarded with the sight of the summit ahead, and

it was with relief that I stepped onto grass again.

My physical relief at reaching the summit was quickly forgotten, for as I stood upright to regain my breath after my exertions, I faced in the direction of what should have been the ruins of the cranogue---at least that is what I expected to find. What I saw was something so entirely opposite to my expectations that I could only stand and gaze at what lay before me.

To say that it was alien would be to make an understatement; words could not adequately describe it. The edifice which lay before me was for all the world like a huge metal canister of box -- yet it was not nearly so symmetrical. There did not seem to be any opening, either as a window or a door. It was like some futuristic mausoleum ---or like something seen only in a vague dream. The next impression I got was one of fear, of cold unbridled terror. Only a supreme effort and an insatiable curiosity kept me from yelling in sheer funk and tumbling headlong down that stony path. But I held my ground, and with my heart pounding at my ribs, stepped deliberately but fearfully towards that strange place.

The dew-damped grass felt very soothing to my poor feet; strangely enough the grass was very short, almost as if it had been mown. Twenty yards from the point at which I had reached the summit of the path, the grass finished suddenly, as though it had been removed, as one removes turf for laying a lawn. One moment I was walking on cool grass, the next I was stepping on a stretch of sand. It felt warm beneath my foot, but it was not like walking on the sand one finds at the average seaside resort; I have never seen the like of it before in all my life, and I have been to every kind of seaside town on the whole of England's coast-line.

The sand was very fine, but not in the way that nature pounds the earth's rocks to the fine powder that we know; the only way I can describe it is to say that this kind of sand was the result of some powerful scientific processing; it may sound a bit wild, but I would say that it was like the result of some kind of atomic disintegration.

With these thoughts running through my mind, I walked slowly towards the building. I edged round it slightly, and in so doing brought myself to view it from a slightly different angle. From here I saw that on this side was a large opening.

Well, my adventure had brought me to the entrance of this place. If my natural instincts had ruled my actions at that moment, I should have hurried away. But somehow I put my fears behind me and stepped warily into the comparative gloom of the entrance.

The moment I stepped over that forbidding threshold I was conscious of a new fear. My whole being was suddenly subjected to strange vibrations. It brought to mind an occasion when, as a little boy, my father took me through the local power-station, and we entered the turbine-generator room; the throbbing of those mighty engines had made me feel queer as their vibrations filled my head with their terrific drumming. That same feeling assailed my body now, except that in this case it was from a more alien source.

As I progressed into the place, the vibrations increased. I tried to put away the feeling, but it was like trying to forget that one has toothache: it is just there all the time. I did, however, manage to keep it to the back of my mind as I progressed into the interior and tried to fathom the enigma of this place.

The floor was a continuation of the sandy ground outside the building, and was reasonably level. The walls were of some smooth hard substance, and from the interior of the fabric itself, light emanated, as though lamps were contained within each portion. When I touched this wall-fabric, my fingers encountered a hard metallic surface, cool to the touch.

I continued my slow progress along the corridor, and soon the sandy substance of the floor gave way to a hard but mat surface, so that it seemed that one could not slip---it would have been almost impossible to slide anything along that floor.

Presently I came to a bulge in the corridor -- a widening which might virtually be described as a room. Like the corridor, the room had the same unnatural illumination.

As I continued my stealthy way past the room, into the interior, the floor sloped steadily downwards; and as it sloped it turned in a gentle downward spiral. Every twenty or thirty yards there appeared a room off the corridor.

After I had passed perhaps three or four of these rooms, slowly spiraling to the right, I estimated that I should be beneath the place where I had started.

It was strange to me that there were no steps in this place, only the gently sloping floor. With this idea jolting through my mind, I realised that whatever had its abode in this alien hospice did not walk as does a normal human being. The occupants would be incapable of using steps as we would. The very thought of this made the hair at the nape of my neck stand on end.

I began to realise, too, that the terrible drumming vibrations were becoming more insistent as I progressed downwards. The thought struck a new terror in my fast-beating heart.....what strange beings was I likely to meet in this unearthly place?

At this moment terror got the better of me. I turned in my tracks and ran headlong up the slope. But after fifty yards of running I stopped as suddenly as I had started, one fact forcing its way into my pounding brain: the vibrations did not get any less as I neared the entrance! They were still as strong.....so that they must not increase the further I ventured into the interior, but the longer I stayed in this place. In other words, the fiendish pulsing was being directed at me, wherever I went, irrespective of whether I went up or down!

My natural urge was to race with all my strength for the upper air and civilisation somewhere above me. Then my curiosity again overcame my mounting terror...after all, I had come too far to return without knowing more of the inhabitants of this bizarre place. So, fighting back the growing fear within my breast, I started off back again down the gently sloping spiral, into the bowels of this weird abode.

As I made my decision to turn again down that sloping way, I could have sworn that I felt a new surge in the throbbing which permeated my whole body, as if the power that sent out that inhuman drumming were exulting at my decision. There was a note of triumph in that hellish pulsing.

So with this additional strain on my near-frayed nervous system, I stepped warily and fearfully again into the easy undulating depths.

I followed the path downwards for a good half mile; still with its glowing walls and bulging rooms, but with the air still reasonably fresh. In fact, if it had not been for that infernal throbbing I think I would have enjoyed my little adventure into that unusual underworld. But the drumming was not to be pushed aside, try as I would. I continued on down this spiral road, but against my better judgement and mounting fears.

Suddenly my searching glance brought my eyes to rest on something that pulled me up with a terrific jerk..... My common sense told me what it was that lay on the floor ahead of me, but my throbbing mind tried to make believe that my eyes were deceiving me. I stopped fearfully forward.

In that eerie illumination I stooped to touch the object. It was the huddled form of a man -- a young man, judging by the clothing; grey flannels and a sports shirt. He bore no signs of violence by being torn or damaged in any way. It was his unusual position that gave me a bit of a shock. His body was turned towards the downward-sloping path, but as though he had been moving in a backwards direction---perhaps backing away from something coming up from the depths below him. He had fallen with his head against the luminous wall.

His posture was one of crouching away from a great terror. His body was supported on his right arm, which was doubled under him, his left arm covering his head to ward off whatever threatened him. The body was reduced almost to a skeleton, but the flesh seemed to be in a normal state of decay -- it had not been destroyed by any outward force, nor had it been attacked by any insect or animal life.

As I looked more closely at the position of the body, I realised that decay had altered slightly the original poise of the arm: I would say that this fellow died with his hands over his ears, as if to shut out some dread sound that was too great to bear.

With this realisation penetrating my benumbed brain, I was again brought face to face with the fact that this vile pulsing was increasing in intensity, even as I looked upon this poor ill-fated creature. I knew only too surely that the corpse was the over-adventurous college-boy, Shamus, of whom my host had told me the evening before....twelve hours ago.....it was beginning to feel like ages since I had seen those friendly human faces.....since I had set off for this hellish labyrinth.

My terror mounted, even as I thought of what it might have been that had struck down so ruthlessly this young adventurer. For a moment I was rooted to the spot in petrified immobility. Then suddenly, with a scream tearing at my vocal chords, I sprang to conscious action with a wild leap round and upwards in the direction of the upper air.

Synchronous with my terror-inspired leap for the upper reaches, was the realisation that I had descended quite some distance into the bowels of the place, and also that my return journey was not the easy approach of my downward walk. Instead I had to face a climb of nearly a mile -- a frightful mile with my very life depending on the effort which my body could produce to overcome that grueling climb.

Fear lent speed to my feet, but even as I strained to get away from that unknown horror, I could feel those horrible vibrations beating into my brain with renewed force.

After half a mile of that incline, my muscles were beginning to feel the strain, and I wondered if I was going to be able to make it to the top. With an effort of will I tried to keep my mind off any thought of failure. Any weakening now might cause me to lose this fight, just as that poor soul in the depths below me had succumbed to the power of the being that could send out vibrations strong enough to break down the human mind and bring death in such frightful form.

Those vibrations had now reached almost unbearable proportions, as if the creature that emanated them were sending them out in a last bid to prevent my reaching the entrance to this inhuman mausoleum and the safety which lay beyond its confines. I began to feel thankful for the energy which had been stored up in my body by the healthy holiday I had spent in the past few weeks, and prayed that the vital store would not run out before I could attain my goal.

In the last few hundred yards of that soul-blasting mile I could feel my lungs giving under the strain, as my breath came in laboured gasps. At last I felt once more the mat surface of the runway give

way to the course sand towards the entrance. I saw the gleam of natural light ahead of me, then I was staggering into the full light of day again. I did not stop to regain my failing breath, but lurched towards the spot where I knew was the path to the lake and freedom. In seconds I was treading once more the cool grass at the top of the rise, and then I was on the top step of the rocky path.

How I reached the bottom of that stony way to the lake without breaking my neck is still a mystery to me; but make it I did. All I can remember is stumbling down that misty causway until I finally felt the cold water touch my feet. I plunged headlong into that watery expanse, regardless of the fact that in my exhausted condition I might never make the swim to the mainland.

The sudden immersion into the chill water must have revived me quite a lot, for I found myself swimming steadily outwards and away from that terror which lay behind me. I must have been within a few yards of the mainland, when I began to feel myself growing suddenly very weak. The strain under which I had been in the last hour was proving too much for my overtaxed body. Here I was...a calling distance from safety, and failing on the threshold of succour. My instinct kept my arms making the motion of swimming...then I felt that it was all over...

I was wrong, as you can see. I wakened to find myself in a soft, warm bed, with my host and hostess bending over me, their voices coming slowly to my returning consciousness. Strong arms lifted me to a more upright position, and tender hands gently fed me with warm broth. A few spoonfuls of that warming fluid revived my senses sufficiently to allow me to partake more freely of the food; then I sank thankfully back into the soft pillow and drifted once more into a dreamless sleep.

I found later that I had slept for almost twenty-four hours. In three days I was almost normal again, but did not feel like talking. My host was kind enough not to ask about my adventure, and I did not wish to tell anyone, but I did try to make myself as sociable as possible to the people who had shown me so much kindness. I tried to make conversation whenever I could.

I asked Patrick how this strange little village came to be called Ballinashee.

"Ballinashee," he explained, "means the village of the fairies."

"But I thought fairies were benign little creatures?" I queried.

"Yes, some of them are, but there are evil fairies as well as good ones, you know."

I felt I owed him an explanation, too, so I proceeded to tell him in outline of my adventures in the cranogue, but did not attempt to offer any explanation of what kind of creature existed in that alien building — not that I could have done so in any language that would have made sense to him. I told him of my find in that weird catacomb, and he agreed that it was the boy of whom he had told me.

Two days later I thanked those kindly people, said my 'goodbyes,' and set off for home. That is all there is to it; now you know the whole of my story."

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I paused for a few minutes to let this strange account sink into my astounded thoughts.

"What do you think of the occupant of the cranogue, Derrick?" I asked. "Do you think it was some form of advanced human or animal life?"

He hesitated. "Whatever it is that inhabits that fantastic place, Bill, it cannot possibly be any form of life that we can even begin to imagine, with our limited intelligence. No...whatever it is over there, it is something as far advanced above us as we are above the most primitive savage that ever existed.

"What possible form of life is there in our knowledge that could send out vibrations in such a form as to concentrate them against the will-power, as it did, so as almost to force the mind to give way to the power being radiated?

"Then again... there was the nature of the place: no steps, always a gradual sloping from one level to another. That can only mean one thing to me--whatever used those paths did not, because it could not, walk like a human being....or even an animal for that matter. The only thing I can think of in that hellish structure, is some sort of super-machine....yes...machine: that's the only word that describes what I experienced in that place; some great monster of unearthly metal or matter, so utterly foreign to our thought processes as to beggar any description I could ever hope to give.

"Whatever it was, it was able to probe into my inner being as a psychiatrist delves into the subconscious; but in this case it was capable of sending those searching vibrations into my body and against my will. To that creature, I was not a human being, but something to be analysed. It could not understand my physical and mental processes, so it tried to destroy me."

In spite of the harrowing experience through which Derrick had gone, I felt somehow that he was not entirely satisfied with the idea of leaving it out of his mind forever. The thought was confirmed with his next words.

"I wonder what lies behind that great enigma? Surely an intelligence as great as the one that exists on that little island in the heart of Eiro is not content to just stay there and wait. I wonder what would be in store for the inhabitants of that little village if ever that alien creature decided to emerge from its lair. What would be in store for humanity if ever it was at large on the face of this puny planet?"

He seemed to be thinking aloud, and with these spoken thoughts he sank into a mood of deep concentration.

Somehow I feel that, in spite of all he has experienced, he might one day return once more to try to solve the riddle of that alien creature on Oilcan Chcoidh.

ENCYCLOPAEDIA FANTASTICA

VOLUME III

(compiled by His High
Excellency the Herr
Doktor Derekof Z.
Williamowski, Esq.)

Callous: give me an early call.
Catacomb: pussy at her toilet.
Catkin: feline relatives.
Centigrade: promoted.
Centipede: demoted.
Charlatan: Charlie sunbathing.
Cinnamon: Eastern gentleman.
Climate: ascend the ladder, cook.
Climax: as above, but more informally.
Copious: do the same as me.

Corned: even older jokes.
Cornic: well I like old jokes!
Cornucopia: a paradise for old jokes.
Corsair: when the comb won't go through
Counterfeit: if she's got three, she's
an alien.
Counterpoise: add up her male offspring
Crackling: see "fluff."
Crapulous: suffering from dysentery.
Cutlass: an injured woman.