THE FANTASITE

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IN THIS ISSUE

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C'EST LA GUERRE

SHORTLY AFTER the entrance of the U.S. into the war a pessimistic viewpoint in regard to the future of fandom became apparent as fans began to realize that mankind was in for a big struggle, and that said struggle was going to have a very noticeable effect on fans, individually and collectively. This outlook, while never expressed with a great degree of volubility, was obvious in the trends of thought presented in various fan publications, in discussions, and in correspondence. It was a most natural and inevitable attitude, for many active fans were being drafted with increasing regularity, the induction of most fans was ever imminent, and publishing activity, ever the mainstay of the fan world, was markedly on the decrease.

A lot of the younger enthusiasts were just emerging from a stage of orientation and were getting into the swing of activity, beginning to glance ahead a bit, formulating plans for active participation, and learning to derive some concrete pleasure from the complicated, strange, and intriguing hobby that is Fandom. The personal structures that these individuals were building up around the field became shaky as it began to appear that fandom might very likely undergo a near-fatal period of dissolution. Also, about this time, a number of the stable, mature, old-guard fans were withdrawing for varied causes from activity, either settling back comfortably to watch for a while, or permanently casting adrift from science-fiction hobbying.

Certainly a most vital factor behind this somewhat saturnine atmosphere was the loss of a comparitively large number of veteran science-fiction authors who were either grabbed by the army or employed in time-consuming defense jobs. But the most important blow was forseen in the deprivation of the science-fiction pulps themselves.

The only irreparable loss, in the long-run, was in the actual demise of a number of the professional magazines, forced to discontinue publication primarily because of the paper shortage. Remaining science-fiction editors have somewhat restored their losses by recruiting capable new authors from the ranks of fandom, and have successfully schooled and encouraged other newcomers to replace the absentee adepts. Thus, while our pulp fantasy fiction has decreased sharply in quantity, it has not suffered greatly, if at all, in quality, and there has been an opportunity for the entrance of new-blood.

In active fan circles the initial effect from the severe depletion in number of enthusiasts acquainted with the field is now swiftly being diminished by the introduction of many new fantasy followers in unprecedented numbers. It is true that many of these new, young fans are a mite to eager, and insist upon indulging in activities and publishing ventures which offer little or no support to a sorely-needed maturity in the amateur fantasy field; but some will mature quickly with the assistance of the older veterans and will at least help to uphold an active structure for returning fans after the war.

And now, fans who are interested enough to do so, may look forward to a glowing future-fandom with manifold possibilities for real advancement, growth of maturity, and in addition to many doubly-enjoyable hours of hobbying, perhaps even a few occasions for professional ventures springing directly from science-fiction. It's extremely comforting for an addicted scientifictionist to think in such a manner, at least. PRB.

Pipedream

CPL. MILTON A. ROTHMAN

As always, the pre-convention evening meeting turned out to be the spice of the affair. And that evening there was a special feeling in the air as we sat around the dining table at the Biltmore in Los Angeles. Finally the Pacificon! For, although the war had ended in 1944, it was 1946 before events had allowed a convention to be held.

"A toast," I said, "to the five years since the Denvention. Whatever took place during those five years that we may want to forget, they certainly were not boring years."

The others nodded agreement, and the glasses with Scotch, wine, beer, and malted milks clinked in atonal harmony.

I continued, more or less talking to myself. "At the time of the Denvention I was living in Washington, D. C. Since then I've gone from one place to another: Philadelphia, New Cumberland, Aberdeen, Santa Anita, Oregon State College, OCS, a dozen places in Italy, and I got to Germany just as the German phase of the war ended."

I looked at E. Everett Evans sitting opposite me and thought, "Where has he been during the past five years?"

But Morojo was speaking. "What happened after you got to Germany? That was two years ago?"

"Oh, I was in the army of occupation for several months. Then I was discharged, but stayed there to do reconstruction work as a civilian. I ended up by apparently teaching math and physics in a Heidelberg gymnasium. Actually, I was trying to beat some tolerance into the thick skulls of those Nazi brats."

"You sound bitter about it," Jack Speer said. "Did you lose your own tolerance?"

"Teaching is a hard racket. And you could see the spot I was in. I took the job just to see what would happen. Nearly got my own roof beat in a couple of times. But I won in the end. Or maybe Beethoven won for me. A couple of the boys liked the way I played the Moonlight Sonata. Soon I had a little group working for me. Then there was the campaign I started to fill all the bookstores with books formerly verboten. The older people remembered them, read them again --and, well--a good book is a good book. The younger people gradually came to read them. It spread. The peace has been won in Heidelberg, at least. How about in Washington, Jack?"

Speer shook his head. "It's a gory mess. The president and Wallace are trying to make a planned economy, while congress has gone reactionary and is all for going back to letting business take care of itself. The army came back with an anti-labor feeling, and there's been trouble."

Wollheim snorted. "And all cooked up by the lies in the newspapers which the soldiers read."

"That's about it," I agreed. "When I was in the army, we'd often have bull-sessions, and out of a dozen or so I'd be the only one to defend unions. I knew then that there was going to be trouble."

"What a contrast to Russia," Wollheim said. "I've just been there, you know. Started out doing relief work in the Balkans, and ended up going to school in Leningrad. Every person there has one idea--build, build, build. The Ural

district is like a new world. Russia is now the first country in the world, not the U.S."

Campbell, our guest of honor, had been sitting back, listening. Now he leaned forward. "When it comes to building things, we're not doing so badly, ourselves. The political problems of Russia have been--ah, simplified in the past. We're coming to a planned economy the long way. If you think we're in a mess, what would you have thought in Russia in the 1920's and 30's?

"But technologically--well, have you seen the new automobile with Diesel engine, power brakes, and power steering? And have you seen the hundreds of remote control devices which the synchronous unit and oil-gear system have made possible?"

"How about--" I began.

"Atomic energy? Well, people, I can finally tell you. The public announcement will be made tomorrow. It's here. Complete. New York will be powered by atoms in two years. But that's not all--since de Camp, Ley, and myself were doing scientific work for the government during the war, we managed to become acquainted with a few people in the right places. One thing led to another--and, well--do any of you people want a job helping to build a space ship?"

"Mr. Campbell," I said. "Why do you think I returned to America? I knew this would be coming any day. The army sent me to school to study physics. Another year of study would make me useful to an atomic energy plant or a space ship. Can you give me the time?"

Campbell laughed. "You may have five years. At the end of that time our radio-controlled model should be ready to construct."

"Perfect!" I exulted. "There are a few things I learned while working in Ordnance that could be applied to space travel. For instance--"

Campbell gave me a warning glance.

"Oops, sorry," I said. "I forgot that they're still in the confidential classification."

"Way back," Evans began, "before I left on my mission, fans were talking a lot about doing something about the postwar world. Because they had been talking all the time about the future, they thought they were qualified to m a k e plans for the actual future. What did they ever do about that?"

I snickered. "A lot of that was pure baloney. It's easy enough to make up a fictional future that has no relation to the actual present. It's more difficult to plan in practical detail a real future that can be evolved from the real present, taking the existence of a present institution into account. That requires a knowledge of economics, politics, sociology, and mass psychology. And, having planned, it requires an organized, established, immensely powerful group to make any kind of dent in the flow of history. Imagine s-f fans trying to put across a plan of their own when congress, and the State Department, and a dozen government agencies were actually taking care of the postwar world.

"What happened was this: some fans did some serious thinking and after they had some decent ideas worked out among themselves, they did something unprecedented. They wrote letters to the general magazines, such as Life, Time, etc. They caused no revolutions, but who knows what effect they may have had on the thought processes of people in important positions?

"Having thus made their mark on history they proceeded to get jobs doing reconstruction work. Several of them became teachers abroad and did their best to put across an idea of a rational civilization. The fact that many fans became teachers had an interesting effect. About 1940, science fiction became conscious of logic. There was a lot of talk about semantics, and fans learned what it was to think straight. Now, a teacher gets an intimate view of t h e thinking processes of his students. And we found an interesting thing: that many

people never learned to think logically,especially in terms of cause and effect. They were content to observe a phenomenon and never worry about the cause. To them, things 'just happened'.

"So we got to work and started preaching logical thinking. It was an awfully new thing to a lot of people.

"Another thing we did was to learn technical things in the army. That, together with the rough life we've learned to lead, makes us prospects for the crew of Campbell's space ship.

"So, although we haven't exactly shaken history around as a group, we've managed as individuals to perform some useful tasks. And who knows, perhaps the ideas that influenced our actions were the result of our group association. So fandom as a whole had its effect through individual action.

"Well, let's get out of here before they throw us out!"

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IN MEMORIAM

...BY HARRY WARNER

Some time ago, Robert E. Howard, who wrote some of the best fantasies ever to appear in Weird Tales, ended his own life. Fantasy Magazine published his picture; almost every fan magazine then in existence contained at least one eulogy; and periodically, some columnist or other fan writer has mentioned what a great writer we lost, ever since.

After a life of wretched health, Stephen Vincent Benét died recently. He was recognized in literary circles as one of the greatest contemporary American authors and poets. I have seen one mention of his passing in fan publications, that being a few lines inserted in Fantasy Fiction Field Newsweekly, as a result of an urgent postal I sent Unger insisting that he not neglect mention of the death.

I don't mean this to be an article bewailing the decadent state of fandom; but it does seem to me that a better sense of values might exist. Howard and Benét had this in common: they wrote fantasies and they died too young, one in a more spectacular way than the other. Between their works, no mature person can hesitate to choose. Howard's work is excellent pulp adventure fiction with a touch of fantasy--better, it seems to me, than Burroughs'. Benét's fantasies are literature, almost every one a classic in its way.

Of course, Stephen Vincent Benét never sold a story to a pulp magazine, and there are large numbers of fantasy fans who refuse to recognize anything not to be found between the covers of the pulps. They are the ones who spend the best years of their lives and huge sums of money tracking down old issues of Argosy, for its "classic fantasies". I write this article in the hope of awakening them to the fact that fiction appearing in slick publications is not necessarily bad.

Fortunately, it is not necessary to buy up old issues of the Post to find Benét's stories. His fantasies are available in three different volumes. His best are contained in the prose volume The Selected Works of Stephen Vincent Benét. Tales Before Midnight, and Thirteen O'Clock. Don't buy or borrow all three; they duplicate one another to a certain extent. I recommend the Selected Works edition, but it'll cost you more, because this volume must be bought along with the selected poetry, making up a set of two. (Contd. next pge)

The very first Benét fantasy I ever read is "The King of the Cats", which probably has seen more reprinting than any of his other tales. I came across it in a magazine devoted to musical affairs, about five years ago. If you think that's a strange place for fantasy to be, you don't know this fantasy. It is based on a legend that occurs with alarming frequency in the folk-lore of almost every country. A traveller happens to see a procession of cats burying a little coffin. He tells it to a friend by a peaceful fireside that night; at the conclusion of his account, the pussy which slumbers by the fire jumps up, shouts "Then I am the King of the Cats!", and disappears explosively up the chimney. In Benét's story, which is centered in very high society, everyone is agog over a great new conductor, who performs Glück and Beethoven as they have never been played, and is further fascinating because he conducts with a real, honest-to-goodness tail. This conductor becomes a pet of society, and steals away the hero's girl, and when the hero takes steps--things happen!

"The Devil and Daniel Webster" is undoubtedly the most popular of Benét's fantasy stories; its plot doesn't need repeating, for it has been reprinted several times, is easily available in one of the Pocketbook short story volumes, was turned into an opera, and came out of Hollywood as "All That Money Can Buy".

However, I don't consider it his best. If I had to choose, I think I'd pick either "By the Waters of Babylon"--the only story which might possibly have been suitable for a pulp magazine--or "A Tooth for Paul Revere".

And here a special word must be said about the latter story, and "O'Halloran's Luck" and "Johnny Pye and the Fool-Killer", which Benét classes as "Stories of American History". They are fantasy only if taken very literally; call them rather parables. "A Tooth for Paul Revere", for instance, tells us that the American Revolution began because Lige Butterwick's tooth ached. You never heard of Lige Butterwick, nor did anyone else until Benét wrote this story about him. It seems he had been hearing things about the way people were riled up against England, but greatly preferred to go his own way in peace, and not get mixed up in any foolish sort of war. So when he got a toothache, he went to Paul Revere because the latter was a famous dentist; Lige didn't care anything about his patriotism. By mistake, Paul gave him, instead of a box of liniament, a most peculiar little box. When held up to the ear, rifle fire, drums, fifes, cheers, could be heard coming from within. Lige the next day wanted to take it back to Paul Revere, and had to go to Lexington to find him, just as the Minutemen and the British Regulars were giving each other nasty looks. To learn what happened then, you'll have to read the story. It makes you feel like fighting the Revolution yourself!

There are a number of Benét's stories which are not fantasies, yet are. That is, there is nothing in them that entitles them to the cognomen; but after you finish reading them, you're convinced you've read fantasies. For instance, try "Into Egypt", and "The Last of the Legions"--two stories in a way complementary. The former has an arresting ending, which gives it an aura of strangeness, but the latter is pure and simple history that might have happened a thousand times. (If you want to learn the difference between good and great writing, compare C.L. Moore's "There Shall Be Darkness" with "The Last of the Legions"!)

I've treated only the fantasies of Benét in this article. Please don't get the idea that I've not read or dislike his other fiction and his poetry. The specialization is due merely to the fact that I can't even say all that I'd like to say about the fantasies alone in two pages. So, I'll merely add that after you've discovered the fantasies of this great writer, don't stop there. Read "John Brown's Body", at least one of his novels, and some of the other superlative shorts like "Too Early Spring" and "All Around the Town", which latter

seems to me to be the finest short story written in this country in recent years. Certain of these shorts show too plainly the influence of the magazines for which Benét wrote; but almost all have his master's touch. Something like the closing lines of "All Around the Town", his glorification of New York City, is worth everything a dozen lesser writers ever turned out:

"When they bomb the town to pieces, with their planes from the sky, there'll be a big ghost left. When it's gone, they'd better let the sea come in and cover it, for there will never be one like it in the ages of man again."

Sauerkraut und Gefilteefisch

CARLTON J. FASSBEINDER

IT HAS BEEN only recently that a strange presence has manifested itself to certain members of The Gang. The object has, to be sure, been in the vicinity of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Colony ever since it moved from Clifton's Cafeteria in downtown Los Angeles up to Bixel Street; but of late, a few of us have felt a certain odd kinship for it--especially while walking along Bixel by the light of the moon.

I am referring to "The Bixel". "The Bixel" is the name of a most hideous, outré, other-worldly building up the street some hundred yards from the LASFS club room. Bit by bit it has forced itself into our consciousness. For The Bixel is truly not of this earth. It stands like some grotesque parody on terrestrial architecture. Ardon Benson is of the opinion that it serves to prove "The Worlds of If". "Architecture _might_ have been like that," he says, to which remark we shudder.

No one can say with certainty just what _color_ The Bixel is. It is a vague kind of gray, but then again it might just as well be vermilion. And what is it _made_ of? Brick? No! Stucco? Well, perhaps, although close inspection tends to discount that theory.

The Bixel is top heavy. The walls bulge out at fearful angles. The floors are not level; instead, they seem to undulate. The apartments appear to be stacked on top of one another in a heterogeneous agglomeration of confusion. The stories are just piled one above another. And here is the strangest thing about this incredible structure--_each succeeding story protrudes further than the one beneath it!_

There is a main floor at the top of a flight of brick steps. The second story projects a peculiar bath-tub-like porch out a full twelve feet over the first story, which is anchored at the extremities to four large, parallel, ugly pillars, which support the _third and fourth stories_. The third story has another porch, and over this lies the porch and front rooms of the fourth story!

Certainly this terrifying monster, crouched like an alien visitation amid the neat and slightly shabby flats of South Bixel Street, is unworldly! Never in any picture of foreign lands, ancient ruins, or submerged cities, have I seen a similar edifice.

And of late this building has beckoned to us as we walk by it.... It seems to call to us with a weird, fascinating compulsion! It _looks_ at us, and we hear bizarre music--a plaintive whine from across the ages. At nights I dream of The Bixel, a fearsome gargoyle, rearing its head above the trees, _looking for me!_ And someday, I have a horrible dread that I will _have to go into The Bixel, and ask for a room!_ No! No! God, not that! Iä, Iä . . . Ph'nglui mglw'nafh-

Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fthagn! Ungl . . . ungl . . . rrlh . . . chchch!!!

(Regarding the above, Fassbeinder was not carried off by strange Shapes. His upper plate merely fell out.)

Meanwhile, Old Doc Fassbeinder wearies of writing for fan magazines. He sits up in the monastery (which is really a front for a large wine-press) imagining himself a monk at the time of the Crusades. All day long he sits, writing long heresies in ciphers; ostensibly higher thoughts, but in reality merely pornography. For relaxation he works now and then on his new system for opening Chastity Belts while the knights are away to the wars.

MFS NOTES: Although disbanded as an official organization owing to the absorption of most of its active members by the army, the Minneapolis Fantasy Society now and then evidences a few heartening signs of life. Clifford D. Simak writes that last September a "meeting" was held in the Marine Room of the Rainbow Cafe at Lake and Hennepin. In attendance were Carl Jacobi, Cliff Simak, John Gergen, and Art Osterlund. Merritt's death was announced by Jacobi, and a half-hour discussion of his works followed. An as yet uncompleted story by Carl was read aloud to the assembly. Into it he had worked some of the best scientifiction color that the group had yet encountered. More recently, another gathering was held at Cliff Simak's home when G. I. fans Manse Brackney and Gordon Dickson were home on leave. Gergen was there also, but Jacobi was unable to make it. Art Osterlund is now in the Seabees.

Fandom AFTER THE WAR

By T. BRUCE YERKE

With the end of the war in sight, although not necessarily imminent, it is an appropriate time for those active fans who are still in civilian life to commence some sort of post-war planning, in order that returning soldier-fans will not have to start again from scratch, or else come back to such a decadent structure that they can have no possible interest in it. Prior to the declaration of war, following Pearl Harbor, the scientifiction field was building up to new heights of interest, activity, and perfected technique. Since that time the Draft and long-houred defense jobs have made a serious dent in our activity.

Turgenieff, a Russian novelist of the last century, once made this observation: "Russia can do without any one of us, but none of us can do without Russia." This, I think, may apply to many fans who literally "grew up" with the rise of the fan field. It was my pleasure to experience the transition from "adolescence" into what nice people call "young manhood" while in the thick of fan activities. For this reason, science-fiction and the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society (my membership in which is now well in its seventh year) hold a deep personal meaning to me, and I believe that a large number of other young fans cannot help but feel the same way. And those fans in their middle twenties certainly cannot fail to hold a very real place in their personal lives for science-fiction; so many of them have given so many years of service to the field. No matter what happens after the war, these persons will discover that a cessation of science-fiction activity would leave a large gap in their lives.

When the military phases of the war are over and demobilization in large numbers begins, any one of a number of possible "Worlds of If" may transpire. They leave possibilities ranging from the Big Business picture of glowing reconstruction activities, back-log consumer markets, and European reconstruction demands as means of maintaining employment and "prosperity", to the Technocratic thesis of terrific despair, unemployment, suffering, and economic chaos, resulting either in internal collapse or a comparitively swift change into the true world of science. Should chaos occur, science-fiction activities will naturally be superseded by the imminent struggle to keep alive and reach some sort of haven. As Robert Heinlein stated at Denver in 1941, science-fiction fans are in a better position to face such a situation than other civilians. Those who survive will eventually endeavor to reestablish communication with other similarly-inclined individuals with whom they were in contact before the war. (Note that if this should occur, contacts would be a direct sociological action, not a "hobby" action; thus backing up the old thesis that fans have a similar mental make-up.)

But regardless of what might happen, it is my opinion after seven years of observation, that the fan field is worth a sincere effort by those in a position to act, in one way or another, to hold it together at all costs, for this reason:

Science-fiction fans constitute a class of people. Their prosaic lives may vary in wealth and position from dishwashers to wealthy fans of high professional attainment who can afford to lose large sums of money on their fan magazines;

but in the fan field the best writer may well be the dishwasher, and the most avid collector on state relief.

The science-fiction fan field is in one sense a Culture, for it has developed for ten years prior to the war to the extent that one could write an interesting and objective history of it. Should one care to analyze this history, it is possible to find in a small and highly specialized microcosm many of the manifestations the human race has shown in its own macrocosm of earth. In our own diminutive way we may boast of our own poets, our great and minor humorists, our famous and infamous editors, our struggles with social movements, our travels and gradual building of a structure which parallels man's own historical development. From the earliest days of small, isolated fan groups carrying on their activities, practically unaware of similar groups, we have passed through the Grecian stage to the late classic stage. Our geographic frontiers have expanded and with them the scope and integration of activities.

Our great celebrities have journeyed to many points on the fan world. Just as writing and printing progressed in the macrocosm, so has it progressed in our microcosm. The earliest "post-dawn" methods of reproduction were hectographs and carbon paper. As we grew in age and gathered more wealth, it became possible to advance from the day when the mimeographed magazine was a luxury to the day when the hectographed magazine was an anachronism. For a while, even, a printed fan publication was no novelty.

I do not believe that anyone so far has attempted a "world" analysis of science-fiction, but few of us realize unless we stop and engage in a bit of retrospection, just how extensive fan history has become.

Our means of expansion, rather than being physical property and land, existed at first almost entirely within the bounds of the professional magazines. The Science Fiction League had in fandom an effect comparable to that the Roman Empire had on the Aryan peoples. It united, for the first time, a vaster amount of persons than any preceding organization had been able to gather, into one group, with the same central control. And now, though the Science Fiction League has been dead for a long time when judged by the speed of fan field metabolism, its effects are still felt. The last chapter of the SFL to die out survived the parent organization by many years. We now have the various Fantasy Societies, each of which remains an autonomous republic, vaguely connected with other societies through the medium of separate organizations like the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, the National Fantasy Fan Federation (now defunct),and others.

The Science Fiction League type of thinking and organizing was too great an institution to survive when the central authority disintegrated, and as with Rome itself, the little provinces fell apart and an age of confusion set in. Some of the "provinces" called themselves SFL Chapters (The Holy Roman Empire); but this was merely a guise, and though the Pope now resided at 22 West 84th Street instead of 90 Hudson Street, his power was mainly hollow.

Right now we are in a "Middle Ages" period, but we'll have a Renaissance which should occur when the macrocosmic war on the earth is over. And in another ten macrocosmic years the scientifiction microcosm may well evolve a thousand years.

This application of Spenglerian race-evolution to fandom may be so much bologna. Nontheless, it is possible to draw an amazingly close parallel between Science-Fiction's historical development in ten years and the real world development of two thousand years. If the social structure of the macrocosmic world continues unbrokenly, it may be logical to presume that the evolution of the fan-world will continue on a similar scale, only at a much faster rate--a

ratio of perhaps one fan year for each two centuries of human progress.

If this be the case, I would place Pearl Harbor as the year 476 A.D. fantimes. And if the war and demobilization take another three-and-a-third years, we may safely say that two centuries a year is a good ratio so far, because that will bring the fan world out of the Middle Ages (American participation in the war) after five years (one millenium), and we'll be at a stage of development comparable to that in 1476 A.D.

Think then of what is to follow. It is only necessary for the Keepers of the Torch, who in this case happen to be a small clique of "monks" with 3A or 4F draft classifications, to hand down to those who will become once more acquainted with the field, and to new recruits, the sagas of the remote 1939 Classic Fan Civilization. We will then start anew. And though this all might very well sound as silly as hell to you, I am dead serious, for that is precisely what will happen.

Let me cast off this comparison of "worlds" now and talk realistic facts. I have just outlined a possible path which the field might follow, for I believe that the field is worthy of the full-time avocational interest of many persons, some of whom will be old-timers and many of whom will be new fans.

If science-fiction fans (I refer to the more active ones), of which there have been perhaps two hundred, with a trailer crowd of about a thousand, are like that clique of Russian writers who "couldn't afford to do without Russia", it is to our vital interest that we go on building the fan field after the war. Many of us will be richer and more mature. Just as the Los Angeles Fantasy Society has managed to acquire a fine clubroom with properties valued at over two hundred dollars, so will other clubs do the same. And there will one day come the time when some fan or group of fans will announce the first all-fantasy Printing Plant!

After the war it may be a matter of simple necessity for ex-servicemen in the same city to band together, forming "Slan Shacks" (a name which is unique, but not suitable for general use; "Futurian House" is a more tenable designation). With such a trend in progress; with "Slan Shacks"; established clubrooms; yearly conventions; attempts probably at first unsuccessful, but increasingly promising each year, toward national fan organizations independent of the professional magazines; with more mature editors and writers to shepherd the way back to full-scale activity, it is possible that the fan world will become more and more important in the lives of those who choose by their own peculiarities of nature to live in it.

Not only will the fan world increase in material gain, but also its cultural achievements will expand. It will give a chance to many persons who would otherwise remain indistinguishable from the mass to become personalities; editors, authors. It is rank introvertism on a grand scale; it may be simple escapism, but it is an escapism which exists on such a large scale that it can no more be called escapism as such than the Shriners, the Christian Church, and the theater industry.

The fan world, a world of its own with its own history, culture, and idioms, is well worth preserving, and those who remain in civilian life owe it to our brothers to keep publishing, keep meeting, keep writing, at all costs. If we flicker out, the fan lifeline will be set back two thousand years beyond the thousand years which the war has already knocked it.

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THE REVEREND Hubert Snelling, a distant relation, no doubt, to the Reverend Frederick X. Shroyer, is a corpulent but goodly soul who blissfully herds his flock of sheep in a little church in the south of England. Until, one shocking day, the Reverend ups and kicks the buc-buc-bucket. Aged but 59.

And in rightful accord with the Reverend's expectations (and his approval of the manner of transportation), a magnificent white swan taxies his remains up--to there--you know.

Which is only the bewildering, bemused beginning of the Reverend Hubert's adventures. Once upon a time Hubert--aged 59--looked with lust upon his housekeeper (but merely looked, mind you--nothing came of it), and he feels sure that as soon as he gets around to having that little matter negated he'll regain his youth and manly build. He thinks.

The book: Strange News From Heaven, by Alan Griffiths, Doubleday-Doran,1935.

Hubert is--shall we say slightly chagrined?--to discover that his saintly, conventional notions of heaven don't quite agree with Somebody Else's notions. And that Somebody Else is a mighty weary old gentleman who long ago stopped paying the slightest bit of attention to that pesky planet Earth. Disconcerting, no end, because a book told Hubert the reverse was true.

Hubert's first acquaintance in Paradise is one Gertie Smith ("You can call me Brownie"), who woke up dead one morning to discover that her ever-loving husband ("only we weren't really married") had tossed her from the stage into the orchestra pit and broken her pretty neck. That wasn't so bothersome; Paradise was a most pleasant place in which to hang around. But she was rather peeved with that rascal of a husband who went directly from her funeral to another gal.

The Reverend Hubert is beginning to work up a healthy appetite for Brownie, despite his age, when the villain enters the picture and claims her for his own. Brownie is willing. Hubert is slightly annoyed to dis-cover that the villain is his own father, a rugged rascal of 25. It is then that he finds he cannot regain his youth--for Papa was killed at just 25. One's dying age is one's perpetual age, in Paradise.

RECOMMENDED READING

BY

BOB TUCKER

Further beliefs of Hubert's are exploded with disconcerting directness. Sad to say, there isn't any other place to go when one dies! That place--down there-- you know, does not exist. Poor Hubert, for all his piously pure and unjoyful life, is forced to rub elbows with:

Cleopatra and Caesar, Cain and Confucius, Adam and Ananias, Eve and

Aesop (fooled you there!), Moses and Macbeth, Tamerlane and Thomas, Magellan and Mahomet, Rabelais and Ripper (Jack the), Joshua and Jezebel--everyone, in fact, from a naked Neanderthal gentleman down to a stranger named Smith.

Disgruntled, downcast, our hero wanders into the big black forest--and meets Methuselah, packing around seven hundred years of age on his bony shoulders. Methuselah sees in Hubert a kindred soul: an almost useless old man, with as much chance of having fun as a eunuch.

Comes the climax: they conspire, and a dastardly plot is born! We will revolt! And with the Reverend Hubert in the role of Der New Leader, the revolt of the aged begins, culminating in a mass march of billions upon billions of old people--all of those who have died since the beginning of time.

There, chums, we shall stop to taunt you. Too many loyal, dime-paying readers threw ashes in our beer, here, the last time we printed a book review. They accused us of giving away the ending. We didn't--it only appeared that we did. The ending to the Thayer tome was a good deal farther along than where we stopped with the introduction into America of the Age of Reason.

However, we glee. Now you won't know what happened to the revolt until you read the book!

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NFFF NOTE

Among the latest reports of an official nature is the receiving of a telegram from the NFFF headquarters appointing Walt Daugherty as the membership chairman of the organization. Daugherty has prepared a complete outline of the purposes of the organization which is available to anyone writing him at his home address - 1305 W. Ingraham, Los Angeles 14, California. The booklet he has prepared is one that every fan should read. Send for it today....ITS FREE.

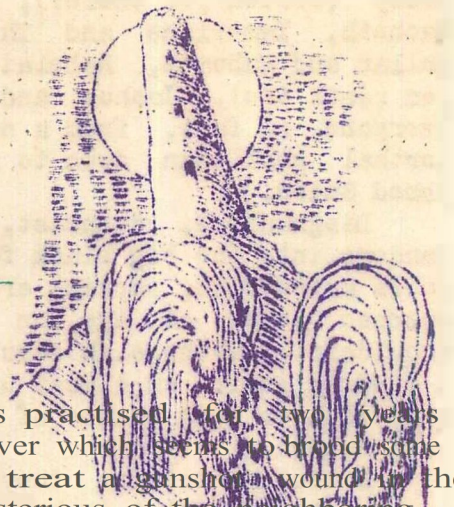
CANADIAN FANDOM

Staggers into its fifth issue with a lithographed cover by Canada's foremost fan illustrator (at least he will be after this cover), Albert Betts. Stories include "The Unclean", by Shirley Peck,"Sic Transit Gloria Monday", by Forrest J Ackerman, and "Our Pet Author", by Alan Child. Article by Rosco E. Wright, and "Stuff and Such", Fred Hurter's main claim to fame; "Light Flashes", brilliant effort by Les Croutch, and the concluding installment of "The Hell Which Virgil Described," condensed by Alan Child. All this and more may be obtained for the mere sum of 5c from: Beak Taylor, St. Andrew's College, Aurora, Ontario. (Gentle Hint)--25c brings six copies.

WANTED:

.....Material for the magazine, VENUS, which will loom onto the horizon sometime in the near future. Stories, funny poems, good cartoons, articles, opinions, etc., will be most welcome. Artwork (particularly nudes), wanted in droves. Send all material to Lora M. Crozetti, at 1542 W. 11th Street, Los Angeles 15, California.

FANTASY BOOK REVIEWS



Samuel D. Russell

THE PLACE CALLED DAGON, by Herbert Sherman Gorman. New York: George H. Doran Co.,1927. 20cm. 315pp. $2.00.

Plot> Dr. Daniel Dreeme, a young physician, has practised for two years in Marlborough, a queer,taciturn New England town over which seems to brood some secret, malignant shadow. One night he is called to treat a gunshot wound in the leg of Jeffrey Westcott, the most secretive and mysterious of the neighboring farmers, whom he finds to be a cultured but. sinister man surrounded by evil —looking tomes in whose study he is constantly immersed} he also meets and is strangely attracted by Westcott's beautiful, dark-haired wife, Martha. When Dreeme visits his father's friend, Dr. Humphrey Lathrop, the old man says he believes there is a supernormal (preternatural), but not supernatural, influence at work in Marlbor- ough, and that Martha Westcott is the daughter of Peleg Carrier, a nervous mel- ancholiac, who was the son of Captain Uriah Carrier, a ferocious old seafarer; Westcott himself is a mysterious German scholar and friend of Peleg's who, after Peleg's death, reared and married Martha, That night Dreeme is summoned by Wag- ner, the Westcott's hired man, to an assignation with Martha at an old mill, where she mentions that Westcott is trying to fashion himself in the image of an old god; though Dreeme is cold to her advances, they are seen there by the Rev. George Burroughs, a saturnine preacher who boards with Dreeme at the house of Walden Slater, a farmer. Next morning Deborah Morton, a blue—eyed young niece of the Slaters who has been sent to the Westcotts as hired girl, comes frantic- ally to Dreeme and says she has run away because -of her fright at finding two little dolls with pins in them in Westcott's study, at hearing Burroughs tell Westcott "she'll do...at the place called Dagon," and at seeing Westcott look in at her in bed that night with evil eyes; when Westcott comes to take her back, Dreeme prevents him. The body of Wagner is found in the river with wooden pegs in the eye-sockets, but Dreeme is unable to get any of the\villagers to look in- to the murder. That night, when Dreeme goes again to the 'old mill, he meets Jeffrey Westcott, who tells him that by studying and practicing evil in appro- priate ceremonies he is trying to develop the power of the will to a point be- yond good and evil. Later that night, after Dreeme and Deborah have confessed their love to each other, he again meets Martha, who reveals that Westcott be- gan his evil work one day years ago when she found old Uriah Carrier's black book. Next day Humphrey Lathrop finally tells Dreeme that Marlborough was settled by those of the S.alem -witches who escaped hanging, that the place called Dagon Is where the others were buried and where they held their meetings around the Devil Stone, that Uriah Carrier, whose family owned the traditional black book of the Salem coven, revived the Sabbath in the 19th Century, as did West- cott in the 20th, That night Walden Slater awakens Dreeme and tells him that Deborah has disappeared; and they hurry to the place called Dagon—a clearing in N----- Swamp, where Westcott harangues the assembled farmers on d emonolatxy.

When Burroughs is about to stab Deborah as a sacrifice to Asmodeus, Slater shoots him, Dreeme rescues the girl, and the Esbat is dispersed. The Westcott farm goes up in flames with Westcott in it, and the farmer's ask Dreeme's forgiveness for succumbing to the witchcraft delusion under the spell of Westcott's mania.

Evaluation: H. P. Lovecraft says of this book: "A less subtle and well-balanced [than Leonard Cline's The Dark Chamber] but nevertheless highly effective creation is Herbert S. Gorman's The Place Called Dagon, which relates the dark history of a western Massachusetts back-water where the descendants of refugees from the Salem witchcraft still keep alive the morbid and degenerate horrors of the Black Sabbat." (The Outsider and Others, "Supernatural Horror in Literature," page 537.) His commendable enthusiasm for weird horror leads him to exaggerate somewhat the merits of this book, which is another of those more or less realistic-sentimental novels written for the average man who likes occasionally to hear the wings of Gothic fantasy flutter but fears to fly. And as usual in such novels the beginning is quite promising and seems to foreshadow splendid horrors to come--in this case particularly so because the situation is so similar to many of Lovecraft's: the sinister scholar in a decaying New England town who pores over mysterious ancient volumes in pursuit of demonic studies. The title, too, suggests Lovecraft. But the truth of the "horror" hovering over Marlborough is revealed with such creeping slowness and turns out to be so feeble (a mere delusion fostered by a hysterical maniac and a sadist) that the novel, by staying on the same vague shadowy level of horror (if it can be called such) that is set at the beginning and never rising to a supernatural level, seems to grow worse as it progresses, and is distinctly disappointing in its climax and finish. The only concession to the weird that the author makes is having Lathrop claim there is a "supernormal" aspect to Marlborough, but whatever it is, it is never revealed, unless Westcott's hypnotic power over Deborah is supposed to represent it; and hypnotism is too common nowadays to be considered preternatural, though perhaps it was when F. Marion Crawford wrote The Witch of Prague. There is a moment of horror when Wagner's mutilated body is found, but it is not developed. The presence of the licentious Martha Westcott is merely a detriment to the mysterious atmosphere; despite her descent from the leaders of the witches' coven, there is nothing weird about her, and at the end she merely leaves town. The novel fails notably to capitalize on a potentially excellent theme--the descendants of the Salem witches keeping alive their ancestors' practices over the place where their martyrs of 1692 are buried --and instead has the farmers ashamed of their forbears' activities and participating in them only because Westcott blackmails them into doing so by threatening to reveal their ancestral shame as detailed in the black book. The fact that the novel seems for a while to approach so close to the Lovecraft pattern only makes one's disappointment in it greater.

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WITCH WOOD, by John Buchan. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1927. 18½cm. 352pp. $2.00.

Plot: This is the story of the legendary minister of Woodilee in Scotland, who was said to have been snatched away by the Devil or the Fairies, and whose story is falsely and inaccurately told in the Rev. John Dennistoun's Satan's Artifices Among the Elect (written 1719, published 1821). David Sempill, a gentle, earnest young Presbyterian theologian, is ordained the minister of the parish of Woodilee in 1644 and soon hears that the nearby Wood of Melanudrigill, whose black depths frighten even him, is reputed a haunt of bogles and witchcraft. One

night he guides a party of soldiers, among whom is a strangely attractive young man to whom the others show much deference, to the Castle of Calidon, where he briefly meets a beautiful, high-spirited girl of the nobility, Katrine Yester. Next spring he comes upon her in the forest, where she has a favorite glen she calls Paradise, and there he meets her many more times, gradually falling in love with her. On May-Eve he stumbles upon a witches' coven of his parishioners dancing widdershins around a stone altar in the heart of the Wood and, when he breaks up the dance, is beaten unconscious. Although the villagers sullenly refuse to confess their sins, and the neighboring ministers, engrossed with the menace of the campaign of the English King's follower Montrose against the Scottish Kirk's Covenant of 1643, pooh-pooh his accusations, David finds an ally in the farmer Andrew Shillinglaw of Reiverslaw, and they secretly attend the next Sabbath on Lammas Eve (July 31) and prove to their own satisfaction that the piper and King-Devil of the coven is Ephraim Caird of Chasehope, the pious chief elder of the parish; but the Rev. Mungo Muirhead, David's superior, is infuriated with him at the charge. One night the patriot Montrose, who turns out to have been the young man David guided to Calidon, and who has just been badly defeated in battle by the Presbyterian forces, comes to David's home and leaves him with a comrade, Mark Kerr, who has a broken leg; and David and Katrine secretly care for him in the glen of Paradise in the forest till he is well and is able to disguise himself as a farmer to escape detection by the victorious and brutal soldiers of the Kirk (Church). Although David's activities are discovered and he is suspended from the pulpit by the Presbytery for heresy, his happiness at discovering that Katrine loves and is willing to marry him eclipses his troubles for a while. On Hallowe'en the coven holds its ritual in the Church while David is away, and soon thereafter Chasehope and the witch-pricker John Kincaid torture an old woman to death, though Mark Kerr drives the pricker away. In the middle of an unhealthily warm and sultry winter a virulent plague decimates Woodilee, and David, Katrine, and Mark work to exhaustion burying the dead and airing stricken houses. In April after the pestilence is gone, Katrine belatedly sickens and dies, and David buries her in Paradise. He cares nothing when the Presbytery deposes and excommunicates him, but upon meeting Chasehope on the way home he drags him into Melanudrigill to the stone altar to force him to choose between Abiron and Christ, and the panic-stricken Satanist goes mad and runs off like an animal to escape "the red dogs". David is nevermore seen in Woodilee, for he and Mark sail for the continent the next day to end their lives in service in the wars.

Evaluation: H. P. Lovecraft says of this book: "In the novel Witch Wood, John Buchan depicts with tremendous force a survival of the evil Sabbat in a lonely district of Scotland. The description of the black forest with the evil stone, and of the terrible cosmic adumbrations when the horror is finally extirpated, will repay one for wading through the very gradual action and plethora of Scottish dialect." (The Outsider and Others, "Supernatural Horror in Literature," page 540.) Both his praise and his criticism are apt, though perhaps he exaggerates the horror-inspiring qualities of the novel a bit. The truth is that John Buchan was not trying to pen a tale of supernatural horror in Witch Wood, but a historical novel with witchcraft as one of its many themes. His story is laid in the days of the witch-burnings, and he plays up the supernatural to show its place in the minds of the people of the time, not particularly to inspire shudders in his readers. Nevertheless, he writes with such skill that his weird passages have greater force than those of many another novel more directly concerned with supernatural horror. As is probably inevitable in a story in which the horror element is subordinate, the novel seems at first as if it is going to develop into one of Lovecraftian power, since the foreshadowing

of demonology and witchcraft in the early chapters is not much less strong than it would be in a true horror novel; but, of course, the story soon becomes preoccupied with other matters, and when it returns to the witchcraft theme it does not develop it to the rising, cosmic extent that one hopes for. The author is to be thanked, however, for not treating witchcraft as pure delusion or fraud, and for occasionally suggesting the actual existence of demonological powers in the haunted wood of Melanudrigill. Lovecraft's appreciation of these horror-passages is pretty well justified, and if the rest of the book were like them, the novel would rank with his own work. It is therefore natural that the horror-seeker should be disappointed by the predominating, everyday historical sections of the story and find the action gradual and the characterizing Scottish dialect overdone. This criticism, however, applies more to the first half than to the rest of the novel; after one becomes used to the leisurely development & the dialect, the characters take on enough life to hold one's interest even without the stimulus of the weird. David Sempill is a thoroughly engaging and attractive hero even to an agnostic, and his brief love affair with Katrine is a welcome idyll among his sea of troubles; especially delightful is the scene in which he confesses his love for her as they ride together through the fog--an admirable handling of what is probably at once the commonest and the most difficult situation in fiction to depict convincingly. All of the characters are likewise drawn with vivid realism, but special mention should be made of the pious hypocrite Chasehope, who, though his influence behind the scenes is felt oftener than he is on the scene, is notable as exemplifying a rather unusual type of Satanist--the Calvinistic Christian who sincerely believes he is of the Elect and thus free to commit any sin he desires.

.. THEY NEVER thought that it would really happen. The general public wouldn't believe it. The scientists scoffed.

And even in the field of fantasy itself, the smug editors, cynical writers, and hyperimaginative fans all kept tongue in cheek.

People were too blasé to believe. Despite a thousand times a thousand stories... despite the Hearst Sunday supplement bulletins...it was just a wild dream to the world.

Until the dream came true...the dream that had dominated science-fiction for years.

Yes, the dream came true--and the Earth was invaded. Invaded and--destroyed!

The real story of that fateful, fatal, final day will never be told--at least, not by human tongue to human ear. For human tongues have been forever stilled, and human ears forever deafened in death.

Death thundered from the skies that day of doom--that day when the silvery space-ships hurtled toward the earth and the red jets of destruction seared from rocket tubes.

Cities crumbled into dust, and there was one wild rumor that in New York the Empire State Building just melted away under a ray-blast, like an ice-cream cone under the summer sun.

Super Pearl Harbor of the entire earth! That's what the papers would have said--if there had been any papers printed...or anyone left to read them.

But by nightfall all was silent. Silent as an ancient tomb. The ancient

tomb of earth...a gigantic graveyard. Everything had been swept away--all of Man's works, and Man himself had been seared into a carbon catalyst of Nothingness. Then, and only then, the space-ships landed. And from the ships poured the horde of monsters...the Outsiders. Ultra-cosmic? Ultra—galactic? The invaders were all of that.

Like giant locusts they swept over the ruined land. In farm and village, town and city and great metropolis, they hurried forth to sift the ruins with inquisitive tentacles.

Ultra-teratological scavengers, patiently picking their way through the huge junk-heap that had once been Earth.

They came to Los Angeles, of course. And the gigantic, beetle-bodied shapes with the octopoidal tentacles and Cyclopean single eyes blazing in the center of bulging exposed brains prowled and skulked in the shambles of a city. Through shattered stones they wandered, hunting in packs or moving singly like shadows out of dreams.

There was one shape, twelve feet tall, with six black tentacles and a polymorphically bulging brain from which a blazing eye leered, that crouched beside the ruins of the Metropolitan Station. Its horrid bulk squatted there and its tentacles idly turned the stones and slithered through molten rock.

Then came a sudden rustle of movement from below; the earth heaved, and a tiny figure emerged from the debris.

Forrest J Ackerman (strange irony of all the gods, but it was he!) peered up at the hideous creature that loomed above him. He blinked around, and realized the doom that had descended from the skies.

For a moment there was silence. Neither man nor monster moved. Each stared at the other. Slowly, Forry took in the full spectacle of the ghastly, the unbelievable entity confronting him.

What could he do?

Then, with blinding realization, Forry knew what he must do. His hand fumbled in his tattered coat pocket for a moment, then emerged, clutching a black cylinder and a bit of crumpled paper.

Gazing up at the monster from the skies, Forry's voice rose over the ruined earth.

"Pardon me, but can I have your autograph?" he croaked.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: To be consistent right up to the last moment, we will plague you readers with a final request for "booster-ads" for our "2nd Anniversary Issue", which will be the number following this one. Your name and any line or two of your own wording will be included for twenty-five cents. Individuals who can afford larger donations and who wish to be helpful may purchase larger ads at our regular rates. And if those readers to whom this issue is sent as a sample will get busy and subscribe, they too will be most helpful.

You have probably noticed our increase in price by this time. This increase will not be retroactive, so subscribers who had their money in before the issuance of this number will have no cause to grumble.

In view of the popularity of our readers' section we are anticipating more than a few squawks at its absence this time. If the readers will take a bit of time and send in some letters of the caliber found in Francis T. Laney's excellent magazine, The Acolyte, we'll revive the column. PRB.