FANTASY COMMENTATOR

...covering the field of imaginative literature...

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CONTENTS

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T H I S - 'N' - T H A T

Books of fantasy fiction published recently that have not been so far noted in this column:

Capp, Al: The Life and Times of the Shmoo (Simon & Schuster, $1). Hilarious, delightful fantasy.

Colvin, Ian: Domesday Village (Falcon, 7/6). Brief novel about a regimented Britain in the future. Rather thin.

Cragie, David: The Voyage of Luna I (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 5/-). Juvenile fantasy---a trip to the moon.

De Camp, L.S. & Pratt, F.: The Carnelian Cube (Gnome, $3). See ppl2-13.

Dogbolt, Barnaby: The Goose's Tale ($3, Dutton). Thorne Smithish fantasy.

Gandon, Yves: The Last White Man (Cassell, 9/6). Tale of the future; a new germ wipes out the entire white population of the world save one man who has taken an antidote.

Heinlein, Robert A.: Space Cadet (Scribner's, $2½). Acceptable juvenile--- a rocket flying school of 2075 A.D.

Farley, R. M.: The Radio Man (Fantasy Pub. Co., $2). S-f for kids. Pretty miserable stuff, too.

Hubbard, L. Ron: Death's Deputy (Fantasy Pub. Co., $2½). Fairly entertaining adventure.

Kafka, Franz: The Penal Colony (Schocken, $3). Collection of shorts, some of which are fantasy; contains Kafka's best work.

Kavan, Anna: Sleep Has His House (Cassell, 7/6). Well-written, if borderline, novel of a woman who relives her past life.

Keller, David H.: The Solitary Hunters and The Abyss (New Era, $3). Two very smoothly written and entertaining fantasy novels. Recommended.

Mann, Thomas: Doctor Faustus (Knopf, $3½). An allegory about a modern musician and the devil. Below Mann's par.

McGlynn, Thomas: Vision of Fatima (Little, Brown, $2½). This has nothing to do with cigarettes, but is a slushy, borderline tale of mysticism.

McLaverty, Michael: The Three Brothers (Cape, 9/-). A miracle is performed in a post-World War II Europe.

Newman, Bernard: The Flying Saucer (Gollancz, 9/6). A faked Martian invasion with proton bombs, etc. Fairly good.

Quinn, Seabury: Roads (Arkham, $2). One of the finest of Christmas stories, in a fine edition illustrated by Finlay.

Read, Herbert: The Green Child (New Directions, $2¾). Excellent fantasy with symbolic overtones. Recommended.

Smith, C. A.: Genius Loci (Arkham, $3). Third in a series of short story col- Good if you like Smith's style.

Spalding, Helen: The White Witnesses (Scribner's, $3). A sculptor is haunted by dreams which turn out to be prophetic. Though the fantasy is subservient to character-study, this appears unusually good, skillfully handled.

Tabori, Paul: Solo (Low, 9/6). Murder, love and hauntings in Hungary.

Terrall, Robert: A Killer Is Loose Among Us (Duell, Sloane & Pearce, $2½). Plague bacilli in future warfare.

Vaughan, Hilda: Iron and Gold (Macmillan, 8/6). Sincere, if unoriginal, account of an old Welsh legend.

Wallis, Geo. C.: The Call of Peter Caskell (World's Work, 5/-). Lost Incas plot to conquer the world. Pretty sad.

Weinbaum, S.G.: The Black Flame (Fantasy Press, $3). The days following wars of the late 20th century.

Westmacott, Mary: The Rose and the Yew Tree (Rinehart, $2½). Psychological study of a man who, in 1958, looks back on his former life.

White, T.H.: The Elephant and the Kangaroo (Putnam, $2¾). A satirical fantasy, now stinging, now side-splitting. Overall, very good. Get it.

Williams, E.C.: The Man Who Met Himself (Long, 9/6). 13 tales in the Grand Guignol vein.

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PLENTY to apologize for this time! The issue is slim because (a) FC is behind schedule; (b) I want to beat the Jan. 1 postal rates rise. Special and sincere apologies to Bill Evans, whose Munsey column was omitted in the upheaval. In the next number, twice the space! A.L.S.

CONFLICT FOR THE SOUL

by
David H. Keller, M. D.

Although very little is positively known concerning the early culture of primitive man, definite opinions about how he lived and what he thought can be formed. Thinking was an earlier achievement than the development of a vocabulary; thus his earliest words originated from both a desire and the need to convey his thoughts to others. Some time after he learned that vocalizing could convey thought, he began making pictographs. Excellent specimens of this art have been found in the Cro-Magnon caves in France, on rock walls in Bushman territory of South Africa and the cliffs bordering the Ohio River. Then came the earliest forms of written language.

From these early words used in folklore and folksong, many of them universal in sound and meaning, from the pictographs, from the oldest written literature, we can construct---at least in part---the hopes and fears of primitive man. Some of these deductions are substantiated by similar cultural patterns of the Stone Age followed by primitives now living in remote parts of the world. But it is not necessary to depend entirely on the study of living representatives of ancient races for such information.

All basic thought has been transmitted from one generation to the following one by word of mouth or some form of literature. Thus it is easy to find the most ancient thoughts presented today, undoubtedly in more refined form, but containing essentially the same factors of which the folklore from past ages was composed. Disguised by new words, recent inventions and modern forms of expression, the old basic thoughts and ideas constantly recur.

Early man could not have found life very pleasant. It was a constant struggle for the survival of the herd, and for this herd- or tribe-survival to be possible a fair proportion of individuals had to mature and reproduce new generations. In an existence constantly threatened by multiple dangers, the life of the individual could be preserved only by the use of every power at his command. Death came in the form of terrible enemies, greatly feared and only partly understood. Cold, hunger, gigantic animals and the long black night constantly took their toll of human life. Man must have felt completely frustrated in his struggle against these powerful agencies of destruction.

He learned that the tops of high trees would furnish some protection against animals; that caves were safer if their openings were small enough to afford him entrance but keep out larger creatures. He found that fire would cook his food, its warmth help him survive the cold winter, and that other animals were afraid of its flame. He was, however, unable to change in any way the long dark night. All he could do was shiver in tree nests or huddle near cave fires and hope he would live till the coming of the day.

Unable to form a clear concept of natural phenomena about him, he developed an animism in which floods, avalanches, lurking animals and the bolt of lightning were all personal agencies, merciless in their constant menace, against which he was wholly inadequate unless aided by similar counter-forces willing to assist him in his fight for survival.

Thus the possibility of the existence of opposing forces was developed. The earliest of these concepts was that of <u>good</u> and <u>evil</u>. Everything was good which benefited the individual and benefited the herd; all that threatened their existence was evil. In various transformations, for example, the sun rapidly became the most important god of goodness, while the moon, guardian of the night, was regarded with dread---a fear not lessened when a feminine nature was later

ascribed to it.

Starting with the concepts of God and Devil a linguistic dualism developed. It is interesting to note how the opposing words so closely described the nature and personality of the antagonists. We have summer and winter; right and left; day and night; hot and cold; up and down; security and danger; food and starvation; male and female; life and death; heaven and hell; and a multitude of other paired words that are perfect antonyms.

It was believed then---as now---that God ruled a white, warm, comfortable world. Heaven could be attained only by travelling upward toward the right. There could be found peace, comfort, beauty and wealth. Man was aided by beautiful blonde angels, and these, descending and ascending Jacob's ladder, constantly tried to save the souls of men.

The Devil lived in hell, which was a realm of pain, hunger and blackness except where illumined by sulfurous flames. This most unsatisfactory residence of future existence was reached by going downward to the left and listening to the intriguing propaganda of minor imps---all brunettes---whose true forms were ugly and terrifying. While these offered much that was pleasant, the ultimate ending of a life of wine, woman and song was eternal torture in perdition.

Man turned to the good gods to aid him in the fight against the evil devils. In his extremity he created a multitude of lesser deities on whom he called in every emergency, however trivial. Thus harvest, hunting, home-building, marital relations and childbirth could all be aided by a favorable god but equally harmed by an unfavorable one. Reproductions in miniature of parts of the god were worn as jewelry; prayers were written and carried under the clothing next to the skin; the smallest hut had its clay Lares and Penates.

Back of the humdrum of everyday life, back of all actualities, came man's dream of immortality and a future abiding place. Early in his contemplation this included the thought of a soul in the body, and that soul, deathless, could live only in heaven or hell, after the physical man died. From this concept came the idea that both God and the devil were intensely interested in the soul of man and were waging eternal warfare for its possession. By burnt offerings---primarily human but later changed to animals, as in the case of the proposed sacrifice of Isaac by his father Abraham; by undeviating obedience to the divine law as transmitted from God to man via a priesthood; and by an obstinate refusal to yield to the wiles of the devil man hoped to attain everlasting life in the very pleasant God-ruled heaven. Otherwise his soul would surely be taken to hell. Earthly life was uncomfortable, to be sure, but hell was considered far more unsatisfactory in every detail.

Man fully believed that the battle between the forces of good and evil was a titanic, never-ending war in which the decision swayed first in favor of one and then of the other, but was never completely decisive. He thought of himself as a soldier, free and capable of choosing on which side he would fight, and it is reasonable to suppose that the large majority of men selected the side they considered had the best chance of ultimate victory. Even when a man sold his soul to the devil for material gain, he was positive that in some way he could circumvent the devil, and after death enjoy a celestial home.

This conflict between the powers of good and evil rapidly became an intensely real part of man's life and consciousness. In the folklore of most primitive races there is precisely the same sequence of supernatural events: the creation of the world and man; a Garden of Eden; a revolt of the angels against the chief deity; their temporary defeat and man's expulsion from an earthly paradise; the mating of the fallen angels with earthly women; a flood; the confusion of tongues; and thenceforward continuous war for the conquest and final possession of the soul of man.

This objective was of far greater importance to the individual than the question of how the army of God would finally win, for in the result of that ultimate victory rested the safety of his soul after death. Consequently the theme of war for the soul of man was incorporated very early into the folklore and literature of peoples all over the world.

The Biblical version of the Garden of Eden was written in its present form no earlier than 600 B.C., but it is a much older narrative known universally to primitive people. In Genesis the devil (in the form of a snake) was definitely victorious, and Adam and Eve suffered by expulsion from paradise. Adam from then on had to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, while Eve and all of her daughters faced constant death in bringing new life to earth. Adam blamed Eve for the catastrophe, and since that time there has been an eternal conflict between the sexes. This is the first recorded conflict between good and evil, and it is important to note that God as well as man was the loser.

Another very early use of the same basic plot is found in Job. This was written either by an unknown author in the eleventh century B.C. or by Moses circa 1520 B.C. The story starts with a family gathering between God and his sons to which Satan comes, probably uninvited but certainly not forbidden. Though he has lost the first battle and been exiled from heaven, the devil remains on sufficiently intimate terms with God to visit Him and engage in intimate conversation. God comments on the goodness of his servant Job and the devil replies that Job serves God only because he wishes to retain His favor and fears His wrath. God contends that Job is a "perfect and upright man who feareth God and escheweth evil." Finally God, to prove his point, gives Satan liberty to test Job in any way except killing him. Here God is unconcerned as to what is done to Job's body but does not wish his soul to fall into Satan's clutches. Job's afflictions include loss of family and property, and are climaxed by "sore boils from the sole of his foot to his crown." The unfortunate man "took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal and he sat down among the ashes." There he is visited by three friends who urge him to curse God and die. The four argue the problem. Finally Job has a lengthy conversation with God, in which he repents his lack of faith, and thus at the end of the narrative God wins the battle with the devil and retains the soul of Job. The latter is rewarded for his loyalty by the restoration of his property, and by becoming the father of seven sons and three daughters. Then, though it is implied but not definitely stated, he is taken to heaven.

This warfare between God and the devil sways backward and forward and in The Revelation of St. John the Divine Satan is triumphant in all engagements until he is finally defeated in the battle at Armageddon. Until this time the forces of evil are temporarily conquered but never completely vanquished; thus they continue to remain a source of potential danger to the human race.

The fourth chapter of St. Matthew furnishes a powerful description of the propaganda technique used by the devil to win the soul of Christ. After the forty-day fast in the wilderness Christ is approached by the devil who, having twice failed to tempt him, holds out a third inducement, all the kingdoms of the world "will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Christ did not annihilate the devil or attempt in any way to impair his power of evil, saying merely, "Get thee hence!" This offering of power and riches in return for later servitude is an oft-repeated theme in medieval literature, and is aptly dramatized in several operas dealing with the Faust legend.

Two great poets wrote of this conflict and described conditions in heaven and hell. Escorted by Virgil, Dante made a tour of hell, and in vivid language particularized the sufferings of the eternally damned. Milton, perhaps better able to see because of his blindness, wrote Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained. In these poems Milton inserted various anachronisms, but in the main he

followed the accepted text and thus became an early member of the Society of World Savers (of which Edmond Hamilton is a favorite modern representative).

John Bunyan wrote two famous novels which related the adventures of a soul beset on one hand by the devil and aided on the other by God. In The Pilgrim's Progress he narrates the strange and difficult journey of a weary traveller who finally gains a celestial home in spite of the efforts of various fiends to circumvent him and take his soul to hell. However, Christian is not finally safe until he wades into the river (symbolic of death) and arrives on the other shore where he is met by angels who assure him that his dangers are over.

Bunyan's other masterpiece, The Holy War, is an allegorical novel in which God and the devil fight for the control of a city called Man Soul. Truly to appreciate this work the Cassell edition, profusely illustrated by Selous and Friston, should be used; here the pictures follow the text very closely, showing the duality of conflicting ideologies clearly. The heavenly warriors with stars on their foreheads and wearing winged helmets are all beautiful blonds, courageous and strong, with fine, kind features. Conversely the devils are heavy brunettes with vicious faces, horned helmets, serpents twined around arms and waists, the hatred and malice in their hearts all too evident. Bunyan follows the expected plot-pattern; often the tide of conflict swings toward the side of evil, but eventually righteousness wins the battle and complete control of Man Soul.

In more recent times we have Anatole France's Revolt of the Angels. In this novel he describes the eternal conflict in a rather modern manner, the evil spirits taking an active part in French politics. (Both France and his compatriot Zola seemed unable to keep political discussions and intrigues out of their fiction.) The Revolt of the Angels is interesting because it shows clearly the propagandizing of the lesser devils assigned to the task of so corrupting man that he can easily be dragged into hell. Beyond question the priesthood felt that these demons had done thorough work on the soul of France and had influenced the writing of the final chapter---which gives the impression that good is evil and evil is good and that the devil has a finer idea of the humanities than God. This novel amplifies the age-old belief that from the moment of birth every human being has an angel assigned to help him reach heaven, and also a personal devil to beguile him into hell.

Devils become especially powerful when they actually enter the body of their personal victims, which they accomplish by using one of the natural orifices. It was once thought that sneezing or yawning afforded excellent opportunity for such entrance. The Hindus thought that if the fingers were snapped during a yawn the evil spirit would be thwarted. Similarly, Mohammed wrote, "If one of you sneeze, let him him exclaim 'Alhamodillah' and let those around salute him in return with 'Allah have mercy upon thee.'" Thus our present-day ejaculation of "God bless you!" when some one sneezes is seen to be a direct continuation of this old superstition.

The couvade is generally practiced throughout the Sotadic Zone. It originated from the belief that Lilith, the first wife of Adam and the only female angel in Heaven prior to the celestial war, joined the army of Satan and with him was cast out of Paradise. Ever afterwards she was supposed always to be on the alert to kill and capture the souls of all women. Following childbirth, the body of the mother is easily entered through the opened birth canal. To protect the mother the father goes to bed, takes care of the child, and even pretends to nurse it. He is kept on a restricted diet for forty days, during which time his friends visit him and offer congratulations on his having given birth. Meanwhile the mother has immediately resumed her household duties. The purpose of all this, of course, is to cause Lilith to mistake the man for the woman, and to foil her attempt to enter the mother and capture her soul. Victor Leyrer

has executed an excellent picture that depicts the couvade in minute detail. It is interesting to note here that while Lilith is credited with great powers her intelligence is open to question. Centuries of repeated failures never have taught her just who or where the real mother is.

Many primitives fill in all of the cracks of their huts with mud before the birth of a child and during the delivery run about the structure making loud noises to scare away threatening devils. The Arabs take a new-born child to a fire, or near the flame of a candle, to protect it. The Jewish religion provides for the safety of the baby by having a rabbi pin a protecting prayer to the blanket covering it.

Art, as a pictorial form of literature, was keenly influenced by the age-long opposing concept of gods of good and evil. Doré never deviated from the universal characterizations while Fra. Giovanni Angelico could not resist painting hell in bold colors in his fresco "The Last Judgement." In cathedrals such as Notre Dame the interiors are filled with pictures of victorious saints and angels, but domes and roofs are adorned with hideous gargoyles unmistakably demoniacal. Hell and its final punishments reached the ultimate of human imagination in the paintings adorning Hindu temples. Many Biblical commentators believe that during their captivity the Jews were deeply influenced by the ancient Asiatic hells, and incorporated many of their details into the Old Testament, which was reputedly written from memory by a group of seventy rabbis in Babylon.

In his Treatise on the Gods H. L. Mencken gives an excellent summation of this Indian hell. Some unfortunate souls, because they killed a priest, were tortured for 64,000 years there---and each day and night in hell was equivalent to 64,000 years on earth. Those who refused alms to a priest were at death turned into pretas, ghostly beings that roamed the world suffering such eternal tortures from thirst that their dried-out stomachs caught fire and caused flames to issue from their mouths and noses. After death the good man, on the other hand, lived in a golden palace and was supplied with a white cloud on which he might float. He remained in such celestial bliss with a retinue of lovely maidens for 9,244,000,000 years, "eating huckleberries and learning how to love." One presumes that at the end of this lengthy amorous education he was graduated summa cum laude.

Three books of Asiatic origin contributed greatly to the literature of good-evil conflict. These are The Talmud, The Koran and The Arabian Nights. In many details they show that they originated in the same folklore. King Solomon figures largely as the champion of God, and as he was endowed with all wisdom, he had no difficulty in capturing many demons, which he sealed in copper jars and cast into the sea. While these demons were very powerful they do not seem very intellectual, for often they were outwitted by men of little education. As is to be expected, in all stories in these three books evil is conquered---at least temporarily.

Dark pages of social history centering around this conflict were written in the Middle Ages when black magic's hysterical adherents were tortured and burned by the zealous servants of God in the Inquisition. These followers of the devil, true to ancestral memories, went from right to left and downward. By reciting the Mass and the apostle's creed backward they changed holy into unholy and thus were able both to worship the devil and insult God simultaneously. Going counter-clockwise is a very powerful form of magic known all over the world; today the schoolchild who is able to recite the alphabet backwards or to write in mirror hand is supposed frequently to have other powers not entirely orthodox. Conversely, in Scotland the drawing of a circle clockwise through the air around the body is reputed to furnish powerful protection against the Evil One.

The fight for the soul of man is not ended till he safely reaches Hea-

en or is at last, hopeless and helpless, flung into the fires below. Thus the soul, after the death of the body, is still in danger. The Egyptian Book of the Dead details the ordeals the soul of the dead man faces, and instructs him how to pass through various gates and successfully combat the devil. In one of Kipling's charming tales he vividly describes a multitude of souls nearing heaven but still beset by the seductive propaganda of many lesser devils. Heaven sends a rescuing force of angels to launch counter propaganda which will encourage the wavering souls to remain steadfast until they are safely inside the Pearly Gates.

In the present day one branch of Christianity firmly believes that after death the soul remains inside the body till rigor mortis occurs. If the final rites of the church are given before rigidity then the soul is saved. The presumption is that the devil has never learned of this hiding place of the soul and thus loses valuable time still seeking it outside the body.

The question of how long the soul is safe after death or how long it remains secreted within the body is partly answered by the custom of many semi-primitives of placing pieces of glass and colored stones on graves to frighten the devil. There is a close relation between this custom and the crosses and other religious symbols carved in marble seen in our modern cemeteries.

The fear of evil spirits is still a definite part of the everyday thinking of the Pennsylvania Dutch. They paint symbols on their barns to keep devils from harming their cattle; they believe in pow-wow for the cure of diseases, and study The Seventh Book of Moses. An old man lived but a few miles from my home and his neighbors believed he had sold his soul to the devil. I have an old bedspread woven in a design called "Four Apostles." The old poem runs:

> Four angels around my bed;
> Two at the foot and two at the head.
> Matthew, Mark, Luke and John,
> Bless the bed I sleep upon.

With that bedspread covering them my great-grandparents must have felt protected against nocturnal visitations of the evil spirits.

The question faces the analyst as to whether there is any basic foundation for this world-wide, age-old credence in the struggle between the forces of light and darkness for the possession of man's soul. For centuries men have written about this conflict, and have believed all they wrote. Flaubert's Temptations of St. Anthony dramatizes the struggle that saint saw raging about him. Luther claimed that he saw the devil and threw an inkpot at him. He once wrote: "I heard him above my cell walking on the cloister. But as I knew he was the Devil I paid no attention to him and went to bed." Nor is there any doubt that Dante, Milton and Bunyan believed they were writing of matters that were factual.

In considering the present-day use of this plot of conflict between good and evil, especially in the fantasy field, it is evident that there are two sharply-defined groups. There are many tales where visitors from distant planets visit the Earth, and as many where men of this planet visit others. The inevitable result is war between the two. However, the extra-terrestrials are rather similar to human beings; they may differ in comparative intelligence, ideology, bodily shape, and so on, but in the main there is really no vital and fundamental distinction, and we finish such a story with the thought that after all it is simply a description of a struggle between two not particularly different races. Mere space opera does not leave the impression that the extra-terrestrials are terrible in their might or supernatural in their power.

The other modern group, headed by Lovecraft and Merritt, write of very old gods from the Outside who have only one desire, that of conquering mankind, capturing its souls, and at long last destroying the planet Earth. These gods

assume unearthly shapes and possess supernatural powers derived not from weapons based on any known scientific principle, but rather from psychic reservoirs unknown to the most learned scientist. These authors have created new worlds and peculiar supernatural forces, but have simply followed the ancient plot firmly believed in by all primitive peoples. Good temporarily defeats evil, but the under gods are never completely destroyed. These authors cannot accept the thought that all things bad can be destroyed beyond possible resurrection any more than they can the idea of evil being permanently victorious. Lovecraft and Merritt each has his imitators among the younger authors. Bok more or less successfully imitates Merritt, while Derleth and Wandrei follow closely after Lovecraft.

One might ask whether Lovecraft or Merritt actually believed there was any definite basis for their plots involving the gods from Beyond and their participation in this conflict for the soul. Though the former is accepted as the master of this form of literature, Frank Belknap Long recently stated that he did not take any such belief seriously. August Derleth concurs with this view, saying:

> Long's statement is absolutely correct. Lovecraft wrote in the myth-pattern for the very good reason that he had invented it, and what more natural that he should carry it on? He had only so much time to devote to his writings; his myth-pattern was popular; doubtless he, too, was fond of his fictional world and it is the most natural thing in the world that he "seemed unable to write anything else"---it was not that he was unable to do so, but that he elected to do so with the little time he had.

There is little known on which to base an opinion regarding Merritt's belief in the basic element of his plots. One thing is certain, however: these authors have given their gods new names but they have not created new ideas; behind all the literary trimmings they still remain God and devil, good and evil.

In answering the question of whether there actually exists now, or ever did exist, any <u>provable</u> elements of fact in this belief of the duality of deities one important field of research has been completely disregarded, at least as far as providing any solution to this vexing problem.

In the world's composite civilization there is a large number of persons who are called abnormals. The largest segment of these psychotics suffers from <u>dementia praecox</u>, or <u>schizophrenia</u>, which is a splitting of the personality or, specifically, "the simultaneous presence of two conflicting ideas," each battling for supremacy over the mind or soul of the patient. These patients have various delusions founded on differing types of hallucinations which are mainly visual and auditory, though sometimes olfactory and tactile.

All of these delusions center around the splitting, or duality, of the personality. This cleavage clearly shows a struggle between good and evil, God and devil, for the ultimate possession of the patient's soul. The hallucinations of sight and sound on which these delusions are based are very real to the patient, but because the psychiatrist does not see and hear them he has always considered that they exist only in the imagination of a sick man and are therefore without factual foundation.

Scientifically there is no doubt that such psychoses as <u>dementia praecox</u> definitely lower the threshold of consciousness and cause the subject to become very primitive in all his modes of thinking. How far back, how deep into the subconscious a person can sink, and whether the subconscious includes ancestral memory as well as all experiences of the patient's past life are at present unanswered questions; but it is an undeniable fact that many psychotic patients exhibit to a truly astonishing degree cultural patterns which have been defin-

itely traced to the most ancient races.

Therefore there exists in our hospitals for the mentally diseased a large number of persons whose delusions, based on hallucinations, are considered abnormal because their delusional life cannot be shared by the so-called normal. This writer, in the course of a quarter century's contact with hundreds of such patients, has never been able to convince himself that these peculiar illusions are entirely the stuff of which dreams are made. He has been able to make friends with most of such patients and, in return for this friendship, they have talked more freely to him than they would to the average psychiatrist.

Their confidential communications follow a main pattern varied only slightly by education, environment, religious experience and the depth of mental illness at hand. Universally this pattern confirms the belief that God and the devil are struggling for the domination of the patients' souls. The ceaseless conflict is constantly raging all around them but becomes incredibly terrifying when it actually enters their bodies. Then within themselves are heard the seductive whisperings of the devil and the counter-whisperings of God encouraging them to resist temptation. Thus there is a bivalence of desire: every thought, every act has an opposing thought or act blocking final action.

The patient feels that while this battle is being waged he, and he alone, can make the final decision. There is ample evidence that he desires to save his soul from everlasting torment. His rage, his struggle to obtain complete mastery over evil and drive out the devil is apparent. While fighting thus he may be described, in psychiatric terms, as being in the stage of conflict.

Often the hallucinations are visual and he sees God and the devil actually struggling for possession of his soul. Most often this takes place during the night, with God hovering above the bed and the devil hiding underneath. God is always blond, beautiful and awe-inspiring in His majestic strength. The devil is ugly, horned, with a tail and a hairy body. He is usually armed with a pitchfork, while God carries a flaming sword. Night after night the conflict rages while the patient lies wide-eyed and immobile, overwhelmed by the spectacle, and egotistically convinced that he is worthy of such a supernatural struggle.

During the day the patient may relax in the safety of the bed or a chair. Out of either he is hotly pursued by the devil. If he is once caught and his posterior impaled by the pitchfork he is eternally lost. One patient carefully explained to me his particular places of refuge, and was convinced that if ever he fell in jumping from one to another the devil would snatch his soul after killing him with a trident.

Voices come out of the sky, truly from the gods of Beyond, hurling threats as to what will be done to a captured soul. Because most of these are obscene the patient often suffers a very violent [illegible] in which fear and rage mingle to produce what is called "the homosexual panic."

Driven to desperation in their attempts to keep these devils out of their bodies, these people often resort to forms of mutilation which will prevent them from committing unpardonable sins. They enucleate their eyes to keep from seeing evil, bite off their tongues to prevent any vile speech, cut off hands or castrate themselves to ensure their inability to indulge in abnormal sexual acts. In final desperation suicide is often resorted to with the belief that in this ultimate sacrifice to God they can escape the clutches of the devil. One man, after self-mutilation, fell backward with arms extended to make a cross of his body, in the hope that this position would save his soul after death.

All too often the patient ceases to struggle and surrenders to the devil. Then his condition becomes entirely hopeless. Heedless of cold, hunger or uncleanliness he refuses to eat or care for himself in any way. Breathing is reduced to a minimum of only three or four times a minute. Winking is so infre-

quent that the dry eyeballs develop ulcers. Urine and feces are passed only when accumulation produces involuntary muscular spasms. He never talks. Yet, as far as can be determined, he is perfectly happy because he has ceased struggling and is content with the thoughts, sights and sounds sent him by the devils to whom he has completely surrendered and who are, thereby, in possession of his soul.

This is not the fanciful writing of a science-fiction author, but the impressions obtained by living with and observing hundreds of such cases. In spite of an honest effort to view these patients in the accepted psychiatric way I have asked myself the question---Are these people really capable of seeing and hearing forms of life that are unappreciable to the so-called normal person? It is certainly true that there are thousands of such patients who have never read about the gods from Outside in the writings of Lovecraft, Merritt, et al., who are ignorant of anthropology, but fully live to the terror-existence described by these authors. To me the truth is contained in one of only two possible explanations. Either their delusional fantasies are the result of education along folklore or religious lines, or else the result of an extremely deep lowering of the subconscious which includes ancestral memories of the far away and long ago.

Thus it seems that the conflict of the gods for the conquest of the soul cannot be lightly dismissed as fantasy. While there will always exist a diversity of opinions it is not impossible that, in time to come, intensive scientific research may prove that the situations developed by our present fantasy authors could have had duplicates in actuality. Until that time comes, however, the only logical and purely scientific position to take is that the question of the conflict of the gods for the control of the soul remains unsolved.

---oOo---

TWO IN ONE

by
Thyril L. Ladd

The White Cat (1907) by Gellett Burgess is a story of dual personality. From a meandering beginning---for the book's early chapters are very much overstuffed with drawing-room conversation---this tale develops a situation which is of extremely tense nature, and, indeed, seems really baffling of solution. The tension grows tighter and tighter as the novel progresses.

A young architect named Castle is injured when his auto crashes into a tree near a fine country residence. Invalided in this house, he makes the acquaintance of the girl Joy. Joy is wealthy and beautiful as well, but is beset by a strange malady; after sleeping she is liable to awake not as herself but as another personality---a romping, younger-minded and often cruel stranger. This other self is called Edna. Neither of the two personalities, however, remembers anything the other may have said or done.

As the Edna-personality becomes more wanton and cruel, it becomes evident to Castle that he must do something to save the girl Joy, whome he has come to love. He and a faithful colored servant of the household battle together. Action is complicated, however, by a doctor---a friend of the Edna-half---who is striving through hypnotism to destroy the Joy-personality entirely.

The closing chapters of The White Cat provide real thrills, as Castle uses the most stringent methods at his command to relieve Joy of the unwanted alternate self. His method of so doing is effective and dramatic---though to reveal it would lessen the potential reader's interest.

This novel is also of more than common interest because of an intriguing similarity, in fundamental plot, that exists between it and The Talkers (1923) by Robert W. Chambers.

At no time in The White Cat does the author hint at the origin of this other personality possessed by Joy. In the Chambers novel, however, the point is stressed. There, a beautiful girl is killed when a hatpin pierces her brain. A young surgeon of none too acceptable reputation comes upon her dead body some time after death and decides to test his theory that there exists in the brain a gland controlling life and death. His unorthodox operation is quite successful, and the girl returns to life. But as her spirit seeks to re-enter her body the spirit of another deceased girl, also seeking to live again in this world, battles her for ownership of the body. Thenceforth until the end of the book the girl's fiance finds either her own normal self present or the reckless and evil spirit of an intruding stranger.

In my opinion, Burgess has done a much better job than Chambers with this theme. His plot is more compact, he does not deviate so much from the problem at hand, and he has produced, all in all, a better piece of writing. I cannot help wondering, too---because of the similarity between the two works---if Chambers read The White Cat and was inspired to remold its basic idea into a novel of his own. Certainly the chronology is favorable to such a belief. In any case, there are sufficient new incidents and fresh variations in The Talkers to prevent any charge of plagiarism arising.

For some reason (I suspect unjustified faith in the accuracy of descriptions of the book in advertising) many fans have gained the impression that The White Cat's theme is possession of a woman's body by a cat-demon. This is entirely erroneous, of course, and shows how many dealers never hesitate to describe for sale books they have never read. The origin of the title is interesting. Burgess has chosen it to refer to a childhood fairy tale wherein a prince is made, by its urgent pleas, to behead an enchanted white cat---whereupon a bespelled princess instantly regains her rightful form. So, in this novel, the hero is obliged to use the most violent measures at his command to save his sweetheart's proper personality.

For the serious reader---one who can enjoy a clash of divergent characters---this tale presents some very entertaining reading. Its power lies in its ever-mounting elements of horror and fascination. There are no spectral figures, sliding panels or unearthly shrieks, but there is present something even more gripping---the stark horror of a mind possessed by an evil, intelligent entity.

---oOo---

DE CAMP, L. Sprague and PRATT, Fletcher

The Carnelian Cube: a Humorous Fantasy

New York: The Gnome Press, 1948. 230pp. 22.5 cm. $3.

It was a "dream-stone," the foreman of the Armenian labor gang told archeologist Arthur Cleveland Finch. If you slept on it, you would go to heaven ---the "place where everything is like you want," as the Armenian explained. And that night, chuckling at his own absurdity, Finch stuffed the red cube under his pillow, wished for a perfectly rational world, and drifted off to sleep.

Seems familiar, doesn't it? It is if you've read Last Darkness Fall, The Incomplete Enchanter, The Land of Unreason and the rest of the Pratt-de Camp novels. All of them use some similar device to get the reader out of his everyday world. A magic stone is as good a ticket to an adult fairyland as any, but

what really counts, of course, is how good the destination is. There are three fairylands crammed into The Carnelian Cube---and every one stinks.

This is not the fault of the ideas themselves. They are not bad; in fact one of them is pretty good. But the authors are so preoccupied with churning out slick dialogue to cover these ideas that such little things as characterization, plot, development and credibility are completely overlooked.

The first world is a sort of feudal set-up where people call each other "thou" or "youse" according to their social status. Nothing much of interest happens, and the reader gets accustomed to everything just as Finch is catapulted elsewhere.

This time he lands in another feudal society, a heavy-handed satire on southern customs and aristocrats, complete with a colonel who calls people "suh" and whips out a pistol or a mint julep according to his mood. Stirred in with him are such items as literary societies, Joseph Dunninger, boat-racing and the ghost of an octopus. The result is certainly a mess.

The third place where the carnelian cube takes Finch seems the most promising of the lot. Everything clicks along scientifically---even cocktail-mixing is done with a stop-watch and a metric graduate. The study of history involves actual reconstructions. These use authentic costumes and settings, and "actors" who have undergone mental surgery and psychological treatment to give them the outlook of the historical figures they represent. What possibilities for a full-length novel! None of them, however, are realized in this pedestrian treatment.

Given decent attention, each of the separate ideas in this book would make an acceptable novel in itself. But jamming them together with narrative speed and a bunch of cardboard characters is a poor substitute for good writing. If Messrs. de Camp and Pratt do not realize it, any reader of The Carnelian Cube will be able to enlighten them. ---Charles Peter Brady.

The Immortal Storm---
concluded from page 32

entering the field; and old names, some of which had been driven into inactivity by disagreement with Wollheim, were returning. The complexions of the professional fantasy magazines themselves were completely altered, and new titles were appearing. For the first time in many years most of fandom was united in seeking a common goal: a world science-fiction convention to be held in conjunction with the 1939 World's Fair. The past, since 1937, had been an era of turmoil, ceaseless feuding, shattered plans and abortive dreams. The immediate future, at least, looked better. And as 1938 drew to a close, the keynote of science-fiction fandom was optimism.

(to be continued)

---oOo---

OF AN OLD WOMAN

by

Genevieve K. Stephens

She called an elfin maid
To watch her ancient house
And went upon her journey
Unobtrusive as a mouse.

Now when the old floors creak
And dusty shutters raised,
Eyes elfin look forth,
Not sick, sad or dazed.

And even as it crumbles
Merry laughter rings---
And there is wondermont indeed
How sweet the Old One sings.

---oOo---

BACK NUMBERS: The following issues of Fantasy Commentator are on hand in small supply: #9, 11, 20. Price, 25¢ each, 5 for $1. If you desire any of those issues, order promptly, please; they will be permanently out of print when the present quantities are exhausted. A postal card from any regular subscriber will suffice.

LEAVES — A BOTANICAL RARITY

by
Rodd Boggs

"Leaves is a collector's item of extreme rarity," said Sam Moskowitz in the Fall, 1947 Fantasy Commentator (p. 141), "and easily holds a prominent place among the finest journals ever to be turned out by the fan field." This is not to imply that it was an ordinary garden-variety "fanzine." While it was indeed a publication devoted to fantasy, one could hardly call it a typical fan magazine, for as Clark Ashton Smith said of The Recluse (W. Paul Cook's earlier "ayjay" endeavor upon which Leaves was based), "it had none of the newsy bits about living authors, magazines, etc., that characterize the present-day publications of the fan type."

A predominately literary publication which survived for only two issues, Leaves was edited and published by R. H. Barlow. (One might speculate on whether the title Leaves was suggested by Leavenworth, at which city he resided when the first number was published.) Barlow was a familiar figure in amateur journalism and fantasy circles a decade ago, but today he is best remembered as an acolyte and friend of H. P. Lovecraft, whom he twice entertained at his Florida home. Lovecraft designated him his literary executor, and in that capacity Barlow has worked closely with August Derleth and Arkham House. His memoir of Lovecraft in Florida, "The Wind that is in the Grass," appears in Marginalia, and he has written other items of fantasy interest, including the foreword to Henry S. Whitehead's Arkham House collection, Jumbee and Other Uncanny Tales. At present Barlow lives in Mexico City where he is writing a history under a Guggenheim grant.

Leaves was Barlow's chief contribution to the fantasy field. The two issues appeared in 1937 and 1938, soon after the collapse of Fantasy Magazine, when fandom was in the "dark ages." Because of this, Leaves created little stir at the time. However, it has become a collector's item because it is the source of more than one valuable bit of fantasia and also because it reprinted several hard-to-obtain items from professional publications. The magazine's "extreme rarity" is implicit in the fact that only 100 copies of the first issue were published, and but sixty of the second placed on sale.

In appearance, however, both numbers fail to impress one in this day of lithographed covers and multicolor mimeography. In all except bulk---each issue compares quite favorably with Joe Kennedy's two annuals and The Fancyclopedia---Leaves appears as a shoddily mimeographed publication, completely unillustrated except for front covers, wholly innocent of letter-guide headings, and run off entirely in black ink on heavy, white, lettersize stock. Though reasonably legible, the magazine shows definite signs of hurry; a few pages seem not to have been slipsheeted, others are run off crookedly---especially in the second number ---and several bear a vertical series of ink-blots from a smudged roller.

The stencilling itself is of average quality; typographical errors are in evidence, some strike-overs can be found, and left-out words are inserted between the lines above a caret. There are no even-edged right-hand margins. The type changes from pica to elite and back again, the switch on one occasion coming in the middle of a story.

The front cover of the first Leaves depicts a group of oak leaves twirling earthward---a very simple and unimaginative line drawing which, being unshaded, is hard to fathom at first glance. In the upper left corner is typed the information: "Summer 1937: First Issue." Across the page in the other corner appears: "Entire Contents Copyright 1937 by R. H. Barlow." "Published at 104 Third Avenue, Leavenworth, Kansas" is placed in the lower left-hand corner. The cover

also lists the price as 35¢. Nowhere else does this publishing data appear.

Leading off Leaves #1 is a twenty-page fragment titled "The Story of the Princess Kulkais and the Prince Kalilah; An Unfinished Episode from William Beckford's Vathek." Being unfamiliar with Vathek, I am uncertain whether this tale, or fragment, appears in the book itself, or whether it is a part of the Episodes of Vathek which were discovered early in this century---some 250 years after the author's death---by a biographer of Beckford, and which is supposed to have been intended as interpolated tales in Vathek proper. Vathek is an Oriental tale, resplendant (as Lovecraft said) in "weird coloring" and accentuated with "shadowy spectral horror." The following passage may perhaps hint at its atmosphere, if a shard can give an indication of the beauty and symmetry of so intricate a whole:

> The sultana rose from her couch, notwithstanding all the efforts made to restrain her, and ran to the balcony overlooking the Nile. The view from thence was lonely and drear. Not a single boat showed upon the surface of the stream. In the distance were discernible stretches of sand, which the wind, from time to time, sent whirling into the air. The rays of the setting sun dyed the waters blood-red. Scarcely had the deepening twilight stretched over the horizon, when a sudden and furious wind broke open the lattice-work of the gallery...

Following this fragment, which (like the above brief quotation from it) breaks off in a trail of dots, is a seven-page work by Clark Ashton Smith, beginning on page 17, which presumes to complete Beckford's original episode. His florid imaginings somewhat recapture the original mood; if anything, this ending is more lush and colorful than Beckford's beginning. Witness:

> In that place, there was no difference between night and day; for the lamps burned eternally amid the fruited foliage, and the star-like orbs continued to sparkle ever in the vault above us. Often we wandered through the garden which had a strange beauty, though we did not care, after certain indiscreet delvings, to examine too closely its hidden particulars....

Whether this C. A. Smith fragment appears elsewhere I do not know, but it seems probable that it is the "Third Episode of Vathek" advertised in Arkham House's 1946 catalog as being scheduled for appearance in Genius Loci and Other Tales. As the story is not part of the book's actual contents, it may be that Leaves is the only extant source of it.

A short piece by Robert E. Howard fills the half-page under Smith's Vathek ending (p. 24). It is "With a Set of Rattlesnake Rattles," which is a brief meditation on the title subject. This sentence strikes the keynote: "The wearer of this emblem is inflexibly individualistic; he mingles not with the herd, nor bows before the thrones of the mighty."

One of the most interesting and---at this writing---rare items that Leaves printed, "Cats and Dogs," by Lewis Theobald, Jun., follows on page 25. This essay, purportedly contributed to a dispute about to occur in a literary club of which Mr. Theobald was once a member, takes the feline side of the cat vs. dog controversy, and upholds the cat's superiority over man's best friend in convincing and inimitable fashion. So perfectly does the polished, quietly witty style of this essay reflect the personal tastes and prejudices of the author (in contrast to the impartial and detached viewpoint he usually affected) that one is not in the least surprised to learn that "Lewis Theobald, Jun." is a pseudonym of H. P. Lovecraft himself. As a matter of fact, "Cats and Dogs" is the "provoca-

tive, delightful essay that forms the title piece for Something about Cats, an Arkham House book of Lovecraftiana to be published shortly. HPL admirers, especially those who are also cat lovers, will be delighted with this graceful expression of an enthusiasm so close to its author's heart.

A sonnet by Elizabeth Toldridge, "Mists," completes page 34. It is remarkable chiefly for the typographical errors to be found therein which are summarized in an "Errata" notation in Leaves #2.

For sheer literary quality, "Dead Houses" (page 35) is unequalled in either issue of the magazine. This 23-page work by Edith Miniter is not a true short story; rather, it is a long, rambling description of life and incident in the New England town of Holly Mountain, a community of sagging houses and degenerate people. Telling her tale in the manner of an elderly gossip gently rocking on her wisteria-covered piazza, the author reveals a sharp eye for realistic detail and a knack for description of "empty houses and abandoned farms, of shuttered windows, relics, ghosts and silence" that is worthy of Mary E. Wilkins-Freeman or Rose Terry Cooke. An excerpt would give little indication of the boundless quality of this work, and the choice of a passage would be difficult. One could never decide whether to quote the story about the grandfather who, while his spouse was watching a sick neighbor, kept himself awake by reading John S. C. Abbott's History of the Civil War in two volumes, and then exactly at midnight loaded a wheelbarrow with pies and firewood which he pushed to the solace of his wife and the invalid; or the tale of the prim New Englander who, visiting a neighbor, had to sit at dinner next to a "great big N-----," and though she had a silver fork to eat with, felt insulted; or the episode about tho shiftless family, too lazy to chop wood, who burned fence-rails all winter, thrusting one end of the rail into the stove till it burned away, then simply shoving the rest into the fire. If you over have an opportunity to read Leaves, do not overlook "Dead Houses" merely because it is not a weird tale.

"Sandalwood," a poem by Clark Ashton Smith, and "The Beautiful City," a sonnet by Frank Belknap Long, occupy page 49. The former is probably the title entry of the Smith brochure Sandalwood, but I prefer the sonnet, which does not suffer from such poeticises as "Thou, who hast chosen the world's appointed way" (line two of Smith's poem).

A reprinting of A. Merritt's "People of the Pit" begins on page 50. This famous tale, which is credited by Jack Williamson and Edmond Hamilton as inspiring both of them to try writing science-fiction, was virtually out of print at the timo of its appearance hore, although it has been reprinted sinco.

"Obiter Scriptum, or, Succotash Without Seasoning," an editorial by R. H, Barlow (page 60), begins: "Leaves is an uncommon botanical bit,, modelled, I suppose, after Cook's Recluse of ten years past, which (although it survived to no second number) collected a variety of material, chiefly fantastic, in complete indifference to popular taste." The editorial continues with four pages of discussion as to whether fantasy is "a legitimate type of artistic expression. . .." The affirmative is taken by Clark Ashton Smith, who decries the fact that fantasy is "out of favor" among intellectuals. Mourning the plight of the writer who was "unlucky enough to have been born into the age of Jeffers, Hemingway and Joyce," Smith writes t

> Writers must confine themselves woll within the range of statisticians, lightning calculators, Froud and Kraft-Ebbing, tho Hearst and McFadden publications, WPA and mcil-ordor catalogues. Chimeras are no longer the mode, the infinite has been abolished, mystery is obsolete, and Sphinx and Medusa are toys for children. Tho weird and tho unearthly are outlawed, and all mundane^ossibilities (which, it may bo, are

commonplaces of the Pleiads) have been banished to some limbo of literalistic derision.

Two short poems, "H. P. Lovecraft" and "Ephemera" by Elizabeth Toldridge, fill the lower half of page 64. Neither is of much interest. "The Panelled Room," a short story by August Derleth, begins on page 65. It originally appeared in The Westminster Magazine during 1933, and is in my opinion one of Mr. Derleth's finest tales. It has been variously reprinted since that time.

A poem "It Will Be Thus," by Arthur Goodenough (page 70) is followed by three stories by Donald Wandrei which begin on page 71. They are "The Twilight of Time," first of the "Cosmic Dust" series---a tale more widely known as "The Red Brain"---and its hitherto unpublished sequels, "On the Threshold of Eternity" (page 76) and "A Legend of Yesterday" (page 79). Both "The Red Brain" and "On the Threshold of Eternity" were published in Wandrei's Eye and the Finger, but to my knowledge "A Legend of Yesterday" (a mere half-page in length) has never appeared elsewhere.

The issue concludes with a lyric poem, "Autumnus---and October," by A. H. Goodenough (page 80). The back cover is blank on both sides.

Leaves' second and last issue is undated except for the line "Entire contents copyright 1938 by R. H. Barlow" on the cover. According to L. B. Farsaci, it was published toward the end of 1938 by Clairo Beck---the cover's legend "For sale at the Futile Press, Box 27, Lakeport, California, at fifty cents" appears to support the contention---and, according to Sam Moskowitz's "Immortal Storm," the actual mimeographing was done by Beck, although Barlow cut stencils.

Consisting of sixty lettersized pages, Leaves #2 is fronted by another line drawing. This one depicts a grinning skull with the head of a serpent darting out from between the jaws. In one of the skull's ill-matched eye sockets is a view of ring-girt Saturn and a shrunken sun, and in the other the image of an unborn baby in head-down, foetal position.

The feature of this number is a sixteen-paged tale, "Werewoman," by C. L. Moore. It begins on page 81---the numbering being consecutive with that in Leaves #1. This is a Northwest Smith story, and is a typical exotic adventure of that famous spacefarer. It blazes with strange, rich colors, and captures the alien mood in poetic adjectives and beautifully descriptive passages. A single paragraph will display the quality of this story:

> ...as reality melted about them, the shadowy city took firmer shape. In the reversal everything real became cloudy, grass and trees and pools dimming like some forgotten dream, while the unstable outlines of the towers loomed up more and more clearly in the pale dark, colours flushing them as if reviving blood ran through the stones. Now the city stood firm and actual around them, and vague trees thrust themselves mistily through unbroken masonry, shadows of grass waved over firm marble pavements....

"Werewoman" definitely takes its place among the best of the Northwest Smith yarns, and it is surprising that it has never been published elsewhere. One is inclined to think that this might have been a suitable story for Miss Moore---who really was conspicuous by her absence---to have contributed to Weird Tales' silver anniversary issue earlier this year.

"Winter Night," a poem in free verse by Vrest Teachout Orton, fills page 97. It is well written, and somewhat weird in theme. Donald Wandrei's tale of "a strange vigil in a desolate land," "The Woman at the Window," appears on pages 98-9. This poetic sketch, like his contributions to Leaves #1, was also included in The Eye and the Finger.

A comment by H. P. Lovecraft, excerpted from a letter, is a filler at the bottom of page 99. Both this and "In Defense of Dagon" (page 117) appear in Marginalia under the title "Two Comments." It would appear that the former, "From a Letter," was first printed in The Fantasy Fan (March, 1934), while the latter may excerpted from a communication to "The Eyrie" in Weird Tales.

"Collapsing Cosmoses," an unfinished satire, supposedly humorous, on the super-duper space epic occupies page 100 and part of page 101. Unsigned, it is doubtless the work of Barlow himself, and bears the date 1935.

A poem by Howard Davis Spoerl titled "Haunted" (page 101) is in the Poe tradition ("the lonely sea, the heavy sea, the funereal sea"), but achieves an authentic, if unsustained, mood of its own for several lines.

"The Faun," which follows (page 102), is a strange bit of mythology, or pseudo-mythology, somewhat more fulsomely written than Bulfinch, but flowery and classical in style. This not ineffective tale was written in 1918 by Samuel Loveman, a fairly well known poet, friend of Ambrose Bierce, George Sterling and Hart Crane, and another of the Lovecraft circle. His photograph appears in Marginalia.

"Flower of War," an ironic poem on page 106, is by Henry George Weiss, better known to fantasites as the late Francis Flagg.

A little over five pages (107-112) are devoted to "Three Fragments" by H. P. Lovecraft. None of the three is a story in the legitimate sense, and each ends in a rash of dots. All three, "Azathoth," "The Descendant" and "The Book," appear in Marginalia under those titles. Their Leaves publication was their first. Two contributions by Frank Belknap Long complete page 112. They are: "O Is There Aught in Wine and Ships?," a poem which lyrically recaptures the classic beauty of Rome, and "Futility," a quatrain.

Fritz Leiber, Jr., who in 1938 was relatively unknown to the fantasy field, is represented on pages 113-7 with a long poem in free verse, "The Demons of the Upper Air." Divided into eight sections, this rather ineffective work is definitely weird in theme, but seems to derive more from Lovecraft than do his later, well-remembered supernatural stories, which in the foreward to Night's Black Agents Leiber says were inspired by "the terrors of the modern city." There is very little of the smoky, grimy metropolis in this poem, however, which speaks of "strange beasts on the galactic rim" and the night where "around, around the far stars wheel, the space winds surge, against the dwellers on the verge." The use of words and phrases like "eldritch," "elder things" and "mad whispers" suggests Lovecraft, as does the very theme of beings from the Outside.

Following "In Defense of Dagon," mentioned previously, are two poems by Jonathon Lindley (page 119). Neither "The Unresisting" nor "March" is memorable.

Of Henry S. Whitehead's "Tree-Man" (page 120) little need be said. It is a Gerald Canevin tale, and originally appeared in Weird Tales in 1931. Modern readers will find it in Jumbee and other Uncanny Tales. The story occupies almost thirteen pages here, the lower portion of the last one (page 132) being filled with a virtually worthless poem by Th. Weelkes, "Thule."

Page 133 features "A Checklist of the Published Weird Stories of Henry S. Whitehead." This names twenty-five titles from Weird Tales, six from Strange Tales and four from Adventure. It omits stories published before 1938, and naturally does not include several that have appeared since then; nevertheless, one notes eleven titles that Arkham House has not as yet collected.

A twelve-paged story by Barlow himself, beginning on page 134, completes the fictional contents of Leaves. Titled "Origin Undetermined," it is a "seeds from space" yarn which clearly shows Lovecraft's influence in several points of mechanism. However, one is glad to see the author carefully eschewing most of HPL's overworked adjectives; in his description of a primal city, for example, he never once uses the words "accursed" or "hellish." In broad scheme the story some-

what resembles the Lovecraft style most evident in "Through the Gates of the Silver Key," without descending so sharply to the deus ex machina denouement. It is well written, and deserves professional appearance.

Leaves II concludes with a last page headed "Colophon or Epitaph." A section of "errata in Leaves I" is followed by "Notes for an Editorial," which contains some indefinite ruminations on the virtues and defects of Poe that have descended to his imitators and admirers, and "Logamachy," a brief reply to criticism of a remark by Ernest Edkins quoted in the editorial of Leaves #1.

This page was indeed an epitaph rather than merely a colophon for, as R. H. Barlow probably realized as he typed the heading, the magazine was never to to see another issue. His literary brain-child thereafter vanished from the contemporary scene, and is now to be found only in the dusty files of a few old-time fantasy collectors.

---oOo---

Mullen, Stanley

Moonfoam and Sorceries

Denver: Gorgon Press, 1948. 264pp. 22 cm. $3.

Further information: This book is limited to 1,000 numbered copies. It contains thirteen poems and thirteen stories. The jacket design, title-page decorations and twelve interior illustrations are by Roy Hunt.

Review: This is one of the nicest looking productions of a small fantasy publishing house I have seen. The jacket, in striking blue and silver, hides a soft green cloth binding, attractively lettered. The paper is of fine quality, too. Unlike most amateur efforts, though, Mr. Mullen's volume is good inside as well as outside.

I am told that none of the works in it are recent, but it seems to me that I saw one of them in a fan magazine not so long ago. That title, "A Strange View of a River," was entertaining then, and as much so on rereading it here. It is about a painting that changes strangely, and how it gives queer dreams to its owner. The other stories present a wide range of fantastic subjects: mutants ("Queen Bee"), archaic survivals ("The Temple of the Frog," "The Guardian"), ancient cults ("The Gods of Shipapu," "The Ophidians") and voodoo ("Night of Serpents"). The locales are varied, too, but the most effective of Mr. Mullen's stories seem to me to be those where he remains closest to home and familiar things. I do not mean by this that he cannot evoke alien atmosphere, for of course he can, yet perhaps it is simply my own nature to react most strongly to those settings I can best visualize. Thus "The Night Watchman," "All Cats Are Grey at Night" and "The King of Ghostland" appealed to me particularly. I also liked "The Sender of Dreams" and "Seven Against Death." They have a mystical slant, and depend on the evoking of a mood, which Mr. Mullen manages very well. And my favorite tale is "The Tavern of Winds," where a fragile topic is beautifully handled.

To my mind the verse in Moonfoam and Sorceries, all of it free verse, by the way, is less successful than the prose. The poems seem a bit too long. Perhaps that is because the subjects are never sharp or striking enough to support detailed treatment. Mr. Mullen gets around this in the title piece by repetition of a varied couplet throughout the work, producing a happy result.

The illustrations in the book look more professional than amateur. Roy Hunt is definitely an artist to watch, and I hope to see more of him. My only complaint against this book is the faulty typography, especially one incongruous intruding slip on page 63. But that is really a minor fault.

—Alice M. Perry.

TIPS ON TALES

by
A. Langley Searles

William Chapman White's Pale Blonde of Sands Street (1946): Johnny and Katie met, became friends, and fell in love---all in the short space of Johnny's twelve-hour shore leave. And before they separated he gave her a keepsake, an old Irish coin he had bought for a souvenir in Belfast. Neither knew then that it was a magic coin; that if both wished for something very much, and wished for it together, their wish would be granted---all because they were true lovers. Katie found that out when Johnny had gone without even telling her the name of his ship. She also discovered that owning the coin gave her the power to search, a lonely and wistful ghost, throughout all of Uncle Sam's wartime fleet for her lost Johnny. An ensign on the Milton saw her figure in the dusk; two seamen saw her, and believed the Monasquan was haunted; she appeared before the Florida's captain who, because his name happened to be O'Reilly and because he believed in magic charms, recognized her for what she was. It was not long before most of the ships in the navy had seen her frail form and heard the oft-repeated question---"Do you know Johnny Smith?" Those who saw her could seldom recall exactly what she was like---but all of them did remember Katie's deep throbbing voice, the soft light in her eyes, her long pale hair combed by the wind; she seemed like the woman they knew best and missed most.... Such a plot is promising if thin, and Mr. White has extracted from it virtually all potentialities. Perhaps a more apt phrase would be "squeezed from it": what he has actually done is expand an effective novelette into a dilute novel. Too much wording in The Pale Blonde of Sands Street is frankly padding. It is entertaining padding, to be sure, but nevertheless it blurs rather than sharpens the characters---they are always a trifle out of focus, always just short of convincing reality. Even Katie seems to be very much like the spectral form she so often assumes, lingering in the reader's mind as an insubstantial wraith rather than a flesh-and-blood creation. Yet somehow this very vagueness brings to the prose an indefinable and haunting charm. Fantasy addicts will probably enjoy Mr. White's book, though few will ever feel moved to reread it.

William F. Jenkins' Murder of the U.S.A. (1946): The casual fantasy reader will probably be attracted by the initial premise of this short novel---that the United States is subjected to a sudden surprise atomic onslaught which destroys a full third of the population within forty minutes. And the veteran fantasy reader will be attracted by its second premise---the nation perpetrating the attack is completely unknown. When an old hand like Mr. Jenkins (more familiar as Murray Leinster) turns to science-fiction the result is usually agreeable, and this effort is indeed as gratifying as one could expect. It is a sort of detective novel on a large scale, and is developed with the careful attention to logic thus implied. There is no axe-grinding in the book, for one is never told the exact identity of the agressor nation, though this nation is discovered and its hidden base destroyed. The story may have value as a warning, but I for one prefer to regard it primarily as entertainment. It's rather good entertainment, too, and you'll probably enjoy it as much as I did.

Bea Howe's A Fairy Leapt Upon My Knee (1928): However poor some novels are, they usually possess at least one redeeming feature that the reader can cling to as proof he has not been totally wasting his time. Miss Howe's opus is no exception to the rule, though ironically only because her book is so bad it is funny. In brief, it relates of the marriage of William and Evelina; how William, an ento-

mologist, caught a fairy while butterfly-hunting (incidentally, he used a mixture of molasses, brown sugar, beer and rum as bait, though it is not stated to which ingredient the fairy succumbed); how the creature caused the two to quarrel and, eventually, to make up. Sandwiched among these world-shaking events are a staggering quantity of verbosely boring descriptions, inept, repetitious wool-gatherings, and some of the most irrelevant, clumsily-contrived conversation I have ever encountered. Such tender scenes as the following, for example, frequently attest to the love of this couple:

> ...staring at the nape of her slender white neck, he said:
> "There was an amusing notice, or record, of this moth in an old back number of the Zoologist for 1852. It told how a specimen of it was taken on the 11th of September in the Montpelier Road, Brighton, by a young gentleman at school while it hovered over a passion flower."

One supposes this is the entomologist's substitute for etchings.... At any rate, neither William nor Evelina emerge as even remotely believable characters, and the fairy (who says never a word) merely sulks from one paragraph to the next; her only individual feature is the sound of her wings, which the authoress describes precisely (if unromantically) as "a minute echo of the noise one hears vibrating through the centre of a wooden telegraph pole." Even if you forget about the telegraph pole episodes, A Fairy Leapt Upon My Knee still is so bad it is funny, as I remarked above. Let me add, however, that it is certainly not funny enough to be worth reading.

---oOo---

MR. HUBBARD POINTS THE WAY

by
George Ebey

> Mr. Hubbard spoke briefly about himself and his stories. He said: '"The End Is Not Yet" was not intended to be a great story; its sole purpose was to implant a half-dozen ideas in the minds of certain people. It has already had some results.'
> ---"Just a Minute," Shangri-La #6.

Considered purely as a writer, L. Ron Hubbard probably ranks as one of the brightest luminaries in the Astounding Science-Fiction galaxy. He's good. He was represented in that magazine, about a year ago, by a serial novel, "The End Is Not Yet," into which it may be interesting to inquire, to appraise with the intention of informing ourselves as to his ideas about the world---which he sets forth at length---ideas shared by a good many people in a certain class. I shall speak of that class a bit further on.

Surely Mr. Hubbard's should be scrutinized because he is a thinker and perhaps a representative thinker who influences people. As a man who has been around and done many things he gave us material for thought in such stories as "Typewriter in the Sky," "Final Blackout," "The Tramp," "The Idealist," the rest of the "Kilkenny Cat" series and the aforementioned "End Is Not Yet." From these and supplementary background material we may gather that here is an author not averse to adorning his fancies with a moral. In "Typewriter in the Sky" he reiterates the "all the world's a stage" idea; in "Final Blackout" we are informed that the military will inherit the earth because it is the clique fittest to survive; and from "The Tramp" we are to understand, I think, that it is not good for

innocent persons to gain power because they are liable to destroy existing institutions. In "The Idealist," the hero speaks: "...the only freedom a people can enjoy is brought upon by a strong and merciful power, not by self-rule, a thing for which they are not equipped." These sentiments are expounded with eloquence.

Personally, I see L. Ron Hubbard as a romanticist---it takes a romanticist truly to glorify the strong man, as he did in "Final Blackout." The characterization of the Lieutenant in this story was a skillful one, producing murmurs of appreciation from many readers. However, Mr. Hubbard has no illusions about either his characters or the world they live in; he is a hard-boiled romanticist, and his heroes are hard-boiled romanticists with ideals tempered by the hard fire of reality.

One of the ideas presented in "The End Is Not Yet" is expressed by one Comte Faime, a fascinating sophisticate of varied accomplishments and one of the story's major characters. Here a group of scientists are working to control the world, and Faime explains: "If all scientists simply refused to work on such destructive weapons, why voila! there are no more wars." Friend Faime is presented as a cynic. "I am cynical," he says. He also remarks that "there is something melancholy and wonderful in dying for a lost cause," probably proving the point.

But such gay fellows are only secondary in the Hubbard scheme of things. His true pets are people like the Lieutenant and Charles Martel, people with something of the god-like about them, whether they are setting up latter-day feudalisms or discovering negative energy. These people are convinced that life is a sham, they realize the futility of trying to improve things (human nature is unchangeable)---yet they pull themselves disdainfully up by their bootstraps; they are replete with talents of one sort or another that the world doesn't appreciate. The Lieutenant, it will be remembered, was a first rate military strategist-tactician and an organizing genius; Steve Gailbraith, the ex-idealist, is a natural leader; and Charles Martel can do practically anything: he is a great nuclear physicist and kills people on occasion. They all have one thing in common which is being generally misunderstood. In the process of being misunderstood they have become hard-boiled.

This sort of stuff has great appeal for readers, who naturally tend to identify themselves with the heroes in such stories---and an especial appeal for science-fiction fans, who tend to be misunderstood by people who don't read science-fiction. To this extent Hubbard's ideas influence an impressionable audience.

In the opening paragraph of this brief essay I spoke of the ideas of Mr. Hubbard being shared by a good many other people. I had reference here to a statement by John W. Campbell, Jr., for whose magazine Hubbard writes most of his science-fiction. Campbell has observed that one-third of the readers of Astounding Science-Fiction are employed in a technical capacity or are technically inclined. This is borne out by a quotation from Pathfinder (a news magazine), which confirms the fact that Astounding "sells like hot cakes at scientist haunts." It has been obvious for a long time that Astounding is largely of, by and for these people---the technical intelligentsia who exist as a class.

That pioneer in the field, H. G. Wells, was prone to dwell upon such an intelligentsia. He envisioned a society dominated and led by airmen, engineers and technicians of all sorts; he believed, with the Technocrats, that a knowledge of ergs and kilowatts was synonymous with leadership and a desire for social improvement. To a certain extent these beliefs have permeated present-day science fiction and are echoed in the writings of Hubbard and others. In "The End Is Not Yet" Hubbard has apparently transferred his sentiments and best wishes from the military to the nuclear physicists---presumably on the basis that an atomic bomb kills more people than chemical explosives. Thusly we see the change wrought on

his mind by Hiroshima.

The proposition stated in "The End Is Not Yet" is the old one of the world-savers versus the world---or human nature, if you like. There is also some debate about the end justifying the means. If this seems familiar to veteran science-fiction readers it is because it is familiar: things have been modernized only to the extent of having a great big Fascist (hight Jules Farbrecken) as the villain. His motives are not very clear but he opposes Martel and company, who are new order internationalists, scientific refugees, citizens of the world who don't get along with their governments. They are tool makers who wish to become tool wielders. This is interesting, because such a situation verges on reality; as of this date there are groups of scientists deserting their ivory towers; scientists of the world are speaking out more and more, striving for a voice in national and international affairs.

But outside the pages of Astounding Science-Fiction the stirrings of these intelligentsia seem rather vague and inchoate. It might be well for Mr. Hubbard and the readers of Astounding to understand this fact and the reasons behind it---otherwise legitimate extrapolations become wishful thinking. The key lies in "mass base" and "leadership." I feel that technicians, as a class, lack these qualities; they have neither the ability to lead, to work together, nor the number to sway the decisions of the leaders in whichever country they dwell, or to sway the people who buoy up the leaders. It is axiomatic that a politically potent group must have a mass base; and a mass base requires a popular ideology. A popular ideology, moreover, must be fitted to the needs of human beings. And a man who understands molecular structure does not necessarily understand the structure of human nature: he is as narrow-minded as a politician, but in a different way.

Considered in this light the efforts of Mr. Hubbard's "End Is Not Yet" hero are hardly germane to his goal---they bear little relation to reality. Similarly with his expressed ideas, and the character of his heroes.

Yet fantasies such as these are presented in such a way as to give a false impression of the components of the world---and further to cloud the minds of Astounding readers, representative of a group. For Mr. Hubbard, with his command of words, has the faculty of distorting reality, and from him we have the viewpoint of a type: a romantic egocentric who sees a man as an etheric whirl, a stomach, a chemical composition, a slave, a congregation of atoms, or a robot ---but never as a man.

---oOo---

OPEN HOUSE

(letters from our readers)

While editing Fantasy Commentator is indeed a good deal of fun, it presents also quite a few problems. Pleasing readers, for instance. As a concrete example of the fact that another man's poison is just what some are looking for, let's consider a few sample reactions to Dr. Keller's recent article, "Shadows over Lovecraft." The vast majority liked it, including this writer, who knew HPL personally:

...I enjoyed Dr. Keller's essay. For me to agree or disagree would be presumptuous, in that I do not have the medical knowledge required for valid criticism of Dr. Keller's discussion. However, on the basis of my layman's general knowledge, I should say that the entire argument is convincing, and while the statements are by no means startling, they are a most useful conclusion to what has elsewhere been written on the subject. I mean, previous reading so prepared me

for what Dr. Keller sets forth that I consider his most interesting and valuable remarks to be a summing up, rather than a revelation. While I've not kept up with fantasy, either reading or writing it, I remember Dr. Keller from old times and such of his works as I have read, I have enjoyed....

HPL was my guest in New Orleans, more than sixteen years ago; and in 1933, I was his guest for several days in Providence. From our meeting in 1932 until his death we corresponded regularly with a warmth and friendliness such that even today I am aware of a sense of loss. My summing-up is this: that HPL the man was so important as a human being that it makes little difference whether his writings have or have not permanent value. Though his being mentioned in the 1946 Britannica, under "mystery," suggests that Derlth is right. Frankly, I can't go as far as do the fans who make a fetish of fantasy; for me, there are quite a few other literary types as worthy either of being read or written. I do not mean to imply that I believe your interests are as narrowly exclusive as are those of the typical HPL-cultist; I mean only that HPL the man looms up, from my viewpoint, in such wise as to make it relatively unimportant what he wrote---or even if he wrote at all. Those who know him, face to face, doubtless appreciate my true meaning.

I have written for Derleth an astrological study of Lovecraft. It consists of a provisional horoscope, erected without knowledge of the time of day at which he was born. This is probably to be published in The Arkham Sampler. My inference, at least plausibly sustained, is that he was born around four A.M. I have the date of his death; if I had the day, month and year of his marriage and divorce; and of the death of father and mother, I should then be able to come closer to determining, according to astrological tradition, the time of HPL's birth. I am making a scientific investigation of astrology, endeavoring to get a valid answer to the all-important query, "Does it work?" Unusual personalities such as Howard Lovecraft are ideal "specimens" to investigate. I shall be grateful for the kindness of anyone who can send me any of the above, or other significant dates in HPL's life. While Derleth will have priority on the publication of such material as he may find acceptable, I shall be happy to send contributors a carbon and a tentative chart showing my use of the data sent. Quite aside from serving my purpose of answering the query above, an astrological interpretation of Lovecraft's life might at least have curiosity value for his followers....

Those who can help may contact E. Hoffmann Price at 2547 Woodland Place, Redwood City, California.... To veer back to the topic at hand, there were readers who didn't particularly care for Dr. Keller's article. For example, take this letter from contributing editor Matt Onderdonk:

...I suppose Keller's article will stir up plenty of controversy among fans who are led by shallow thinking to resent the labels "neurasthenic" and "psychoneurotic" as vile, personal slurs. Of course I, personally, still retain quite a bit of the old-fashioned attitude which cannot regard medical case-histories as being valid literary criticism. However, since the modern tendency is to try to discover just how and why men's minds tick; the reasons why they thought and acted and wrote as they did; the study of the underlying forces and obscure motives which drove them to create things they had to create, I think Keller's opinions deserve plenty of serious consideration.

I don't think there can be much to quarrel with in the medical evidence in "Shadows over Lovecraft." It would seem to be pretty well established that HPL had two strikes against him from the start which made it impossible for him to develop into a so-called "normal" personality. His parents were both mentally diseased, and his environment and upbringing certainly precluded a normal child-

hood and its usual associations. However, we come to the old, basic, crucial question---who cares? After we have digested the ancestral and psychological findings for whatever light they may throw upon his writings, we must consider his work in itself alone as an artistic creation. A lot of us like his work--- we are entertained and intrigued by it, even granting all its faults by comparison with ideal standards. If Lovecraft had not had the heritage plus the childhood he did, we most certainly should not have had the Lovecraftian tale nor the Lovecraftian attitude as we now know it.

I must say that from a strictly personal viewpoint I like privacy, and I also try to respect it in others. Hence, I cannot but feel a little personal distaste with the modern idea of probing and peering into the private affairs of persons, whether they are artists or just ordinary mortals. It savors not a little of small village noseyness: the attitude of the desiccated and disappointed virgin of antique vintage who peers through the minister's windows at night hoping to catch him at dalliance with one of the female choir members! But since modern criticism demands that all who create for public notice must bare their souls (willingly or otherwise) to the vulgar stare of every village loafer, I suppose there isn't much we can do to change things even if we would!

Dr. Keller's fault is that of most medical men: they must make a diagnosis, and must make it stick if possible. Beginning with the absolute conviction that Lovecraft is a victim of the Oedipus complex, he proceeds to pick out and elaborate all facts and surmises he can find to bolster this original premise. Anything in HPL's ancestry or personal life which might tend to weaken or negate this hypothesis is quietly and light-heartedly ignored.

His startling conclusion that Lovecraft would have been entirely different if he had "become a soldier" or "joined the Rotary Club" is rather fatuous. It is on a mental par with the conclusion that Bierce would have been different if he had not fought in the Civil War or that M. R. James would have been different if he hadn't been an antiquarian or that Blackwood would have been different if he hadn't worked and travelled in Canada where he absorbed the atmosphere and folk lore of the great north woods.

I think, too, that Dr. Keller shares the obtuseness of most medical men in riding a hobby to death. The word "psychiatry" has become a shibboleth of the present day; he who does not worship at the shrine of Freud and Kraft-Ebbing is a heathen beyond the pale. Yet somehow I feel that really responsible medical authorities would hesitate a long time before attempting to assess Rubens' paintings or Bach's fugues in the light of this or that complex. In other words, psychiatry can tell us a lot (when properly interpreted) but it is not the Magic Word, the Be-All and End-All of human existence. In the hands of some it comes dangerously close to a par with the hocus-pocus of the ancient witch-doctor and magician. Psychiatry can tell us much, but it is not the whole story.

We have no conclusive evidence that psychoneuroses alone make a genius. Nor do we have conclusive evidence that the existence of genius presupposes existence of psychoneuroses. Dr. Keller has chosen to list De Quincy, Poe, Burns, London, Nietzsche, Beardsley, Gautier and de Maupassant. I might counter with Horace Walpole, Mrs. Radcliffe, Maturin, Le Fanu, M. R. James, Henry James, Hugh Walpole, Machen, Blackwood, Dunsany, Hodgson, Coppard, Wakefield, Stapledon. Haggard, Wells, Wharton, Freeman, Saki, de la Mare, Collier, E. F. Benson, Stoker, Verne, Aikon, Gorman, Sloane, Rohmer, Buchan, Merritt, Whitehead, F.B.Young, Doyle, Priestly, Woolf, Shiel, C.A.Smith, Harvey, Hartley, Sinclair, Beresford, Asquith, Steele, Crawford, Kipling, Onions, Jacobs, Cobb, Hearn, Glasgow, Benet, Collins, Bowen, Burrage, Cram, Forster, Irvin, O'Brien, Hichens, White and a host of others. Most of these persons to a greater or lesser extent show some hint of genius in handling imaginative concepts (I have purposely limited myself to this

genre because Dr. Keller has also); yet does he contend all those mentioned were equally lacking some of their buttons? I don't pretend to know the intimate life histories of all these authors, but perhaps Dr. Keller does!

In passing, I cannot help recalling that Machen and Hodgson are the two authors whose weird concepts of cosmic evil most nearly match Lovecraft's. Machen, who recently died at the premature age of 85 must indeed have had a weak and puny body and mind. Hodgson led a singularly sheltered and unhealthy life when one considers that he spent eight years at sea, sailing around the world three times, receiving a medal for saving life at sea, and distinguishing himself afterwards for his brave fighting in World War I, being killed in action. Should we also surmise that Lord Dunsany has lead a sequestered existence as a British army officer associating with the Greek guerillas, and that Algernon Blackwood found things as calm and gentle as a rest-home when he tramped through the Canadian wilderness in his younger days?

But need I go on? My contention is that a psychiatric case-history may be of supreme significance in a few cases and probably of considerable interest in a good many, but as the final, conclusive evidence in interpreting and evaluating any outstanding personage its dogmas should be taken with a generous pinch of good old sodium chloride. One can go very far off the beam indeed by trying to squeeze the infinite variety of human life within the confines of one single theory. But if---as Dr. Keller apparently contends---a syphilitic medical history makes a Lovecraft, then I say more power to the spirochete pallada!

Similarly, readers disagree on the merits (or lack thereof) of Moskowitz's "Immortal Storm." But you get the idea---so rather than use space on mere pros and cons, let us turn to this letter from P. J. Searles (who is, incidentally, of no relation to Fantasy Commentator's editor), which gives some interesting data on his relation to the fan field some years back,...

I am afraid that any information I can give about "The Immortal Storm" will be sketchy and not of much interest. Naturally, I've read the article and have enjoyed it thoroughly, but, frankly, I can't strike up too much interest except amusement over the petty squabbles among a small group of youngsters fifteen years ago. From the noise made at the time, one would think that the fate of the world depended upon decisions made at meetings rarely attended by as many as fifty people. During the 1930's I saw or read intermittently quite a number of the fan publications. Most of them frankly were very bad, with dull material amateurishly written and nothing to hold adult attention. I never met Olon Wiggins, but I did secure a few issues of his Science Fiction Fan; it struck me as being about as bad as the rest, and I was just on the verge of giving it up when Wiggins, for some unknown reason, wrote and asked me for an article. For an equally unknown reason I contributed one or two, which were probably no worse than the rest of the magazine's contents. A few months later, Wiggins said that he was giving up the Fan because of pressure of regular work plus personal reasons. I guess that I must have been temporarily nuts, because I suggested that I take over publication for a while until he wanted to resume.

So I got out The Science Fiction Fan for over a year (from August, 1939 to January, 1941, excepting only the June, 1940 issue---ed.) and, believe it or not, it came out regularly once a month---although I am afraid that the number of worthwhile literary contributions printed hardly warranted its appearance more than once a year. Fortunately (or perhaps unfortunately) I had working for me at the time a rather clever artist who made some extremely lurid drawings which were done in very glaring colors. In fact, the cover of the magazine looked like an old-fashioned piece of stick candy drowned by Christmas tree lights. I think even the dogs barked at it! At the same time, I had a lot of fun getting the

magazine out. I was finally required to give it up when I left the country for a couple of years. I have not heard from Wiggins since.

As to fan feuds at that time, I became involved in only one. I had put one of my own articles in the Fan under the previously used pen name "Autolycus." This article was intended to be serious, but I am afraid it was not quite successful in becoming a learned discourse on the use of colorful words in stories by Lovecraft or Clark Ashton Smith. Michel (whom I have never met) sent me a hot return article in which Lovecraft and all his kind were denounced for betraying class interest. Apparently Michel was a Communist or at least had leanings in that direction because he insisted that no writings of any kind were worthwhile unless class inspired and following the style of Marx. Of course, I told Michel that his contention was all nonsense and I would still have the same opinion even if I were a Communist, which I definitely am not. I printed Michel's article, and the following month another of my own, explaining that my own opinion of fantasy is that it is a form of relief or escape (by no means a new idea). This was a very minor and petty feud, but it continued for close to a year.

The above is about all I can tell you of my very tenuous connection in the fan field; it wasn't very enduring and it won't be repeated. I still read fantasy and even fan magazines from time to time, but as to making it of major importance in my life, the answer is definitely no....

From Elizabeth, N. J., A. H. Lybeck writes:

...a pedantic dig I can't resist: Please refer Mr. Onderdonk to I Corinthians, 13:12. Admittedly Le Fanu could turn a neat phrase, but St. Paul was there first with "...in a glass, darkly." However, I did enjoy his article.

Next we hear from contributing editor Darrell C. Richardson:

I have a correction and amendation to make to my "Tarzan Theme" article (Fantasy Commentator, II, 121). In reviewing Kaspa the Lion Man therein, it was stated that The Lion's Way was the American title for this British novel. Actually the two are entirely different works, the former being a sequel to the latter. The Lion's Way (1932) tells of the early life and adventures of Kaspa among the denizens of the jungle. It also concerns his journey to Canada, where he finds himself heir to great wealth. The attitude of an uncivilized man of the jungle toward the complexities of civilization provides an intriguing psychological study. In plot, this tale is superior to its sequel, and should rank among the finer stories of its type. It received quite favorable newspaper reviews, and was warmly praised by no less a light than Sir Philip Gibbs.

In the more recent article "Talbot Mundy: Oriental Mystic" I unaccountably made some egregrious omissions. King of the Khyber Rifles (1916) is a marvellous tale, and ranks as a classic in Oriental literature. Yasmini appears for the first time in this book; she is a lovely woman who possesses uncanny beauty and supernatural power. She also appears in Winds of the World (1917), Caves of Terror (1932) and Guns of the Gods (1921). The second title, incidentally, is a tremendous fantasy, and easily ranks as one of the most fantastic of all Mundy's tales. Some of the super-scientific gadgets and secrets of the "caves" are as thrilling as anything ever conceived by John Taine, Edward E. Smith or A. E. Van Vogt. "The Grey Mahatma" in this title is truly unique. Finally, The Mystery of Khufu's Tomb (1935) features Mundy's greatest and most famous character, Jimgrim, and concerns the search for the real tomb of Khufu, the builder of the pyramids. Eventually the tomb is found through the extremely fantastic calculations of an equally fantastic Chinese mathematician.... I might mention that Bleiler's Checklist of Fantastic Literature lists several other Mundy novels which I don't consider bona fide fantasy; hence I have not discussed them here.

THE IMMORTAL STORM

A HISTORY OF SCIENCE-FICTION FANDOM

by
Sam Moskowitz

(part 14)

XXXIV
The Opposition Crumbles

The influence and popularity of any general movement is usually determined by the ability of its leaders to express its aims and ideals; and the personal beliefs or views expressed by those leaders on related subjects are, rightly or wrongly, attributed to the organizations they head or are influentially connected with. Therefore in the fan world of 1938 when two powerful groups, the Futurians and New Fandom, wrestled for supremacy, their strength and ability to recruit new members could adequately be measured by the readiness of their leading writers to compose propaganda about the organizations and communicate their own ideas about science-fiction itself to interested fans.

Because of a deliberate and wearing campaign by his opposition, Donald A. Wollheim, while a leader of the Futurians and a competent writer whose knowledge of fantasy was generally respected, had but little influence on the field. His right hand man, John B. Michel, was not particularly active in fandom, and his writings were confined to a few flaming manifestos such as the notorious Mutation or Death document. Richard Wilson, on the other hand, was one of the Futurians' strongest aids, liberally publicizing the cause in a generally favorable manner in his Science Fiction News Letter; he was well liked throughout the field, and was noted for an ability to turn cynically biting phrases of wit.

In the New Fandom group, William S. Sykora had long been the victim of a systematic campaign to discredit him, and though an able writer found his ideas being discarded in much the same way that his own friends discarded Wollheim's. James V. Taurasi was a good editor, but did not express himself well. Raymond Van Houton could give a fine account of himself with a typewriter, but, like Michel, not sufficiently active in the field and in comparison even less influential. Robert A. Madle, live-wire Philadelphia fan and editor of Fantascience Digest, was of outstanding aid to the movement through his publications. And Jack Speer, who had won considerable respect through his IPO polls, was writing more often and also rapidly becoming one of the Futurians' most potent foes, setting forth his arguments with a precision and care for detail that presaged his later entrance into the legal profession.

The most influential writers, however---the ones that placed the philosophies of their groups before the largest audiences most often---were Robert W. Lowndes and Sam Moskowitz. A nation-wide fan poll, the results of which appeared in the September, 1938 Science Fiction Fan, bore this out: in the science-fiction fan author category, Lowndes garnered 46 points to Moskowitz's 45 for the two top places.

Robert W. Lowndes wrote creditable fiction and poetry of exceptional merit, but it was through articles and essays that his influence was most strongly felt. Lowndes' forte was the air of sophistication and the appearance of objectivity in phraseology that characterized most of his pieces. Also characteristic was his habit of reworking provocative ideas or styles that had caught his fancy with an eye to improving upon them and/or approaching them from a different angle. This was apparent in his fiction and poetry as well as in his factual writings.

His poems showed at various times the strong influences of Poe, Lovecraft and C. A. Smith, utilizing often similar themes and meters, and always showing pronounced ability. In his fiction he tended to adopt the heavy, deliberate style of Lovecraft, but showed also versatility in handling dialogue. The desire to cast another's ideas into his own mold was evidenced, for example, in his story "The Gourmet" (published in the December, 1939 Polaris), whose theme and handling bespoke kinship to Robert Bloch's powerful tale "The Feast in the Abbey," printed in Weird Tales almost five years before. In articles---particularly when engaged in a feud---this imitativeness was probably deliberate. If an opponent gave a summary of the best fantasies of the year, Lowndes was apt to write one himself. Should an opponent compose a critical essay on fan philosophy or some phase of a professional's writings, Lowndes would follow with a use of the same theme for an article of his own, probably attempting to show superior qualifications or analytical ability---sometimes successfully. A number of contributions to The Science Fiction Fan in late 1937 and early 1938 on fan philosophy, several articles on Stanley G. Weinbaum and critical summaries of fantasy periodicals, in addition to forthright pieces of Michelistic propaganda, helped establish his reputation.

Sam Moskowitz, at first, wrote a negligible amount of fiction and poetry. His reputation as a science-fiction writer stemmed almost entirely from articles and essays. The majority of these in this period were characterized by dominating elements of sentimentality and nostalgia. He often strove for beautiful phrasing. On the other hand, many of his critiques of professional fantasy magazines were coldly bitter and cynical. Called upon endlessly to fill the pages of fan magazines as he was, his productions were extremely voluminous. He wrote articles by the hundreds, often using thousands of words to describe a single fan gathering, and thought nothing of devoting two entire pages to reviewing a single issue of a fan journal. As contributing editor of Fantasy News, he regularly filled from 25% to 100% of each number. As a duty, he mailed every month from 1,000 to 5,000 words to Wiggins' Fantasy Fan. Moskowitz's work appeared under such pseudonyms as Robert Bahr, Robert Sanders Shaw, William Weiner and others, most of which were well known at the time. He wrote a long series of essays on fan philosophy that proved extremely popular. He was obsessed with the concept of fan history, and wrote many articles on this subject. Another of his favorite themes was collecting fantasy, and this likewise brought forth a series of articles. In fiction, he created the "science-fiction fan story," a sort of hybrid between an article and a tale that utilized fans, their journals, backgrounds in the field and so on, as themes and settings. Such "fan stories" as "Grand Old Fan," "The Road Back, " "Roquiem" and "The Last Fan" were vital bulwarks in the continuing popularity of his writings. Moskowitz very often made careless typographical and grammatical errors, and these his publishers reproduced sacredly intact. Yet the criticisms he received were not for these so much as for his provocative habit of making positive statements, assuming his readers were as well aware of their justification in fact as he. These criticisms were answered either by time or by his own documentations. As a result, he paradoxically gained a reputation for prognostication which irritated his critics. As time went on they became increasingly cautious about nibbling at statements, however, since these occasionally had been designed as bait, and Moskowitz often had the aid of Speer when pulling in the hook.

To both factions the problem was clearly one of discrediting or silencing the leading spokesman of the opposing group. A powerful effort in this direction came from the Futurians as a result of Moskowitz's article in the August, 1938 Science Fiction Fan, which stated that their parent organization, the CPASF, had received orders from the Communist Party to utilize fan journals as a field for disseminating propaganda. There are conflicting stories as to how the ensu-

ing event came about, but the bare facts are as follows. In the next number of The Science Fiction Fan, editor Wiggins made a simple, direct statement that was greatly surprising to readers at the time: "Beginning with this issue there will be no more material by Sam Moskowitz in the pages of the Fan." He went on to explain that he had long considered this ouster, carrying Moskowitz only because "the readers wanted him"; that it seemed unfair to him to print diametrically opposed views by both Moskowitz and Wollheim; and that Moskowitz was being dropped because he, Wiggins, favored personally the contributions of Wollheim.

Moskowitz himself was stunned by the ingratitude and callousness of Wiggins' decision. Naturally, too, he suspected that it had been motivated by more than a simple protest from his opponent. His only consolation was the relief he felt on being released from the onorous chore of submitting regular contributions to The Science Fiction Fan.

Shortly thereafter Wiggins announced that since only two subscribers had cancelled their subscriptions, events proved his action had not been misguided. Counter-action by the New Fandom group was quickly forthcoming. This amounted to Wiggins' expulsion from Cosmic Publications for behavior unbecoming a member. Most parties favoring the New Fandomites interpreted Wiggins' action as placing him automatically in the Futurian orbit, moreover, and he soon found himself completely and helplessly dependent upon Futurian support for Fan material.

Yet even these happenings might not alone have been fatal blows to Wiggins' prestige had it not been for simultaneous developments in the Fantasy Amateur Press Association. Once a defeated candidate for the post, Wiggins still coveted its presidency. Currently, as we have already seen (chapter XXIX) Futurians held all but one of the FAPA offices---Michel, Lowndes and Wollheim being respectively president, vice-president and official editor. Within a short time after appearance of the September, 1938 Science Fiction Fan, FAPA members received a special issue of the organization's official organ, The Fantasy Amateur. It carried sensational news. Lowndes had resigned his post, and his resignation had been accepted by Michel. Michel appointed Wiggins vice-president, an action that was within his official rights. Then Michel resigned, automatically elevating Wiggins to president. Finally Wollheim resigned, suggesting his friend Milton Rothman for official editor, an appointment Wiggins promptly made. Wiggins also appointed Marconette vice-president. In his first presidential message after this amazing ascent to power, Wiggins stated his position in the December, 1938 Fantasy Amateur as follows:

> You might correctly term me as anything from a communist to a technocrat. A rigid foe of Fascism and allied beliefs. You are probably wondering if this makes me an ally of the Michelist faction---only in belief. I have never come out openly for any faction. But if it ever comes to a showdown you would more than likely find me backing the Michel faction.

New Fandom leaders immediately raised the cry that Wiggins had sold out to the Futurian camp in exchange for the FAPA presidency. His actions had indeed built up a powerful circumstantial case against him, and this Jack Speer did his best to convert into a coffin in his Cosmic Tales column, "Thots from Exile." The issue having once been raised spread like wildfire through fan circles, and Wiggins' sagging reputation dropped several notches lower.

Included with the Moskowitz ouster in the September, 1938 Science Fiction Fan was yet another Futurian effort to discredit him. This was a mock essay "How to Write a Moskowitz Article" by Sham Markowitz as told to Braxton Wells (a pseudonym of Wollheim). The essay poked fun at the length, amount of detail and personal eccentricities of style typical of Moskowitz's compositions. Be-

cause this issue also began another series of articles it was dubbed by one British journal "the official organ of the society for the mutual admiration of Wollheim." This was in references to such flowery eulogies written about Futurians by Futurians as Lowndes' "Wollheim: the Most Fan," Michel's "My Comrade, Doc Lowndes," Lowndes' "Glance at Michel," and so on.

As time went on, many excellent items did appear in the Fan, particularly in the realm of the critical essay and material slanted toward collectors, and even the fan of today will find many rewarding pages in the magazine. Most of this improvement was due to the efforts of the veteran fan Paul J. Searles, now well known as book reviewer for the New York Herald-Tribune. Searles (who is not related to the editor of Fantasy Commentator) took over the combined task of editing and publishing The Science Fiction Fan with the August, 1939 issue. He held the title of associate editor, Wiggins still retaining the editor's position, but Searles actually did nearly all of the work. Under his aegis the quality of the material, reproduction and illustrating all took a remarkable upward turn. Long a follower of fan journals and professional fantasy fiction, Searles' only previous activity was contribution of a book review and a short story to Hornig's Fantasy Fan and an occasional article under his pen name of "Autolycus" appearing elsewhere. He will also be remembered as a winner of the Marvel Science Stories prize contest at this time. When the Wollheim-Moskowitz feud was at its height in the Fan, Searles had contributed anonymously a four-paged supplement appealing for reason. As a mature individual, Searles doubtless felt a certain reticence about involving himself deeply in activities that were only too often juvenile in nature, but like H. C. Koenig and others, found the lure irresistible at the time. He continued to edit and publish the magazine through its January, 1941 issue. With the February, 1941 number he relinquished the task to a young Denver fan, Lew Martin, and accepted the honorary post of assistant editor. Martin mimeographed but a single issue of the magazine (#55), and with that it ceased publication and was never again heard from.

Despite Searles' best efforts, however, The Science Fiction Fan never attained its previous position of importance or influence in the field. The chief reason was its politics, which remained lopsidedly in favor of the Futurian faction from August, 1938 on. Even under Searles' editorship many articles printed were either forthrightly or subtly propagandizing efforts that mirrored the Communist Party line. It seems probable that this policy was insisted upon by Wiggins and tolerated by Searles as a gesture of liberality, for he put himself on record in several articles as opposing the red viewpoint that the Second World War was just another imperialistic adventure, and called upon fans to work in the best interests of the nation.

It can be seen, then, that these Futurian tactics, far from injuring Moskowitz, actually lent him the role of a martyr; and it also almost completely destroyed the prestige of The Science Fiction Fan and Olon F. Wiggins. Pressure of fan opinion became so great against the Futurian circle that, even before the FAPA episode, the Science Fiction News Letter's October 22, 1938 number printed a news item to the effect that plans were afoot to "liberalize and decommunize the Futurian Literary Society." The next (October 29) issue carried the further information that four Futurians---Wollheim, Michel, Lowndes and Pohl ---would resign from all offices in science-fiction organizations other than their own, and in other ways reduce activity. On every side, ordinarily neutral fans, such as Litterio Farsaci and Louie Kuslan, were openly putting into print long articles against Michelism. Despite this trend of opinion, Wollheim's article "Retreat" (The Science Fiction Fan, December, 1938) came as a bombshell. In that work he pointed to his long-standing interest in the field, his outstanding collection of fantasy magazines, books and fan journals, his dozens of published

articles, his attendance at innumerable fan gatherings, and personal associations with countless fantasy enthusiasts to attest his sincerity and his authority in the field. Through acquaintance with science-fiction fans he had come to note, he asserted, that they were mentally different, that they seemed to be searching for certain logics and truths. The search for these had led him and his friends to find out that they "were closely parallel to communism. That is to say to the intellectual aspect on communism as it affects literature, science, culture." The scope of Marxism very closely approached, in their opinion, the goals of the fans. "Accordingly," said Wollheim, "we came out openly for communism." Its immediate acceptance had not been expected, but the overwhelming, "vicious" nature of the opposition had taken the Futurians by surprise. "What intelligent fans there were failed to stand up firmly, we were deluged by a mass of stupid and vicious hate. This slop pile grew in quantity and intensity. Actual violence was threatened. And through lies, the editors of the magazines were enlisted into the campaign against us." At the same time, Wollheim maintained, the standard of the material in fan magazines and the activities of fans themselves had sunk to a hopeless low. "To remain further active in stf fandom while it is in its present condition would be to lower myself to its level. I, and my friends, fought as best we could against those overwhelming odds. My purse and my health do not permit me to carry on such a one-sided fight. There comes a time when it becomes necessary to withdraw for a while and recuperate." Fan activities, concluded Wollheim, would forever remain puerile until they accepted the basic tenets of Michelism.

Donald A. Wollheim, scarred veteran of fan feuds, had for the first time publicly admitted defeat. The campaign that had begun so gloriously a year before with Michel's fiery "Mutation or Death" speech at that memorable Philadelphia convention had run its course. The very vigor with which it had been pressed, its callous, roughshod ways, its uncompromising viewpoint that the end justified the means---these things had first created lethal opposition where there had been none, then strengthened that opposition, and finally gave it sufficient momentum to crush its creator.

Very few fans of that period took Wollheim's statement of retreat as being anything more than temporary disgruntlement over continued setbacks. Least of all his opponents! Even though Wollheim meant what he had said, New Fandom leaders were by no means sure the Futurians would be content to sit back and lick their wounds. Later events showed their suspicions were justified, but equally they showed that the Futurians no longer had the support or contacts to wage anything more than a harrassing delaying action. The fight had long since resolved itself into the question of whether the fan world was willing to accept communism as the price of peace with the Futurians---and the answer was definitely no.

Realizing that the attempt to communize the field had been a failure, Lowndes' "Open Letter to Louis Kuslan" (published in the January, 1939 Science Fiction Fan) tried to convince fans that they had been misled by the personal beliefs of Michel into thinking that Michelism and communism were identical. Michelism had never had as its purpose the converting of fans to the Communist Party, asserted Lowndes, and one might be a good Michelist without being a communist.

The reply to this was more memberships in New Fandom, more new subscriptions to Fantasy News.

But an era was coming to a close, an old order was changing. The day of the hektograph and the close-knit corollary of fifty active fans was already a thing of the past. Of the two formerly leading journals in the field, The Science Fiction Fan was discredited and The Science Fiction Collector had just suspended publication---ironically enough with an issue carrying an article by Moskowitz that showed current trends pointed to the end of an era. New names were

(concluded on page 13)

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