
1¼ BOB THE BUSHEL!

FOURTEEN BOB THE BUSHEL

A collection of fourteen episodes of Bob Shaw's column "The Glass Bushel," selected from the more than 30 episodes which ran in the Walt Willis (*et al*) fanzine HYPHEN*, from its very first issue.

Published by Bruce Pelz on the occasion of Loscon 22** being so perspicacious as to have invited the author to be Guest of Honor, and so fortunate as to have him accept. Bob Shaw, author, raconteur, gourmand, world traveler, and, above all, a fan as well as a pro, has always been one of The Wheels of IF***. These writings may help you discover why. Here are examples of Trip Reports, Fan Fiction, SF and Fanzine Criticisms, Nostalgia, and Eye-Witness Up-To-The-Minute+ Accounts of Fan Activities.

Read and enjoy++.

COVER BY LARRY STEWART+++

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* Thanks to WAW and to BoSh for permission to reprint

** Or at least its Chair, Robbie Cantor.

*** Irish Fandom. The term was invented in the '50's – well, pirated from L. Sprague de Camp in the '50's – and, up to now, has been known only to the Elite, the *Cognoscenti* of Fanzine Fandom. By Special Dispensation it is now being revealed to the General Fan Public.

\+ Assuming the minute is located somewhere between 1954 and 1962

++ Failure to enjoy will doom the culprit to seven hours and 19 minutes per day, for the next five years, of reading rec.arts.sf.blather.

+++ Fan Guest of Honor, Loscon 22

The hypothetical observer is bored. He stifles a yawn. He gazes at the sky and wishes he was back in his hypothetical bed. For years now he has been posted outside Oblique House and nothing has ever happened. He is beginning to think nothing ever will. No Zap guns, no outbursts of fannish hooliganism – nothing but quiet respectability and adult good sense.

Suddenly he senses something out of the ordinary. He opens the gate, crosses the 'lawn' and sneaks up to the corner of the house. Cautiously he peers round the side. He gasps. His eyes dilate with horror. Frantically he tries to draw back, but he is too late – a thin jet of water plays over his hypothetical face. Willis and White dash out, cackling with laughter and brandishing water pistols. "I got him! I got him!"

Like any sensible person, the hypothetical observer turns and runs.

Yes, it's quite true! Willis and White, the sobersides, the starched collars of fandom, have acquired water pistols. It would be bad enough if they were ordinary water pistols, but these are powerful brutes of things capable of a hundred deadly shots on one reloading. My concentration on my fannish activities is constantly interrupted by furtive figures prowling about muttering such sayings as "Bah! Wind deflection again" and "It is fitting that a Gunner should serve."

All afternoon they sit at the back room window and drench inoffensive cats and other small animals. Soon, however, they will get tired of such easy game and start looking for something that will give more excitement, show more signs of horror , scream louder. Something like me, for instance.

Luckily by that time I will have completed my weapon. A really powerful water pistol constructed from a bicycle pump and a pair of chest expanders. We'll see who drowns who. Heh. Heh. Heh.

That will leave me short of a pump for my bike, but I'm sure we will manage – my bike and I. It isn't much to look at, but it gets me around. I like my bike. The mudguards are tied on with string and the saddle is so loose that when I go round a sharp bend I remain facing in the original direction. But in spite of all its faults we have come through a lot together and a bond has sprung up between us, and in view of this it is with great sorrow I announce that They are plotting against us.

Everybody has at one time or another complained of how the wind always seems to blow in their faces when they take a bicycle out. In my case it doesn't just

seem to. It does! It blows in my face on my way to work in the morning. It changes before lunch and blows in my face all the way back. Not content with this, it repeats the same performance in the afternoon. Going round corners has no effect. It cleverly blows against various walls and deflects itself down the new street. It always outsmarts me, but I haven't got the breeze up: I'm going to expose it! I'm going to do what Eric Frank Russell did with the Vitons. I will write a story about myself and sell it to *Astounding*. So that nobody will pierce my disguise too readily I will spell my name backwards. The hero of this yarn, this fellow called boB, will still have the same trouble as me. No matter what he does the wind will be too smart for him. He tries pretending to go up the road and swiftly turning round and going back down it at full speed. He tries sitting backwards in the saddle and tricking the wind into thinking he is going the other way, but all to no avail. He becomes neurotic, he wears away to a shadow. Then one night as boB is setting off to work he is infuriated beyond all reason by the sight of a few normal carefree riders going in the opposite direction with the wind in their backs. It is too much for him.

"To hell with work," he shouts, and turns his bike round and flies up the road, pedaling like mad. The next day there is a report of his passing through a small village about ten miles beyond the Castlereagh Hills, screaming with hysterical laughter and uttering loud cries of "Fooled them! I fooled them!" ...and that is the last that is ever heard of him.

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It is a far cry from the days of yore when fan humourists used to represent the outbursts of laughter which they hoped to inspire in, or direct at somebody else by the use of such devices as: – (Hearty laughter) or (loud guffaw).

The modern writer has a whole battery of individual chuckles ample enough to electrify his readers, be they at ohm or in a cell. The head man at chuckles here is James White, which must be why his friends call him chucklehead. For an example, just look at this extract from a letter of James' to Vince Clarke, *who was quite likely to publish it*. The letter was full of nasty cracks at Chuck Harris and he ended it up by saying, "Of course I don't want Harris to see this. Heh. Heh. Heh."

This is a brilliant example of the use of the vindictive chuckle. As well as that, there is the oafish chuckle which is best ascribed to somebody else, preferably after a rather stupid remark of theirs, e.g., "The man in the shop tried to charge me the full cover price for a 1932 *Astounding*, but I was too smart – I made him give me a brand new magazine! Hyuck! Hyuck! Hyuck!"

The other two main forms are used for rounding off a joke with which one is rather pleased. Naturally I can't throw away one of my carefully stored, memorised and rehearsed spontaneous witticisms on a lecture, so I'll just content myself by noting that they are "Nyuck, nyuck, nyuck." and "Erf! Erf! Erf!" The latter is to be uttered slowly and with gusto, or some other willing helper.

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Is anybody keen on the policy some of the newer sf mags have adopted of not having any interior illos? Personally I hate to plow through page after uniform page of the dry as dust stuff that these look-at-me-as-I-read-Poe type of mags dish up, with never a touch of brush and pencil to brighten things up. I think that a good illo makes a story.

Who can illustrate Sprague de Camp like Cartier? Or Van Vogt like Rogers? The reason for these affinities is not that Ls de C writes about queer creatures and Cartier is good at drawing them, and ditto for vV and Rogers. It is that the essential mood of the members of each pair is the same. That is what a good illo does – it sets the mood of the yarn. I quote almost any book on art: "-The aim of the artist is not to depict, but to capture the mood.-" The significance of this is put in its proper perspective by the following quote. Bob Tucker in QUANDRY: "-As compared to other forms of literature the sf yarn is lacking in mood.-" (!)

TELEKINESIS AND MUTTERED OATHS To move from a serious topic to a really grim one. I am the victim of a horrible mental disorder! Every time I read a really convincing yarn about telekinesis I find myself glaring at various small and innocuous objects and gritting through clenched teeth, "Move, you b....., move!" If anyone else has this complaint, let him write to me and we may be able to start up a movement between us. That, in case you missed it, was a pun.

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HYPHEN 10 (Sept. 1954)

HOAX

Percival Ingram settled back comfortably in his seat and glanced about him with a contented sigh. His first Convention! For a moment he forgot the voice of the Chairman making the introductions as he realised that at long last it was here. The event he had planned for and waited for these last two years. It was worth the weary months of writing hundreds of letters, articles, and columns, typing stencils, drawing cartoons, duplicating... .

Suddenly he became aware that the fans were wildly cheering and applauding someone who had just been introduced. Belatedly, the name the chairman had used penetrated to Percival's brain. It was Stanley Long.

Percival felt the colour drain from his face and the sound of the still applauding conventioneers swelled and diminished, approached and receded, as he teetered on the edge of a faint. "It can't be," he whispered to himself, "Stanley Long is a figment of my imagination."

When he had quietly entered fandom two years ago, Percival had become inflamed with the idea of putting over the biggest ever fannish hoax. A month later, when he had moved into a new flat, he decided to create Stanley Long. At first he had only written a few letters, and, by arrangement with the new tenant of his old flat, picked up the replies on his way to work in the morning. That had been the beginning.

Gradually, as time went on, the character of Stanley Long began to absorb more and more of Percival's thoughts and time. For Percival was even more dissatisfied with himself and his own personality than most people are. His thin, pimply face, his timorousness with members of his own and the opposite sex, his complete lack of social aptitude, had made him pretty fed up with the person of Percival Ingram.

Here, in this new character of Stanley Long, he had begun to realise, was another chance. A fresh start. He had taken a deep satisfaction in building the imaginary Stanley Long into the personification of everything that he, Percival, never was and never could be.

In order to make the illusion complete he had drawn up a complete mental dossier of Long – had even made sketches of him in order to get a clear picture in his mind. Stanley Long the brilliant athlete who had entered fandom not for escape but because the heart of a Trufan beat inside his 44" chest. Percival had fitted Long with a series of hectic amours which sometimes received passing mention in his numerous columns for the main fanzines. By strenuous effort he had given Long his fannishly famous sense of humour and subtle, brilliant literary style.

In short, BNF Stanley Long was Percival Ingram's greatest work of art.

And here he was in person being introduced to the gathered fans in the Convention Hall!

Suddenly Percival's common sense re-asserted itself, and two possible explanations formed in his mind. Either there was an unknown fan called Stanley Long who, when signing in, had been mistaken for his non-existent namesake;

or some brash fan was playing a hoax. Percival turned in his seat to look at the object of the prolonged acclaim to see which of his theories was correct. If the former, 'Long' would be embarrassed and bewildered; if the latter, he would be putting over the hoax – grinning and modestly shaking his head.

At the sight of the tall, powerfully built young man who was just sitting down, Percival felt an icy coldness gather in his stomach and his palms prickled with sudden perspiration.

It was him.

There was no mistaking the handsome highly individual face that he had dreamed up. There was the check sport coat of the intriguing pattern that had been the subject of a Long article which was in Percival's bureau at home, waiting to be sent off. Every line of face and body was just as Percival had imagined it.

Suddenly 'Long's' gaze alighted on Percival's astonished, staring face, and the smile that had been on his lips seemed to fade slightly. Percival whipped round in his seat, staring straight ahead at the speaker on the dais, his thoughts batting about in his head like wasps in a jar. He felt suddenly afraid. Had there been menace in 'Long's' eyes when they met his own? What was happening? His mistaken identity theory had been exploded by 'Long's' graceful acceptance of the applause — but a hoax? No. There could be no coincidence so great that the fan who had decided to masquerade as Long could be absolutely identical with Percival's picture of his own creation, right down to the pattern of the sport coat which had yet to be mentioned in fandom.

Percival missed the rest of the introductory session as he sat, lost in the maze of his own thoughts, trying to reason it all out, and endeavouring to ignore the cold, implacable hatred he had glimpsed in 'Long's' eyes.

"Mr. Long is in Room 309," the girl at the reception desk said in reply to Percival's enquiry. He thanked her and hurried up the stairs, forcing his feet to move quickly. At the door of 309 his courage sank even further, but he knocked anyway, wondering if 'Long' would be there. It was almost lunchtime, and from his seat he had seen 'Long' hurry out during the first auction, which had given him the idea of getting the fan alone. Now that the time had come the idea didn't seem so good.

When he heard footsteps in response to his knock, Percival's knees grew weak. He half turned to leave, but the door opened and the spurious Long was visible.

"I want to talk to you," Percival quavered, acutely aware of his own insufficiency beside the other's smoothly muscled well clothed bulk.

"Come in," grinned 'Long' with a flash of white teeth, perfect except for the one tiny gold filling which had been the topic of one of Percival's long columns in *Space Soot*.

Percival entered, sat down on the bed, immediately regretted it because he now felt even smaller and more ineffectual, and jumped up again. His embarrassment increased as he realised that 'Long' had been watching him with an amused expression on his face. Anger at himself as much as at 'Long' induced Percival to throw caution to the winds.

"What's going on here?" he shouted. "Who are you, anyway?"

"It's quite simple," replied 'Long,' in quiet controlled tones. "I'm the Stanley Long – you must have heard of me." 'Long' grinned as he finished, but Percival was in no mood for examples of the famous Stanley Long humour.

"You can't be," he shouted, "Stanley Long is a figment of my imagination -- my own creation."

"You are partly right," replied 'Long.' "I admit I am a figment of your imagination, but I am not your creation. It was those people down there," he waved one tanned hand in the direction of the Convention Hall, "that created me. You see, your hoax worked too well. You didn't allow for the powerful and vivid imagination of the science fiction fan. Every fan who has ever read a fanzine believes in me, and has faith that I exist. It was that, their strong imagination and unquestioning faith, that created me."

Percival's mouth opened and closed several times without emitting any sound; but, although he was shocked and stunned by what he had heard, his mind grappled with the *Unknown*-type of logic of the situation. There was one thing certain. Stanley Long could not be allowed to continue his existence. Such a thing was unthinkable to anyone familiar with the laws of everyday life. Something had to be done. Soon.

Although it was the faith of all fandom that had created Long, he, Percival Ingram, had been the prime mover; and if he refused to believe in Long the clash of beliefs should be enough to force his creation out of existence.

Percival immediately began to disbelieve in Long.

Stanley Long, intently watching Percival's face, smiled and shook his head.

"It won't work," he said. "You see, the thing is out of your hands now. I don't need you, and to tell the truth I'm glad. I would hate to think that my being

depended on the whims of a mere nobody like you. What have you ever done in fandom?"

Percival gasped. This was too much. "How dare you," he sputtered. Then, with a sudden surge of craft, "What makes you so unpleasant to speak to? My Stanley Long is friendly to every fan he comes in contact with."

"You're different," Long replied. "You never provided in your fannish writings for Long's feelings towards his inventor. You I can hate."

The colour drained from Percival's face and he took a step towards the door.

"I know how to cancel you out, then," he shouted. "I'm going down to the Convention Hall to tell them all about how I made you up."

The threat failed to disturb Long's composure. "No, you're not," he said almost kindly. "You see, I am in a way the focal point of all the creative belief of several hundred fans. The instrument of their minds – and I am going to refuse to believe in you."

"You can't," moaned Percival. "It won't work."

"It will," insisted Long, gently. "What do you mean to fandom? Who will remember you if you disappear? You have no friends or relatives outside of fandom. You are nobody. I'm afraid," he added, beginning to smile again, "you are a very difficult person to believe in."

Percival had just time for one faint whimper of pure terror, then he vanished forever as if he had never existed, leaving Stanley Long to saunter down to the Convention Hall to receive once more the acclaim of his many friends and followers.

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HYPHEN 13 (March 1955) Illo by BoSh

I once heard somebody remark that fans, with their long familiarity with all shapes and sizes of bems, would be in much better control of themselves in an encounter with e.t. monsters than would the ordinary man in the street. The same would apply, of course, to ghosts and all other hair-raising phenomena. Personally, I don't know. I wonder what would happen if a bunch of ordinary fans, returning from a convention, were forced to spend the night in....

The storm-driven rain that was lashing the tiny car drummed so loudly on its roof that conversation was almost impossible for its five occupants. "We should never have tried to drive home from the convention to Bridgetown," shouted the driver, BNF Harry Muggins. "I don't think the old car will make it."

Even as he spoke the engine sputtered and died.

"What did I tell you," Muggins cried plaintively.

"Ah shaddup!" shouted Theodore McGee, the other BNF of the Bridgetown Astronautical and Egoboo Hunters Club. "If you had been watching the road instead of sitting there spouting background we might have made it."

"This no time for one of your arguments," interrupted Hubert, the neoest fan of the group. "This roof is leaking. Let's run over to that old house for shelter." There was a pause while the suggestion sank in, and then, with raincoats flapping and after-Con eyeballs gleaming redly in the darkness, they dashed for the house which could be dimly seen at the bottom of a wildly unkempt garden. McGee, who had once stayed at John Berry's house, paused for a second, looked around him, shook his head, and muttered "Couldn't be. He's still in Ireland."

The five arrived in the porch of the house in a fairly compact bunch, the two girls bringing up the rear with the luggage.

"My feet are soaked," moaned Muggins dismally.

"That's what you get for wearing decrepit shoes," said McGee.

"They are not," retorted Muggins, "They're leather." He burst into loud peals of laughter which terminated rather abruptly as the rotting, leprous door to the house swung open, noisily, of its own accord. The interior thus revealed proved to be as dark and foreboding as a spider-infested tomb.

Hubert poked his head inside, sniffed, listened, and said: "Maybe the car would be all right after all, Eh? Let's go back to the nice car. What could be nicer than to curl up in a comfy seat, pillow your head on a soft downy luxurious steering wheel, and drift off into refreshing slumber lulled by the musical trickling of oil in the sump and the dreamy, peaceful, tinkling of creaking springs? How about it? Eh?"

For an answer McGee, who had a local standing as a pro writer because he had once received a written note instead of a printed rejection slip, brushed him aside and stamped into the hall. "What atmosphere," he exulted. "I can use this. It's the sort of place writers need."

"Yes," agreed Molly Millikan, "but the rest of us aren't dead yet." Heedlessly McGee went on into the room that opened on their left, only giving up the noisy stamping gait he favoured when his right foot went through the rotting boards three times. The rest of the group followed.

Muggins, who hadn't been satisfied with the reception given to his last pun, skirted the freshly-made holes in the floor and said: "You must have leather soles, anyway – you couldn't have done this if you had crept." He immediately went into violent paroxysms of laughter and the others stood patiently with their faces averted until he was back to normal. Somebody lit a patent pen-flashlight.

They were in a large high-ceilinged room, bare of furniture and with an old fireplace at the opposite end. Molly and her twin sister Milly carried the luggage over to this and set them down.

"The fire's out," Muggins pointed out sarcastically, rather embittered by the fate of his puns. Hubert went back to the door and hauled up an armful of floorboards from where McGee had gone through, and, with the aid of a fearsome gas-lighter he had bought from a Bradford fan, managed to get a fire blazing.

When they were seated on suitcases around the fireplace, with the warmth playing ruddily on their sensitive fannish faces, flasks of whiskey and hot coffee shuttling, and the storm raging impotently outside, things began to look a lot better. Beanies were produced and donned, laughs were raised for Muggins's jokes, cigarettes glowed and the spirit of the Convention was recaptured. McGee suddenly shouted, "Let's produce a one-shot! To commemorate this event."

There were groans and moans but, somehow, the time was ripe. In a few minutes McGee's Empire Aristocrat was uncovered and the hekto kit dug out of one of the cases and the search for a title was begun.

"How about 'The Morgue the Merrier'?"

"Nah."

"'The Spook of Ptath'?"

"Byaaaagghhhhh!"

"All right – no need to be so uncouth."

"How about 'The Propeller On My Beanie Tickles My Armpit'? Get it? Dead subtle, that."

"Not bad – too subtle, though. Hey! Where's Hubert?"

They suddenly realised that Hubert's lanky frame was no longer crouched over the fire. "Oh my Ghod," moaned McGee, turning pale, "He's vanished. Something's happened to him. Let's search for him. See him? No. Neither do I. Oh well, we looked. Let's go back out to the car." He had just finished his speech, which lasted all of two seconds, when footsteps were heard in the hall and Hubert appeared through the doorway carrying more firewood.

Unconscious of the general sigh of relief, Hubert waved brightly and said, "I went down to the cellar to see if I could find some stray lumps of coal. There was none, but I got these sticks. Might have got some mushrooms, too."

"Hungghhh?" said Muggins.

"Mushrooms," explained Hubert patiently. "The things that toads don't sit on. Whoever used to live here must have grown his own mushrooms."

"How do you know?"

"S' easy. There's a big long box half full of earth down in the cellar." Hubert set the wood down on the hearth, while the other four, all avid Weird Tales readers, stared at each other in startled surmise. They looked like a Convention Committee being told at the last moment that they had booked a temperance hotel.

The uneasy silence was broken by a strangled gasp from Milly, who had instinctively glanced out of the window. "There's somebody sneaking up the path," she whispered.

"So there is," quavered her sister. "But why is he acting so scared? What is there to be scared of?" She gave a shaky laugh and burst into tears.

"There! There! Don't worry. I'm here," soothed Muggins, protectively tucking his head inside her coat and placing her between the door and himself.

They stood in a silent group, vibrating in unison, while hesitant footsteps sounded in the hall and then approached the door of the room. A few seconds later a pale, nervous face peeked round the jamb of the door and looked all around the room.

Noting the obvious timidity of the newcomer, McGee took heart, assumed he was a tramp seeking shelter, and shouted, "What do you want? Who are you?"

The pale stranger seemed not to hear McGee. He completed his scrutiny of the room, apparently looking for something. At last he seemed satisfied and stepped into the room. "Good evening,": he said finally, and McGee saw that he was very tall and dressed in black. "My name is Count Dracula – and I think you know what I want." He smiled and his eyeteeth gleamed in the firelight.

Hubert, at last catching on, gave a faint whimper and looked to the others for help, listening to the loud thumps of his heart. He discovered that the four thuds he had heard had been the others flopping onto the floor.

"Wake up, McGee," he babbled, kicking frantically at McGee's pointed head. "This is the stuff a writer needs. You'll never get better atmosphere. Here, have a No-Doze tablet. Have two. Make a sandwich of them. Wake up! Please, McGee, get up. Yoo-hoo! Breakfast is ready! Rise and shi– Stay back, you!" he snarled at the advancing black figure. "Get back. You don't want me anyway – my blood's an absolutely useless type. They wouldn't even take me in the blood bank. Honest. Know something? My red corpuscles have fraternised with my whites and made an awful mess. And I haven't washed my neck for days."

The horribly pale face with the cruelly curved teeth kept coming forward. "Stay back!" warned Hubert, lowering his head menacingly. "Stay back or I'll fill your face full of dandruff." He stepped hastily back and knocked over the suitcase upon which was balanced all the equipment to run off the one-shot, and fell on top of it. One of his feet knocked the hekto jelly towards the looming figure.

"Aaaaaggggghhhh!" it screamed, and Hubert just managed to glimpse the flapping black cloak disappearing through the door. Half a second later the

sound of his feet had receded to a quickly fading series of squelches from the road outside.

Muggins, McGee and the twins, seeming to sense that the menace was gone, came round. Hubert told them what had happened, omitting his impassioned appeal.

"Fat lot of good you were," accused Hubert. "What would you have done if I hadn't been here to fight him off?"

"It's all right for you," moaned McGee, clutching his head. "He must have given me an awful beating. Besides, we are science fiction fans – if it had been an ordinary bem we could have handled everything. Right?"

"That's right," agreed Muggins.

"Vampires are out of our line," said McGee, " – but bems we know about." He was getting braver by the minute. By tacit agreement, however, everybody began to pack up their stuff.

"Wish a bem would show up," snarled Muggins pugnaciously. "I feel like a good fight."

Out in the hall there came a wet slithering sound.

Gleaming in the firelight with a shifting purple slickness, a huge shapeless mass of slimy jelly dragged itself into the room. It came straight across the room towards the group at the fireplace.

There was a horrible fascination in the painful, heaving undulations of the monster as it slid its way across the room. Hubert stared at it in hypnotised horror as it drew near to him, and barely heard the inert bodies thudding to the floor all round him. When the monster was barely ten feet away, something else happened that caused his eyeballs to cantilever even further.

The hekto jelly had squirmed out of its tray, and, with plaintive mewing sounds, was crawling towards the other mass of what Hubert now saw to be almost identical stuff. The two blobs of jelly, one huge and one tiny, met and merged; then the mother mass began to retreat towards the door.

Somehow Hubert felt that he had just witnessed a scene that was in a strange way touching. What was this horrible thing that trailed purple slime and which had frightened the vampire so much that he had sneaked into his own house? What was the meaning of the ghastly union he had seen? Or was it... re-union?

Was the monster now on its way to seek out the owners of yet another hekto outfit?

These and a hundred other questions flashed through Hubert's mind as he dragged the limp forms of McGee, Muggins, and the Millikans out to the car and stowed them inside.

Hubert managed to get the car going, and on the drive to Bridgetown he managed to fit all the questions and his answers into a longish story plot which he wrote out and sent to another fanzine. He never touched a hektograph again himself.

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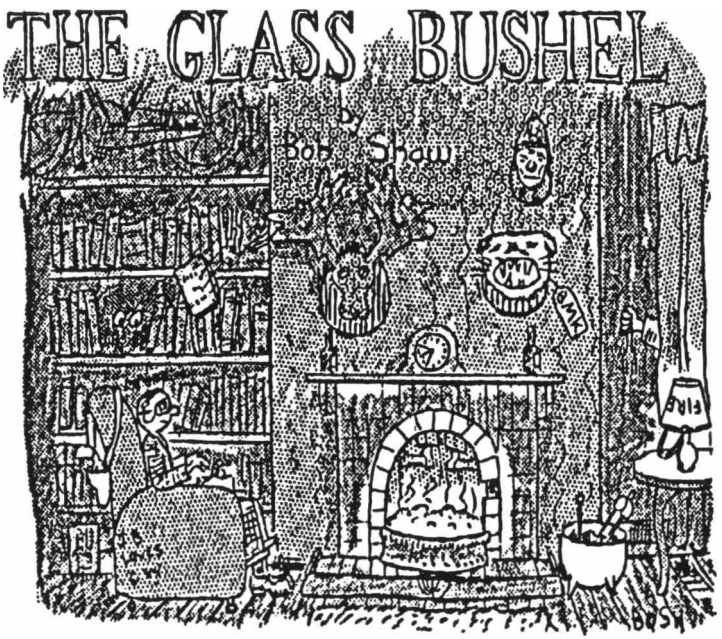
HYPHEN 15 (NOV. 1955) **Illos by BoSh**



The other day I said to John Berry, "John, have you ever had any close contact with the supernatural?"

He bounced out of his chair and went something like this: "Suffering catfish! Have I ever ...? What a question. Oh crikey! I wish I had. Mmmmmmm!" Here he made a circle out of his forefinger and thumb and held them up like a French chef enthusing over somebody's tomato ketchup. "Oh, I wish I had! Honestly! I

say, Bob, there's a bit of grass in your trouser flap. What an idea for an article! Bob Shaw the squatter — crawling through long grass to spy on courting couples. I could have it in the next ORION, all about the police and special constabulary being called out to find you cos you frightened George out of his wheelchair when he was out with Carol."

"Sit down, John," I said, gently pushing him into the chair.

"The supernatural," he babbled. "Mmmmmm. Lovely! I wish I had. Suffering catf – Hey Bob. That was quit a push you gave me. What an idea for my next article in OOPSLA!! Bob Shaw the bruiser who goes around terrorising Irish Fandom. I could have it that you beat us all up to make us write articles in your name ... oh, I must write those two on my way home tonight. Ah yes! The supernatural! Close contact! hee hee hee. Honestly, I'd give my right arm ..."

Quietly I sneaked away, appalled at what I had heard. It was quite clear that when somebody said "the supernatural" to John Berry he thought they were talking about Marilyn Monroe.

Later it occurred to me that I should say something to fandom about my life with the supernatural. After all, I reasoned, very few of us have been given The Gift, that second sight which makes its possessor aware of things that the common run of humanity does not even know about. Sometimes as the veil is lifted aside for a moment I wonder: are there regions into which Man is not supposed to venture? I believe that a limit was placed on Man's domain and when he goes beyond he is incurring the wrath of someone who watches ... . It is dangerous to pry into things that are not meant for the human eye to see ... .

How do I know? Well, you see, the supernatural has a spite against me.

I first became aware of this at the age of seven; in fact I was almost ten, but then I was very slow in growing up. I remember when some of my chums were eleven and twelve I was only eight, but in later life I overcame this handicap and managed to reach 21 years before my kid brother who was only ten at the time. It must run in the family.

Anyway, it was in the middle of the afternoon and I was in school receiving a singing lesson. The whole class was tiredly standing there singing some uninspired jingle which dealt, in great detail, with the reactions of some bird of the robin family to the onslaught of winter in general and the northerly winds in particular. I was bored because the only song I liked was one about a mermaid with a comb and a drink in her hand and we wouldn't reach that one for some time yet.

I began to yawn, so I put my hand over my mouth, because it is polite and because nobody likes to see your tonsils, but mainly because the teacher would have whaled me for lack of interest if she had seen it. Bearing this last in mind I decided to play real safe. I put my other hand over my mouth as well.

This is where the unseen forces that have the power to strike fear into the hearts of ordinary men made themselves felt. We were all singing softly and sadly, the teacher was watching us and I had both hands cupped over my mouth. Suddenly, echoing through the classroom there came a horrible cry! It was a loud, eerie, frightening ululation which in several seconds reached a horrifying crescendo before gradually fading away into a low gurgling sob rather reminiscent of the death cry of an ambidextrous sea serpent being dropped into a blast furnace full of glowing nutty slack.

I assure you it was an awful and memorable sound and I stood unmoving, in that same pose, hands over mouth, until the last despairing echo had faded away. I blinked several times in surprise; then I noticed something was wrong.

Everybody in the classroom had turned and was staring – accusingly – at me!

"Shaw!" the teacher bellowed, her face contorted with shock and rage, "Why did you do that? Come up here." Dumbfounded I turned to stare at my classmates, hoping for someone to explain: then I felt hands pushing me in the back and forcing me to stumble up the aisle. My friends had turned on me.

Several feet away from the teacher's desk my voice suddenly returned. "I didn't do it. It wasn't me. Don't slap me. I couldn't do that — it was somebody in the street. Don't hit me, I didn't do it, I tell you. Honest! Honest! It was a murder out in the street." I screamed, quietly and bravely. Miss Beaucannon dispatched one of the others to the window; he scanned the street outside and returned with a negative report. There was no one there. I got six of the best with a whippy cane and the pattern for my supernatural experiences had been set.

My next encounter was several years later when I had grown up a bit and joined a flute band. I was returning home from band practice one night along with a friend when They struck again. We were trudging along the Beersbridge Road in a moody silence when the other chap, who was much bigger than me, turned on me with a savage cry and punched my jaw so hard that I fell flat on my back.

"What you hit me for?" I whimpered, getting to my feet. He pointed mutely at his right eye.

Somebody had spat in it.

I stared around the deserted road in the gathering dusk feeling the old hopelessness stealing over me. This time I didn't even try to blame it on some expectorant mother leaning out of an upper window. I walked away with quiet dignity and left him there mopping his eye. I never spoke to him again.

A few years went by and I had lost a lot of my friends due to my newly acquired habit of slinking about like somebody out of 'The Black City'. I was returning home from an unsuccessful sf hunt in Smithfield book market when I noticed my bus sitting at the City Hall. I was hungry and wanted home so I ran for the bus which was just moving off.

Now, anyone familiar with the topography of Belfast will know that when the Castlereagh bus moves off it has just time to pick up a good speed when it reaches the lights at Arthur St. I made a tremendous effort and caught up on the bus ... you know the way it is. You are straining every muscle, it is no longer a matter of merely catching a bus, it is the most important thing in the world to reach out and grab that bar, only a few inches beyond your fingers and, relatively, almost at rest. That's the way I was when, with eerily impossibly rapidity, the Arthur St. lights turned to red and the driver stamped hard on his brake pedal. The bus stopped within a few feet, probably assuming a rhomboid shape in the process, to the sound of screaming tyres and creaking joints and the bumping of numerous foreheads against seat backs. If the reader can be diverted from contemplation of this vivid word picture of the effects of sudden, violent, deceleration on the huge bus, could I mention something else?

Remember me?

Making pathetic little noises of pure fright I went through the door of the bus, denting the used tickets box, bounced off it into the conductor, off him into the lower deck of the bus and stormed through a scared crowd of old ladies with shopping baskets, some of whom almost had hysterics. I finished up just behind the driver, covered with perspiration and incipient bruises. I bestowed a sickly smile on all the startled faces turned towards me, slunk down the bus and up the stairs.

The supernatural had scored over me again.

Strangely enough buses and trams seemed to be a sort of focus of psychic activity, although the above is the only instance in which they manipulated traffic lights. Usually they would let me risk my neck in hopping onto a moving bus and then, during the time my senses were concentrated on getting aboard, change the destination, so that I had to get off at the next stop and limp back.

The last important incident took place on one of the old-fashioned tram cars which until recently ran along the Shore Rd., where I worked for a time. We

came out of the office and saw the yellow lights of a tram lumbering towards us, so we ran to the stop just in time to make the driver halt. This is important; I could swear I saw lights and people in the upper deck out of the corner of my eye as I was running.

Anyway, I scrambled onto the platform of the tram and charged up the steep stairs, closely followed by the other two. Halfway up the stairs I was feeling good, laughing the way people do when they are forced to run in a group for a bus or a tram, and I was moving at a very good speed. Suddenly I felt a vicious and crushing blow on top of the head which drove my hat down over my eyes and smashed me back down against the other two. The three of us landed in a heap on the platform below.

My first thought was that an insane criminal armed with either a baseball or a cricket bat had been lurking on the top deck and, on seeing my head appearing upstairs, had gone berserk and tried to murder me with one blow. When we had risen to our feet again I risked a cautious glance up the stairs and found that the lights and people I had been sure I saw did not exist!

The little sketch on the right represents a plan view of the upper deck of a tram. In order that the tram shouldn't have to turn right round at the terminus they were made with driving gear and stairs at each end. The two areas marked 'A' indicate the hinged sections of flooring which could be used to block the stairwell when the driver was at that end. In this case the tram had reached the terminus and started the homeward journey with the driver at the other end, but the conductor had forgotten to fold up the floor over the end where we had got on.

Simple, isn't it? The supernatural needs very little to work with.

I did the only thing I could do after that — I retreated from the supernatural. I pretended that I knew nothing about it. Nowadays when somebody asks me if I have had any experiences with the supernatural I go: "Me? Hee hee hee. I wish I had! Oh crikey! What a question to ask! Hee hee hee. Suffering catfish ... ."

MY CAREER AS A THIEF

One time when I was living in London I decided that I was cut out to be a master criminal, one of those sinister characters who sit at the core of the underworld and manipulate the grapevine or whatever it they do. I pondered for a day or two on what would be the safest way to break into this new field of endeavour. I didn't want to get rich quick or anything like that, I just wanted to do a bit of mild larceny ... a 'Make burglary your second income' sort of thing.

As a prelude to commencing operations I took to skulking about with my coat collar turned up, my beret pulled down and a sardonic twisted smile on my lips. However this attracted so much attention from August holiday crowds who kept dropping pennies into my hand, that I gave it up. I soon realised that it would be foolish to tackle anything like a bank without getting a bit of experience, so I got a nice piece of curtain material for a mask, determined to pounce on someone in a dark alley and make them hand over. I gave this up when I heard the sentence for robbery with valance.

Hence it was, that one evening I slunk up to a post office in Greenwich High Street with one hand in my overcoat pocket. I halted outside it, looked left and right to make sure that my stiff neck was cured, then whipped the penny out of my pocket. I dropped it into the stamp machine and watched as the stamp appeared from the slot. My heart was pounding heavily. This was the part I planned so carefully and I wanted no mistakes. I gripped the stamp firmly and instead of tearing it off oscillated it from side to side. After a minute or so of this the roll inside the machine had tightened up a little and part of the next stamp was beginning to protrude from the slot.

Breathing heavily, I jerked on the inner corner of the first stamp and – lo and behold – I had two stamps. Two for the price of one! Success! I was in – no more work for me. Flushed with the heady excitement of easy money I whipped out another penny and shoved it into the slot and waited with an evil smirk on my face. It took several seconds for me to realise that I had already received the next stamp and no more would appear without more cash.

I had lost all my loot!

Holding back tears of frustration I posted my letter and went back home determined not to make the same mistake twice. A week later I had scraped together the necessary capital to try again. This time I made no mistake.

I wiggled the stamp, gripped the inner corner, jerked out two stamps and sauntered away casually, quivering with excitement. Over to the pillar-box I went, determined to put my ill-gotten gains to immediate use. I posted my letter, giggling hysterically, and turned to march away, full of grandiose plans of working techniques for cigarette and chocolate machines. The I noticed something.

Standing at the stamp machine was a sweet little old lady in a shabby but very clean coat and an old-fashioned straw hat trimmed with artificial violets. In her wrinkled but very clean old hand she was clutching a letter, probably for a soldier boy in Malaya or her aged by very clean husband twitching on a hospital bed. She was gazing at the machine, which had just accepted her coin without

fulfilling its part of the bargain, with an expression of mingled dismay and bewilderment on her kindly old face. She was pathetic.

"Tough luck, mother," I snarled inwardly. "There's no room for sympathy in the underworld. It's the weak to the wall here. You shouldn't have tangled with the Machine. Get out before it's too late — this is a tough racket, kid." I turned up my collar, raked the street with steely, hard-bitten eyes and sidled towards the nearest pub. When I had gone a few sidles I looked back.

The old lady was going through her handbag and it was obvious she had no more money. She looked even more pathetic. She was too surprised to do anything more then tremble gratefully when I clumped up to her, shoved a penny into the machine and rammed a stamp into her gnarled but very clean hand. My conscience drove me to it.

Nowadays I work for a living and am satisfied with it. There's more security.
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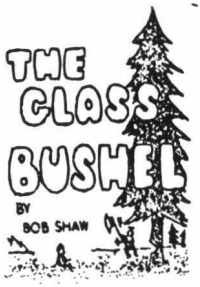
HYPHEN 16 (AUG. 1956) **Illos by BoSh & Atom**

Irish Fandom's Emigré Eminence writes from exile:



This the first GB to be written in Canada, and as I have done a lot of rambling of late, this article will do the same. Anybody that has moved his abode and effects over a long distance will know what I mean when I say that things get a bit disorganised, so for once the GB will not have that precision of structure, that beautiful balance and intricacy of relationship between its separate parts for which all my previous columns have been noted. I dare say it will turn out to be a sort of trickle of consciousness effort.

The journey over here was more or less uneventful.

Sadie and I wandered around Liverpool for a few hours and then went aboard the "Empress of Scotland" after passing through the customs. The only thing of note there was that I found myself sitting opposite a small man with a weather-beaten face not unlike that of a moronic gorilla. I conceived an instant hatred for him and prayed that I wouldn't see him on the voyage. We had lunch on board at one thirty and the ship sailed at four.

When the ship was wriggling out of Liverpool I went to the Chief Steward to make dining room reservations. I joined the line and found that I was standing right behind gorilla-face. I watched his moronic face and listened to his moronic

conversation with an almost equally moronic companion. It turned out he originally came from Scotland but had lived in Canada for thirty years. He liked his friends to call him Scotty. He pronounced it Scaddy.

I was relieved when a thick-set young man who looked like an intelligent Raymond Burr tapped me on the shoulder and introduced himself as David Rhodes. He was another draughtsman going to the same firm as I was. Cook's had made us mutually aware of each other some weeks previous, and Sadie had sent him up from the cabin where he had called to see me. We talked for a few minutes, but the proximity of gorilla-face was too much for David and he arranged to meet me later. I booked our places at a table and got David a seat with us. As it happened, there was another structural draughtsman, from Wales -- David is from Glasgow -- at the same table. We sort of had a convention.

Nothing much happened that day, as Sadie and I were tired out through not being able to sleep on the crossing from Belfast on the previous night.

I rose early next morning and went up on deck. The sea was rough and the ship was rolling quite a bit. I saw the mountainous coast of Ireland quite near and remembered that the passenger list had shown the route to pass close to Donegal. I immediately began to look for Port na Blach where the Willis and Shaw families had spent the previous summer holidays. I soon found it and a host of other familiar landmarks, and was about to dash down and arouse Sadie when I noticed something wrong.

Ireland was on the right side of the ship instead of the left. I got a bit worried over this and decided that something was wrong with the ship, and they were putting back to Liverpool without saying anything for fear of panic. Just then Glynn, the Welsh draughtsman, showed up and I explained my fears to him. He laughed uproariously for a minute at my folly and then informed me that we were passing south of Scotland. He pointed out distant mountains beyond the first range on the coast and reeled off a string of place names in the Hebrides. I was impressed.

Just then David appeared with the news that the ship had changed from the planned course to miss bad weather and that we were passing south of Ireland. Glynn muttered something about distances being deceptive over water, and went below. I took my first look at the extreme south of Ireland and marveled at its resemblance to the North of Ireland. That was the first day out and the ship covered 316 miles in a rough sea. I noticed that the dining room crowd had been reduced to about half by the motion of the ship.

Considering that the ship weighed 26,300 tons I had expected the motion to be very slight, but the ship really rolled about. The wind was force 5, i.e., a fresh breeze. The next day the wind was 6 to 12 and we covered 415 miles. Next day

the wind was 10 to 12 (12 being hurricane) and we only did 178 miles. I'm telling all this because on the menu for the last dinner it's all set out for you and it's a pity to waste it.

Eating was an experience under those conditions. The famous Shaw gut adjusted to the antics of the ship immediately and I never felt better in my life. I used to go up onto a perilous-looking bridge projecting over the extreme end of the ship and watch the sea fighting into the sky for hours. The spray-laden air gave me quite an appetite, and I used to go into the dining room anxious to do justice to the fine food we got. By this time the tables which had started off with about ten people apiece were only seating one or two. It was fascinating to watch the reactions of ordinary people to the pitching and rolling of the floor. Most of them leaned against the roll of the ship in an effort to keep vertical. This was in accordance with the advice of the Chief Steward who walked around most of the time with that superior look that experienced seamen get in bad weather. He was an adept at this technique of staying vertical.

It only failed him once. The ship heeled over even further than usual, and the Steward was leaning forward with his nose almost touching the floor, smirking to himself. Just when the slope was greatest the ship gave a little kick which lifted the Steward's rubber soles clear of the floor, and, obeying the law of gravity, he shot down the slope like a torpedo. Accompanied by a shower of cutlery, bread rolls, baked potatoes and apples, he sped through a crowd of waiters who were clinging to stanchions, and ended up below the cutlery sideboard. He was still calling out in a muffled voice, "Lean against the roll of the ship! Stay vertical!"

There was another school of thought which deemed it better to go with the ship and remain in a plane normal to the floor. Unfortunately, this group diminished sadly when its leading exponent, a thin, pale woman, went head over heels backward out of her chained-down chair and banged her head on a table about twenty feet away. She went around for the rest of the voyage with a bewildered expression on her face and a swathe of bandages around her head.

My own idea was to go willingly with the ship, but to keep a firm grip on something immovable. I gripped the leg of the table with my knees and am happy to say I didn't even lose a bread roll during the whole trip. The rolls were great fun. We got them with every meal, and there was always a couple dozen of them scuttling up and down the floor. Plates and saucers would often float quite leisurely off the tables, poise in the air for a tantalising instant and then dash themselves onto the floor. People would aim carefully at a piece of bread and then with great deliberation smear butter along their forearms. One waiter tore by us on one leg with his tray, completely out of control, and smashed into the wall. He must have had a sense of humour, for he looked the elderly lady he was serving straight in the eye, delicately lifted her upended soup bowl and held it

out to her, dripping and upside down. "Your soup, Madam," he grinned, and staggered away roaring with laughter.

On the fifth and sixth days the weather was comparatively smooth and we put into Halifax on a foggy evening. We went through the Canadian customs and boarded our train, and found that gorilla-face, who had been everywhere I went on the ship, was in the same compartment. He was within a few feet of me for the next two days, and he didn't drop dead, which shows that there is nothing in thought transference. The only satisfaction I got was when they found out that David was a Scot and sent for him to have a drink. David went down, drank all their whiskey, and came back.

David is like that. Nothing daunts or hurts him. The first morning we went to work

he pounded up to the front door, which is one of those modern glass efforts, and twisted the handle. It didn't open the door, so he gave an impatient push with his shoulder. I said that he was like Raymond Burr -- built like a grizzly bear. The door was not meant for treatment like that. It split from top to bottom, and the glass slowly disengaged itself from the frame and dropped onto the porch. A number of the firm's employees were about, and while I was trying to shrink into the ground for having even been near him, David surveyed them coldly and disgustedly, then crunched through the broken glass into the building. Those whom he had looked at seemed to quail slightly. He made them feel guilty about being in a firm that put up such shoddy doors.

David disrupted the Drawing Office when we finally got settled into it. It was the quietest, most industrious place I ever worked in, and I felt compelled to sit down and shut up. We worked for a time during which the only sound was that of racing pencils. Suddenly, at the top of his voice, David burst into a solemn ballad called "The Virgin Sturgeon," which dealt mainly with the aphrodisiacal effect of caviar upon various of the singer's relatives. Several of the draughtsmen around him went rigid with shock, then sat around with sickly smiles until he had finished. Office doors in other parts of the building opened and enquiries were made. David didn't notice.

He sang at intervals through the morning, each time with the same effect, until he felt it was time for tea. When he was told that there were no tea breaks he was astounded. The men that had broken the news to him were from Holland, and David informed them that if they had not been from such a backward, uncivilised part of the world they would never have let themselves be tricked into

slave labour for a gang of profiteers. The chief draughtsman developed a pained expression during this loud speech. It grew more pronounced during the day as David, still disgruntled, held up to voluble ridicule everything about the firm that differed from the way he liked it. I think everyone was glad to see him go home that evening.

Next day he had recovered his good humour, and in an excess of good spirits jerked the lever too hard in the toilet and flooded the place out. By this time the men were beginning to get used to his singing, so things were not too bad. A couple of days later he showed up with some tremendous calculation which involved the rate of currency exchange, average wages throughout the world, the difference between lunar and calendar months, and numerous other factors. The end result of this calculation, he announced in a loud voice which carried through the whole building, was that we were all being paid the equivalent of £5-6-8 back home. Men that were standing near him scurried away. More doors opened. David didn't notice.

"The Glass Bushel" will be written in Canada for the next two years or so, but if I have to go home before that -- you will know the reason why.

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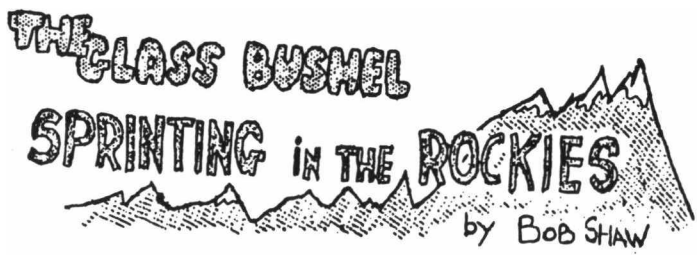
HYPHEN 17 (Dec. 1956) **Illos by ATom**



When the alarm clock rang I half leaped out of bed -- then I remembered it was Saturday and I didn't need to go to work. I relaxed back into the warmth of the blankets, sighing gently, giving myself up to that most luxurious of all feelings: getting back into a warm bed, knowing that you don't have to move for hours and hours.

Then a niggling worry made itself felt. Why had I set the alarm? It wasn't like me: every night before setting the alarm I bow my head in silent thought for a few moments trying to remember some reason for not doing it. Suddenly it all came back to me. This was the day on which David, the traveling draughtsman from Glasgow, and I were to go on a hunting trip.

Numb with regret I got up, wandered into the kitchen and put on the kettle. I slumped down in a chair, wondering why it is that an idea which seems so good in the middle of the working afternoon or after a couple of drinks in the evening never seems quite sane in the light of dawn. When the tea was ready I raided the refrigerator in the hope of finding a couple of wrapped sandwiches or something. There weren't any. Rather than cook something for myself or waken Sadie I broke my fast on tea, chocolate biscuits, ice cream and a bag of potato chips.

This made me feel quite good, and I dressed myself and tiptoed around the room gathering up my rifle, a bag of ammo, a telescope, a map, and a knife. I carried these out to the car, dumped them in and headed for David's digs. By this time I was feeling wonderful. The sun was well clear of the horizon, and was shedding a fresh rosy light over the thinning outskirts of the city. Whistling "The Call of the Faraway Hills," I pulled up outside the house of Peter van der Krogt, a Dutch draughtsman with whom David lodges. I sounded the horn... .

Everything had turned out well after all. I think my pessimism of earlier was due mainly to an unfortunate experience I had when I was about eight. I remembered it well. There had been a mild pleasant evening in late September on which I had had a rollicking, exciting time with three other small boys. For once there had been no fighting, no jealousy, and none of the limelight hogging which so infuriates other little boys who want to hog the limelight. We all felt so good and friendly that we decided to form ourselves into a club to which we would remain loyal and true for the rest of our lives. This was a great idea. So as not to waste one precious moment of this deathless friendship we decided to meet at seven the next morning. I was to go to the back garden of Harold, the member whose home was situated between all the others, and sound a bugle. Upon hearing this clarion call my friends would come tumbling out of their homes and together we would set out on a bright glorious day of adventure and camaraderie.

The next morning I got up before seven, dressed myself and put on my favourite coat, a brown, shiny-cuffed little thing which I imagined I had transformed into a romantic looking greatcoat by cutting off the buttons and replacing them with brass Belfast Transportation Corporation buttons. I went to the appointed place and waited until it was exactly seven o'clock. Harold's back garden was not a really attractive place, especially at that time of the morning,. I fought off the depressing effect of the utter silence, the misty morning air, the thick coating of frost that lay over the few bedraggled plants in the centre of the garden.

I decided to sound the call.

I had no bugle, a fact which we had overlooked on the previous evening. The only thing I had been able to find was a little wooden soldier with a hole in the top of his head which you could blow into and make a sound. The paint was

washed away from it almost entirely. I blew into this thing, which belonged to my younger brother, and a noise like the death-cry of an asthmatic duck floated out across the withered frost-bitten vegetation. I repeated this several times, striving to obtain a more blood-stirring note, but without success.

Slowly turning blue with the cold I waited there and, of course, nobody came. After a time I turned my back on the broken fence, the mute furrows of barren earth and the houses with the drawn blinds, and went home. I felt that I had grown up somewhat. Later on in the day when I met the others I was too embarrassed to tell them that I had stuck to our plan, and they had apparently forgotten all about the club, for we never spoke of it again.

Now here I was sixteen years later and sixteen thousand miles away. David came running out of the house with his rifle slung over his shoulder. He thudded his two hundred pounds into and almost through the seat beside me and cried hoarsely, "Take her away quick! The Krogts are coming! Flee for your life!"

Somewhat surprised, I got the car moving and saw in the rear window Peter's two little boys peering after us. When we were well away David relaxed a little and began to relate more of his horrendous stories about the activities of those two little boys, both of whom seem to me to be perfectly normal children except for the fact that they get up at six every morning. After a few minutes David began to cheer up and he sang me the first few verses of a new song he was working on. It was called, "The March of the Krogts."

Presently we left Calgary some distance behind and were buzzing along a narrow little road with the Rockies getting higher and higher ahead of me. "This is the life," David commented. "This makes me feel like Champlain."

Champlain, I thought feverishly as I saw David glance sideways at me, Champlain? I began to get slightly worried. I should explain here that David and I have different approaches to the task of absorbing knowledge. My method is to get an overall picture of a subject, paying little attention to dates and names and places, etc., and using this knowledge to enable me to look up the required information any time I need exact details.

On the other hand David learns names and places, etc. I think that I probably cover a wider field than he does, but my type of learning isn't much good for impressing people. It has a vague, woolly sound, compared with his incisive rendition of facts and figures. For some reason David gets a kick out of demonstrating this, especially on his two main subjects, Recent History and Geography.

"Yes," he continued, "this certainly makes me feel like Champlain. Doesn't it make you feel like Champlain?"

He was closing in. I ignored the obvious pun and said. "It certainly does."

David gave me a benign smile. "Who was Champlain, Boabby?"

"Why, the famous Frenchman," I said. That much was pretty safe.

David's smile widened. "What did he do, Boabby?"

"I don't know and I don't care," I snarled.

David's face assumed a look of incredulity and then pity. He launched into a little lecture on the explorations of Samuel de Champlain. I sat hunched over the wheel thinking furiously. What books had I read lately? Suddenly I remembered that only about two weeks before I had read Willy Ley's The Lungfish, the Dodo, and the Unicorn. Surely one little fact had stuck with me, just one little grain of hard, uncompromising knowledge. My brain began to stir sluggishly... .

"What's a wisent?" I shouted challengingly, interrupting him in mid-sentence.

"A wisent?" he said. He repeated the word several times at different speeds and with different emphasis, obviously trying to see if it was a word that he knew but which I hadn't said properly. He got nowhere with it. My jubilation increased.

"What is it?" he said reluctantly.

"The European wood buffalo," I chanted, and then to clinch the matter and show my grip on the subject, "It's extinct."

David gave me a reproachful look and told me that it wasn't clever to use an unknown word for a well-known animal and that the wisent, as I called it, wasn't extinct, that there were privately-owned herds of them on the Continent.

I told him that Willy Ley who writes in *Galaxy* every month said the privately-owned herds had all died out in the war. David wasn't impressed. Willy Ley was wrong, wisents did exist, David had seen photos of them. He was so firm that I began to wonder if Willy Ley was wrong, or if I was thinking of aurochs.

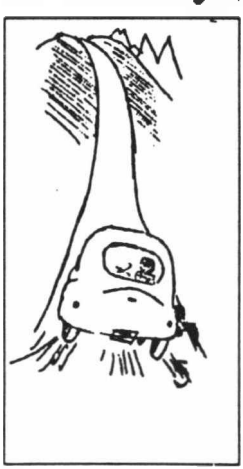
All of this put me into a sort of silent rage which wasn't helped by the fact that, although for the last ten miles we had been driving through deserted forest land, every tree seemed to be wearing a "NO SHOOTING" notice. At last I decided we had gone far enough and turned round to go back.

We were driving along through this forest, and David was telling me why he would like to have a wolf-skin to take back to Scotland with him. It seemed he thought it would be a very impressive thing indeed to be entertaining friends and suddenly say he would like to go up and change into something more casual. Then he would take his friends by surprise by reappearing wearing his wolf-skin, the head sitting on top of his own and the forelegs knotted beneath his chin... .

Suddenly I saw a small clearing, a flat, grassy-looking place which had no notices in the immediate vicinity. I turned the car off the road, and all at once we were sitting at an angle of 45 degrees, with the left-hand wheels on the road and the right-hand wheels sunk to the hubs in swamp. We looked at each other and then got out of the car without speaking.

It took us an hour to get the car out of there and get it headed for calgary again. Then we ran out of gas. Luckily the old Hillman was able to reach a filling-station. By this time David and I were both anxious to get back home, so we belted along the narrow little road at a steady forty. Another reason I wanted to go as fast as the road would permit was that I knew we were going to come to a really long and steep hill and I wanted to hit it at a good speed because I had been warned I had two burned-out valves in my engine. We came near the hill and I started going full out.

We swung round a bend and saw that a huge car was coming down the hill in the exact centre of the road. There was nothing else for it. I had to stop. When the big car had gone by we tore at the hill again and went onto it doing about ten miles an hour in first gear. When the engine felt the slope our speed dropped to a steady five. I sat and cursed myself for not having spent the few dollars for new valves. I felt as thought I was being pushed along in a wheel-chair.



All at once I began to like it. No rush, no worry about road deaths here, just the quiet rhythm of the engine, the trees slowly drifting by, the blue sky ahead at the top of the rise. About half way up the hill where it got steeper, David said something to me and jumped out of the car.

At first I was surprised, then I seemed to forget about him. I was alone with my soul, slowly, majestically ascending toward the distant sky. I was like Ptath, a god moving unhurriedly to some wonderful destiny beyond the unseen stars. Every thought connected with the earth left me, and my mind was suffused with beautiful, philosophical concepts. I was drifting along in an ethereal world of Platonic forms, and

somewhere, somewhere far away, a voice was calling to me, faintly, plaintively....

"Come back, you Irish bastard!" it said.

I had forgotten to stop when I reached the top of the hill, and the car was chugging along at a good speed. I jammed on the brakes and looked back. David was sprinting along after the car, raising little clouds of dust and waving his arms. When he caught up with me he climbed back in without speaking. I sensed that he was angry. He didn't even respond when I asked him did he know what a palimpsest was.

We drove back to Calgary in silence. I knew that David was rehearsing the dramatic story he would tell the Krogts about how I tried to maroon him in wolf country. I didn't care. I had just realised that, with a little luck, my car would turn out to be to other cars as my bicycle was to other bicycles.

It was a nice, happy thought.

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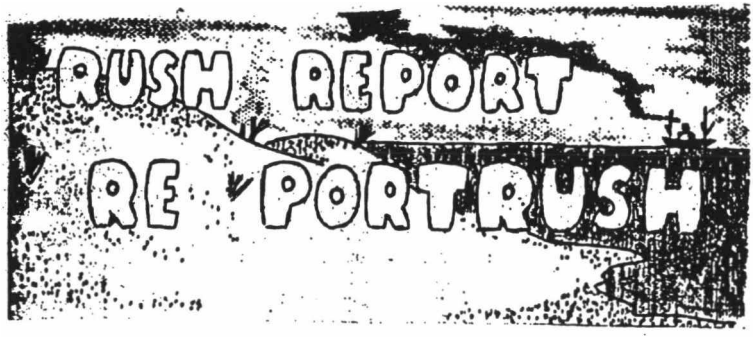
HYPHEN 18 (May 1957) **(Illos by ATom)**

I am one of those people who feel that they have had a happy childhood and boyhood. Sometimes, when I recall parts of it in detail, I wonder why I have this feeling. I think that some boys just don't have sense enough to be unhappy. I'm behind deadline on this column but I'll try to recall enough events of one period of my life to explain what I mean...



John Berry's Portrush adventure in the last HYPHEN set me thinking of the first time I saw that little resort. It was during that period of my life when I was an unwanted member of the Boy's Brigade, and the Company went there for summer camp one year.

A series of minor disasters with tents and equipment had inspired in the Company Officers a deeply rooted distaste for the great outdoors, and, by the time I joined, the word "camping" had come to denote taking over a cheap boardinghouse for a week. The adventurous souls who had decided to make the trip in this particular year mustered in the railway station one grey drizzly, Saturday morning. The rain was coming down in leisurely, vertical lines and looked as though it could stay that way indefinitely.

Things began to go wrong for me almost immediately.

One of the lieutenants hated me. His name was Johnny and he was a large, beefy young man with a round red face and humourless little eyes. He hated me because at that particular time I had a peculiar gasping sort of laugh which I was totally unable to control, and which sometimes reduced me to the point where I had to lie down to restore my power of breathing. I think he felt that this was bad for discipline.

I saw Johnny working his way down the line (we were queued at the barrier) collecting our money so that we wouldn't lose it. My parents had warned me that I was getting only a certain amount of holiday money and that I had better conserve it if I wanted to have enough for the camp. I had ignored the warning, and they had remained firm – with the result that I had slightly less than a pound with me. Some of the others had ten times that.

When Johnny asked me for my cash I said, no. I didn't want to let him know my weak financial position. The part of his neck that bulged over his collar turned a deeper red. He lifted his gaze upwards to the sooty trusses and rain-washed skylights of the station and stood like that for a moment. After a time he said, "Why?"

I didn't know what to say. I glanced wildly around me for succour, and saw only my friend McReedy moving away from us towards the barrier. McReedy was a thin pale youth who had only been drawn to me by the fact that I was more persecuted in the Company than he. By a strange coincidence he too was having a difficult period as far as laughing was concerned. He was in a sort of "silent heave" stage and his efforts to control this made his face twitch in a ghastly manner.

I could see from the convulsions of McReedy's body and the spasmodic movement of his ears that he had seen me on the spot and the sight had brought on one of his attacks. To my horror I felt my own lungs give a sympathetic squeeze and a preliminary sob escaped my lips.

Johnny recognized the danger signs. "Shaw," he gritted murderously, "I hope you're not going to start."

"Hhawnngghhh! Hhawnngghh!" I said weakly, trying to ignore McReedy, who was now an alarming purple colour and twitching from head to foot like a veteran of chorea. The situation was saved by Johnny noticing that the Company had moved through the barrier and was boarding the train. He gave me a threatening-pleading-reproachful look, grabbed his bags and ran away. I could see that he was worried about how his holiday was going to turn out.

At Portrush we emerged from the body-warmed, clammy interior of the carriage (all the Privates had managed to squeeze into one section, thus making it impossible for an N.C.O. to travel with us) into the same kind of light, persistent rain. We made a rough formation and marched off to the digs lugging our cases. I still remember that cheerful march vividly -- jogging along through the grey, spotless rain-scoured streets; smelling linseed oil from cricket bats, seeing muddy football boots dangling from rucksacks, being slapped with wet inner-tubes which some of us had brought to use as water-wings.

We reached the boarding house, settled in, made gleeful discoveries about who was in the same room as whom, and had our first meal. When the meal was over we went out and found that the rain had stopped.

I was lounging about when a fellow called Wishart approached me. "Let's go down to the Fun Fair," he said. I was quite flattered, because Wishart was one of the leading members of the Company, but I was chary about starting to squander my little stock of cash so soon.

"I don't know if I can," I hedged. "My money... ."

"Never worry about money. I've got plenty here," he said. "Let's go." This was great; I went with him to Barry's where we rode on dodgems, shot rifles, raced in little racing cars, ate ice cream, fed the slot machines, and, in general, had a good time. When we got back to the digs at about eleven I went to my room where I played "Monopoly" with McReedy and another unfortunate called Knox. I even did well at "Monopoly" which was unusual for me as I had a fatal weakness for buying cheap property with low returns.

The game had been in progress for about half an hour when there was a knock at the door and Wishart came in.

"Welcome, kind and noble Wishart," I blabbered loudly. "Wilt thou sit with us and share our humble repast?" McReedy and Knox looked at me admiringly -- I was Wishart's friend. I was a success.

Wishart produced a piece of paper, handed it to me and said: "There's a list of all the things we did down at Barry's. You owe me eight bob."

This was about half my stock. I mustered a trembling smile and gave him his money, then went back to "Monopoly." I got put out of the game and went to bed. I felt sick.

Next day things were fairly quiet. I kept out of Johnny's way and managed to reach bedtime without losing any more cash. On Monday morning the stamp-collecting fiend descended on me. "I've discovered a great shop," he told me. "Come on down and see the stamps." I went and looked them over, said they were very nice and that I was sorry I couldn't buy any as it would leave me broke.

The friend told me reproachfully that he was going to spend all his money on them and that a real collector was prepared to give his all to the cause. I felt ashamed. Here I was trying to conserve a few miserable shillings when the fiend and I could be sharing our hobby, talking, going for long walks during which we could monkey around with our stamps and in general act like a couple of Gibbons.

I spent all my remaining cash with the exception of two shillings which I felt might see me through any emergency which should crop up. It cropped up about ten minutes later. When we left the shop the fiend said, "I think I'll go and buy some presents and stuff to take home, then I'll have a feed."

"But you spent all your money on stamps," I reminded him.

"That was all my stamp money. I still have my holiday money." He set off briskly in the direction of Woolworth's.

I tottered after him, tugging his sleeve. "Wait a minute," I pleaded. "Are we not going to go on long walks talking about stamps an' albums an' postmarks an' triang..."

"Are you mad?" he said, shaking my grip off. "I can talk stamps any time. Right now I'm on holiday." He quickened his pace and left me standing in the street wondering who it was up there didn't like me. I went back to the digs and sat on the front step trying to budget for the next six days with 24 pennies. Finally I got an idea.

I went and found Knox. "Knoxy," I said, "How about going up the town and buying a fishing line and hooks? Then we can have fun all week and it won't cost anything."

Knoxy's long gloomy face reflected the mental turmoil my proposal had engendered inside his untidy head. He didn't like fishing, but he liked it better than spending money – and, after all, fishing would not be too bad with company.

We bought the lines, took them back to the boarding house and met the bunch on the way to the beach for a pre-lunch swim. This was another good way to enjoy oneself -- and free, too. Knoxy and I grabbed our swim trunks and went along. We stayed in the water longer than anybody else -- and it didn't cost anything.

When it came near lunch time, Knoxy and I staggered out of the breakers onto the bright sand and went for our clothes. All the stuff had been piled in a promiscuous heap, and it seemed reasonable to assume that when all the others removed their stuff ours would be left.

That was not exactly the way things worked out. Knoxy got dressed all right, but when I looked for my nice new shoes there was only a pair of cracked gaping things which looked as though they had kicked stones all the way around Ireland ten or twenty years before.

"Knoxy," I said, "somebody has stolen my good shoes."

Knoxy was enraged at the treatment which some unknown had meted out to his new friend. "The rat," he gritted. "Let's teach him a lesson. Let's destroy his shoes. That'll teach him." Before I could begin a refutation of his logic he seized the shoes, methodically broke the laces into tiny pieces, threw the shoes into a puddle, tramped them into the wetness, stuffed them with sand and pebbles, and then buried them.

"Yow!" Knoxy said. "That'll teach him !"

It was while he was brushing the sand out of his trouser cuffs that I noticed something. "Knoxy," I said. "Give me my shoes."

The events of the next minute are not suitable for detailed description – Knoxy's realization of the situation, his frantic scrabbling in the sand for his shoes, his reluctance to return mine, his angry accusations... .

I spent most of that week fishing in Portrush harbour – alone.

When Friday rolled around I was beginning to believe that I was going to escape without any more trouble. I was recovering pretty well from a sun-roasted back and I had hardly seen Johnny at all. I fact, I had hardly seen anybody.

Friday afternoon they decided to have a cricket match – Officers versus boys. I was forced to play because the boys only outnumbered the officers two to one, and it was felt that this was not enough to compensate for the age difference. The pitch was a fairly level spot behind the sand dunes. It had been made treacherous by trampling down the long grass into a slippery flatness.

On this pitch the Officers bowled out the boys for a total score of nine runs. The boys then dismissed six of the Officers for seven runs, which meant that Johnny was left to save the day for them. All through the game Johnny had been prowling about disgustedly, sometimes lying on his back pretending to sleep, sometimes whistling at passing girls to show us that he was a worldly man encumbered by his duties to us children, sometimes taking the ball and bowling an over at blinding speed by which means he so much terrified four of the more timid boys that they fell backwards into their wickets.

When the Captain, whose name was Sammy, informed him that he was "in" and that three runs were needed, he surveyed the field reluctantly, then saw that I was holding the ball. He seized his bat and shouted: "Okay, Shaw – Bowl!"

The other members of my team gave an immediate cheer, sensing something good was coming up. "Go ahead, Bob," they shouted. "Bowl him out." From the tone of their voices they obviously considered this an impossibility.

So did I.

Johnny made a great show of obtaining centre, marking his crease, examining the fielding layout, squaring his bat. At every exaggerated movement, the boys laughed uproariously -- it would be worth losing the match to see me getting pasted.

I ran down to bowl amid a sudden, pregnant silence. The ball, going at a good speed, landed three-quarter way down the pitch, sped up from the slippery grass and hit Johnny, who had been attempting a cut to leg, squarely on the chest. It made a peculiar booming sound and dropped at his feet.

Johnny clutched his chest and glared up the pitch at me with naked hatred in his eyes. "Shaw," he snarled, "Get a grip on yourself."

I retrieved the ball, ran down to deliver it and was just about to let go when I saw McReedy. The sight of Johnny being thumped on the chest had brought on another of his attacks. He was staggering about at mid-on, limbs twitching grotesquely, eyes rolling, mouth working, face contused. The breath whooshed out of me in one gasp and I shambled to a halt, absolutely incapable of delivering the ball.

Johnny pointed one meaty finger at me and shouted, "Shaw! Stop laughing."

This reduced me to the point where I began seriously to feel that I might die of strangulation. I tried to stop. McReedy was doing the same. I could see the panic-stricken look in his eyes as he felt himself go more and more out of control.

Johnny ran down the pitch and seized my shoulder. "This is your last chance, Shaw" he gritted. "Stop it." I dangled on him, sobbing from deep down in my chest. McReedy was down on his hands and knees, dribbling.

"All right, Shaw," Johnny said, "you've had your chance." He strode away from me and the game broke up in utter confusion.

I saw Johnny once more that day. I was walking through the dunes alone after supper when I heard a sound on the other side of one of the hillocks of sand. Hoping that it might be somebody I knew, I went up the hill and peered down the other side. I found myself looking straight into Johnny's face.

He was lying in the grass with a dark-haired girl of about nineteen. Johnny and I gazed at each other in petrified silence, both of us unable to take in what we were seeing. After a few seconds my legs regained strength and I sprinted away through the gathering twilight, bleating with panic.

The look of incredulous rage on Johnny's face haunted me until I went to sleep. That night some of the lighter sleepers were aware of a mild disturbance in the small hours of the morning.

When morning came, most of the boys found themselves liberally daubed with shoe polish. Enquiries revealed that the Captain and a couple of senior officers had got up during the night to play a prank on the juniors by decorating them with "Cherry Blossom" boot polish.

My own experience of the affair differed from that of everybody else. I was fast asleep when something big and strong descended on me like an enraged succubus and showered me with vicious, painful blows. This went on for about a

minute before my terrified moans wakened the others in my room and the intruder fled.

I never found out for sure who had done it, but next morning I saw Johnny smirking contentedly at me during breakfast. As soon as possible after the holiday I resigned from the Company as a sort of dramatic protest against the Company officials.

I don't think anybody even noticed that I had gone.
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HYPHEN 20 (FEB. 1958) **Illos by Atom**

PERCHANCE TO SLEEP

I was visiting my grandmother in Dublin.

I walked down a bright, dusty street of Victorian houses, noticing, with beautiful clarity, each twig of the sparsely-leafed hedges, and each time-carved doorstep. My grandmother's house was at the end of the row, and I went up three steps into the hall. I could smell steak frying.

The house was bustling with my uncles and other relatives, all hurrying around getting it into order – they had just moved in. Before finding my Grandmother I went up to the bathroom and discovered it was locked. Somebody suggested that, if it was urgent, I should use the one in the unoccupied house next door.

I went out into the brilliant sunlight again and into the empty house. Going up the dusty hall with its worn floorboards and peeling walls I glanced into the first room on my left. There was a long object lying on an old couch. The object was covered by a sheet.

At the top of the single flight of stairs leading up from the narrow hall I pushed open the bathroom door. I found myself looking down into a cracked, dirty bath. In the bath was a naked human corpse which must have been there for weeks, for it was rotting horribly.

I turned to flee down the stairs and out into the street, but, somehow, the massive front door was now tightly closed. Then I saw something else.

A small piece of white cloth was projecting into the hall from the room I had looked into on my way up. I knew that the thing under the sheet was standing just inside that doorway waiting for me to come down. It would come up behind me as I fumbled with the front door lock... .

On the night I dreamed that dream not only did I rouse my parents and brothers, but I terrified our dog who sleeps out in the back. It isn't known for certain, but my father believes it was my yowl of fear which made his ferrets, which live at the bottom of the garden, so nervous all that year.

Dreams were one of the things that Gregg Calkins and I chatted about when I visited him in Salt Lake City. It turned out that we both had very similar dreams, and we wondered if this was a widespread phenomenon in fandom.

For example, both of us have recurrent dreams about being in a spot where our lives depend on using a pistol to get out. In Gregg's dreams the trigger always becomes so stiff that he can't aim while pulling it, and in mine the trigger simply goes loose and dangles there, making it impossible to shoot. Now why should two people with entirely different backgrounds repeatedly have this dream?

Another thing that happens to me is: I have a dream involving a complicated setup, and then forget it inside a few days. Suddenly, perhaps as much as a year later, I have another dream which is a continuation of the long-forgotten one, and involving the same background and characters. For example, I dreamt that Belfast had been taken over by a sort of monstrous overlord, who, in order to keep the population from becoming too strong, had the city divided into small wards and nobody was allowed to leave his own tiny district. In the dream Sadie and I were trapped in his castle (which was near where James White used to live) and we escaped into the city only to find that the sector patrols would keep us in that area and we would be caught again. Here I awoke.

About eighteen months later I had a dream which commenced just where we escaped, and continued on to where we worked out a way to evade the sector patrols and get safely away.

At the end of the second dream all memory of the first had long since faded out. With minor variations this has happened quite often.

Another type which Gregg and Walt Willis share with me is the one in which I dream I have discovered some wonderful, and hitherto unsuspected, truth which will alter the pattern of human existence and make life all that it should be. I waken from this one feeling supremely happy, and then I realise, with a sinking sensation, that the Truth is slipping away from my mind. I make a frantic effort to grasp it, but the very intensity of the effort drives it away completely.

When this had happened to him several times Walt took a notebook and pencil to bed and sort of lay in ambush for the next dream of that kind. Sure enough, after several weeks of waiting, it happened again – the beautiful, perfect thought came.

Next morning he got up, remembering with the customary regret how this Word had come to him and been lost again to mankind. Then, as he was dressing, his glance fell on the notebook – it was open on the bedside table. Hardly daring to hope, he dashed over. Could it be? Had he written the Word down in the night? He had!

With trembling hands Walt lifted the little book, almost overcome with grateful joy that he had managed to save the Message. On it was written:

"The obvious is not necessarily untrue."

As far as I know Walt discontinued his work in this field, but could there not be something in it? Could it not be that the slumbering fannish brain is somehow in tune with a good, wise Unknown who tries to bring help to the world? It is high time this matter was investigated.

THE FASTEST GUNS ALIVE

In Salt Lake City I lived out an astonishing parallel to one of the most popular plots in present-day Western films. Like this....

A number of fannish writers have written about the large appetite I possessed in Ireland. This is the opening of the film – the "fast gun" gets a reputation which spreads far and wide. Then I traveled from Belfast to Calgary to Salt Lake City. This is the next part – the "fast gun" is weary, and he moves around trying to find someplace where he is unknown and can live in peace.

Now comes the big scene.

We all sat around in the Calkins living-room talking guardedly. I could sense the tension in the air. I knew something was going to happen... .

Jo Ann said, "The liquor laws in Utah are so awkward we can't even take you somewhere for a drink. What will we do?" She glanced at Gregg.

"I don't know," he said. He glanced at me.

"I don't know either," I said obligingly.

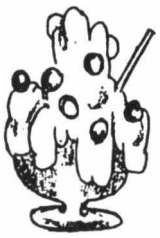
We waited. I had been given my chance to back out and now it was too late.

"I know," Gregg said with careful spontaneity. "Let's have a parfait." They looked at me and I nodded.

As we entered the ice cream shop Gregg nodded at a waitress. She paled slightly and dashed away to return with parfait menus. These were more like stock lists than menus – huge lists of materials which could be incorporated into one mixture.

Gregg was first. Hardly even glancing at the list, he reeled off a string of ingredients which took him several minutes to recount. Jo Ann ordered one hardly less formidable, and Sadie, who had not yet sensed what was happening, happily ordered a mixture of her favorite confections. Then it was my turn.

"The same as him," I said to the waitress, and nodded at Gregg. There was a look of satisfaction in his eyes.



Presently the girl returned with four glass things (carboys is the word that springs to my mind) filled with the parfaits, and we set to. I have often heard things described as "an acquired taste," but this was something new to me – an acquired dis-taste. The first dozen spoonfuls were nice, in fact the first hundred or so were nice, but after that I began to feel that I had had enough. Doggedly I kept going to within an inch of the bottom, then I glanced round.

Sadie was down about an inch from the top. Gregg and Jo Ann were finished and were regarding me smugly over the yawning rims of their glasses. Taking as deep a breath as was possible with my ice cream congested lungs, I finished off my parfait and triumphantly dashed the spoon down. Onto the table, of course.

Sneeringly I surveyed my opponents. Thought they could beat me! Hah! That's what they thought! Hah! I showed 'em! Somehow, they didn't look disappointed, though. I noticed that Gregg was looking expectantly towards the counter, and I glanced warily in that direction.

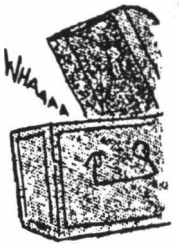
I could see the top of the waitress's head bobbing along behind the bar, and I wondered why she had become so small. She came out into view and I realised she was bent double with the weight of four sort of handless buckets. She shambled over to us and swung these things up onto our table. It was the uneaten portion of the parfaits.

Strangely enough, I managed to finish mine – an ignominious twenty minutes behind the Calkinses – but I have no memory of doing it. I vaguely remember coming out of the place feeling like a brand new tube of toothpaste, being shown around the University, being driven back to the apartment, and, to crown it all, being given beer in a gigantic, figured mug (a sort of Epicstein) which I was almost unable to lift... .

The top gun is retired now. He lives quietly in a little midwestern town, where nobody knows him. Sometimes, when the talk around the potbellied stove turns to the feats of famous gunmen, he smiles reflectively. But he doesn't say anything. He has his memories – also, he is still burping ice cream.

SERVICE WITH A SMELL

I always felt sorry for Judy Garland when she sang that song about being born in a trunk in Pocatello, Idaho. Now that I have been in Pocatello and seen what it is like, I realise that Judy's parents must have been pretty well off. I can quite believe that it was only privileged cases who were admitted into any trunks that were available – the rest would have to make do with Pocatello's grubby little buildings.



That's right! I don't like the place.

It was a pretty grim and grimy place, but, on thinking back more carefully, perhaps it is all because of the service station there. That morning we had left the Calkinses and Salt Lake City peacefully acquiring a thick coating of cold, wet snow, and driven North into warm, sunny weather. Coming into Pocatello I saw this service station in which everything, right down to the attendants' uniforms, was coloured blue and brown.

The combination was so jarring to my sensibilities that before I knew it I was stopped outside the place. At the sound of a bell two men came running out, separated, and came at the car from each side. A second later they had jerked the doors open, and were sitting one on each side of Sadie and me, sweeping at the floor with little brooms.

My theory about cleaning cars is the same as for shoes and bicycles – they are clean when you get them, and that is enough. At this particular time, due to a recent muddy spell, there was so much dust on the floor that the control pedals looked like three strange mechanistrian flowers growing on a bank. The dust billowed up around us, obscuring everything and getting into our eyes and

mouths. I had the satisfaction of hearing the man at my side giving dismayed little moans as he realised what he had started.

In time they got most of the stuff shoveled out onto the ground, and I told them to fill the tank. This request was ignored. One of them got a pail and rags and began washing the windows; the other lifted the hood and began poking around the engine.

When the window-washer was going around the front end he stopped and began pounding on one headlight with his fist, then he came trotting around to me. "Did you know you have a big hole in your Sealbeam?" In his voice there was a note of wonder – how had I driven so far with the car in this state?

I got out and examined the headlight in question. Sure enough there was a hole there; but it was so small it took me a minute to find it. While I was trying to shred a match down fine enough to fit the hole, the other man, a lanky Southerner, bounded out from under the hood. "Ah've got some bad news for you, suh," he said.

"What's wrong?" I said.

"Theah's a big leak in youah hose."

I immediately adopted my anti-salesman look – utter and absolute simplicity and stupidity. This look gives them confidence and makes them think that the sales talk is going right to the mark, but when it is coupled with obstinate refusal to buy, the salesman gets a panicky fear that he has stumbled across some kind of potentially dangerous lunatic. By skillful use of "the look" I have almost broken several men.

"A leak!" I moaned in bovine consternation. "Where is it?"

"In theah, suh."

He pointed to a place where he had left a dark, greasy thumb print in the dusty hose surface. I could see at once that there wasn't any leak, so I said, "I see it. What will that do to the engine?"

"Why, when you drive it, all the water will run out and the engine will overheat and the bearings will all melt and the whole thing will burst into flames."

I intensified the look and said, "Oh."

"Well, suh, do you want me to put in a three-dollar hose or a five-dollar hose?"

"But I don't want to buy a hose. Just fill her with gas, please."

"But suh! The engine... the bearings... fire... ."

"Fill the tank, please." Shaking his head, the tall one went away to fill the tank. There was a baffled look on his face. I turned expectantly to the other man, who had been crawling around the car on his hands and knees. Dead on cue he jumped up: "I don't like to tell you this, but those front tyres are just about to blow out." But he had a hopeless sort of look in his eyes, and his voice faded away at the end. I didn't even bother to speak to him. I paid for the gas in silence and drove away, leaving the two of them staring after us.

"Good-bye, suh," the tall one called out. "Hope you don't run into too much trouble." He didn't sound too optimistic.

If this had been a fictional account it would be easy to finish off in humourous tradition. There is only one ending possible, i.e., the tyres all burst, the headlights go out, and the engine burns up within a hundred yards of the service station. But in actuality, nothing happened at all.

When we got back to Calgary, after a 2,000 mile run, we had not even had a soft tyre. If any fan happens to be in Pocatello, Idaho, and sees a horrible brown and blue service station, would he drop in and tell this to them?

Please?

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HYPHEN 24 (March 1960)

The Man in the Grey Flannel Toga

One Evening last winter while glancing through the Radio Times I discovered that the BBC was going to give "Julius Caesar" the full treatment in about half an hour's time. The discovery of and the imminence of this veritable pearl sent me into a state of near oysteria. I dashed out and purchased two pint bottles of Amber Ale, got the fire well stoked up, equipped myself with glass, bottle opener, pipe tobacco and slippers and settled down in an armchair before the TV set. Once that TV of ours gets into your chair nothing will shift it.

The play opened in a rather unfamiliar manner — nothing but grey mist and a strange, eerie silence. I was explaining to Sadie that I didn't care much for the liberties the BBC had taken with the original settings when she noticed that the set wasn't switched on. Once that was done I began to enjoy the show. Everything went well until the third act, then my memory began to stir uneasily, dredging up fragmentary glimpses of the past ... .

Suddenly it was all there. Of course. How could I have forgotten the sheer misery of my first and last taste of the footlights' glare? This was the play I had been forced to take part in during my first year at the Technical High School. Gradually the sound and fury of the BBC version began to recede as the events of that ghastly evening came crowding back ... .

The English teacher in charge of the production was an athletic tweedy man with a square, angry face. His name was Carson and he was feared throughout the first year sections because, according to rumour, he had been known, when enraged, to demolish even the largest boys by applying a sort of wrestling submission hold known as the Corkscrew. This involved putting his left arm round your neck, catching the short hairs of your temple in his right hand and winding them like an old gramophone. Nobody had ever actually seen Carson so this but we all went in dread of suddenly being given the Corkscrew.

Actually I shouldn't have been in the play at all. In fact, the only reason for the whole business was that Carson, like so many short tempered people, believed himself to be something of a humourist. He had written a take-off on "Julius Caesar" for the end of the term social and had realized at the last moment that all the clever bits, such as the assassination scene in which the conspirators used tommy guns, would not be appreciated by the rabble. Accordingly he had decided to do the play seriously to show us what the real thing was like, and had cast third and fourth year students in the major parts.

In English class one day I was laboriously making carbon copies of my class magazine, known for some forgotten and unguessable reason as "Le Hibou and Ku Klux Klan Journal", when Carson appeared beside me and saw what I was doing. I cowered back covering my temples but to my surprise he took the matter quite well. After a public enquiry into the policies and circulation figures of my magazine, which left the rest of the class in stitches, he asked whether my evident interest in the Arts included any desire to be a Thespian.

I had a vague idea that the word meant something peculiar and mumbled incoherently about being too young.

Carson didn't seem to notice. He handed me a copy of "Julius Caesar," showed me my part, which consisted of two lines in Act 3, and told me to show up at rehearsals that evening. Some of the boys who sat nearby almost became ill

with senseless laughter — this was going to be something to talk about for years.

As it turned out I only had to attend one rehearsal, due to be conscripted so late, and things went so well at it that I became reconciled with the idea of being an actor. One serious snag was the obvious impossibility of producing reasonable facsimiles of Roman Army uniforms, but Carson had got round this by dressing everybody, even Mark Anthony and Pompey, in togas. These consisted of lengthy pieces of curtain material borrowed from the Art classrooms. An elderly teacher by the name of Miss Anderson fitted them on the boys with safety pins.

There was not enough material on hand to provide me with a toga so I did my bit in my ordinary clothes which at that particular time consisted of shapeless grey flannels and an ex-ARP jacket. Before I went on Miss Anderson provided me with a spear and a circular cardboard shield.

Just as I was ready to make my entrance Carson buttonholed me. "Listen, Shaw", he said, "I want you to speak up. Don't mumble. Your part is small but it is important that the audience hear what you say, so speak up. And keep your shield on your upstage arm to give them the full benefit of your gallant warrior's physique."

I ignored the sarcasm and did all I was told and it felt pretty good. I came off fired with enthusiasm — perhaps this was the start of a new career. Still in this mood I told Miss Anderson that I was going to do away with the circular targe, which was most un-Roman, and was going to make a proper semi-cylindrical shield. She thought that would be very nice and agreed rather lugubriously to make me a sort of tunic and skirt to wear. I could see my performance being described as "a little gem" in the school magazine.

On the big night I got down to the school early and smuggled my shield into the dressing rooms. Most of the other boys were there already wearing their togas and stamping their feet with the cold. It was November and the dressing rooms were like gloomy iceboxes. Our breaths filled the place with a faint fog.

After some enquiries I found that Miss Anderson had left my outfit in a paper bag in a cupboard. I brought it out, took off my clothes and then discovered to my horror that Miss Anderson's idea of a Roman soldier's uniform was a grey silk thing with thin shoulder straps and a plunging neckline. I put it on and found that it came down just far enough to cover my trunks and no more. When the shout of laughter went up from the others I developed a sneaking suspicion that Miss Anderson had given up trying to make anything and had given me an old petticoat. Mark Anthony began talking in a high pitched voice, prodding me with his rubber dagger and finally tried to make me waltz with him. I was saved by the arrival of Carson.

"Unhand that maiden, Marcus Antonius," he said. Carson loved to use the old form of words and names — he was a sort of ycleptomaniac. Luckily, as the play was about to commence, he had no time for further comment on my costume and I suddenly found myself alone in the dressing room. I decided not to wait in the wings with the others and slumped down in a corner to wait my turn.

An hour later, when it came, I had turned a mottled blue with touches of burgundy here and there. I was predictably unable to speak. Getting through the crush in the wings was easy; I just kept putting my hand on bare arms and the crowd melted before me. It was a bit like the scene where Quasimodo frightens people going up the cathedral steps.

Somehow I got onto the stage, husked my two lines about the approach of some army, and ran off. I found out afterwards from boys who had been there with their parents that I had carried my huge semi-cylindrical shield on my downstage arm and, as well as not hearing me, the audience hadn't even seen me. Into the bargain I was shivering so much that the flabby point of my spear had almost leapt off the stick.

Back in the throng I saw Carson bearing down me with a looked of unbridled hatred on his face. I clapped my hands over my temples, gave a despairing whimper and clawed my way into the dressing room. I threw on my trousers and ARP jacket over my costume and fled through another door.

The next day in class Carson didn't speak to me. Now that I think of it, I don't believe he ever spoke to me again.

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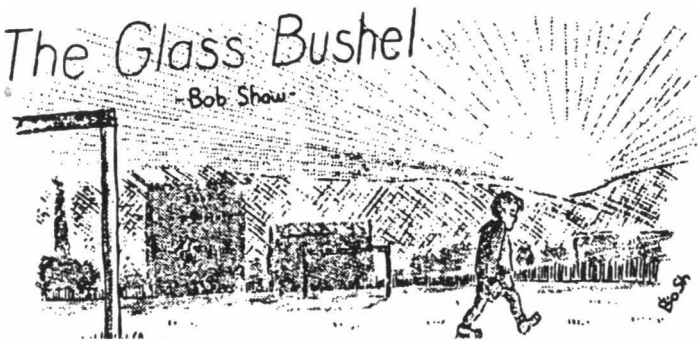
HYPHEN 25 (Nov. 1960) **Illo by BoSh**



A couple of weeks ago, on a run down to Whitehead, I was motoring along keeping an eye open for a petrol station. Filling stations are scarce on the road

to Whitehead - in fact, you might say they are fuel and far between - so I was going very slowly when I passed through Greencastle. The sight of the old huddled cottages there, examined in detail for the first time in many years, brought another of those sudden onrushes of memory which have, in the past, proved so valuable when Bushel deadlines were drawing nigh.

This time the Proustian gurglings in the subconscious dredged up an early episode that I have entitled, "The Strange Pond of Dr. Moreau".

When my brother and I were small children my father periodically took us to Greencastle to swim. There is no beach there, just a dismal stretch of mud, seaweed and sharp stones; but my father is a man of simple tastes and these things did not bother him. I have since made extensive enquiries and have not yet come across one other person who has swum at Greencastle; nobody else has even considered it.

I don't blame them. Even at that age I could sense a difference between Greencastle and Miami Beach. My brother and I grew to dread those occasions on which Pater separated us from our playmates with the tidings that we were all going to "the seaside."

Resistance was futile, so we trooped onto the tram and were taken into town, onto another tram and out to the end of the lines and Greencastle. Dutifully we bared our goose pimples to the reddish light of the evening sun, then splashed around until my father decided we had had enough enjoyment for one evening. Sometimes, as a special treat, he brought a snack with him - usually massive, dry soda farls that we could hardly eat. Very rarely he would slip in a doughnut, but only very rarely - they were few and farl between.

One sombre evening, with a chill wind nipping in from the Lough, I was sitting in near nudity amongst the rocks when I got a strange, wonderful idea that transformed the whole outing into a thing of joy. There were crabs at Greencastle, little mud-coloured crabs that I had always pitied because they were doomed to live and die right there. My idea, like all great ideas, was simple. There was a clear, clean pond in the park near home - I would bring two crabs back with me, put them in the pond and let them start a whole new breed of crabs. Bigger, better, happier crabs. I could see it all - the crabs would do well in their new surroundings, they would spread all over the pond. Soon it would be noticed, it would be in the local papers, people would come for miles to see them and wonder how they came to be there ... .

And nobody would know but me and, maybe, the crabs. Perhaps as I walked in the lonely twilight near the pond my little friends would sense my presence and, out in the centre, a pair of nippers would break surface in a gesture of humble thanks.

Half an hour later, Robert Shaw - Apprentice God - was on a homeward bound tram, firmly clutching a jam-jar from which two dismayed crustaceans surveyed the changing universe.

One thing about these trips was they really made us hungry. Home and my mother's cooking never seemed so good as on arrival from Greencastle. Gerry and I usually ate twice as much as a normal meal when we got back, swilling it down with hot weak tea and feeling wonderful about being home. But this time I slipped away before the meal and got into the park just before the gates were closed. It was almost dark when I put the crabs into the still waters of the pond and fondly watched them sidle away into the depths. I dropped in a handful of salt that I had thoughtfully brought along to ease the transition from brine to fresh water, then I went home, feeling uplifted.

Childhood enthusiasm can wane as quickly as it waxes, and the next day I was too busy to go and see how things were with the crabs. Things kept cropping up and cropping up and quite a long period of time elapsed before I finally went back to the park. As I neared the gates I began to recapture some of that magical fervour and my step quickened until I was almost running. Suddenly I halted. The pond was no longer there. They had filled it in and built a football pitch in its place.

* *

Occasionally I drive by that spot, but I never watch the football players because, somewhere under those carelessly pounding boots, my two little friends lie silent in the cindery soil.

I should have left them in Greencastle.

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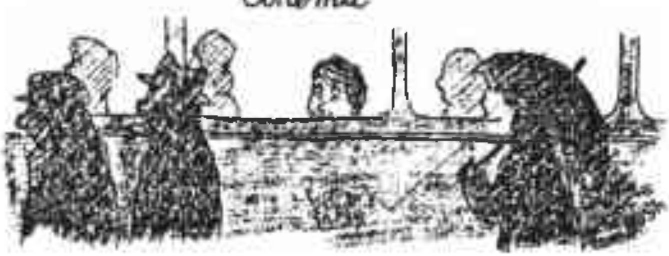
HYPHEN 26 (JAN. 1961) **Illos by BoSh**

I Have Been Faithful to Thee, Cinema



The other night, having left the car in for a much needed grease job, I found myself back with the Belfast Corporation Transport after an extended absence. I was suddenly and forcibly reminded of how, when I was a small boy, my mother hated having to take me onto a bus on a dark, rainy evening. There was a strange hypnotic quality in the sombre dimness of the lights, the drumming of rain on the roof and the smell of soggy tickets which never failed to send me into a trance. I would get a seat to myself, slump down in the corner, peer out at the varicolored blurs of light and drift off on yet another adventure. People the bus passed would sometimes notice a pair of eyes glaring at them, from a point approximately one and a half inches above the bottom of a window, and never realise that they had just been transfixed by an arrow, perforated by a bullet or shriveled up by a betatron ray pistol – depending on which serial was running at the local cinema.

When in one of these moods I was exceedingly difficult to arouse and often had to be led off the bus like an imbecile. On one occasion, having just seen Nelson Eddy in a film, I became so completely absorbed in my role of Bob Shaw, world-famous tenor and consort of beautiful women, that I had to be forcibly restrained from giving several bored passengers a fifth rendition of the only song I knew the whole way through. I think it was "Away in a Manger."

(It would be nice to be able to relate that I quickly passed through this stage, but such is not the case. I was out of my teens before the cold sneer of Bob Shaw, master mind, ceased to be a familiar sight on the Castlereagh Road buses on wet winter evenings. In fact, it was on such a night, in a fit of neurotic grandeur, I decided Ireland was not big enough to hold me and I was going to Canada. I remember sitting alone on the top deck, trying the idea on for size while the introspective, melancholy strains of Rachmaninov's Second rose up around me in imaginary applause, mingled with the faint pervasive odour of wet tickets on the floor... .)

The films they show nowadays do not seem to be capable of exerting such a powerful effect on young minds.

Possibly it is because the new breed of children, case hardened by television, are different from the generations for whom the weekly visit to the local cinema was a thrilling, glittering event. But I expect the real reason is that the movie makers have discarded nearly all the best ingredients that went into the "oldies," and have kept the dross.

Look, for instance, at what has happened to the aerial combat epic. The romance, heroics and tragedy have been done away with since the coming of these supersonic broomsticks which completely enclose the pilot and give him time for just one burst before he is over the horizon and out of sight. The human

element vanishes as the fliers strive to attain the efficiency and temperament of machines.

How much better were the pre-war films about the first World War where a dozen biplanes could swarm all over one piece of sky for hours. Watching those films I was no longer in a cinema seat – I was there. As far as memory is concerned, I personally flew against dozens of German air aces with names like Heinrich von Sticklegraffer, who always led, not merely a squadron or a fleet, but a Circus. There were bombs that you lifted from under the seat and threw over the side by hand, and if you ran out of ammunition it was always possible to nail your opponent with pistol fire.

Those aeroplanes were made of wire and cloth, but when they received a direct hit they did not vanish in a puff of smoke the way modern jobs do. They went down in a spectacular flat spin which always allowed ample time for victor and vanquished to stand up and exchange salutes, the tribute that one brave man extends to another. The lumps that I got in my throat when such things were going on used to reduce my breathing to strangled gasps which, more than once, became so noisy as to cause alarm among people sitting nearby.

Perhaps impressed by the rigid ethics of aerial combat, the film directors developed a code of their own, and nobody ever got killed without several easily recognized warning signs appearing in advance. You always knew that anybody who, before takeoff, announced his intention of making just one more run, or who fell victim to a sudden impulse to write his girlfriend a letter, was a goner. Another bad thing was to give away one's good-luck token.

Once in battle a pilot could survive innumerable wavy lines of bullet holes all over his craft, or even, although this was more dangerous, a close-up of a wire brace snapping, but let him get hit in the face with a squirt of black oil and you knew he had had it. No amount of pushing up of goggles, knuckling of eyes or wrestling with controls could save him once that happened.

Even the weapons were more romantic in those days. Twin machine guns synchronised to fire between the propellers were always *de rigeur*, but I never trusted them. Firing between the propeller blades always seemed to me a risky business at the best of times, perhaps because I could never figure out just how it worked. Bob Shaw, D.F.O., used to limp home from many an imaginary engagement in his uniquely blazoned aircraft that had been crippled by its machine gun synchroniser going wrong and letting the guns whittle the propeller

blades down to stumps. It was only by using all of his skill and giving the engine full throttle that he managed to stay up at all.

So acute was the film maker's understanding of the public taste in aircraft armament that they completely disregarded what was on the actual planes. The old British S.E.5 and 5a never had twin Vickers firing through the props – but they were always shown with them. Would they do that today? Would they have twin Vickers firing through the props on one of these Lightnings or Super Sabres?

No! And quibbling about the fact that these are jet aircraft reveals the kind of mind that is ruining the film industry. Now that I think of it, this is probably what has gone wrong with science fiction – can you name just one story where the spaceships have twin Vickers firing through the props?

I had intended to explain what has gone wrong with detective and Western films too, but I've used up too much space already. Perhaps at another time. Right now I've got to start work on a modification of the Shaw family car – I think I can get them firing through the fan if I move the radiator out of the way... .

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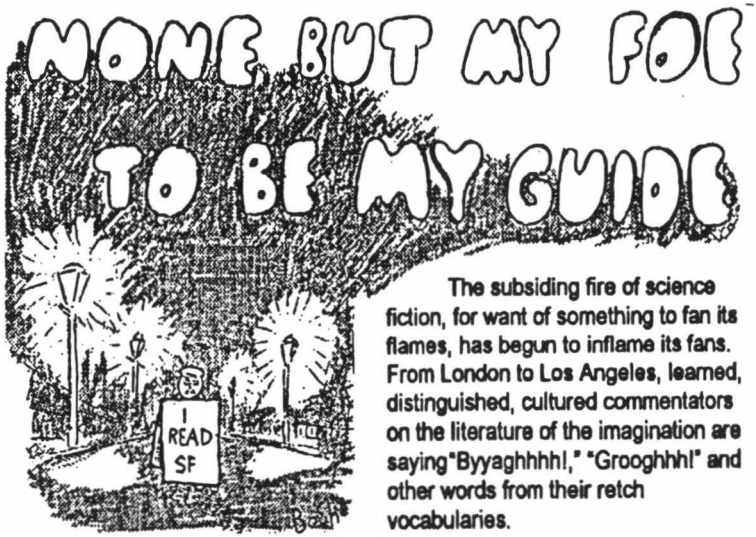
HYPHEN 28 (May 1961) **Illos by BoSh**



The subsiding fire of science fiction, for want of something to fan its flames, has begun to inflame its fans. From London to Los Angeles, learned, distinguished, cultured commentators on the literature of the imagination are saying "Byyaghhhhl," "Grooghhhl" and other words from their retch vocabularies.

One leading expert, who had been reading *Analog* in his back garden, left

his magazine on the ground only to have a passing seagull, which must have been in the market for crudzines, leave a small deposit on it. "Bad manners," the leading expert said mildly, 'but, ah — what a critic!" * His wife, thinking he would be worried about the mess on the magazine, said, "Will I bring a piece of paper?" "Don't bother," the LE replied, "the bird is miles away by now."

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* This remark is actually attributed to Sir Thomas Beecham. He is supposed to have said it on one occasion when he was conducting a poor rehearsal in a theatre where a circus was getting ready. During the rehearsal an elephant wandered onto the stage and made its contribution to, as George Charters once said , posteriority, by using the proscenium as a toilet.

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Needless to say, most of the preceding paragraph is a tissue of lies. I don't know what came over ... Careful, Shaw, you're getting back into the same sequence of jokes! As I was saying, most of the preceding paragraph is lies but, as people who write technical reports say when they are giving doubtful facts in order to influence your opinion, the perspective is reasonably true. Fans are getting a bit fed up with science fiction, and only one or two wonder if it is as good as ever and think perhaps it is the fans who are getting tired.

But whatever the general opinion may be I want to get in my say about what is wrong. As far as I'm concerned, the main loss to sf in recent years has been that nobody cares anymore when you announce your addiction to reading or writing science fiction. In the old days everyone though you were mad — and it made life interesting. At one time whole fanzines could be filled with accounts of the violent reactions of a fan's friends and family. Now, thanks mainly to the efforts of people like Bradbury and Amis, and the engrammatic reaction of all journalists which makes them say, "a science fiction dream come true" when writing about new developments, the general public has a vague feeling that sf was right all along and that it must therefore be another boringly respectable branch of esoterica, on a level with company law or comparative philology.

The trouble is that some of us seemed to thrive on adversity. Sneers and jeers from members of our circle of acquaintance in the mundane world seemed to strengthen our conviction that we were easily on the inside of something truly worth while. Nobody could have been more anti-science-fiction than my own father. He is one of those Irishmen of the old school who fish, hunt rabbits, breed ferrets and gun dogs, drink porter and believe fervently (or claim to) in fairies. He had a deep hatred, with vaguely religious overtones, for science fiction. It manifested itself in the form of jovial abuse when he was in a good mood and heavy parental alarm over my mental health at other times. He never used the actual words "science fiction", but instead always called it "That black magic stuff."

I think it was this unending barrage which led me to try my hand at writing the stuff and helped keep me at it until I finally began to sell the occasional story. I wanted to make some money and show him that the hours of reading pulp magazines and pounding my 1913 Oliver had not been a waste of time at all. It was entirely typical of my father that he did not give up even when I was able to wave a cheque in his face — he referred to my earnings as "winnings" and complained bitterly when I refused to share part of it out as is the custom with pools wins.

Practically everybody else I knew had roughly the same point of view as my father, the only difference being that they didn't do it in the grand manner. An interesting side effect from all this was that when you encountered someone who did not hold you and sf up to ridicule they appeared in your eyes as wonderful warm intelligent benefactors. I had one uncle called George who would have fallen into this class had he not died before I was old enough to buy my first copy of *Astounding*.

He was a thin worried-looking ex-sailor who, as far as I could determine, spent most of his time cleaning his shoes for work the next day. There was a family gathering at his place every week and the only bright spots in these meetings, as far as the infant BoSh was concerned, were when George occasionally looked up from his shoes and cut into the woman-talk with some prediction about the invention of spy rays or nuclear powered ships.

I don't think he ever actually read any science fiction because he never acquired the facile use of words like "continuum" and "asteroid" which in those days in non-scientific circles distinguished the sf reader from the man in the street. He had somewhere however picked up a rudimentary grasp of the idea of escape velocity and this was perpetually exciting his sense of wonder. Every now and again on summer evenings when he and I were outside the from door throwing my old tennis ball about he would explain to me how if an object were propelled skywards fast enough it would go into orbit. George didn't call it "going into orbit", because he wasn't familiar with the phrase. He simply said that if you threw the ball up fast enough it would "stick", and this was enough for me. I got the idea.

I used to ask him to try to do it and, kindly soul that he was, he never refused to have a go. His thin brown face would take on a look on intense concern, as though to impress me with the magnitude of the test we were attempting, then he would perform an elaborate series of wrist flexings and twistings which would become more and more violent until they finally culminated in as powerful a throw as he could manage. The ball would go up and up into the evening sky

until I was almost sure it was going to "stick"; then it came sailing down, usually in the next street, and I had to go hunting after it. Every time I recovered the ball I was slightly in awe of it - as is only proper when one is handling an object which has barely missed being consigned for ever to outer space.

Looking back on it, I can see that Uncle George may not have been an expert on science fiction, but he certainly knew a lot about keeping small boys amused.

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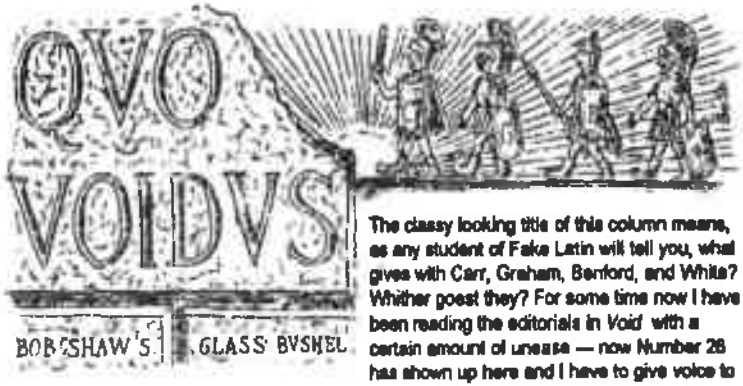
HYPHEN 30 (Dec. 1961) **Illo by BoSh**



The classy looking title of this column means, as any student of Fake Latin will tell you, what gives with Carr, Graham, Benford, and White? Whither goest they? For some time now I have been reading the editorials in *Void* with a certain amount of unease — now Number 28 has shown up here and I have to give voice to my anguish.

My big trouble is that I strongly suspect myself of being insensitive. All my relatives and friends seem to be gifted with more subtle perception, or a priori knowledge, which enables them to see merits or demerits where I can only look on with uncertain acceptance. Show them the material for your new suit, a roll of wall-paper, a painting, a pub, a carpet, a football match -- in fact anything — and rightaway, right there on the spot, they Make A Decision. They announce authoritatively that this is good, or this is bad. Every time it happens there settles over me a feeling compounded of inferiority, guilt and despair because, not only had I not known whether the thing in question was good or bad, it hadn't even occurred to me to judge. I just accepted.

To take one perfectly typical example. One evening my wife and brother and I were out in the car and we decided to have a drink. I drove to a new pub about half a mile up the road from Oblique House and led the way to the lounge. About half was across the room to the bar I suddenly realized that Sadie and Gerry were no longer with me — they were standing in the doorway with looks of horror on their faces. With a sinking feeling I went back and asked what was wrong.

"Look at that ghastly upholstery!" they chorused. "How could you drink in a place like this?"

Before following them back to the car I sneaked a look round the place. All the seats were covered with some kind of yellow plastic -- maybe it was too bright, even garish, maybe even vulgar. The point was that I had been in this pub three or four times previously and had sat there in contented ox-like oblivion swigging Blue Bass without realizing how bad it was.

Years of this sort of thing have left me, as I said before, with a suspicion that I'm insensitive. That's why *Void* has been bothering me. Presumably if someone is going to put six pages of editorial in a fanzine there must be a lot of good stuff in there. The trouble is that I just don't get it. Are people laughing at some new form of humour that goes completely over my head? Or have these reports of desultory conversations got some other quality which, like jazz, ballet and most poetry, is lost on me?

There is one page which Terry Carr devotes to claiming proudly that he invented the saying, "Well, it certainly is a wonderful thing," plus a lot of words on how pithy and useful and good the sentence is. Now, this might be a fiendish ploy aimed directly at a person with the failings I have outlined above! To me the sentence is completely unremarkable and I cannot see why anybody should even want to claim it as his own. My first impulse was to sit down and write a take-off in the form of a triumphant claim that I had invented some saying like "What time did you say it was" or "There's a piece of chicken stuck in my teeth." I was going to go on to prove that my saying was catching on all over the world and give examples of people using it, just as Terry did -- then the doubts began to creep in ... .

Was there something in the sentence I had missed? Was the piece I proposed to lampoon actually a lampoon of something else? And so on.

Or do the editors of *Void* feel that editorial pages are essential and, lacking immediate inspiration, go ahead and stencil anything that comes into their heads? Some people might feel that a few pages of friendly, though featureless, chat done with a willing hand are better than no pages at all. I disagree. It is perfectly normal to be temporarily stuck for something to say -- anybody who does a bit of writing is only too familiar with the feeling — but if it happens you should (a) say nothing, or (b) really get down to the job of writing and find something to say.

Fans sometimes complain that there is not enough of Willis in *Hyphen*, but I think the reason for this is that Walt shares my views. If he has not the material or inspiration at hand to write something worthwhile, he prefers not to write at all. To write pages of stuff simply to fill up space does a fanzine more harm than

good — it produces something which had the form of a fanzine, but not the substance.

Having said all that, I should mention in passing that I enjoyed the rest of the magazine – especially Harry Warner's "All Our Yesterdays," the two WAW pieces and Bhob Stewart's artwork.

THE QUACK AND THE DEAD

I got a nasty shock in the doctor's the other night. I had always looked up to him with a mixture of reverence and awe which had been instilled in me by long hours of viewing "Medic" and "Dr. Kildare" – but those days are gone forever.

Sadie had been taking a tonic and I was supposed to pick up a new bottle. As I was coming out she repeated my instructions — I was to get the orange bottle. An observer stationed along the clumps of grass growing in the Shaw driveway would have noted a tolerant though slightly supercilious smile on my face as I went down to my motor. What a simple soul Sadie was. As if a doctor would talk about an orange bottle; probably she had never seen a complete episode of "Medic" in her life.

When I explained to the doctor why I was there he asked me what sort of a bottle Sadie had been taking. "Well," I explained, "as far as I can determine from my preliminary inspection it is a pretentious little compound, with a substantial admixture of iron, fortified with the usual phosphates, glucose, and in all probability a concentrate of Vitamin B2 to build up the blood." I settled back in the chair to await his look of grudging respect.

He gave a patient sign, toyed with his pencil for a few moments, then said, "Was it the red bottle or the orange bottle?"

"The orange one," I mumbled, aghast — it was easy to see that this mate never worked under Doctor Gillespie, or even James Robertson Justice. I was still sneering when I got home an hour later and plumped the bottle down in Sadie's lap.

"I think we should change our doctor", I began. "That bloke doesn't know much about phos– What's wrong?"

"You're stupid," Sadie interrupted, with a shocking disregard for my scientific approach to medicine. "You've brought the cloudy orange bottle — it's the clear orange bottle I take!"

At that point I gave up. Not only did the doctor classify his stuff by colour, but he had clear and cloudy. Of course, I should have expected something like that when I learned, sometime before, about soothing unguents.

Isn't it funny how these modern doctors can't prepare a decent soothing unguent? If you ask for one they just stare at you and mutter about orange bottles — and yet every medical man from Biblical times until a couple of hundred years ago could rustle up a first class soothing unguent in next to no time. In the old days it was the standard treatment for everything from spear wounds to the assorted contusions one acquired while being trampled by Roman horses or Carthaginian elephants. There is even something about the very sound of 'soothing unguent' which right away make you feel up to trying a little clear soup and a couple of turns round the ward.

The only fairly recent innovation to come anywhere near it was the hot fomentation, but even that seems to be dying away too.

AND BON MOT TO YOU TOO!

My brain, fresh from its success in having conceived the title "Stand and Deliver" for a recent parliamentary report on the overcrowding in maternity hospitals, has just brought up a little slogan which I am prepared to donate to the Milk Marketing Board, Dr. Edward Teller and everybody else who recommends fallout for the over-forties. It goes: drinky pinty strontium ninety, drinky pinty str ... On second thoughts, I will not start criticizing milk — psychologists can deduce a lot from a man's attitude to milk, and, for all I know, Ted Sturgeon might read this. Which brings us, in a rather devious fashion, to ... .

PUKE OF THE MONTH

The first word in the sub-title is intended to be a pun on 'book'. There is a much better pun with the same meaning as puke, namely 'boke', but as far as I know the word is known only in Ireland and Scotland and is therefore unsuitable for an international publication like *Hyphen*.

The book, puke or boke in question is Ted Sturgeon's new novel from Ballantine, Some of Your Blood. There is only one way to describe it: a failure.

This is a case where it doesn't matter whether or not one is insensitive, because the blurb explains, with an air of carefully restrained enthusiasm, just what Ted was trying to do — and reading the book reveals that he didn't do it. The idea was to take a man who might be called monstrous, a fiend, a warped and twisted creature and by sheer good writing and knowledge of the working of the brain in the head "make the reader feel and understand the guts of the beast so

thoroughly that he becomes a very human victim". The blurb goes on to say that "even while the back of your neck chills with terror you hope that some solution will be found that can keep the monster both safe and happy."

Nobody should ever state baldly like that what a book is supposed to do. If people don't know for sure what is supposedly going on they can usually find some other virtue which the man who created the work had not deliberately put in, or else they are inclined to be puzzled but slightly respectful. In this case, during the whole time I read 'Some of Your Blood' the area of skin between my back collar stud and my hair remained at a steady 98.4 F. In fact, every time my little girl came near me she ran away shouting, "The back of Daddy's neck is maintaining a steady 98.4 F."

The first way in which the book failed was in trying to create terror. George Smith was not a frightening figure. He was violent enough, but nobody would like to run into him in real life — but there is no terror in this fact. A man-eating lion would be much more dangerous, but people read about them all the time without turning a hair.

To create terror, therefore, it is not sufficient to offer physical danger – there must be an encounter of mentalities. The normal mind recoils and experiences fear when it encounters another mind filled with the intent to kill. In short, when it encounters an evil mind.

George Smith was an innocent. A person is evil only if he understands why he should be good and why he shouldn't be evil, and then goes ahead and does evil. Beside that sort of a person, the one who murders because he thinks it is all right to do so or because he doesn't even realize what he is doing, is relatively tame stuff. He is like a falling rock — you get out of the way but your soul doesn't recoil the way it does from the fellow creature who is sufficiently like others to be one of the tribe, but has gone terribly wrong in just one respect, in that he doesn't agree with you regarding the desirability of prolonging your life and happiness.

The other respect in which the book failed was on a purely technical level, a judgment I never expected to pass on the author of "Killdozer."

We were supposedly taken inside George Smith and made to feel and understand his guts. But, in the account of his life which occupies the first part of the book every single detail of the growing insanity is carefully omitted and then handed to you in a lump in the last few pages. If you had been acquainted with George's foibles right off you would have had a chance to accept them, but all that happens is that you get a queer sensation during the reading. A feeling perhaps similar to the one you might experience when you stare at Holbein's

'The Embassadors' for ten minutes and begin to sense, but not understand, the occult symbolism.

There were things I didn't like even in the actual writing, e.g. the life story written in the so-familiar American rustic style, complete with unorthodox sentence construction and what are supposed to be flashes of untutored brilliance of description. For example, "...lying there he watched the grain of the dry gray wood where once was a knot, and the way the deep furrows of the weathered wood swirled in and around and out of that knot, you see things like that sometimes that though they do not move your eye keeps going into and out of and around and back again there are two spirals of hair on a cat's back that way."

To be confronted with an indigestible lump like this is bad enough, but when, later in the book, Sturgeon puts the following words of praise into the mouth of one of the characters I got the feeling something had gone wrong. "I am also impressed by this kid's descriptive ability ... his description of the weathered knot in the boat's side ... I never failed to get exactly what he meant."

Apart from anything else, the descriptive piece just wasn't true to life. Right after I read it I went out and had a good close look at my neighbor's cat and the hair on its back was just like on all the other cats I have seen --- slightly reminiscent of George Gobel's crewcut.

Ted Sturgeon must have set out to show us how far wrong a mind can go, and he may have succeeded. After all, he has reached the stage where he could sell a book on any subject under the sun, so why — out of all that he could have written about --- did he choose this peculiar form of vampirism?

I think he must be a food crank.

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HYPHEN 31 (March 1962) **(Illo. by BoSh)**

THE MERRY MERRY PAEON OF PIPES

So many people ask me to teach them how to smoke a pipe that I am surprised correspondence schools don't run courses on the subject. (Of course, that's the trouble with these postal colleges - all they ever do is teach you to be the foreman of the machine shop. I've seen it all in those strip cartoon advertisements. No matter what subject you write in to them about, you end up foreman of the machine shop.) When I get a request of this nature I help the

bloke to eliminate his most obvious faults in things like rubbing out the tobacco and filling the bowl to the proper consistency; and if he is really a keen pupil we go on to the more subtle and abstruse points of pipe-smoking theory, such as the advantages of putting the right end into your mouth and of sucking instead of blowing. I do all this, but my heart forewarns me (I listen to the auricle) that it is useless — unless the pupil has had the proper conditioning from childhood he will never be a pipe smoker.

It helps a lot if you come from a pipe smoking family, although in this respect I wasn't particularly fortunate. None of my relatives would thank you for a cigarette, but not because they dislike cigarettes — they are just rude. But in spite of the fact that my father didn't smoke a pipe, he was instrumental in giving me the necessary conditioning. When I was a small boy, during the mid-Thirties, my greatest pleasure on a winter evening was to clear the table and settle down to a couple of hours of drawing pictures on clean white paper. I had a huge bundle of coloured pencils which I kept in large tobacco tins obtained by my father from a shopkeeper pal. Even to this day when I smell the aroma of fresh St. Bruno I am suddenly back in my mother's kitchen with a big fire sputtering and whistling in the grate and the rain lashing harmlessly on the window-panes. Another powerful influence was my father's choice of reading material. The only magazines he took were *The Gamekeeper* and *Wide World* (later he tried to take *Field and Stream* as well, but was caught on and nearly jailed), both of which carried several pages of pipe advertisements. The pipes were always shown split longitudinally, revealing fascinating details of things like juice traps, filter, smoke cooling surfaces and so on. These ads were the first things I turned to, and I sat there inhaling the sweet heavy perfume of St. Bruno which wafted ceilingwards from my pencil-box, gloating over the disembowelled pipes and promising myself that I would grow up to be a pipe smoker.

Perhaps I shouldn't have attempted that soppy sentimental passage, but I am maudlin myself after Stout, "Saki", Graves and that great French novelist, Barsac -- with perhaps a little dash of Max Brandy. The course of the narrative seems to have suffered a sharp strain and perhaps has even become disjointed so, with the customary 'Meanwhile, back at the wrench!,' we will return to where we broke off.

An artist must suffer for his art and so it is with pipe smoking. In fact I went through some harrowing experiences even before I got started on the pipe.

There was the occasion when I found a pipe lying in the grass during one of my forays at the bottom of our garden. At first I thought my big moment had come and that I should immediately start smoking, but as I was only sixteen at the time I decided there would be too much parental opposition. Besides, the pipe must have been lying there in the damp for years because the bowl was all soft and pulpy. Then I remembered that another youth named Joe who was in the same class at night school had announced importantly, a couple of evenings previously, that he was going to "go on to the pipe".

I bought my find into the house, dried it out for a couple of days, restored its shine by repeated applications of oxblood shoe polish, and finally took it off to school and sold it to Joe for half a crown. Joe was delighted, and he was even happier when the teacher — who used a man-to-man approach to his evening classes – gave him a fill. It was against regulations to smoke in class, but immediately afterwards Joe, surrounded by a crowd of admirers, put the pipe in his mouth and began the process of lighting it. As soon as the match got near it the bowl of the pipe burst into greenish flames and, in spite of Joe's frantic efforts to put it out, practically consumed itself in the course of a few seconds. I found out afterwards that, by some pyrotechnical miracle, the tobacco that Joe had put in wasn't even scorched.

I'll say this for Joe — he didn't hit me, and didn't even ask for his money back. (Strangely enough some years later I went to work in a structural drawing office where the selfsame Joe had once worked, but he had left and gone to Canada. A couple of years after that he returned briefly while on his way to Scotland, Spain and South America, building bridges in each place. He offered all his former workmates jobs in his team but, even though he remembered me all right, he didn't offer me a job. I didn't really want to go to South America anyway, but I did think he might have offered. After all, how was I to know the pipe would practically blow up when he lit it?)

And then there was the case of Harry. Harry took up the pipe on my advice because he was getting a bit fat and I had assured him that he would eat far less if he smoked. Harry was grateful for the suggestion because he was not good at diets. Somebody had once told him to cut out salt, but he couldn't believe that ordinary sodium chloride would be fattening — he took the story with a paunch of salt. Harry puffed away happily for a week or so, then one summer evening tragedy struck and I had the harrowing experience of seeing my protégé almost maimed by his lightweight Dunhill briar.

Anyone who has smoked an elegant 3/4 ounce Dunhill might scoff at the idea that it could inflict any damage on a slightly overweight adult male, and I would have agreed with them until this fateful evening. One can appreciate that, in the hands of an expert, a Petersen rough-cut could inflict a nasty flesh wound, and

in the dark I would hate to encounter a thug armed with a full size Ropp natural cherrywood — but a Dunhill!

Harry and I were queuing to get our coats at the end of one of the local dances. He had just ignited a heated-up bowl and was standing with the pipe clenched in his front teeth when a scuffle developed in the line and a man in front of us was shoved backwards with great force. Harry's Dunhill was driven straight down his throat and he received a double injury; the mouthpiece almost sheared off his tonsils, and the tip of his nose was charred medium-rare through being jammed into the bowl. The St. John's ambulance men who were in attendance all agreed it was the most interesting case they had ever encountered, but this was no consolation for Harry. He gave up pipe-smoking and got as fat as a pig.

The most dangerous incident of all took place only a few weeks ago. Somebody had told me that blocks of firewood could be purchased cheaply in the Crumlin Road Prison and I decided to go up there one Saturday morning and give it a try. I parked my motor outside the massive wooden gate and gave a gentle knock on one of the panels; already I was beginning to regret that I hadn't spent the morning over a couple of pints and pies in Hannigan's bar.

A sort of outsize letter box sprang open and a voice from the inner darkness said "Phwat d'ye want?"

"I want to buy some blocks."

There was a long pause, during which I could feel eye tracks being laid all over me, then the voice said suspiciously, "Who told ye ye could get blocks in here?"

"Can you not get them?" I cried thankfully, backing away. "I must have been misinfo...."

"Stand where you are," the voice commanded and there came a sound of locks turning. I glanced up at the machine gun towers on either side and decided against making a break for it. Gradually the great doors swung open and a policeman said, "Right, bring your car in."

I drove in only to encounter another exactly similar gateway about thirty feet behind the first. The outer gate closed , trapping me, and two other policemen appeared and demanded proof of my identity. When this formality was cleared up and my name written in a book, one of the officers got into the car beside me, the inner gate opened and I was directed to the office where wood sales were conducted. Here things were a bit different. A genial old boy in civilian clothes ushered me into an ancient, cluttered room which was poisonously overheated by an open gas fire.

"I'm glad to see you," he told me. "You're my first customer for days. I don't know why we don't get more business in here -- I expect it's because we're not allowed to advertise. Would you like a cup of tea?"

Overcame by this show of friendliness after my reception in the front office, I nodded. He spoke a few words over the phone and about a minute later a brown-suited convict came trotting in carrying a metal tray, in the centre of which was as a single mug of tea covered with a white napkin. I took the mug, the convict thanked me profusely and jog-trotted out again. The genial old boy beamed as I drank the tea and suddenly the whole atmosphere of the place seemed different. I relaxed. They liked me in Crumlin.

When I finally got round to the wood yard a cheery red-faced officer took my sales docket. "The boys will be glad to see you," he said. "You're the first customer today."

"They will?" I faltered.

"Yes. The boys wouldn't like a Saturday morning to go by with no customers."

The proverbial icy feeling began to develop in the pit of my stomach. There was something going on here. Something .... sinister? The officer crooked his finger and a large doleful youth came trotting over from the working party which was 'hegging' logs in the yard.

"Henry," the officer said, "here's a man wants two bags of blocks. Fill up his car."

Henry's face split into a broad grin and he set to happily carrying armfuls of wood over and chucking them into sacks. As he worked the officer waxed philosophical. "Ah Henry," he boomed. "Ye chopped these logs yourself, sweating in the head of the summer with your shirt off. Ye didn't think ye'd be back here in the middle of the winter to sell them again. Did ye?"

Henry became positively ecstatic under this barrage, and I grew more and more uneasy. My docket was only for two bags but there was the equivalent of at least five bags in the car before Henry was satisfied.

"What d'ye think of the weather?" the officer said suddenly. I stared at him for a few seconds trying to think up an answer when there came a cry of anguish from the general direction of Henry. I swung around and discovered that he had emptied the ash tray of my car -- and then it all dawned on me. Customers for wood represented a source of cigarette ends to the inmates. BUT I SMOKE A PIPE!

In the centre of Henry's outstretched palm was a small heap of pipe ash, two apple cores and a partly chewed caramel which had been dumped on the quiet by my little daughter. It was a black, sticky, disgusting mess and, judging by the look of horror on Henry's face, he had just arrived at approximately the same conclusion. Other convicts gathered round muttering "rhubarb-rhubarb'. The mob, as the saying goes, was turning ugly.

Somehow the officer got me back out into the street, but he acted as though he didn't think I was worth saving. When it dawned on me that I was free again my nerves were so shot that I just had to have a smoke.

So I bought myself five cigarettes.