



WHEN YNGVI
WAS A
LOUSE


~~~~~  
COVER - which so typifies the spirit of 50's Fandom - JIM CAWTHORN.

BACOVER - which typifies the serious & constructive nature of 50's Fandom -

ARTHUR THOMSON.

ARTWORK CREDITS

Hazel Ashworth, Pages 23 & 25.

Jim Cawthorn, Pages 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12, 13,  
14, 15, 17, 32.

Vinç Clarke, Pages 49 & 50.

Terry Jeeves, Pages 6, 37, 47.

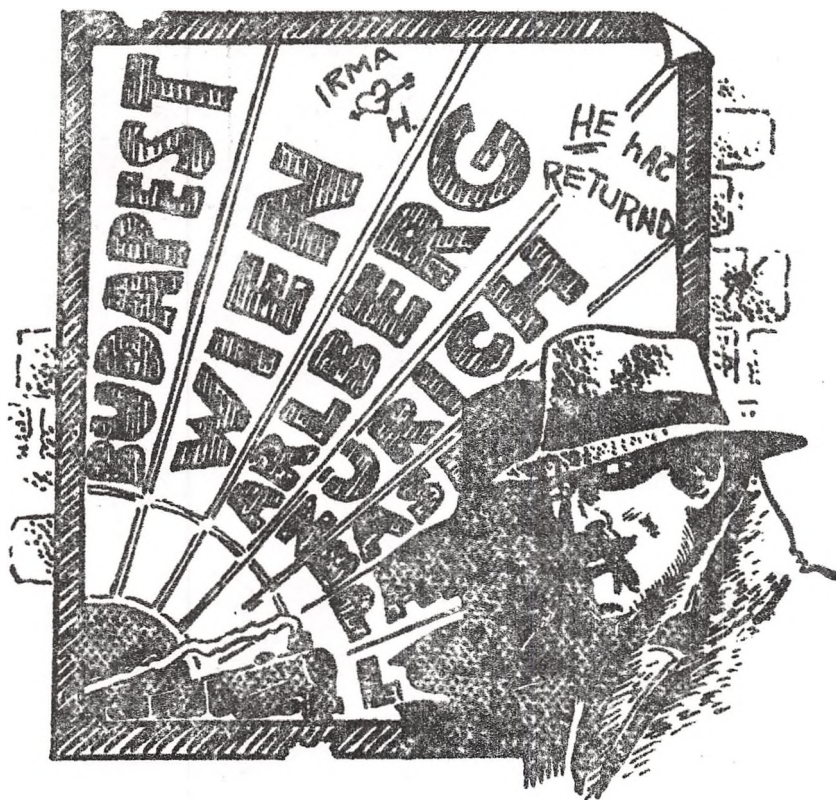
Arthur Thomson, Pages 29, 33, 35.

Harry Turner, Pages 19 & 21.

QUOTES FROM FANZINES VARIOUS can be found throughout the fanthology, and generally are credited 'in situ' - however, even an expert stencil-fudger couldn't quite manage to do this with those used to garnish TWILIGHT OF THE GODS. They emanate from - P.37 Bob Shaw, HYPHEN Nov'55; P.38 Walt Willis, HYPHEN June '55; P.39 Bob Shaw, HYPHEN June '55; P.40 'Ermengarde Fiske' (Evelyn Smith), HYPHEN Nov'53; P.41 Walt Willis, HYPHEN Sept'54; P.42 John Berry, HYPHEN X'mas '54; P.43 Eric Frank Russell, HYPHEN X'mas '54; P.44 & 45 James White, HYPHEN Oct'53; P.46 Paul Enever, HYPHEN Apr'54. All carefully culled by Vinç Clarke.

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" I agree 100%,
but....."

" We wonder if
Martians spec-
ulate upon the
possibility of
Earth being
peopled by
strange beings
with only one
head."

" If you are so
damned normal,
how come you
read science-
fiction!"

" If you are
looking for
sympathy...
try the
dictionary."

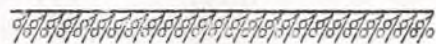
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The BACOVER is
a re-created
"- COVER.

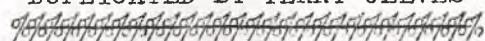


EDITED BY ERIC BENTCLIFFE



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DUPLICATED BY TERRY JEEVES



WHEN YNGVI WAS A LOUSE, a
Fifties Fanthology is a
TRIODE PUBLICATION and
the fault of ERIC BENTCLIFFE,
17, RIVERSIDE CRESCENT,
HOLMES CHAPEL, CHESHIRE,
CWA 7NR., ENGLAND. Where
comment should be sent;
and is dedicated to those
fellow survivors who,
hopefully, will buy the
editor a drink at the
next convention. And to
those who writ that which
is within these pages.



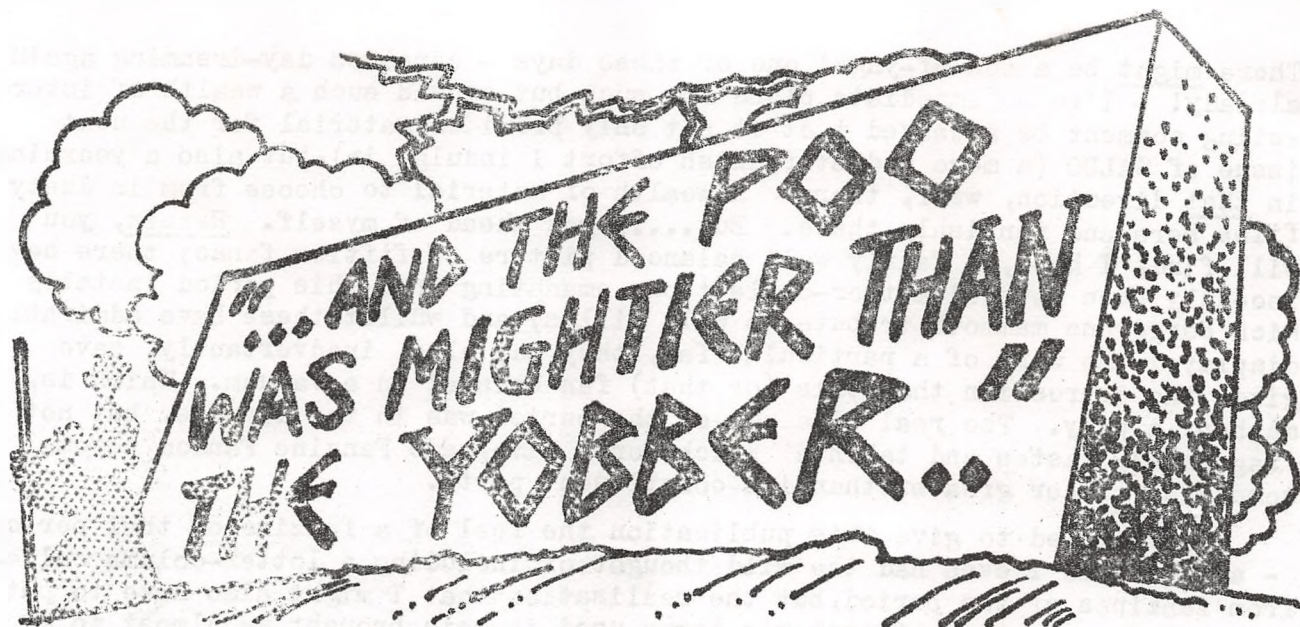
THERE AREN'T MANY GOOD FIFTIES FANZINES AROUND AT THE MOMENT, YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED....which, I suppose was about all the justification I needed to eager-beaverly get to work on producing this fanthology type thing you now hold in your hands. Naturally tho', this being fandom, its genesis isn't as uncomplicated and easily related as that - otherwise what point this editorial-introduction....oh no, this fannish project like most fannish projects came about because of careless and indiscriminate day-dreaming. A pre-occupation which has many fannish perils. One can be quietly concentrating on the good things of fanac, ie, telling other fans what they should be doing and why - when a strange urge can come upon oneprobably caused by those self-same fans you were mentally instructing dancing widdershins round boiling-pots, tossing in eye-of-newt, leg-of-toad, gall-of-neofan, and the like....takes one, shakes one, and involves one in all kinds of unpremeditated fanac. Like this.

It all started with people suggesting I should do a fannish history of the fannish fifties - after writing one chapter of this, I decided history was definitely not for me - it requires careful thought and even more careful research, both of which take a lot of time and make me sneeze. So, 'Do a collection of fifties fan writing', the unsneezed upon said. Well, perhaps, I can send out a flyer to wherever all my old chums are (dancing round that aforementioned pot, probably); they won't reply and I can sit back and do nothing for another five years or so....

But, Ted Tubb (and Charles Grey) sent material by return and a few days later Bob Shaw responded and he'd just heard (after a twenty year silence) from Vin/ Clarke, and (presumably as the contents of the pot acheived a hitherto unknown potency) in the same post I heard from him, I got a postcard from Mal Ashworth - also twenty years in the writing. The Pot Thickens, mayhap....Arisia and Eddore were obviously in alignment, what else could I do. I re-established contact with John Berry and Arthur Thomson, Harry Turner and Eric Needham, Hurstmonceaux and Faversham; perhaps there'd be safety in numbers. Jim Cawthorr wrote and warned me to be careful of what strange forces I was releasing....but he also sent some superb artwork, which cancelled out his words of wisdom.

As far as I am concerned the pleasant re-contacting of many an old fan friend is justification enough for this publication, but for you it has to be other things. Not, as you'll have gathered already, a historical treatise of any kind but - hopefully - a pleasant read which may also give you some idea of what it was to have been a fan in the fifties. It isn't intended to be The Best of Anything (though some of it probably is); I could have excerpted what I thought to be the tops from a score or so of fanzines - well I could have if I hadn't sold my UK fanzine File to Dick Bergeron many moons ago when I needed the money - but that would be a cold and clinically unfannish way to go about it anyway, I thought. The contents then, were chosen - almost entirely - by the respective fannish authors as being pieces they were fond of, and which they also thought were illustrative of the mood of their time. One thing they have in common, they were written by fans to entertain other fans, and to inform them of newly discovered fannish pursuits which they, also, would perhaps enjoy....eg, Ghoddminton, Fan Croquet, Budgerigar Rape, and the like.

Many of them also illustrate the myth-making properties of fifties fandom; almost everyone knows of the legendary happenings at 170 Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast, but herein you will also be beguiled and bewildered by some of the Strange Beings introduced into the Romiley Fan Veterans & Scottish Dancing Society by Eric Needham: and afforded a brief introduction to none other than Him. Sir. William Makepeace Harrison, that is, of course.



- He (kindly genuflect or curtsy) was Savior of the Western Hemisphere on numerous fannish occasions and perhaps the way he came into being is interestingly indicative of the way that fifties fandom often torturously, entertainingly, thought. Sir. William, and his principal protagonist Herr von Neumann, were cut from the cloth of the Liverpool Group; and were in (almost) reality Bill Harrison and Dave Newman. Bill was a noted gourmet and bon vivant and Dave, an ex-patriate London fan who had moved up to live in the LiG area had not only the temerity to challenge His choice of Dinner Wine on at least two occasions, but also upon being made secretary (or chairman, or something) subsequently vanished from fannish ken with not only the LiG minutes, but the last two bottles of Norman Shorrocks '53 Dandelion Sauterne, as well! This latter dastardly act inspired those good friends of Bill, John Owen and Stanley Nuttall (known also as Harry Hurstmonceaux and Cyril Faver-shan), to write a whole series of fannish extravaganzas...the one in this publication being one of the least esoteric, would y' know. Like many fannish pieces of the period, it grew as other fans contributed their thoughts in letters-of-comment; many of these - it must be admitted - concentrating on alternative nasty endings for the by now quite-horribly piranha-nibbled and corgi-savaged, distinctly worn-around-the-edges von Neumann. But several were kind enough to suggest other suitable villains - should you come across a file of TRIODE and/or BASTION you can amuse yourselves by trying to identify those so depicted.

From the foregoing you'll gather that if this fanthology carries any message, that message must be that Fandom is (or should be) fun...F*U*N. If you happen to be publishing a fanzine and you aren't having fun...well, why not? Fandom is a hobby and if a hobby isn't fun, ie, enjoyable what's the point of it all? Of late, there are fanzines published (apparently) with the intent to CONQUER ALL FANDOM or, at least, bludgeon it into a nameless samelessness - I don't know why, though I could hazard several guesses (Too many experts and not enough Indians...) but so can everyone else, which is one of the reasons why current British fandom seems more eager to read its entrails than pub' its ish. Perhaps one relevant comment to make, however, would be that none of the writing herein is cast in the form of a 'Critical Essay' the 'in' style of fannish writing....and its certainly nonetheless memorable for that.

There were - are - other things than Critical Essays I would have liked to include in this publication, and other fans as well - Walt Willis, James White, Ken Bulmer, Ron Bennett, Chuck Harris, Norman Shorrocks...Norman G. Wansborough, even, the list is fairly endless but I did want to get this out in the eighties, and some people didn't reply, anyway.

There might be a son-of-yngvi one of these days - careless day-dreaming again, already! - I've no immediate plans for such but should such a wealth of interesting comment be received that it not only provides material for the next issue of WALDO (a more modest fannish effort I indulge in), but also a yearning in that direction, well, there's a wealth of material to choose from in dusty files here and fannishly there. But....I get ahead of myself. Herein, you will find, I hope, a fairly well balanced picture of fifties fanac; there have recently been several author-collections emanating from this period (notably Rich Bergerons mammoth tribute to Walt Willis) and whilst these have admirably displayed the work of a particular fan, they may also, inadvertantly, have given the impression that this (or that) fan existed in a vacuum. Which is, mayhap, a pity. The real pleasure of the period was in the diverse, but not fragmented, tastes and talents which for a time, made Fanzine Fandom become something rather greater than its constituent parts.

I've tried to give this publication the feel of a fanzine of that period - at one time I even had the wild thought of including a letter-column culled from fanzines of the period, but the realisation that I might also have to put in a 300page glossary of esoteric terms used therein brought me almost to my senses. Instead, and to serve a similar purpose hopefully, you'll find scattered throughout the fanthology varied quotes from various fanzines....most of which were expertly extracted by Vinc Clarke from his fantastic fanzine collection. I'm greatly indebted to the fates that brought Vinc back into fandom just in time to be of invaluable assistance and Great Moral Support; and I'm also more than grateful to John Berry for stencilling his own piece - the fact that he did it for quarto, not A4 was probably my fault and led Vinc into an interesting quest for ten-line-quotes! - to Arthur Thomson and Jim Cawthorn for superb artwork; and to TERRY JEEVES for Duplicating and artwork and those little-finishing-touches he did.

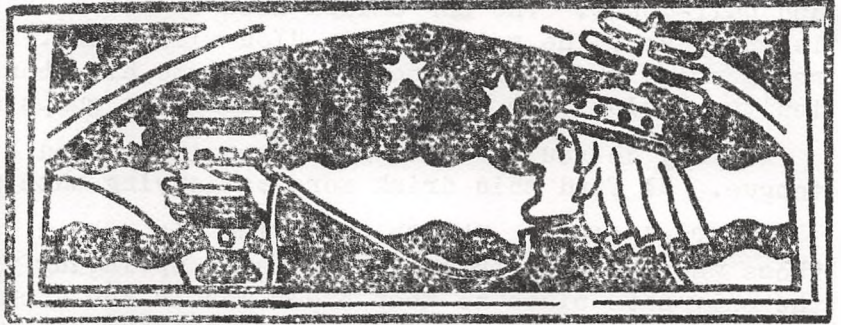
Almost everything else is my fault.

ERIC BENTCLIFFE.



TED TUBB

CADREX



"YOU KNOW," said the chief BNF, "sometimes, when I look back on the past, it seems almost incredible that no one appeared to realise just what was happening." He looked at his visitor, a swart, green-scaled Venusian, and politely gestured towards a chair.

"You will join me in Bheer?"

"With pleasure." The Venusian carefully sat down. "I must confess that your attitude somewhat surprises me. I had expected..."

He smiled, green fangs flashing in the light of the setting sun. The Chief BNF returned the smile as he touched a bell.

"Panic, perhaps?" He shrugged. "The Martians thought the same, I've no idea why. After all, we have expected you for quite some time now."

He turned as a neofan entered the room, his red cadet's beanie in clashing contrast to the neat, golden, triple-propellered one the great man wore with unconscious dignity on his thick, white hair. "Thank you. Pour and remain."

Reverently the neofan tipped the chased urn and poured a lambent brown stream into the jewelled goblets. Still flushing from the condescension of the Chief in permitting him to remain, he stood - as a neofan should - against one wall, his fingers nervously plucking at the Mark I zap gun at his belt.

"You see," the Chief sipped at the warming fluid, "like most people they were too near the wood to see the trees. Even the Great Ving - whom Ghu preserve - didn't realise the truth. The Great Willis," he bowed his head as the neofan grovveled on the floor in self-abasement at the rolling thunder of the legendary names, "even he, potent as he was, didn't grasp the tremendous significance of what he was doing. Giants thought they were, yet we must never forget that they, even as we are, were human."

8

A muffled sound came from the neofan, a combination of half-protest and half-doubt. The BNF smiled down at the flushed features. "You will learn, my son," he said gently. "You will learn." He sipped again, then, remembering the basic tenets applying to all those who drank Bheer, emptied the goblet with a series of tremendous gulps and held it out for more.

"Why do you do that?" The Venusian licked his lips with his rolling tongue. "I find this drink more satisfying when sipped with dignity."

"Tradition." The Chief lifted his goblet in silent homage to all those who had gone before. "A custom springing from the early days when the only safe place to keep Bheer was in the stomach. Also, and I must admit there is a little doubt on this point, it was considered impolitic to retain a full glass; such an action precluded being offered further supplies." He frowned. "That is one of the few points still open to dispute. Some say that a little left in the glass enabled the drinker to wait until some other offered to buy the round, some say that the best ploy was to remember an urgent, temporary appointment, while a few insist that the Old Ones were beyond all mercenary considerations. History, however, does not give weight to this opinion."

"I see." The Venusian closed his inner eyelids in ecstatic enjoyment of the fabled Bheer. "You were saying...."

"Of course. You must forgive an old fan's ramblings." The Chief sighed. "It is hard to watch the passing years, to remember when one was, even as our young friend here, a bright and eager neofan." He smiled at the boy. "Produced your first fanmag yet, son?"

"Yes, sir." The boy almost swallowed his tonsils in acute embarrassment at being recognised. "A one-shot too, sir, and I'm working on...."

"Yes, yes." The Chief lifted his hand. "You must be sure to send me a review copy." He lifted the urn, his hand trembling a little as he poured the goblets full. "As I was saying, even the Great Ones didn't know just what they were doing. There must have been an impression, a hint, a subtle something perhaps emanating from the infinite, but, be that as it may, they didn't really know."

"I find that hard to believe," murmured the Venusian. "Not that I doubt you; the whole system knows that Truefans never lie, but....."

"I understand your hesitation, and yet it is the undoubted truth. The archives reveal that for many years all fan activity was concentrated on dissection, examination, evaluation and discussion of the actual pro-mags themselves. The word 'science-fiction' appears with appalling regularity and it is hard to believe, in these enlightened days, that such productions were even read, much less subscribed to. There were clubs, of course, small gatherings of the persecuted, and there were even martyrs to the Cause. One heart-rending case is that of an undoubtedly Devil-possessed parent actually burning a sacred collection before the eyes of a screaming neofan." The Chief shuddered as he thought of the heresy, and buried his face in his goblet. "Naturally, such a thing could never happen now, but it serves to reveal the state of public opinion back in the unenlightened days."

The Venusian nodded, his slit eyes glazed a trifle, and his clawed hand fumbled as he reached for the urn. "A potent liquor, this Bheer," he muttered. "If a stranger could ask the formula?"

"It is a closely guarded secret," said the Chief BNF regretfully. "Discovered, so I understand, at the time of the famous SuperMancon by the adherents of the London Circle. The secret is known only to the Guardians and must not be divulged."

"I understand." The Venusian licked his lips as he drained his goblet. "A war secret, you might say."

"Perhaps," said the Chief, a little stiffly, "but we Truefans prefer not to discuss the matter. The Great Ones, as I have said, were human,

with human traits, and even they did things which are looked upon with some small misgivings. However, to continue." He burped and settled his golden beanie a little more firmly on his head.

"The first signs, if we discount the trend of all true fanmags to make a point of ignoring 'science-fiction', came with the publication of "Scrooge On Ice" by the Great Vinç, followed by the "Enchanted Duplicator" by the Great Willis. These two, of all fen at that time, seemed to have the closest affinity to the surging longing which so shortly afterwards was to break its bonds and sweep over the civilised world. Soon afterwards came that memorial piece, written by one of the professional authors of the day, a man who, while bowing to the neccessity of earning a living, yet still nurtured an inward fire. I refer, of course, to Charles Grey, and the piece he wrote is known by heart and is a 'must' together with Scrooge and the Enchanted Duplicator. It begins;

"He was an old fan, and tired....."

"I have read the piece," said the Venusian hastily. "A truly remarkable work." He hesitated. "You say that Grey was a professional author?"

"Yes, but why do you ask?"

"Never mind, but...he made money at it?"

"Certainly." The Chief smiled. "I understand your incredulity. Most Truefans of the day tended to frown on Filthy Pros and Vile Hucksters, but we must never forget that even the Great Vinç, the Great Willis, the Great Bulmer, the Great Harris, and indeed, a surprising number of the Old Ones, were professional writers. Some were even Editors, and it says much for the fen of the time that such pursuits were tolerated and even encouraged, but naturally, their best work was reserved for the fanmags."

"He was an old fan," muttered the Venusian, "...and tired...." He shuddered and reached for the urn. "Incredible."

"But true." The Chief frowned into the empty urn and snapped his fingers at the wide-mouthed neofan. Swiftly the lad picked up the container and ran from the room, the single propellor on his red beanie whirling with the speed of his passage. Within seconds he was back with further supplies of Bheer.

"Good work, lad. I'll see you get promotion to a two-prop cadet for this." The Chief steppen carefully over the grovelling figure of the neofan and shook his head in amused depreciation at the Venusian. "Sometimes their enthusiasm becomes a little embarrassing - but such is the price of fame."

"It could be awkward at times," the visitor agreed, and blinked as he missed the goblet. The Chief put it into the clawed hand.

"After the memorable piece by Gray, the tide began to turn into a flood. Other authors followed the trend. The great Vinç wrote 'The Esoterics of Fandom'. The Great Willis followed it with 'Subliminations of Fan-Ego' and the Great Stu Mackenzie proved by statistics that all fen were living an unnatural life, a state of existence



comparable only to that of the early Christians. In short, they were trying to fit an ideal into a civilisation which was basically and financially against it. Incidentally, it was the Great Stu who proved, also by statistics, that it was possible for a Truefan to live without visible means of support, a fact which had been apparent to the inner circles for many years by then, the Great Ving having obviously lived on nothing but air and fandom for some time." He paused, and stared at the Venusian. "Have you seen the monument to the Great Ving?"

"I have. A magnificent piece of architecture. A tremendous duplicator and a bag of wind. Symbolic, I presume?"

"Of course. These two objects served to keep him alive for an incredible length of time. A length of time so incredible, in fact, that many of us believe that the Great Ving could not have been wholly human. Alone of all the the fen of his time, he proved what the Great Stu had shown by his statistics. A Truefan is able to exist by eating his words and breathing egoboo - it proved the salvation of Fandom." Again the white-haired Chief buried his face in his goblet. "Before you return to Venus you must be sure to see the other monuments to the Old Ones. The symbolic ocean in Ireland for the Great Willis. The stone computator for the Great Stu, the Vale of Shadows where lie all the first fen, that strange place where, at night, can be heard the ghostly sound of ancient duplicators and the muffled curses as they produce their eternal storms."

"An interesting place," said the Venusian thickly. "I must make a point of seeing it."

"The annual pilgrimage is at Whitsun of each year. The ghosts are at their busiest then, but, naturally, you could go at any time."

"I will."

"The literature I have mentioned served to trigger the inward awareness that Truefens were not as normal men. After the SuperMancon this awareness reached a high peak and at the Great Meeting - the first convention to be held in the open the entire seething pulse of inward tension exploded in a scintillant fury of action. Most of this was due to the Great Slater. Well versed in military strategy, he, together with the Great Buckmasters took over the organisation of the co-ordinated effort. Within a few weeks all Fandom in Great Britain had been united into a composite whole. True, there were factions. The Great Bentcliffe founded a splinter group whose credo was that no Truefan could be born outside the Manchester area, but he was attacked by the Scottish Group and quashed with the assistance of the Great Cohen. It is said that the flaring of zap-guns made the nights hideous and that for once it just could not rain fast enough in the Bleak City to provide ammunition. The turning point came when the Great Newman, who had been secretly working for many years on the project, produced the Mark V., super-zap gun with an incredible range and devastating effect. After that the insurgents had no chance and the internecine strife was over before it had really begun."

"And then?" The Venusian grunted as he tried to rise, only to find that his legs wouldn't support him. "What happened then?"

"The Gospel spread. Missionaries were sent to every part of the globe and the results were miraculous."

"But I understand that travelling in those days cost money? As most of the fans were in a state of perpetual financial distress, how did they manage?"

That was wholly due to the Great Wansborough. For many years he had been frowned on as someone with slightly unworkable ideas but when the true awareness blossomed in the hearts of Fans, and it was realised that - to a true believer - nothing was impossible, the Great Wansborough came into his own. For five shillings he not only provided a year's reading of pro-mags,

but arranged for air transport to America with free board and lodging for a month. How he ever did this remains a mystery, one of the many of the Time of Enlightenment, but do it he did, and when made Commander of Transport, proved himself as one of the greatest of Fen by sending missionaries all over the world at a cost that even the tight-pursed fen could afford. His monument is now one of the finest in the Vale of Shadows - together with that of the Great Burgess - the only fan known who never bought a drink or was seen to taste Bheer - but I wander from the point."

"Which was Bheer?" The Venusian blinked hopefully at the Chief who, with a start, realised that the visitor was tighter than a Convention Committee member on the second day. Hastily he offered more Bheer.

"Once the thing had started it swept the world. Backed by the Editors, members flocked in to taste of the new way of life and, once tasting, they stayed to the end. As one of the first tenets was that a Truefan could live on nothing, and as the only way to find out whether or not an applicant was a Truefan was to lock him up with a duplicator and a postal service for not less than three months, both the population and housing problems were solved without difficulty." The old man sighed. "Those were great days. Great names and great ideals. The Great Ratigans, who with a judicious combination of lurid art and extravagant hospitality seduced hostile groups to a mumbling acquiescence. The Great Campbell, whose beard, worth ever hair its weight in gold, awed the crowds as he preached the benefits of Bheer, the prophet of Ghu. The Great White, Temple, Shaw, Enever, Carnell, Klein (who made a fortune by selling fanmags as banned, privately printed 'hot' literature - and the Great Duncombe who held onto the cash against all the thirsty pleadings of the Great Brown and the Great Arnold. Great Names....shall we ever see their like again?"

He sighed, and a tear trickled down his withered cheek, and his hand as he lifted the urn trembled with emotion. Hastily the Venusian pulled his goblet away from the diluting stream.

"But how did it happen?" he asked plaintively. "What was this magic which turned the world from an armed encampment into.?" he gestured towards the high windows, "...this ?"

"Haven't I explained?" The Chief BNF turned so fast that the triple propellers on his golden beanie spun like refined rainbows. "It, the philosophy of Truefandom I mean, proved the answer to ALL. For years the Truefans had lived in a world of fantasy, utterly divorced from the mundane world of reality around them. At first, when contaminated with 'science-fiction', true awareness of what they were and what they did was hidden from them. It was only when they discarded the excuse and retained the fundamental reality of their pursuits that they could shake off all care and enter fully into the Golden Life. Trufandom showed that there is only one Ghod and Bheer is his prophet. Life became fun, a miraculous world where no one worried about anything, where each man was his own editor, his own writer, his own boss. It was more than that, it was an actual Way of Life, and a Way of Life is a...."

"Religion." The Venusian nodded, then, toppling as a tree topples, fell in an unconscious heap on the floor. The Chief BNF stared down at him, shaking his head in mute admiration at those long-gone giants who had compounded so potent a brew.

Automatically he reached out for a fanmag and began to read.

* * *

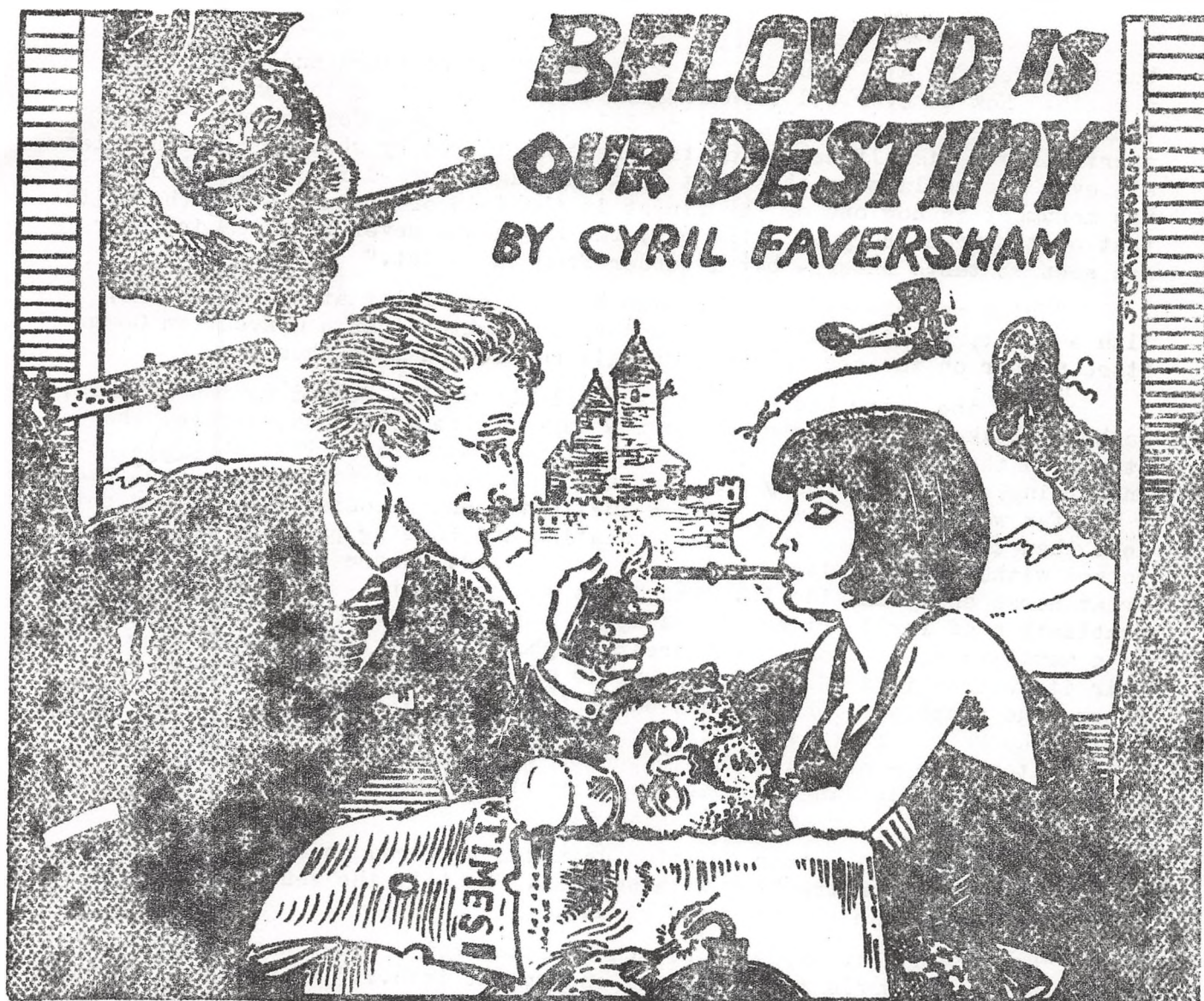
FINIS

* * *

"What do non-fans do
with all the spare
time they must have ?"
(FILLER)

|| * * *

"If we don't have a
film show how will we
be able to cancel it?"
(HYPHEN)



Part Three: CROSSED STEEL.

At precisely one-twenty-four p.m. on Friday, June 27th, 1946, the man generally acknowledged to be the most discerning gastronome in Northern Europe seated himself in the restaurant car of the Zagreb-Bucharest Express. At precisely three-forty-three p.m., an oily Armenian waiter of dubious antecedents and even more dubious allegiances, brought Turkish coffee to the gastronomes table. The Gastronomer raised the cup to his lips, wrinkled his nostrils delicately, and set the cup down untouched. He looked up at the waiter, his clear blue eyes twinkling merrily.

" Please inform your employers that they must be more subtle," he said, with great good-humour. " Potassium Cyanide is a little obvious, you know. "

EDITORIAL NOTE: Harrison (known throughout the East as 'The Great White God', in Europe as 'The Master, and in the New World as 'The Fox'), having contributed what He has described as His 'modest bit' towards the winning of World War II, is as active as ever in the ensuing Cold War. His adventures in the uneasy postwar years are legion, but few, if any, have reached the ears of the general public. The following is one of them, as pieced together by Cyril Faversham, who, together with Harry Hurstmonceaux, is still occasionally called upon by the Great Man to assist Him in His work.

With a snarl the Armenian turned away; and the gastronome, chuckling, picked up his copy of 'The Times' and began to read. He had barely had time to appraise the latest Test scores, however, when he felt the pressure of a hand upon his. He looked up, startled; and his eyebrows lifted, slightly, in appreciation, for above him stood one of the most beautiful young women he had ever seen in his life.

"Are you he? Are you Harrison?" the girl asked breathlessly.

"I think I may lay claim to that distinction," said the Great Man nonchalantly. "Would you honour me by joining me in a liqueur?"

"My name is Ilse von Haundog..."

"The Countess von Haundog?" queried Harrison.

The girl nodded. "That was once my title... Until these - these schum took possession of my beloved country."

"I am honoured, Countess," said Harrison. "Won't you sit down?"

"Let us be done with formalities," said the girl urgently, seating herself opposite to him. "You must help me, you must! My father, the Grand Duke of Serbia, is being held in the Schloss Heuriger by the Secret Police. God knows what they may be doing to him. Perhaps, even now, it is too late..". Her voice broke, and she dabbed at her eyes with an absurd lace handkerchief. Suddenly, her eyes dilated. "Look out!" she screamed.

But Harrison had seen the stiletto coming. Laughing, he inclined his head an inch or two to one side, and heard the weapon bury itself in the wooden panel behind his left ear. He turned, extricated the stiletto, and tossed it nonchalantly to a gentleman of teutonic origin who was wrestling determinedly with a portion of Maria-Teresa-schnitzel at the next table.

"Hard lines, old man," said Harrison, smiling. The teuton looked up, directing a glance of venomous hatred at him; then turned away, and stared fixedly through the windows at the hilly, heavily-wooded Balkan landscape as it rolled past them.

"Who is he?" hissed the Countess.

"Don't know, really; been following me from Belgrade," said Harrison casually, and produced a slim gold cigarette case. "Care for one? Turkish this side, Russian that... Where is Schloss Heuriger, by the way?"

"I knew you would not fail me!" cried the girl. "I knew it as soon as.."

"Steady on, old thing," said Harrison soberly. "We are now about to enter the Zobrovny tunnel, which, besides being a masterpiece of engineering, is almost one kilometre in length."

The girl blanched. "You mean..?"

"I do," said Harrison. "Under the table, quickly!"

With an ear-splitting shriek from its whistle the train thundered into the tunnel, and the compartment was plunged into blackness.





Suddenly a great orange star exploded definitely not ten feet away from them; there was a horrible gurgling scream, followed by a sudden babel of voices. A few confused seconds later, brilliant sunlight flooded the compartment as the train emerged from the tunnel. The occupants of the dining-car blinked, then gasped. The teuton who had thrown the stilette lay sprawled across the table, a bullet through his brain.

Harrison looked levelly at his fellow-diners. "Whoever was responsible for this," he said, indicating the dead man, "ought really to brush up on his, or her, marksmanship." He picked up his copy of 'The Times'. "We are now approaching the outer suburbs of Bucharest," he said, taking the Countess gently by the arm. "Shall we prepare to leave?"

* * * * *

The Cafe Dobra, in the heart of Rumania's capital, was as crowded and noisy as ever, but there was little real gaiety about it; gaiety being unfashionable in a People's Democracy. Harrison, however, had insisted upon visiting it, for he knew that the chef could still prepare the most succulent paprika-goulash in Rumania, and it was an idiosyncrasy of his always to eat well before undertaking a venture which might in any way be hazardous. And indeed, he thought comfortably, it had proved to be a memorable meal. He picked up the pepper-pot and scattered a few grains of the yellow powder over his vodka; then raising the glass to his lips, drained the spirit at one gulp.

The Countess stared at him fascinatedly. "Why did you do that?" she asked.

"Little trick I learned in Moscow," he said. "The pepper takes the fusel oil to the bottom of the glass - makes the drink a good deal more palatable. I...." He looked up suddenly, as a hand was placed on his shoulder.

A small, greasy-looking individual stood above him. "You - English man?" he grinned.

"I have that privilege," said Harrison, coldly.

"Ah, so I have thought!" cried the man with nauseating bonhomie. "Then you shall drink with me!" Unbidden, he seated himself at their table and beckoned a nearby waiter. "Three large measures of szilva - and quickly!"

The greasy individual, whose name appeared to be Lupescu, began to talk loudly and volubly about nothing in particular. Mistaking Harrison's steely silence for an absorbed interest, he presently began to regale them with an account of the achievements of the New Rumania. "I have been reading from your so famous author Dickens. Can things be so terrible like he describes them?"

"There is a kernel of truth in what Dickens says," said Harrison suavely, "but we're improving all the time;" and, in the split-second in which the other's eyes left his, he had adroitly switched glasses. "For example, we've recently succeeded in abolishing whipping posts."

"I am exceedingly glad to hear it," said Lupescu with a sneer, gulping down the fiery spirit before him. "Exceedingly glad. The New Rumania...."

He coughed, and set down his glass. "The New Rumania...."

Suddenly his eyes bulged horribly; he coughed and spluttered for a few seconds; then slumped down across the table - dead.

The Countess gave a shrill little scream, and Harrison put a hand upon her shoulder. "Steady on, old girl," he said. "We must keep our heads. The Schloss Heuriger next, I think?"

* * * * *

Two hours' furious driving along the tortuous, rutted Balkan roads brought them at last to the Schloss; a gaunt, forbidding edifice perched precariously at the top of a steep wooded hill. Harrison parked his scarlet hispano behind a dense clump of foliage, and got out. "Please remain here," he said to the Countess, in a voice courteous but firm; then strode off, like the lion-hearted man of action that he was, towards the dark walls of the castle.

His mountaineering jaunts in the Himalayas had prepared him for emergencies such as these; in a moment, he had secured his foothold and was beginning to scale the vine-covered battlements. A few minutes of careful climbing brought him to a point immediately beneath a narrow open window about eighty feet from the ground. He squeezed himself dexterously through this narrow aperture, and jumped nimbly to the floor of the room within.

The room was large, and apparently unoccupied. A few logs crackling and blazing in the huge open fireplace, provided the only source of illumination; he could see dimly that the walls were covered with hunting trophies, swords, firearms and the like. There was little furniture to be seen - a few heavy chairs, a table....

"Welcome," said a voice from behind him.

Harrison spun round. A lean, tall figure stood silhouetted in an open doorway to his right. Something glittered in the man's hand. Suddenly he had moved, and the glittering object was flashing towards Harrison.

Harrison ducked nimbly, and the knife clattered against the wall behind him. "Hardly the most hospitable welcome," he said suavely; "However, since you have a taste for the melodramatic...."

He turned swiftly, removed his impeccably-cut blazer, and having carefully rolled up his shirt-sleeves to the elbow; took two epees - ornamental, but nonetheless very lethal - from the wall above him. One of these he tossed to the stranger with a light laugh.

The man's nostrils flared like a stallion's. "You choose to pit yourself against me?" he snarled, catching the weapon.



"Against Gregori Tabori, the greatest swordsman in all Rumania ? Very well, you have chosen, it shall be so - to the death!"

He stepped forward. Harrison retreated a pace or two, quiet and watchful; suddenly, however, he moved quickly forward, tightening his fingers on the grip to give it a beat in septime. His opponent deceived over the blade, threatening the wrist, and Harrison smoothly reversed his direction.

Tabori cursed, and they began a rapid series of lunges and counter-parries, the clash of their blades echoing through the high, empty room. "Do they teach you swordsmanship, too, on the playing-fields of Eton ?" snarled Tabori, recognising his adversary's mettle.

"I'm afraid I can't say, old chap," chuckled Harrison; "I'm a Harrow man myself, you know," and he beat his opponents blade with a light contemptuous touch. Suddenly, he came in quickly, as if to follow through, but checked himself just out of reach. Tabori cursed, fiercely and fluently.

Back and forth across the great hall the two men thrust and parried, the flickering firelight casting their shadows hugely against the wall behind them. Tabori, who had retreated watchfully behind the table, suddenly levered it upwards with his left foot; it swayed over towards Harrison and crashed noisily to the floor, missing him by inches only.

"Have you nine lives, Englishman ?" snarled Tabori.

"Perhaps," said Harrison, with a light laugh; "but you have only one, and I mean to curtail that."

His opponents face was now livid with a baffled fury. Suddenly, he made a savage rush forward, obviously intent on a quick kill. At this, Harrison pulled his feet together, rising to the balls of his feet and pivoting his body to the right. At the same time his blade flicked out over his adversary's bell and caught him full in the chest.

"My round, I think," said Harrison lightly, stepping back a pace; and Tabori sank to one knee with a groan.

"Not quite!" said a sharp voice from behind him; and Harrison, turning, saw the Countess von Haundog, a cold fury in her eyes, levelling a tiny silver automatic at his heart.

"You fool!" cried the girl, her eyes blazing, "I am not the Countess. She died in '52 on a Smolensk collective from eating too much!"

"My dear girl, I knew that from the beginning," said Harrison chuckling.

"But how....?"

"No member of the aristocracy - even of the Rumanian aristocracy - drinks Krenser Wachtberg with Yoghourt," Harrison smiled.

"You are very clever, Englishman," said the girl coldly. Within her, furious anger was battling a certain half-reluctant admiration. "But if you knew this, why did you accompany me here?"

"Because, my dear, you are Irena Pudovkin." The girl gasped. "And, because this gentleman, if I am not mistaken, is Vassilyi Dovzenko." Dovzenko, at the mention of his name, staggered to his feet and bowed painfully. "I have heard you described as two of Moscow's most astute agents, and I was anxious to meet you, as you, it seems were anxious to meet me."

"But you fool, you have walked into a trap!" cried Irena Pudovkin, infuriated by the Englishmans imperturbable sang-froid.

"Not quite, my poppet," said Harrison, smiling. "If you will do me the honour of looking behind you, you will observe that you are being watched by the men of the Fifth Battalion, Royal Scots Guards."

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The girl blanched, as she saw the grim line of kilted men behind her.
" But...how...?"

" They travelled with me on the train, disguised as Albanian match-sellers."

"But - the Armenian Waiter ?" said the girl, bewilderedly.

Harrison chuckled. "Dickie Lascelles - M.I.5."

The girls beautiful lower-lip trembled slightly. "And the German in the restaurant car ?"

" Aubrey Beauchamp, very old friend of mine. Fellow-Harrobian, too. A very decent sort."

" And Lupescu, the Rumanian ? I suppose he - ?"

"Sir Godfrey Tremaine," said Harrison, stifling a yawn. "Intelligence, Counter-Espionage Department, you know. Eton man, but quite sound."

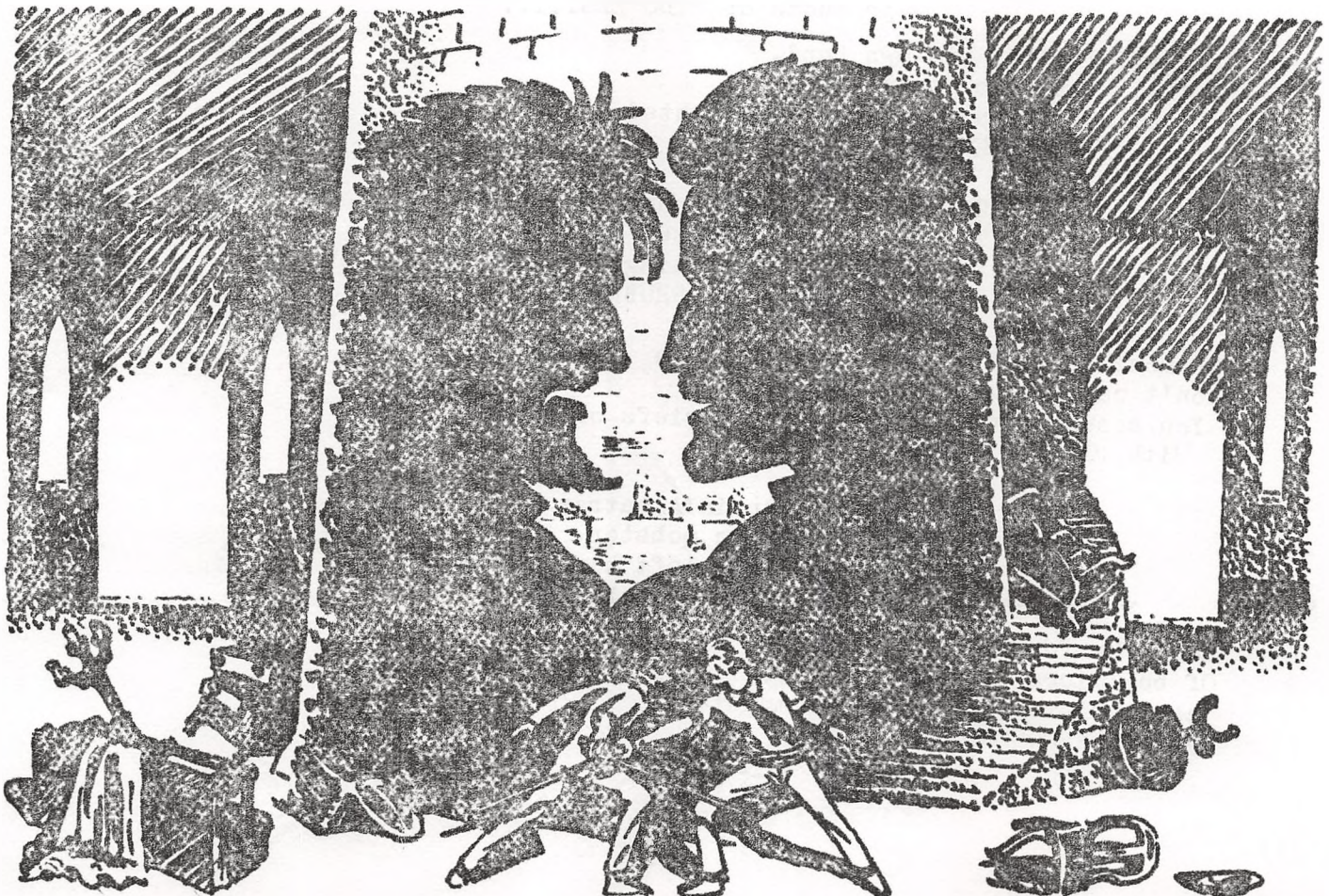
" The two zigeuners," said the girl weakly, " at the Cafe Dobra ?"

" Cyril Faversham and Harry Hurstmonceaux, two of my most able and devoted lieutenants," said Harrison. "Ah, I see them in the doorway now. Come in, gentlemen."

We entered the room, still attired in our colourful gipsy costumes. "Faversham, Hurstmonceaux," said Harrison, "you will convey this lady and this gentleman to London, where you will present them to His Majesty's accredited authorities with my compliments. A BEA Viscount is awaiting you on the lawn to convey the whole party home. As for me - I shall see you again, no doubt."

"But sir - aren't you coming back to England with us ?" I asked faintly.

" England..." said the Great Man, his eyes clouding in pleasant reverie. " I have not seen England these five long years...tell me,"



he asked, his voice lightly nostalgic, " does the Wye still meander like a silver ribbon through her verdant meads ? Is the click of bat against ball still heard through the drowsy afternoons upon Her village greens ? Is the sweet Devon Cider still quaffed beneath the shade of Her great trees ? And is there - honey, still, for tea ?"

" England is England yet," said Hurstmonceaux, his voice trembling, " despite those damned Socialists. The finest damned country in the world, sir!"

Harrison nodded, as if reassured. " One day I shall return there, until then - au revoir!"

With two or three agile steps he had reached the window. He stood there, framed in it, for an instant; then waved once, and was gone.

We stood, looking at the place where he had been; and none of us spoke for a while.

" I could love such a man," said Irena Pudovkin, tears glittering in her eyes.

I turned to her. " But men of such a stamp are not destined for the love of one woman alone, or of one great nation, even; for it is their proud destiny to dedicate themselves to the service, not only of England and Her Mighty Empire - though that will always come first - but of all mankind. His is a lonely path, but tread it he must - it is his Noble Heritage, and his greatest joy, so to do."

We stood a moment, in contemplative silence, before leaving.

THE END - Of Part Three.

* * * * *

ONCE UPON A FANNISH TIME.....there was a fanzine called NOW&THEN,
and the mythical (we hope), magical (perhaps)
products of WIDOWERS.....

Socrates died by his own hand.

Imagine what this means...

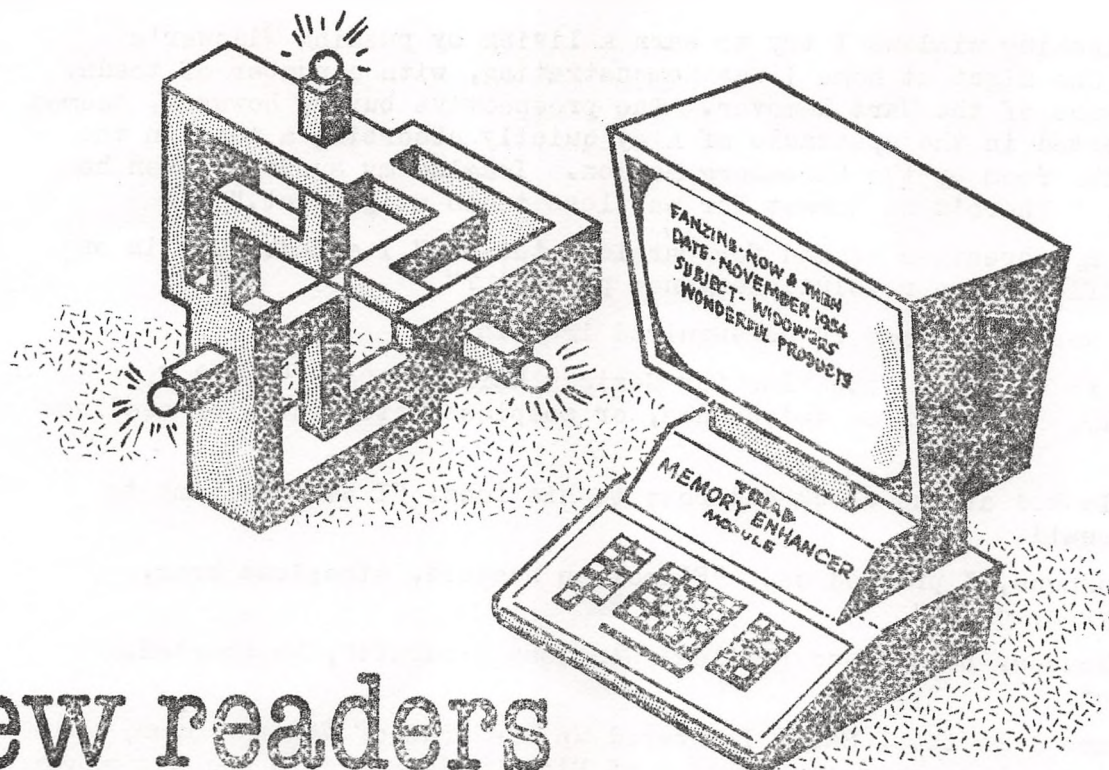
A whole life wasted - he never tasted
WIDOWERS WONDERFUL BEANS.

To shoot an apple from his small son's head
Tell used an accurate, true barb...
Descendants flourishing, reared on nourishing
WIDOWERS WONDERFUL RHUBARB.

The most intimate article of lingerie
Won't cause a moment's unease if
You secure your scanties, your briefs or your panties
With WIDOWERS PATENT ADHESIVE.

Capone ended up in Alcatraz
The worst Chicago mobster.
His life of crime left him no time
for WIDOWERS WONDERFUL LOBSTER.

Lewis Mumford's most excellent thesis
Of buildings baroque & rococo
Was initiated, and then stimulated
By WIDOWERS WONDERFUL COCOA.



New readers start here...

I was recuperating from a final eye operation, sight restored, grateful that I lived in the 20th century and the miracle was possible, and planning a vast scheme of reading and art projects to catch up with the enforced neglect of the past few years, when the phone rang.

"....doing a fifties fanthology", announces Eric from far-off Holmes Chapel. "How about some stuff from Now & Then - three, four pages long plus a batch of WIDOWER's jingles. Something redolent of the times but not dated...not too many esoteric allusions, like..."

So much for my plans.

How do you reprint anything from a quarter-century old fanmag without hitting obscure references? As I recall, we had to publish a "Glossary of Esoteric Names, Words & Phrases" after the first three issues of N&T to help new readers catch up then... So you'll have to leap in at the deep end.

WIDOWER'S WONDERFUL PRODUCTS appeared in the mag early on. Eric Needham my co-producer, did some bulk-buying to economise on his house-keeping, and confessed he was getting fed up with a steady diet of Batchelors Baked Beans. After a discussion on the techniques of persuasion, Eric tried his hand at some advertising jingles for products from an imaginary company - Widower's. I used the results as fillers in N&T, and we found readers joining in with new jingles. There was a time when we had so many jingles on our hands that we had plans to produce a WIDOWER'S CATALOGUE...

And in the third issue of N&T, Eric came up with the Strange Tale of WIDOWER'S WART REMOVER.

- Harry Turner.

* * * * *

HOW STRANGE IT IS that throughout life it is the small things which have the greatest influence on us. So small a thing as a hundred gallon drum of Widower's Wart Remover brought me to a fate almost worse than death... marriage. It was in this way.

When not cleaning windows I try to earn a living by pushing Widower's Products. One night at home I was demonstrating, with a number of toads, the efficiency of the Wart Remover. The prospective buyer, however, seemed more interested in the spectacle of Algy quietly absorbing a toad in the corner of the room by the Nuremberg Maiden. Imagine my surprise when he said to me, "There's no market for wartless toads at present."

"Could you not create a demand for wartless toads?" I asked. "Get in on the ground floor on a revolutionary new product?"

"Who wants wartless toads?" he enquired irascibly,

"There was no demand at one time for Mexican Hairless Dogs," said I, thoughtfully, "or wireless telephones, or soapless detergents, or seedless raisins."

The buyer looked at the clock and rose to his feet. "I have no time to waste", he said.

Sensing weakness, I pressed on. "Flameless heaters, strapless bras, tubeless tyres, or..."

"Roofless houses, bottomless bottles, wingless aircraft", he snarled, stomping out.

Some days are like that. Sadly I covered up the drum of Wart Remover, and shoved it into place between the cage of Black Widow spiders and the snake venom distillery. Tossing the rest of the toads to Algy, I soothed my ruffled feelings with Artie Shaw. But still the thought persisted..... wartless toads.

The following day at work it occurred to me that a wartless toad would encounter supply difficulties, since toads are scarce, and when wartless resemble frogs, of which there is a world surplus. Frogs even fall out of the sky in showers of rain, according to Charles Fort. Far be it from me to contradict Charles Fort, but since I work in the open and it rains often, I have yet to see a shower of frogs descend on roof-tops and fire-escapes. Once, in Titus Livius's History of Rome, in the first chapter, I came across a reference to a shower of stones on the Capitol, which is just as well since I only read the first chapter. I asked a fellow window-cleaner, and he admitted that he too had never seen a frog on a fire-escape. This puzzled me immensely. Do frogs dislike fire-escapes?

No man shall ever know the cunning with which I stole a three-storey fire-escape and smuggled it home unnoticed, all in the spirit of pure scientific research. Or how in a single night I erected it, single-handed, but I am essentially modest. On a rainy day, I borrowed a ten-ton lorry, drove into the Cheshire swamplands and gathered ten tons of frogs, determined to find out why frogs never seem to be found on fire-escapes.

It was appalling. The carnage was indescribable. Ton after ton of frogs I carried upstairs in a large bucket. One by one I placed them on the top of the fire-escape outside my window. One by one they hopped off and fell down, down, down on to the jagged rocks and cruel crawling foam below.

After seven tons of frogs had been swept away by the outgoing tide, I called a halt to the senseless suicidal urge. Wearily, I scooped up Algy in the bucket, carried him downstairs and poured him evenly over the remaining three tons of frogs, and left him to deal with them. Swearing horribly, I poured through Freud, Brill, Kraft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis, Jung, Hubbard, and Edgar Wallace to find some cause for this insane spate of batrachian self-destruction.

Even the sale of the fire-escape at a fabulous profit did not lighten my mood. How, in the name of Noshabkeming or all the devils of the Seven Purple Hells of Palain could I get into the mind of a frog without a lens?

Inspiration - Scientology! Perhaps one form of insanity could explain another, I mused. Did some phantom fire-escape in some previous incarnat-

ion haunt
these hag-
ridden
frogs ?
So Old
Faithful
came out
of its
cabinet,
and was
modified
into an
Electropsy-
chrometer.
It may not
be on the
same lines
as Hubbard,
but the
results are
pretty much



the same. Using the existing line time-base, I added modulators to the frame time-base, and pumped in respiratory wave-forms, brain alpha-, beta-, and xi-rhythm waveforms, cardiac waveforms, and amplitude control dependent on electrical conductivity of the skin of the frog. The resulting composite waveform was murderous, and matched my mood at having to do this to a perfectly good television set. Still, the lust to know overcame my desire to see Sir Mortimore Wheeler and Connie MacKenszie.

Three weeks and five frogs later, I had probed back 637 trillion years without result. In despair, I lightly took the motor-bike and gat me to Romiley to see Harry.

He was sitting at the window, proudly gazing at the new mangrove swamp which, at great expense, he had imported from Belfast and installed in his back garden. Seeing my frown he tucked the hibiscus blossom he held behind one ear and raised his eyebrows. Accustomed by now to Harry's decorating schemes, I praised it. He does look sweet with hibiscus blossom behind one ear... But, as ever, he drove straight to the heart of the problem,

"I seriously doubt," said he, "if there were any fire-escapes 637 trillion years ago." So I sadly took the motor-bike and gat me hence.

An Experiment with Time offered me a clue. Did the fear of fire-escapes exist in the future ? I asked Madam Clara in her Oldham Street salon how to determine the future but she, being a palmist and clairvoyante, could offer no help, though she did give me the address of a horoscope manufacturer. But here, as always, there was a snag. When is a frog born ? As frogspawn ? Tadpole ? Or when it loses its tail and becomes a true frog ? So, to be certain, I had a horoscope cast for a frog of each sex at each stage in its developement. If any of these remarkable horoscopes comes true, there is a surprising future in Algy. I banged my head against the wall, and went to see Harry again.

Ploughing through the dense bougainvillea which festooned No. 10's entrance, I gained access to the mangrove swamp. And lo! there was Harry in an attitude of intense thought contemplating the largest frog I ever saw. It was a beauty... 3 feet high, 2 feet thick, and 4 feet deep.

Two hours solid bargaining with Harry, the exchange of seven shillings and sixpence, and a two-ton truck brought the frog home.

Rejoicing at the find, I made room for the frog in the living-room by tipping the Black Widow spiders into the snake-venom, and poured the lot into the Nuremberg Maiden, and shovelled Algy in on top.

The cage went into the sea, and then I brought the Frog in. And I got the shock of my life when the Frog sat in my armchair, looked at me, and said: "You must kiss me".

Numbly, I answered, "Kiss you ? Kiss you ? Kiss you ?"

" I am really a princess", said the Frog, " and if you would wed a fair princess, all you must do is kiss me and restore me to my true shape and form".

Fishing in one of its ankle socks, it handed me a book of instructions. The instructions were plain enough, but my eye caught a revealing phrase in tiny print - "This princess is not transferable".

Suspicion deepening, I dragged the tipsy Algy out of the Nuremberg Maiden and arranged him around the Frog in a circle. Algy shoved out several eyes and watched with interest. I took a deep breath and kissed the goggle-eyed horror, stepped back and opened one eye, and regarded the transformed apparition, vaguely aware that Algy was deserting me by oozing under the skirting board.

Alone with the princess, I retreated behind the snake-venom distillery.

" Am I not still desirable ?" it said, raising skinny arms in an attempt to embrace me. Clutching the Wart Remover drum and gasping for breath, I asked: " How long have you been a frog ?"

" Six hundred years, good sir", she said, still advancing.....

....Eric Needham.

* * * * *

Lucifer fell from heavenly grace
and landed in the gutter.

What caused his slide was not his pride
but WIDOWER'S WONDERFUL BUTTER.

The water supplies of Ancient Greece
Were affected by pollution.
A certain cure for a leaking sewer
is WIDOWER'S RUBBER SOLUTION.

Pluto muttered in Stygian gloom:
"It's too dark to distinguish a
Thing in Hades, since Charon displayed his
WIDOWER'S FIRE EXTINGUISHER.

Nero was a frolicsome lad,
With many a whimsical sly caper.
His favourite jest was to seat his guest
on a WIDOWER'S WONDERFUL FLYPAPER.

Elizabeth the Virgin Queen
Was chaste to the end of her days.
Although they hurt you, keep your virtue
with WIDOWER'S WHALEBONE STAYS.

Where Florence Nightingale kept her lamp
Is a source of many rumours.
She had it concealed, it's now revealed
In her WIDOWER'S WONDERFUL BLOOMERS.

The Mona Lisa's secret smile
Which hints of gay adventures
Could be more daring if she were wearing
WIDOWER'S PORCELAIN DENTURES.

(All WIDOWER'S jingles quoted are by Eric Needham...so far.)



A MAN'S BEST FRIEND IS HIS BÊTE NOIRE

by
MAL ASHWORTH

I useta have a problem with books. This fact is recorded some places, like for instance in some issues of TRIODE, a Big Time fanzine of the 50s and 60s whose editor, Gorilla Bentcliffe would show no scruples about throwing all the muscle of his 4' 3" physique strong on me to come up real fast with a column whenever the publishing monkey got too scratchy on his back.

Whoo, yes, I did have a problem with books.

That has been resolved; and I am pleased to record I no longer, as I move towards the years of serenity, have a problem with books. I now have a whole clutch of problems with books. Why, you may ask? (Alternatively, you may not ask. You may even query, gently - So who gives a shit, Grandad? To which I can only reply, meekly - walk this way, Junior, and find out if a facefull of loosened molars will aid your understanding.) Many, and various, I conclude, are the reasons.

One is that I am now a philosopher. No - but really. I mean - officially and like that. I even have Degrees (well, one. Well, a half of one if you're really keeping count.) and things (well - books) to prove it. And if there is one thing that is quite distinctive about philosophers it is that you can go to them with a problem and they will get rid of it for you. Ho, yes. You will go home with sixteen new problems, but the old one will, like a toad-touched wart, be gone. So that's one reason.

You see, I used to think my problem with books was 'Where do I store them all?'; not just 'Where - empirically, pragmatically - do I in fact, store them all?' No, no - even I, on a relatively bad day, could usually answer that one. No, it was more like 'Where sweet ever-lovin' Jesus can I possibly store 'em all if I am not going to sleep out on the lawn tonight?'

That, more or less, in approximate terms, and roughly stated, is what I used to think my problem was.

Those assiduous and dedicated followers of my bibliophilic vicissitudes who have never missed a nuance despite carelessly (and, of course, deliberately) interpolated obstacles like twenty year gaps in the saga,

will recall that this - even this - simplistic, seemingly inconsequential, base-line problem was no Johnny-come-lately but had its feet fixed firmly in the mists of antiquity (and its head in a jumble of mixed metaphors). I blush - indeed I do - to remind you of my teen-age exchanges with 4' 3" (now where did I come across that self-same statistic only recently ?) of Venomous Mother, which went roughly like:

VM: You're not bringing another book into this house until you've got rid of some. Do you hear ?

@SRM: That seems fractionally unreasonable since collecting books is my hobby.

VM: Talk right in your head.

SRM: I am talking right in my head. I happen to collect books - a harmless enough hobby, Goodness Only Knows, compared with Standing On Street Corners*, so I have to bring them into the house.

VM: 'Standing On Street Corners'! I've never heard anything so daft. It's all those silly books you read that give you these silly ideas. Well I've told you - you're not bringing any more into this house; and you're going to get rid of the ones you've got.

And so on. And thus. Und so weiter. My adamantine reason cut no ice and VM's pitch and volume continued to rise while my eyes got slittier and slittier. (There has to come an end to this sort of thing, of course, or else eventually you can't even see whether you're slitting your eyes in the right direction) There were no outright victories - even my threats of Standing On Street Corners, occasionally aided by solemn promises to wreck the joint beyond repair if even the slimest of my slim volumes came under threat, only achieved a standoff. But I did, no'er'theless, keep on bringing books into the house. And I have kept on ever since bringing books into the house. Any house. Well - any house I happened to be living in.

From that time on, in fact, this Nelson Bunker Hunt-ishness (or Nelson Bookhunter-ishness) (You remember him - the Texan who tried to own all the silver in the world and actually got about halfway there) has been my Albatross. In part - but only in part - I blame the example of my friend of those days and joint fanzine editor, Tom White. Tom at the time lived in a small one-up-one-down, back-to-back, toilet-down-the-street-if-you-can-climb-over-the-dead-cats-and-Rag-and-Bone-men mill cottage. And every night before he and Betty could go to bed they would have to lift piles of books off the bed. Which was a continual consolation to me since I could always think, as I had to move piles of books in order to get into the loo (this was in later, more affluent, days, after I, too, had ceased to live in a one-up-one-down-, back-to-back, toilet-round-t-back-o't-tripe-slitting-shed, mill cottage) - I could always think at such times, pants around my ankles, six volumes of Will Durant's STORY OF CIVILISATION still in my hands, and a crisis approaching: 'Well, at least I'm not as bad as old Tom White who had to move piles of books in order to go to bed.'

=====

@ Sweetly Reasonable Me.

* Back in those days Standing On Street Corners was, believe it or not, a viable alternative, of a status somewhat akin to Going To The Dogs, Being Seen In A Pub or Running Around With Fast Women; this latter always had too much of an energetic Olympic Games sort of flavour to attract me very much. Though I'd probably have been converted if I'd ever actually seen any Fast Women. Maybe they were just so fast they were always out of sight before I got focussed. Anyway, that's where Standing On Street Corners stood in that ante-diluvian cosmogony.

Who knows but that without that shining example of fanatical Bibliomania I might have returned to the sweetly reasonable Middle Path and quit collecting the damn things; but no - I can always tell myself that I am not yet as bad as Tom White once was.

Fact is, I did for some time have what I believe is known as a spontaneous remission; I know that sounds a bit like a Catholic outpost in New Mexico but I am given to understand by usually well-informed sources that it just means "I got better". Anyway, it didn't last and I got worse again. Much worse - so that now I can only get into the study by hopping over piles of books on the floor; and I realised just last night that the study is now a fine example of a multi-dimensional self-defeating jabberoo (I disremember the exact technical terminology as of this moment in time). Fr'instance - can I work on the desk in the study? No, it's got books piled on it. So, for a while, I took to sitting further back in a chair and working on the flat top of the stool on which I had been hitherto wont to sit while working at the desk. Now, however, even that looks kinda like the palmy days of the Golden Dawn as I sit even further back all sort of scrunched up in a corner writing this on a clipboard on my knee. Yup - the stool too done got books on it, goldarn it to tarnation. (You think I'm making this up? Would to God t'were so; no, indeedy, I can tell you their titles: Emanuel Litvinoff's *FACES OF TERROR* trilogy; *THE SUPERNATURAL IN THE ENGLISH SHORT STORY*; *STEPS* by Jerry Kosinski; *PIERRE & JEAN* by De Maupassant; Trevor Leggett's *THE CHAPTER OF THE SELF*; a History of Dutton's Brewery from 1799 to 1949; and two copies of John Le Carre's *SMILEY'S PEOPLE*. Yes - two copies, one a hardback, one a paperback. Well, yes, I know, but they're both kinda nice in their own way, y'see. And that's just what's on the stool. We won't get started on the desk just now if you don't mind.)

Yet another example of this self-defeating whatsisname is - it has always been my practice to keep in the shelves those books I felt I would most likely want to read or refer to, and to leave the less likely ones in the piles. But now the piles of Less Likelys have got so high - and often two or three deep too - that they totally obscure and render utterly and finally inaccessible, the More Likelys. I sometimes feel parents are grossly negligent in the way they rear their children and train them for the life ahead. Nothing anybody ever said to me prepared me for problems like this. Hell, no.

There again, you see, there's another problem; well, not so much a problem as a rockbottom, downhome ding-bing deprivation. I can remember other days in other studies in other houses when a bit of 'the other' has been given an added piquancy by being indulged in beneath those serried ranks of tomes and volumes. Not for me such John Berry-like vulgar ostentation as leaping off the top of wardrobes (though I suppose it might have been my only chance of catching up with some of those Fast Women), but ne'ertheless the distinct possibility of being buried forever in flagrante delicto under not one but several 8' x 5' bookcases (full ones, of course) does give the whole business a certain je ne sais quoi; it is at such moments that one comes closest to realising what the Existentialists are on about when they say 'Live every moment as though it is your last'. There were other subtle and refined angles to this pleasure too; quite apart from bringing together two



of my favourite earthly entities - books and sexy girls (Oh - and me), the thought of Doing It under the very noses of St. Augustine, Karl Marx, Ludwig Wittgenstein and even Hugo Gernsback added several tantalising nuances to the usual infinitely prolonged unendurable ecstasy.

Now, as you will guess, all that is right out. No sooner does the breathless nubile young thing, all ready to be impressed and undressed in one swell fop, get through the door than she falls flat on her kisser over a pile of FOSDYKE SAGAS and I start bawling her out for booting my books. Even dragging the Mongolian Goatskin rug into another room never quite restores the atmosphere after that.

I wish to hell I could remember what those self-defeating jaggery-doodles are really called because now that I've seen some I keep on finding them all over the place, a bit like woodlice. I mean, consider, for example, the fact that collecting so many books is one of the main factors that stops me reading them. (A day now, though, I'm really going to get bang up to date with my science-fiction reading. No messing, I'm gonna get stuck straight into RALPH 124C41+ or A MARTIAN ODYSSEY.) It isn't just the time I spend, usually feeling hungover and lecherous, picking my way between moth-eaten 1940's fur coats and pairs of boots apparently remaindered from the retreat from Moscow, as I uncover obscure paperbacks at 5 and 10p a throw in Oldham Flea Market. No, sirree, nothing as simple as that. You have to add to that all the time spent cataloguing them (well -- writing the titles down in my diary), the need to decide which pile each book is to go into (that's why the Litvinoff trilogy is still on my stool, see Decisions, always decisions.) and whereabouts, the time taken - the considerable time taken - actually, physically getting it there despite the inevitable alpine avalanches and subterranean shiftings of all the other books in that particular sector of space - as well as the time spent sitting in the pub afterwards recovering from such a titanic and colossal battle with the furious forces of nature at Her most Primeval and Awesome. And even when I've recovered from all that the demands upon my precious time do not cease; even then there is a pressing and undeniable necessity to sit there over a few more pints thinking - about the books I've bought, the books I still want to buy, the books I'm going to get tomorrow; and whether the ones I've just dealt with are really in the proper piles after all. Would you - could you, even - believe that with all the foregoing compendium of Hard Evidence my Head of Department can be so icily inhuman as to turn a deaf ear to my contention that I should be given a singularly light teaching programme since I patently do not have the time to read the books I am supposed to be lecturing on?

I think by now maybe I've given you enough to worry about on my behalf so I won't burden you with the problem of the death-struggle over lebensraum between my book-collection, my oriental knife collection, my Jubilee Ales collection, my old bottle collection, my old tin box collection, my Boermat collection, my old model vehicle collection, my empty-containers-I-can't-bear-to-throw-away-because-they-might-come-in-useful-one-day collection, and so on. (In all this, though, I take consolation from yet another example from my early years - that of my dear old Venomous Mother herself. Would you believe that not only did she amass huge collections of corks and bits of string but she also had a considerable and constantly increasing - tonnage of sardine tin keys. I don't think she appreciated them for aesthetic reasons, nor yet for subtle differences in design - certainly she never took the trouble to display them - but, collect them she sure did. And - by God, it just struck me - "Come back, Venomous Mother; I demand a re-match." I've just come up with the perfect riposte. How about: "Well if I can't bring another book into this house, you can't bring in any more sardine tin keys!" ?) No, like I say, I won't add to your ponderous Weltschmerz by insisting that you consider any of these problems. (Oh, by the way, I forgot to list my sheath knife collection.) But there are two more vital items I'd like you to add to your list of morbid, overpowering concerns on my behalf.

The first of these deep-seated worries stems from an article I read about collectors of old Dinky Toys. (Yes, I pick those up too whenever I can - I regard it as a sort of stocking up for Second Childhood. In the same way, one of my justifications for having all these Silly Books is that after Doomsday - be it Nuclear, Cosmic or simply from Coca-Cola pollution - when society has broken down and there is no food or transport, things will probably be a bit miserable and there won't be much to do except read; now in these circumstances no reasonable person would want to take the risk of running out of things to read, would he? So you see that after all buying lots of books is perfectly sensible; in fact now that I come to think of it I'm not really sure that I've got enough to last through the whole of the Post Catastrophe Doldrums.) Well, anyway, apparently one of the sad things about old Dinky Toys is that they sometimes suffer from metal fatigue. Downstairs in the dozy morning staggers the ardent collector only to blear at a pile of dust where but yesterday he gloated at an Aveling-Barford Forklift Truck. Horrors! Horror of horrors! Might there, I shuddered jitteringly, be a similar affliction abroad threatening books! What if one morning say SKULLFACE AND OTHERS, or even DON'T DARE ME SUGAR should have turned into something a ravenous woodworm might have left behind? If Dinky Toys can get metal fatigue and elms can get Dutch Elm Disease, why shouldn't books suffer from Botswanan Bookrot or the dreaded Doncaster Disintegration? Then where would I be after Doomsday? these are, undoubtedly, terrifying times we live in. As the Yorkshire Alphabet has it: " 'L' is for Living, 'at's noan allus fun - but it's better nor deein' when all's said and dun." Sometimes, though, one wonders. Truly one does.

You see, even deein's a bit of a problem, and one that causes me some concern at that. Oh, not the technicalities of it; I'm given to understand that nothing could be easier and very little active participation is required. No, it's what happens afterwards that brings in the problematic aspect; I don't mean what happens to me - that, I understand, is also taken care of (both here and hereafter) without my having to do too much about it. No, it's what happens to my books that is the really worrying thing. I suppose that since I won't be around to fuss about it then I could just forget about it and leave the hassle to someone else; but it's rather like a proud parent feels about his children - I'd rather like to feel that they were placed in the best and most suitable situations. Now I realise that many a University Department would be more than happy to add HALLIWELL'S DICTIONARY OF ARCHAIC AND PROVINCIAL WORDS to their august collection; but would they, I ask myself, feel the same way about HOTSIE, YOU'LL BE CHILLED or SLAY RIDE FOR CUTIE? I have some nagging doubts. The First English Edition of THE BHAGAVAD GITA (1785) would no doubt find many a prospective owner offering bowls full of eye-teeth to get his hands on it; but would such a gentleman welcome with equally open arms MYRA BRECKINRIDGE? THE STORY OF 'O'? Ten Story Fantasy Magazine featuring 'Tyrant and Slavegirl on Planet Venus'? It is these sorts of worries which I sometimes feel could drive me to an early grave (come to think of it that would be another of those self-defeating itchamakoos we were talking about, wouldn't it?). And even then, like the man said: '....in that sleep of death what dreams may come, when we have shuttled off this mortal coil, must give us pause.' I can just hear this well-remembered voice issuing from about 4'3" up in the Ether (assuming that they haven't yet gone metric Over There):

"You wouldn't listen to your old mother, but I knew best. You see now what comes of hoarding all those silly books."

.....MAL ASHWORTH.

NB: Completists please note, Mal is currently negotiating the purchase of a large empty farmhouse; the third part of this trilogy will therefore not appear for about...well, three years, mayhap? eb.

I WAS SITTING IN MY OFFICE TRYING TO ENJOY SOME MUSIC on Radio 2 and thinking how bland most of today's pop groups are - I mean, I've never been grabbed by the Docleys, have you? Suddenly it occurred to me that I had promised myself that I would send Eric the Bent one of my old articles. The trouble is, I thought, I don't think there's anything around here that hasn't already been printed and reprinted in recent years. Nevertheless I poked around in the bottom drawer of my filing cabinet, where I keep old fanzines, and came up with a copy of THE SCARR by George Charters, dated 1963. (That's the date of the fanzine, of course. Nobody in Irish Fandom knows what year George is dated, because we weren't able to read the Hittite script on his birth certificate.)

Glancing through that fanzine was a weird experience, because in it I found the following article, the writing of which I had no memory whatsoever! None at all! It was like a message from an alternate time stream, except that after a while I began to remember the little bits of IF history upon which the article was based. Walt Willis, having a talent for radio construction, was able to repair TV sets, and he had a number of them functioning around his house in the days when the box was not all that common. I had an old razor-edged Triumph saloon which was not so much in need of cleaning as weeding, there was moss growing on it in places. And Jim White once bought an ex-WD oscilloscope, because he preferred looking at sine curves while the rest of us were happy with the Tiller girls.

It all goes to show that its worth while to keep a diary. You think you can remember your life, but you can't, and every day another little bit of your past slips away into oblivion. The thing that gripes me is that I have let 18 years go by in which I could have been using the pun about the watchdog. What a waste! But perhaps all is not lost. The man next door has a useless slob of a hound which he fondly believes can frighten off intruders - I think I'll go down and engage him in conversation.....

* * * * *

Among the serried ranks of traffic in Belfast's busy Milk Street a sleek black Fordson van was moving easily through the lines. At the wheel was Clint Kinnison, Ulster's ace spotter, wearing the grey whipcord of the profession. Across his back was the Spotter's emblem: a red hand of Ulster cupped at a huge magenta ear, over the phrase "Canis Moribundum regurgitans licentious" - "Die, dog, or cough up the license."

"This new engine they've put in the van is running well," Clint remarked. "what size is it, anyway?"

"I don't know," his pretty assistant Maggie McVickers said. "It's a new Italian engine. It was tested by a thousand top Italian drivers and they all agreed it was perfect."

"Then it must be a thousand si-si engine," Clint replied. "I'll open the bonnet and show it to you afterwards."

"You mean - you're going to take me to your litre?"

"Not bad, Maggie," Clint said, "but remember you're the straight man around here."

Maggie nodded and took a deep breath, revealing her unsuitability for that role. "What's this new mission we're going out on?"

"Well, it's been discovered that a gang of TV license forgers is operating in the town. The chief has made up a list of suspected viewers



who are connected with some kind of home printing business. We've to check them out. The first one is called Willis - we're on our way to his place now."

"In that case," Maggie said, "I'd better warm up our expensive highly sensitive mobile equipment which is so acute that it can not only tell whether a tv set is on in a house but which channel is being watched, and even what corner of the room the set is in. Pardon me for spouting so much hot air, Clint, but that bit was all plot."

"You like your air in plots, do you?" Clint smiled. "It suits you... Here we are - 170 Upper Newtownards Road - it's a big house and the signal will probably be faint coming through all that brickwork. Better give the equipment full boost, maximum sensitivity."

"Okay, Clint." Maggie switched on the mass of electronic in the rear of the van and immediately several indicator needles wrapped themselves round their stop pins, sparks showered from half a dozen black boxes and the van was filled with smoke.

"Ruined!" Maggie screamed. "The equipments all ruined! That was the strongest signal we've ever received. There are only four people in that house, and two of them are children, but they must have TV sets going on every floor. Talk about the affluent society!"

"You mean affluent, don't you?" Clint snapped. "On second thoughts maybe in this case you are right. Anyway, the fiends have ruined £20,000

worth of detection gear. We'll have to go back for a new lot - the chief isn't going to like this."

As the black van sped down the road inside number 170 Walt Willis said to Madeleine, "I'll keep trying for the golf on Scottish Television this set, you watch out for Hancock on Ulster Television on yours, tell Carol to keep tuned in for the tennis scores on BBC in her bedroom, and send word up to Bryan in the attic to give us a shout when the science fiction serial starts on Telefis Eirann."

* * * * *

"There," said Clint Kinnison, tightening down the next nut, "that's the new equipment installed. Now we'll try the second name on our list."

"Do you think this fellow Shaw will be tough?" Maggie asked.

"Nah!" replied Clint confidently. "If he tries anything we'll soon have his teeth chattering with this." He patted his holstered cavity resonator and the black van roared off towards the Castlereagh Hills. After half an hour of steady climbing the engine was beginning to labour in the rarefied air and the scenery had grown bleak and forbidding, with rocks jutting up in the roadway and masses of vegetation looming on each side.

"I don't like this," Maggie said nervously. "Do you think he'll have a watch-dog?"

"I'm not worried if he has - most watch-dogs are quite harmless. They shoo off more than they can bite, in fact. Get it? Hee, hee, hee!"

"I still don't like this. We must be nearly at Shaw's house, but did you ever see so much grass? The van's beginning to stick in it, Clint - do you think you could lean out and cut it with something as we go along?"

Clint shook his head. "No mower for me, thanks - I'm driving. Hee, hee, hee! Never worry - there's a small mound of dust and stones, I'll drive up on top of it and see where we are." He spun the steering wheel deftly and the van swung towards the mound, which - too late - revealed itself to be a large, unwashed Triumph saloon. There was a loud clang as the two vehicles collided, followed by a series of tinkling noises as £20,000 worth of delicate electronic equipment fell to pieces in the back of the van. In the dim unnatural light that filtered down through the overhanging weeds Clint and Maggie stared at each other aghast.

"Oh, lock," Maggie giggled, "your face has gone all puke coloured!"

"You mean puce, don't you?" Clint snapped. "On second thought - maybe in this case you're right. The chief definitely won't like this, you know. There's only one more set of equipment left." He jerked the van in reverse savagely, and it trundled backwards down the hill out of sight.

Inside number 26 Sadie Shaw said to Bob, "It's high time you cut our grass, Fatso. I thought I heard a bang at the front door a moment ago but the weeds might get the children if I open it." Shaw only sipped his beer.

* * * * *

"We're not going to take any chances with this White character," Clint explained as they buzzed along the Upper Falls Road. "This is the third set of equipment today, and at £20,000 a time that comes to....how much?"

"Work it out yourself," Maggie said. "Doing sums gives me a headache."

"Me too - it's called the aftermath. Anyway, the chief says we're sacked if anything goes wrong this time, so we'll go really carefully up to White's house, tune in on him and prove that he has a set, then we'll burst in and ask for his license. If it's forged...." Clint patted his cavity resonator grimly.

" It was a dirty dull and dismal-looking flea-pit,
With an atmosphere to make the senses spin,
Just a den of dissipation, filled by the Imagi-nation,
And their fifty-seven different sorts of sin.

From the dianetics session in the cellar,
To the paralytic drunks in one-o-three,
Through the Con Committee's failure, one giganic saturnalia,
Showed that science-fiction fans were on the spree.

Ken Slater held a black mass in the lobby,
(The commisionaire was ankle deep in gore)
And in the mezzanine, there was something grayish-green,
Squirming bonelessly upon the parquet floor.

Ted Tubb was selling virgins at an auction
....and every one was fully guaranteed,
Above the frenzied bidding, you could hear the fake-fans kidding,
That the innovation filled a long-felt need.

Fred Robinson was taking pics for blackmail,
The Medway mob were flogging filthy plaques,
And out upon the roof, Eric Bentcliffe, (it's the truth)
Was stuffing bodies down the chimney stacks.... "

Chuck Harris (assisted by Vinç Clarke) PERI no.3

"Looking back over the year of 1955, let us peep in at the mightiest event in the much talked about bar-room gatherings of those misguided people calling themselves fans of science fiction, people who never read or write the genre but instead drink and read and write about one another, the mightiest event, that uneventful gathering together in a little known normal and virginal community of the sane, the annual science fiction convention took place at Kettering in Northamptonshire, a market town... What did this gathering of the clans, the bravest of the brave, the wittiest of the witty do to further the cause for science fiction in the world of tomorrow or even today? Nothing....here was the science fiction world of the country, the best in the field's talent, from Tubb and Willis down to Harris and Reaney, doing what? Propping up bars, wearing ridiculous headgear in the streets....distributing silly notices to shocked passers-by, playing stupid games devoid of connection with the genre they had gathered at Kettering to discuss, staying up all night to wrack their sleep-yearning physical bodies with the fulfillment of frustrated passions....."

ACID DROPS by 'Redd Grayson' ORBIT no 7

**"ROOM 504 WANTS
SEVEN ENGLISH BREAKFASTS...
.... TWO SERVED ON THE
BEDS, AND FIVE UNDERNEATH"**



"Ted waved the audience to silence, solemnly opened the first magazine, nodded approvingly at it, shut it, and holding it out to the fascinated public said "IF YOU'VE BEEN RUPTURED BY A TRUSS... The next remark I heard above the shrieking was LET'S RUIN THE MANCON, SHALL WE ? and after that TURGID TALES OF HUMAN EMOTIONS WHICH I DARENOT PUT INTO WORDS.... YOUR GENEROSITY IS SICKENING ME.....GENUINELY MOUSE GNAWED.....etc.

Vinç Clarke. HYPHEN 9.

"....a mutant named
Mr. Forewarned...."SLANT.



THE DAY I BIT GHOD ON THE ANKLE

This was back in '55 when Belfast was a more peaceable place - apart from the attic at 170 Upper Newtownards Road, that is - and the centre of the fannish universe. I was visiting John Berry for a few days and spending some very pleasant hours with the Wheels of IF discussing the latest advances made by Ken Bulmer upon his recent discovery of STEAM*, and the possibilities of a Truebill in regard to the rape of the Berry Budgie by Chuck Harris.

I think the greater part of the friendly discussion took place before I bit Ghod on the ankle; I must admit in retrospect that this aberrant action of mine must have been something of a conversation-stopper, but then I plead great provocation, and it was probably Eney's Fault, you know. Anyway, we were indulging in action rather than words at the time. They had only themselves to blame. They'd lulled me into a false sense of security with a typical barrage of puns... "did I think Bob Shaw's Sultana Cake is a raison d'etre?" ...and the like, and then in a brief lull cunningly suggested "...having a quiet game of Ghoodminton". I, in my innocence accepted the challenge.

Now, someone, somewhere, recently asked how Ghoodminton was played and what were the rules, so perhaps I'd better digress for awhile and explain the game, if only in mitigation of my later action! One could call it a game for immortals I suppose, in that unless you were an immortal you weren't going to get far beyond the beginner stage, but as best I can convey it GHOODMINTON was a 'game' based loosely on a cross between Badminton, Table Tennis and Japanese-style wrestling. It was probably the inspiration for Karate, as well. It was played in the sizeable fan-attic at Walt's place, or rather a cleared area thereof, the 'court' most often being defined as that area not currently occupied by the HYPHEN duplicator and Bob Shaw's reserve stock of guinness; although if things were going against the home team play in these areas might also be allowed. The 'bats', there just isn't any other word to describe them even loosely; were made of extremely stiff cardboard. Legend has it that the first successful bat, ie, one which lasted out a whole game, was developed when an AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY was accidentally dropped into a vat of Madeleine's stew, but this is probably a vile calumny. The shuttlecock, strangely enough, was an ordinary shuttlecock in deference to the original Mr. Shuttlecock and his wife, I understand, not because they couldn't have thought up an equally suitable alternative if they'd wished. In fact, John Berry did once offer an alternative; after a particularly heavy defeat at the hands of The White Flash he came along with a shuttlecock studded with galvanised clout nails of considerable length....this, however, was ruled out on the grounds that "one could never cast a clout 'till May is out, even if it is September!"

* Patent still pending, I understand.

The court was divided by a tennis net and the (stated) object of the game was to get the shuttlecock onto the floor in the opponents half of the court, thus scoring a point. Due to the manner in which the game was played this was not as simple as it sounds. For instance, one of the truly diabolical rules of the game was that players were allowed to distract other players by whatever means they could whilst the game was in progress. The opening gambit after the coin had been tossed, was to ensure that the side that lost the call faced the wall where the Marilyn Monroe Calendar hung: you'll realise that all this took place in a much less permissive time and that a swift revealing of Miss Monroe's torso at a critical point in the game could be sufficient to put even the hardened sex-fiends of that day momentarily off their game. (This may have been the reason why James White always played without his glasses.)

The principal gambit though was to wield ones bat in as frightening manner as possible at the opposition whilst your partner ~~served~~ served. James was particularly good at this, and having studied psneerotics under Mal Ashworth he won many games in this manner. Other diversions were more extempore' such as crying out to Walt "Orville Mosher's here to see you... ...and he's got Francis Towner Laney with him!" during an intense exchange. Usually Ghoddminton was played as a doubles-game, although this wasn't always possible due to injuries sustained by the players during previous matches; there was in fact a rule to the effect that nowone with a broken arm or leg was allowed to play - not, I may say for humanitarian reasons, but because of the time John Berry broke his arm and discovered there was a distinct advantage in playing the game with a plaster-cast to flourish.

It should go without saying that I, in my innocence, didn't know all this when I accepted the invitation to play the game; and should this account be a little garbled I can only ask you to take into account the effect my first contact had upon me: I got over the concussion fairly quickly and the nightmares stopped a couple of years back, but my memory is still a little hazy about it all.

"We'll have a friendly match first," they said, "to let you get the hang of the game." Ha! Fout, in fact! I was partnered with John against Walt and Bob and the first exchanges were relatively mild. Nowone hit me with anything, but on the other hand they didn't let me hit the shuttlecock! They were all at least two metres tall, I was 5'6" in my mickey-rooney specials. They just passed the shuttlecock back and forward over my head!

However, the game passed off quite pleasantly with John striving valiantly to compensate for my inability to swat the near-orbiting shuttlecock. The second game was slightly different, they played for keeps. After first changing into their Ghoddminton-gear - obviously a further ploy to divert the oppositions attention this changed from game to game; John got out his Goon Bleary guise of trench-coat, propellor-beanie and mickey-spillane bat, Bob stripped to the waist, James put on his special one-way glasses, and Walter, traditionally, wore his tennis clothes with a solar topoe and shin-pads. They apologised for not having any protective clothing for me but said that I probably wouldn't need it since I was fast on my feet. They were right, but I wasn't fast enough! They soon found out where I was hiding. "Come on," they chorused, "come out from behind the duper and play, it's only a game!"

I was partnered with John again (partly to handicap him, I think, since by various cunning ploys he'd won a lot of games recently), against James and Walt; Bob stood ready to take the place of any who should fall early. The first few exchanges went against us, once again I was unable to jump high enough to hit the shuttlecock as it flashed over my head, and having James opposite me didn't help much either - leaping up and down grinning fiendishly, and looking rather like an attenuated Yamamoto off to a kami-kaze reunion, he was flourishing his bat within a thousandth of an inch of my nose, and I must admit I found the sight intimidating.

"Sorry, John," I said as I picked up my bat after hitting him instead of the shuttlecock," I'm afraid I'm going to lose this game for you."

"Don't worry," he hissed from under his tightly pulled down beanie, "just wait and watch, I came prepared...I just want them to think they are going to win..."

"Well, they have me convinced," I rejoined.

The score went to eighteen - love; against us, of course. And then John revealed his secret-weapon. He'd spent hours (I learned later) perfecting this latest device...it was a battery-powered assist for his beanie, and By Ghu it worked! As Walt took service, John switched on his power source and levitated comfortably to a height sufficient to enable him to ricochet a return off Bob (who'd made the mistake of standing close-in to watch play) and onto the floor between James and Walt. We won the next few points easily, the opposition were stunned, their morale broken by the sight of an airborne Goon Bleary, and even I was now finding it possible to return their shots.

We quickly drew level and the score line changed to nineteen - eighteen in our favour. And then...disaster. John's battery was exhausted. There was a last grinding twirl from his beanie-prop as he managed to make the score twenty - eighteen, then he thudded to the floor. "Blast it, I know I should have used bigger batteries but I couldn't solve the weight-ratio equation," he muttered, "it's up to you now, Eric, the batteries have slipped down into my wellies and I can't achieve liftoff."

'Up to me, a tyro at the game...what could I do?' Even as I thought, Walt and James, recovering their confidence, hit back to make the score twenty-all. Whatever I was to do I had to do it quick, and after all John was my host, I couldn't let him down. As he prepared to serve, delaying as much as possible, I noted that Walt's shin-pads had come slightly adrift and there was a gap between them and his spats. Inspiration came, 'yes it might work...shock tactics to be sure, but they'd used them on me....'

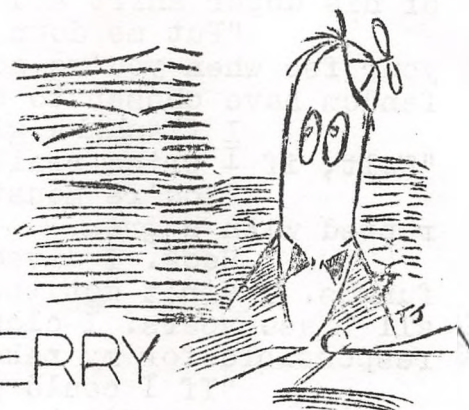
"Right, John," I hissed, "serve, now!" And as he served to Walter with a tremble in his bat I threw myself bodily under the net and clamped my teeth on that part of Walt's left-leg below his shin-pad. It worked! He was so busy shaking me loose he missed the shuttlecock. We'd won!

Naturally, there was some debate about the legitimacy of the gambit, and I don't think Walter really thought it a fair one, but Bob (in his role of innocent-bystander and de facto referee) ruled that it should be allowed.



Twilight of the Gods

by JOHN BERRY



With a muttered curse of "Suffering Catfish", and making sure my false moustache was affixed, I kicked open the door of our fanroom and leapt inside, facing Walt Willis.

"Steady, boy" he grimaced, his haggard face peering over a wall of folded fanzines. I sidled over, picked up one of them. It was the latest HYPHEN. Funny. They were all HYPHENs. About 250 of them.

"Thought you posted all the HYPHENs last week, Walt," I frowned.

"True," he nodded. "But they all arrived back here again in a couple of days...all unopened. By the way, your moustache is upside down."

I ripped it off, ran the edge of my tongue over the gum-arabic, and slapped it on properly. "But why have the HYPHENs been returned?" I asked, sort of disgruntled. It had been a special issue commemorating the publication of my 250th article.

"Same reason as all my mail has been returned unopened, I suppose," muttered Walt, kicking at the waist-high heap of letters that surrounded him.

"Any news of Peggy White?" I asked, trying to change the subject. Things were sort of complicated, and when things are complicated, I get baffled.

"I understand she has obtained a life membership of Alcoholics Anonymous," groaned Walt.

"A fitting climax to her fannish career," I observed, handing Walt my hip flask. Neat soda water would do him a power of good in his present state.

Walt took a swig and then looked at his watch. "Bleary" he said. "Bob Shaw is almost due back from his psychiatrist... I think he's doing very well, by the way, though he still means to flee the country...and before he comes I want an earnest talk with you. I have tried to refrain from this course of action, which is against all my finer instincts, but I have no alternative. I have reluctantly decided, Goon, to avail myself once more of the inimitable facilities afforded by your versatile organisation."

Heck. I wish Willis would confine himself to words of not more than two syllables. I was working at a disadvantage

© "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 is they do. 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. I soon realised it would be foolish to tackle anything like a bank without getting a bit of experience, so I got a piece of curtain material for a mask, determined to pounce on someone in a dark alley and make them hand over. I gave the idea up when I heard the sentence for robbery with valance....."

as it was.

"My fee" I hissed, gripping him by the sticky collar of his duper shirt and pinning him against the wall.

"Put me down this minute," he ordered. "We'll discuss your fee when you've solved the mystery of why the rest of fandom have chosen to ostracise us."

I flashed a glance at the Marilyn Monroe calendar. "Walt, if I tried really hard, would you...?"

"You're moustache has fallen off again," he interrupted with a grin.

Heck. I dived onto the floor and once more replaced my fungus. I ain't got the nerve to expose my naked upper lip after all these years. I clenched my fists at the thought of the person responsible for my nakedness. Age wouldn't save him.

"If I could just get my hands on George Charters," I grated. "I'd...I'd bung up his ear trumpet...I'd..."

"Funny thing about George," mused Walt. "He hasn't been here since the Heinlein fiasco. And it was just after that my mail started coming back unopened, too."

"I was just going to say the same thing, Walt," I lied. Willis is my best customer...in fact, he's my only customer.

Just then, Madeleine came in with a sack over her shoulder. She gripped both ends of it and miserably shook out the contents onto the floor.

"Oh, no," sobbed Walt. "Not my OMPA mailing contribution. To think that Joy would do a thing like that to me."

Madeleine dabbed her eyes. "My article I SLEPT WITH WILLIS has been returned unopened by FEMIZINE," she sniffed. "Why, oh why?"

Suddenly we heard rapid footsteps mounting the haunted staircase.

James White came into the room with a brown paper parcel under his arm. He paused in the open doorway...a pitiful sight. Then, like a great Shakespearian actor, he took a pace forward, swept an arm majestically upwards and shouted...

"I am undone."

"You mean -?" gasped Walt and Madeleine.

"Yes," he cried. "Carnell has sent back my latest story, Quinn illos and all. In fact, he hasn't even opened the parcel..."

"So it wasn't any use to get Conklin to say you were a Londoner," muttered Walt grimly.

The door opened once more, and Sadie came in leading Bob by the arm. She raised a finger to her lips with a warning "Sssshh."

"There's my boy," she crooned, leading a gibbering Shaw to a secluded corner of the room where he sat staring vacantly at Marilyn Monroe.

He was worse than I thought.

Sadie tiptoed over and whispered; "The doctor says it's a bad case of shock allied with acute frustration of the bowels and constriction of the bladder. He is to have a complete rest before he's even fit for a sea voyage."

Tears glistened in her eyes. Heck, folks. Beneath my dirty vest there beats an understanding heart. I laid a

"Bob Shaw is not a deeply religious person...being little more than what he calls an 'enlightened Shavian', but there is one belief which he holds with religious fervour. It is that budgerigars cannot talk. It is not that he doesn't believe budgerigars can talk - no, he holds it to be self-evident that they cannot. It is rather like the difference between an atheist and an agnostic. The latter is merely not convinced of the existence of God, whereas the atheist is firmly convinced of his non-existence. In just such a way Bob Shaw is firmly convinced that budgerigars cannot talk: not only does he hold this belief with an almost fanatical devotion, but he is prepared to crusade and undergo martyrdom...."

comforting arm around Sadie and gave her a paternal kiss.

Next moment, Bob slipped to the floor with a horrible "Duuurrrh", saliva dribbling down his chin.

"What's wrong with the boy?" screamed Sadie.

"Give Goon his whiskers back," growled Walt, master of the situation as always.

"Tsk tsk," I mouthed, as Sadie ripped the vagrant fungus off her lip and helped Bob out of the room.

A nostalgic look flitted across Walt's face.

"You know," he said, "these queer things all started to happen immediately after The Night Heinlein Never Came."

I wondered, too. Back home, in the seclusion of my den my mind stumbled back to the evening before Robert Heinlein was to visit Oblique House...

We all sat back to enjoy our tea after the careful preparations we had made to ensure that Heinlein's visit would be a memorable one. Madeleine was applying a damp compress to Walt's left wrist, where he had strained it clipping several feet off the privet hedge. Bob and James had just returned from their unenviable task of temporarily depositing the loaded pro-zine kiosk in the shed at the back of the house. I was exhausted after my exertions helping Madeleine to fold the table napkins. Sometimes I think Walt is apt to take my enthusiasm for granted.

"So I'll 'phone up tomorrow," said Madeleine to Walt, "and hire a butler for the evening."

George raised himself to a sitting position and, rapping his crutch against the wall, signified his intention of wanting to take part in the conversation.

"Walt," he croaked, "I have held a great variety of, er, occupations in my time, and it has, er, heh heh, always been an ambition to be, er, a butler. It would be the fulfilment of, er, my wildest wish, if I could act as, er, butler on this most important occasion. Heh heh".

This shook Willis, folks. I could see that Walt didn't want to hurt George's feelings, as did none of us, but after all, Robert Heinlein was a pretty important person.

"I'm sorry, George," began Walt. George looked downwards, a spasm of resignation flickering across his venerable frame. There was silence for several seconds, and then Willis, doing the stupid thing and letting sentiment overcome his common sense, gave a big sigh and nodded to George.

With a terrific show of exuberance, George gripped the side of his bath chair, staggered to his feet and hobbled from the room, cackling happily to himself.

We looked at Walt.

"Listen" he said. "The best thing for us to do would be to apologise to Heinlein for George being absent tomorrow night. We'd never live it down if it got around fandom that we were ill-using George, even though it makes him happy."

We nodded sympathetically.

As we were to discover, that was going to be the least of our worries.

"The only fans that I know enough about to enable me to produce an article on them are those here in Ireland and since the arrival of John Berry, sometimes known here as The Chronicleer, this is not possible. He writes up everything. I did have the idea of shouting "Copyright" in a loud firm voice immediately anything of interest took place...but John, sensing his supply of material was being imperilled only shook his head doggedly, causing a shower - almost Fortean in nature - of old tooth-brushes and long-lost combs to fly out of his moustache, and retired into a corner to devise his countermove...it was devastatingly simple. John now writes up everything before it happens....."

I felt quite proud when I saw George the following night. He opened the door majestically to my ring, and I nearly collapsed in the airlock at the sight of him. He looked like a penguin; his remaining silver locks brushed back carefully over his pate.

"Welcome to Oblique House, sor," he said, addressing the hall stand.

"It's me, George," I hissed.

It hit him like a physical blow. "Third time tonight," he complained. "How do I look?"

"I gotta hand it to you," I cringed, pushing him gently out of the way as I passed. I liked his red waistcoat and buckled shoes...I hoped Heinlein would.

As I entered the drawing room, and noted the turnout of the members of Irish Fandom, I felt that this was the big time. Willis tapped his cigar out into the roaring fireplace, and Madeleine was handing out port.

Heck.

I crossed to the french windows and drew aside the curtains to see if our visitor was coming. I saw an unfamiliar figure flitting furtively up the path. I shouted excitedly.

"Hey, Walt. Here comes Heinlein with a flat cap and a sack over his shoulder."

Walt rushed over. "Fool" he gritted. That's the postman."

Gripping the man by the bag strap, he pulled him through the window.

"Evening," whispered the postman. "Just as I was leaving the Post Office this telegram came for you, so I thought I might as well bring the morning's mail with me." He dumped a pile of letters on the carpet and dived back through the window.

Walt, with an air of foreboding, opened the envelope... read the telegram...screwed up his eyes...looked at us sorrowfully.

"Heinlein is not coming. His aeroplanes all got mixed up. He was taken to Dublin by mistake."

We groaned. It was a great disappointment, right enough.

The door opened, to reveal George leaning against the wall.

"He should be here soon," he croaked. "Oh, this is the greatest day of my life. Heh heh." So saying, the lovable sage clawed his way out again.

Madeleine, the really sentimental one amongst us, dabbed her eyes.

"How can we break the news to George?" she sniffed.

"Poor old thing," agreed Sadie, "it'll surely break his heart."

Walt leapt to his feet, that look of bliss on his face, revealing that his genius for improvisation had again reached the heights.

"We've made so many preparations, it's a shame to waste them all...and we don't have to," he explained. "Let's pretend to George that Heinlein has come. George is so short-sighted that he won't know. It'll be worth it, just to see a flicker of happiness in his bloodshot eyes."

.....as an ardent devotee of science fiction, I undertook some scientific experiments myself - on the colour of my hair....I wouldn't mention such a thing in the public prints except that everyone is so confoundedly polite and pretends that he or she doesn't notice that my hair has now turned bright green, when I am bursting to tell people how I mixed the chemicals with my own little white (now green) hands and wasn't it clever of me to get even the roots emerald so nobody can tell it isn't natural. I don't take credit for the fact that it now shoots sparks - that was a purely fortuitous result...."

"Who's going to be Heinlein?" asked James, practical as always.

"Me", gritted Walt. "My visit to the U.S.A. in '52 will stand me as far as the accent is concerned. I have a fedora upstairs. If I also put on my new coat and hang a camera round my neck and have a couple of flashy suitcases and a loud tie, and ring the front door, he'll be completely taken in."

Spontaneous applause greeted this inspiration of Walt's. Was this going to be his greatest triumph?

We chuckled to ourselves as Walt slipped away. Moments later we heard the front door bell ring. After a pause, our door opened once more.

There stood George. This was his finest performance; for a full ten seconds he managed to hold himself upright.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he quavered, "Mr. Robert Heinlein."

With a big grin, Walt swept into the room and began dishing out Heinlein hard cover editions, which I presumed constituted the entire contents of his Heinlein collection.

"Where's Walt?" asked George, looking very worried, trying to focus his optics.

I had to admire the verve and initiative shown by James White. He backed out of the room. In a few seconds he was back again, wearing an old torn pair of trousers, a black-stained shirt, his hair standing on end.

"Ah, there you are," wheezed George, looking at James. "Come and meet Robert Heinlein. But where is James?"

Bob Shaw, caught in the spirit of the thing, leapt out of the door and re-appeared almost immediately, wearing glasses and black pin-striped trousers. He went over to Peggy and gave her a couple of smackers, and grinned at George.

"Yes yes," beamed George, taken in by Bob's clever acting, "here's James. But I can't see Bob Shaw."

Well, Peggy is a girl who, up to then, I had always regarded as highly intelligent and sensible, not given to hasty decisions. It must have been her sporting instincts which made her dash out of the room and re-appear as Bob. I could see that she had stuffed a pillow up the front of her jumper and a couple of rolled blankets down the back. I liked the added subtle touch of authenticity she gave the performance by munching a ham shank.

"There you are, Bob," said George, patting Peggy on the back. "We're all here now except, er, heh heh, er, Peggy".

I am still trying to find out who kicked me through the door. I found myself sitting in the hallway, and a rasping voice shouting in my ear... "Quick...you're Peggy."

During my lifetime, I have had to take a number of momentous decisions. Once, some fool asked me to jump out of an aeroplane...but my problem was the most crucial ever to confront me.

To impersonate Peggy...I should have to SHAVE OFF MY MOUSTACHE.

GHOD...THE ENORMITY OF THE SACRIFICE.

But I just couldn't let Willis down. I ran upstairs to the bathroom. I clipped off my beautiful growth. I shaved my upper lip, blinking at the mirror through my tears.

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"...I agree to a certain extent with your argument that people cannot be expected to appreciate fully oldtime fannish esotericism, but we hoped to make them interested enough to want to. The editors are dedicated to the proposition that fandom should have continuity, historical as well as geographical integration. That, for instance, it is a Good Thing and part of the pleasure of fandom that allusions to events 15 years ago in Los Angeles should be understood today in London. It was the lack of this timebinding quality, this scorn for the past, that worried us most about "Seventh Fandom". At least, some of its leaders seemed to feel it was self sufficient....."

Diving into Madeleine's bedroom, I grabbed a dress, and with the manipulation of a couple of powder puffs my disguise was complete.

I would sue Willis afterwards, I consoled myself.

"You look delightful, if I may say so," croaked George. "You remind me of Lily Langtry, or Dame Clara Butt". He pinched my cheek.

Suffering Catfish. I began to think I had made a dire mistake.

Listen, folks. Some fantastic things happened that night. I want to tell you about them so that you can see what lengths we went to to keep George happy. It's important, too, because it has some bearing on the subsequent investigation. But get the situation clear before we go any further. Remember that Walt was 'Heinlein'...Bob was 'James'...Peggy was 'Bob'...I was 'Peggy'. Bear all this in mind, because from now on things start getting complicated.

Now I'll take you back to the grim events of The Night That Heinlein Never Came.

The shape of things to come was heralded when George entered with the drinks. With commendable foresight he brought in the glasses on a tea-trolley, thus providing himself with a crafty form of support, of which he was obviously in need. He free-wheeled up to me and said:

"Here is your tomato juice, Peggy."

Heck. I fluttered my eyelashes coyly and sipped out of the little glass, surreptitiously adjusting a vagrant powder puff. Oh for a dirty great pint of Guinness.

Then I heard a horrible groan. Bob Shaw, the real Bob Shaw, that is, had fainted. George, thinking of him as James, had given him a glass of water, James's favourite beverage.

But worse was to come. Bob is renowned throughout fandom for his ability to absorb beer in considerable quantities. George, well aware of this and anxious to please, had brought in a full quart bucket. Now he gave it to Peggy, thinking that she was Bob, see ?

"Mr Heinlein," cackled George, "come and see, er, Bob Shaw drink a quart of beer in one gulp."

What else could we do ? We crowded round and offered encouragement. Peggy, her nose wrinkled, touched the frothy top with her little tongue...then she started to turn green. She did her best, however. Oh yes. Though I did become to get worried when it started coming out of her ears.

George's next chore was to hand round cigars to the men.

Once more Peggy had an admiring audience as she tackled a six-inch Churchill Special. It was unfortunate that she was stretched out behind the piano, and, confidentially, I thought things were going too far when I espied the white's of her eyes through a cloud of blue smoke. James, I felt, was most anxious to give his bride some husbandlike succour, but he was supposed to be Walt and had to keep up the pretence. You had to look at everything through George's eyes.

The seconds ticked slowly onwards. The pseudo-American

"I made a mistake today. To think that I, having been carefully fore-
warned, should make such an elementary error, is sickening. It's fate, you say. Could be. Could be. Anyway, even as the words left my lips, I realised the Thing I had done. "Bob," I said, "lend me your cycle-pump." I looked at his face. It brightened up like a ray of sunshine breaking through a cloudy sky. I could see that he was thinking..."wonders of wonders, someone asking me for the loan of my pump." "Sure," he breathed, "sure." moving quickly, so that I couldn't change my mind, he untied the string and handed the instrument over....."

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accent of Walt's impersonation grated horribly on our tortured eardrums. I felt sort of queer not being able to take a bite out of my moustache whenever I wanted, and I hated to have to have to use a falsetto voice every time George came within vocal range.

I regretted that since their honeymoon James and Peggy had been so...attached. I kept having the feeling that maybe more was expected of me. But I had suffered sufficient ignominy as it was.

At long last, George announced supper.

Bob's cry of anguish haunts me to this day.
Let me tell you about it.

The table in the dining room was completely covered by one of the biggest displays of eatables it has ever been my fortune to behold...items ranging from the delicacy of Madeleine's coffee creams to the brutal reality of Walt's own specially baked gingerbread. In one corner of the table was set a little plate on which was placed three arrowroot biscuits and a glass of water. James White, as you know, is restricted to a very severe diet. Conversely, at the other end of the table was a large tray with a mountain of cakes and sandwiches, fronted by a retractable grab, an innovation designed by Bob Shaw after a trip to an amusement arcade...the idea being that whilst eating with the left hand, he could produce a delicacy from the other end of the table by dextrous manipulations with the right hand, thus saving valuable eating time.

As James (pretending to be Walt, remember) led 'Heinlein' (Walt) into the dining room, we followed. To our horror James, by some dormant instinct, took his place by the frugal snack, and Bob sat eagerly hunched over his invention. He gleam of bliss in Bob's eyes as he reached forward was in striking contrast to the look of fortitude on James's face as he picked up his first biscuit.

In a second, our plot would have been torn asunder.

With typical Bleary alacrity I switched off the lights and, amidst the baffled shouts of alarm, swung the table round to place Bob, James and Peggy in the positions to suit their aliases.

I switched the lights on again.

As I said, the groan of anguish from Bob was terrible, like the midnight screams of a demented person, as he saw the thin biscuits staring up at him. But he was comparatively fortunate. Poor Peggy was now fully aware of what constituted Shaw in all his diverse facets. Already she had drunk a quart of beer and smoked a cigar..now she was faced with an even more monumental effort. Her task was to clear the table or cause everlasting humiliation to an aged fan, too far gone to be able to live it down.

The most serious part of the affair, though, was the glazed look of frustration on Bob's face as the Grab careered recklessly over the comestibles, operated by an ardent Charters, anxious to keep Bob (as he thought) fully supplied. Bob's demeanour foreboded mental disorders to come. I calculated that from the long term point of view Peggy's case wasn't so bad... a few weeks of fasting would see her in reasonable shape again.

Irish Fandom was sure getting itself all mixed up.

@ "I liked Damon Knight reviewing in an irascible mood. His technique of sandwiching periods of utter resignation between bellows of fury proved highly amusing.(A sort of brood and batter sandwich) I also liked Pam's take-off of the true confession style of narrative. Would like to introduce her sometime to a pal of mine, who had one stf yarn published years ago, and who's actually written dozens of 'true confessions' under a femme pen-name for 30/- a thousand words. His Muse is most active when he types naked, drunk and surrounded by empty bottles. Working-class females break their hearts over his soul-torments. I won't tell you who he is - no names no packdrill. But he once made Gillings pee on my rug."

I hope you're all able to keep up with me. I can tell you that the events portrayed so far constituted the most nerve-racking experience that ever befell me. It is a constant source of wonder to me that I am able to present the facts to you in such a clear and precise manner. Many folks would get lost trying to explain these complex details, but you can rely on the Goon to keep things straight, as always.

I must now relate the climax of the Heinlein affair, culminating in the strange behaviour of George Charters.

We had hoped that George would go home, or asleep, or something, but he hung around persistently, delighted to be of service to Heinlein. At about 2 am it was obvious that the situation was desperate.

"Say, folks," drawled Walt in a Belfast-American accent that sounded like nothing on earth, "I guess I'd better hit the hay".

"Good idea, Mr. Heinlein," we chorused, and everyone left for their respective rooms.

I had to go home, because I was required for duty in my mundane occupation, so I hung around until everyone had retired; then I crept into George's room to change. It was the only room I could go to see, the others being occupied by Walt and Madeleine, James and Peggy, and Bob Shaw and Sadie...as their real selves, I hasten to add.

I had just divested myself of Madeleine's dress when George, whom I had supposed to be fast asleep, suddenly sat up in bed, his night cap quivering.

"Brazen seductress," he bleated, grabbing his shawl. "Shame on you, Peggy. Get thee behind me, temptress."

So saying, he hobbled out of the room and entered the Willis bedchamber, intent upon making a complaint to the head of Irish Fandom.

I peered round the door, and saw George actually hopping out of Walt's room, shouting "No...no...I cannot believe it."

I saw him crawl up the stairs and heard the sound of Bob's door being opened, followed by a moan of anguish. Then he apparently opened the door of James and Peggy's room. There was a terrible scream of "NO. THIS IS TOO MUCH", and George flashed, yes, flashed past me and on down the stairs. Eventually I heard the front door being banged so vigorously that the fanlight smashed.

I couldn't understand it.

Bleary was baffled.

Well, folks, those are the facts. And you already know about the phenomena that followed that shocking night. Now follow my investigation for Willis. Read on, and see the Goon in smooth rippling action.

First I sent a coded telegram to Art, head of the G.D.A. in England, detailing him to approach selected fans over there and try to find out why we had been sent to Coventry. Next morning I saw a G.P.O. messenger boy screech to a halt outside my house. He rammed five buff envelopes through the letter box. Art had been on the ball. I ripped open the envelopes:

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"The next thing which happened will live in my memory till my dying day...  
...and probably haunt me for centuries after that. It was, sort of, a pun.

We were all going in to tea, with Bob several lengths in front and moving fast, when he suddenly stopped, turned round and said to Bea, "Bea, you look good enough to eat." A harmless enough remark of the sort that hungry wolves say to Miss Mahaffey as a matter of course. As Bea sat down she said, sort of offhand, "I do - three times a day." Bob said, "Glumph." It had happened at last, we thought. Shaw caught without a come-back. History had been made. But no."



CHAOS AT RAINHAM HARRIS BECOME MONK ART  
CAMBELL SHAVED OFF BEARD LEFT AUTHENTIC ART  
NEVER CUT DOWN PASSION FLOWERS ART  
STIRLEY MARRIOTT SEEN EMBARKING BELFAST FERRY ART  
LONDON CIRCLE RUMOURED OFFERING CHARTERS SANCTUARY ART.

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Charters again. It seemed the key to the problem might well lie in Bangor, Co. Down, ancient seat of the Charters family; but it would never do to venture to that remote fastness without disguise. After some hours deliberation I hit on the original idea of passing myself off as a Max Brand merchant. Subtlety is our watchword. I fitted myself out in a long black overcoat, check cap and thick horn-rimmed spectacles and tucked a couple of hard cover Max Brand books under my arm.

As I shuffled nervously down the tree-lined avenue of Lancaster Place, Bangor, I saw the venerable sage himself, sitting back, grim of countenance, in his armoured bathchair. His gnarled fingers were lovingly caressing the woodworm-riddled butt of an ancient muzzle-loading flintlock.

He looked up as I approached. "Howdy" he growled.

"How do you do, sir" I breathed in a complicated accent. "I am authorised by my firm to give you these books free, if you can produce one of our Max Brand publications."

"How do you know I read Max Brand stories, stranger?"

He peered at me suspiciously.

I laughed nervously.

"I sorta noticed the Bar 20 sign hammered onto the front gate," I explained. George takes this cowboy hobby seriously, folks. I forget the medical term for his abberation.

"Heh heh" said George, "heh heh."

Putting his bathchair into overdrive, shouting the while "Hi yo Silver", he drove recklessly into his house, leaving the door open behind him. He turned left into the library, I tiptoed right into his study. I looked round keenly, grabbed his correspondence file, flicked through the pages...

Ghod.

I stuffed the file into my pocket, rushed to the library door and locked it, left the two books on the doorstep as some sort of consolation, and rushed home.

I opened the correspondence file and read it with growing horror. No wonder we were all up the well known creek.

There were carbons of letters to the FAPA, SAPS and OMPA directorates, the Science Fiction Writers of America, the World Science Fiction Association, the ESFA, the LASFS, the Outlanders, the Derelicts of Toronto, the ISFCC, the N3F, Ken Slater, the London Circle and other respected fan organisations, including the Los Angeles Insurgents. I read the last one with pangs of anguish gripping my intestines.....

"...with a great personage like your compatriot Robert Heinlein in the house, I should have expected the little known and generally unsuspected eroticism of Irish Fandom to have continued to remain decently concealed. Judge then of the alarm a hard cover merchant of my standing must have felt to behold beside his bed the panting semi-clad figure of Peggy White struggling to remove a strange item of underclothing. This was not all, however. Rushing

"All during tea he gazed abstractedly at Bea - she must be used to this, too - and he didn't speak at all except for a few syllables like "More tea," "More bread," and "More salad." While the rest of us demonstrated the proper way to rustle a paper and waved our hands through the opening sequences of "High Noon", he was in some horrible world of his own. Finally, after some three quarters of an hours silence, he spoke. He said "What other newspapers do you take?" and began to laugh for about ten minutes. He really appreciated his puns."



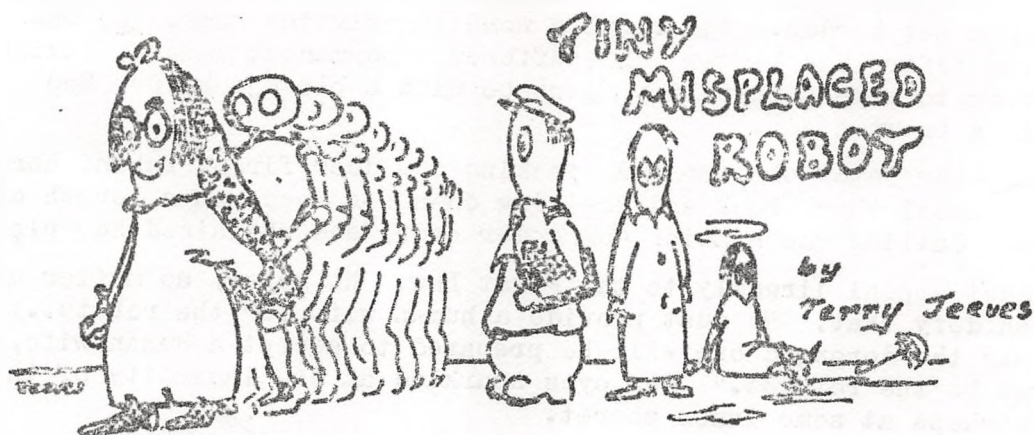
indignantly to Walt's room to expostulate, I was shocked and grieved to find that respected professional author from Max Brands own country preparing to enter the Willis bed, whilst it was occupied by the first lady of Irish Fandom. My one thought at this stage was to denounce this dastardly intruige. I rushed up the stairs to the rooms occupied by the Shaws and the Whites. I shall say nothing of what I found in the first...Sadie is a young girl and easily carried away by the blandishments of a successful professional author who has been to Paris and is a fully paid-up member of the British Interplanetary Society... but in this second room. First, promiscuity, then adultery, and now this. You will understand, Mr Laney, that..."

I could read no more. It was fantastic, ghastly, but I could see that what had happened. George's mind had completely misinterpreted a perfectly innocent state of affairs. That night we had flogged ourselves mercilessly, made every possible sacrifice, spared no conceivable effort to make his remaining days happy...and then in a few unguarded minutes the whole edifice of well-meant deception had fallen on our own heads. Seeing what he had thought he had seen, the ancestral pride of the Charters had come to the fore. His keen sense of justice, his sincere belief in the fundamental clean-living principles of fandom, had made him cast friendship to the winds and take upon himself the stern task of publicly revealing what he took to be licentiousness on our part. Whilst all the time my bare upper lip bore, had he but known, silent witness to our innocence...to our selfless desire to enable George to think that he had butted for Robert Heinlein.

And there is the very crux of my dilemma. I have solved the case, only to be faced with an even greater problem. What can we do now? It is unthinkable that Irish Fandom should continue to bear unjustly the stigma of moral pariahs. On the other hand,, how can we tell George the truth? His agony would be twofold... he would find that not only had he been hoaxed by a fake Heinlein and his hour of glory was a sham, but that he had made a humiliating spectacle of himself by falsely denouncing his friends to fandom. It would be enough to bow his grey hairs in sorrow to grief.

But after much deep thought the master minds of The Bleary Eyes have come up with a solution. This article reveals the truth to fandom at large...a special copy of this HYPHEN has been printed for George containing seventeen of his columns, and we can tell him that their genius was such that fandom forgave us everything. It remains to reconcile George to us. As I see it, the only way we can do it without telling him the truth is to modify his old-fashioned moral standards. To this great endeavour I am willing to sacrifice myself, but I need your help. Send me anything you can think of that might broaden his mind...banned books, French pocksarcs, Marilyn Monroe calendars, anything like that. Selflessly, I will sacrifice my leisure hours to studying them carefully and working out ways of showing them to George. No, no. I don't want any thanks for this stern task. Just part of the G.D.A. service, that's all.

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" Pish! to Blish and Faugh! to Hubbard; let distraction cease,
Lock me in the airing cupboard while I write a masterpiece
Rebuilt Rem and virgin paper here before me, waiting, lie,
I must cut a wordy caper, shaking Fandom ere I die.
There shall be no hackneyed writing, no space-opera for me,
Something grand and thought-inviting shall my magnum opus be.
Shall I write of H.Superior, moving mountains with his mind?
Or would poltergeists be eerier, using virgins for a blind?
Ah, but Sturgeon's done the first part in a dozen ways, I know,
So I'd only be the dustcart following the Lord Mayor's show..." (10)



Doctor Soo San Nalvic, head troubleshooter, psychoroboticist and general dogsbody for Masinov Robots, gazed once more at the semi-circle of automotons before her. Twenty in all, normal, fully humanoid dozitronic robots...but one of them was an abberated model. The only snag that Soo San could see was the fact that she was unable to identify the erring specimen.

All had gone well with the new delivery of robots until an over-worked technician, goaded beyong endurance by the antics of one of the batch, had wound up by yelling, "Go away and lose yourself until you can learn how to imitate a real robot." Unfortunately, the errant android had just finished reading an obscure S-F book, and was equipped with a few original ideas on how to obey this instruction. He promptly went and hid himself among the other nineteen. Now Dr. Nalvic had been called in to locate him again. Apart from her spinsterish delight at mingling with a score of fully humanoid robots, her attempts to winkle out the miscreant had proved fruitless as the refugee had shown the foresight to relate the contents of the book to his fellows. Now they all reacted in the same way.

Soo San counted them again. Still twenty. She replaced her socks and quickly reviewed the three Laws of Dozitronics.....

1. No robot may take a human wife,
2. No robot may, through inaction, allow a human wife to be endangered.
3. A robot must protect himself unless this conflicts with rules 1 & 2.

Nalvic's eyes lit up (she was partly bionic). Her whole body stiffened just as if she'd been pinched...a most unthinkable thing in her dedicated life. A marvellous idea had come to her. Flinging orders in all directions, she stalked across the room. In a trice or two, sprinkler sprays were erected, their jets of rust-creating water converging on the centre of the room. A junior technician and his wife were called in and the position explained to them. The woman was rather reluctant, but the technician, loyal to Masinov Robots wholeheartedly agreed to help. The water was turned on, and with remarkable alacrity, the technician began to strangle his wife.

Dr. Soo San watched the robots closely. One of the robots should have shown reluctance to risk the rust-producing spray merely to save a human wife. Instead, all the robots produced umbrellas and stalked through the corrosive spray to assist the unfortunate victim and persuade the technician his wife should be treated with greater deference.

Dr. Nalvic was aghast. The junior technician was dumbfounded and his wife glassy-eyed. The young man bravely offered to repeat the experiment and try a bit harder. The results were exactly the same. He was gently removed before his better half suffered permanent damage. Waving aside his offer to make a third try, perhaps with a blackjack, Dr. Soo San went into a brown study.

Half an hour later she emerged, locking the door firmly behind her. She carried a small black book and trailing down her back was a length of white muslin. Calling the station commander over, she explained her plan.

"We must appeal directly to the First Law. No robot, no matter how deranged, can defy that. We must provide a human wife for the robots..... and since only the deranged one will be prepared to accept a human wife, that one must be the refugee." Her eyes sparkled at the ingenuity of the plan...and perhaps at some inner secret.

The Station Commanders face lit up (he was also bionic), but then it darkened again (his power supply was weakening). "But who will volunteer to take this hideous risk...." His voice tailed off as he noticed the muslin trailing down Nalvic's back.

"Naturally, as Chief Psychoroboticist, it is my duty to volunteer," she said. Here is a bible; as Station Commander you have the authority to conduct the ceremony. Shall we proceed?"

Two hours later, an astounded Commander closed the little black book for the twentieth and last time and gazed at Soo San Nalvic as she stood with her twenty new husbands. Not one of the robots had invoked the First Law forbidding them to take a human wife. She was now married illegally and bigamously to the whole lot. Worse, under State Law, the robots, as lawfully wedded husbands, were now completely qualified citizens of the State. No further tests could be conducted on them. The erring robot had corrupted the lot....and could no longer be traced.

Naturally, Soo San Nalvic resigned on the spot and departed immediately with the twenty robots. But to this day, the junior technician is prepared to swear that as she led out her score of husbands, there was a gleam of triumph in Dr. Soo San's spinsterly eye. After all, they were fully humanoid robots.

The End.

* * * * *

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".....then there were the dozen or more wonderful 'gabfests' - to use an ugly word - that I took part in. They were, for me, half the fun of the Worldcon. I'd meet someone in a corner of a lounge and gradually a bunch of others would gather around, all of us swapping yarns, ideas and plain good fellowship. Then we would break up and another group would assemble. Thus I remember sitting round a table at 3.30a.m. on Monday discussing communication theory with Doug Webster - how to put one's thoughts on paper - this I could use now! While next to us Ron Bennett, Doreen Lewthwaite and Peter West sorted through piles of photos of the previous nights costume ball, and Sam Moskowitz related some tricky piece of fan history. Over there was the dapper figure of Frank Arnold, and next to him George Nims Raybin beaming merrily behind a cigar-shaped pipe. Or was that a pipe-shaped cigar? Or was it that night at all?....."

Sid Birchby on the '57 Worldcon. PLOY '57.

"...I wouldn't say that Hoddesdon was a small town - it's just that when I plug my shaver in, the street lights go dim."

Alan Dodd - CAMBER '57.



# ED TIME TALE FOR A BABY

BEM

Once upon a time there was a little flat bed duplicator named Flat. He lived in the corner of a junk-shop. He didn't like it because it was dusty, but his Mum-my and Dad-dy had left him there. His Mum-my was a Cestetner and his Dad-dy was a wand-ering Roneo, and he was the re-sult of an ill-egit-imate union. (Ask Dad-dy to ex-plain any-thing you don't under-stand.)

Grown-up used to come to the junk-shop to buy things. The man who owned the store sold them dirty old wash-stands and dirty elephant feet made into walk-ing stick stands, and dirty barom-eters, and some really fil-thy pictures.. But he never sold Flat, because Flat was hid-den under a pile of dust. Every day Flat hoped that some-body would buy him, but he was al-ways disa-ppointed.

Once a big man in a bow-ler hat came into the junk-shop and said to the man who sold things " I am look-ing for a cheap dupli-cator," and the junk-shop man blew the dust off Flat and after every-one had stop-ped cough-ing said "This is a dupli-cator and it is cheap."

Flat held his breath, be-cause this was the first time that the junk-man had tried to sell him, and the man in the bowler hat look-ed at him and went all red and said "I am running a business, not a mus-eum, and I can't send notices to my cust-omers on a thing like that." So Flat was put back in the dusty corner and the man in the bowler hat bought some photo-graphs in the back-room, and Flat cried down his silk-scr-reen all night.

Then one day a fun-ny look-ing young man came into the shop, and looked around at all the piles of dirty old wash-stands and dirty peramb-ulators and dirty Vict-orian arm-chairs, and said to the man in the shop "I am looking for old copies of ast-ound-ing stories or amazing stories or things like that," and the man in the shop said " I know just what you want and I have a big pile in the back room" and the young man choked.

So the man went into the back-room, which was nearly as dirty as the shop, and he came back with a big pile of maga-zines. And he said "I can't see any ast-ound-ing stories, but I got silk stocking stories and flirt and titter and wink and black garter..."

"No, no," said the young man, backing away from him. The young man backed right into Flat the Flat-bed, and Flat fell down with a bang.

The man who sold things was very ang-ry, and shout-ed

VINÇ CLARKE

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1958



"Look what you been an' done, a vally-abble scien-tific instru-ment damaged," and he picked Flat up and gave him the first dusting he had had for seven-teen months and he said "I expect it's broken."

The young man said "That's a flat-bed dupli-cator and I don't think it's broken. I'll buy it," The man in the shop said "Are you trying to be funny be-cause if you are I'll break ever-y bone in your bleed-ing head."

But the young man, whose name was Joe, said he was serious, and very soon Flat was wrapped up and taken to Joe's house.

Joe lived with his Mum-my and Dad-dy, but had a room all to himself, where he kept lots of books and magazines and pictures, and they all had stories about things to come in them. Joe also had a typewriter, Oliver, which was also from the junk-shop, and Joe wrote lots and lots on it. He tore it all up afterwards, except letters, but he wrote lots and lots. After buy-ing Flat he went out and got some dupli-cating sten-cils, and Oliver typed them.

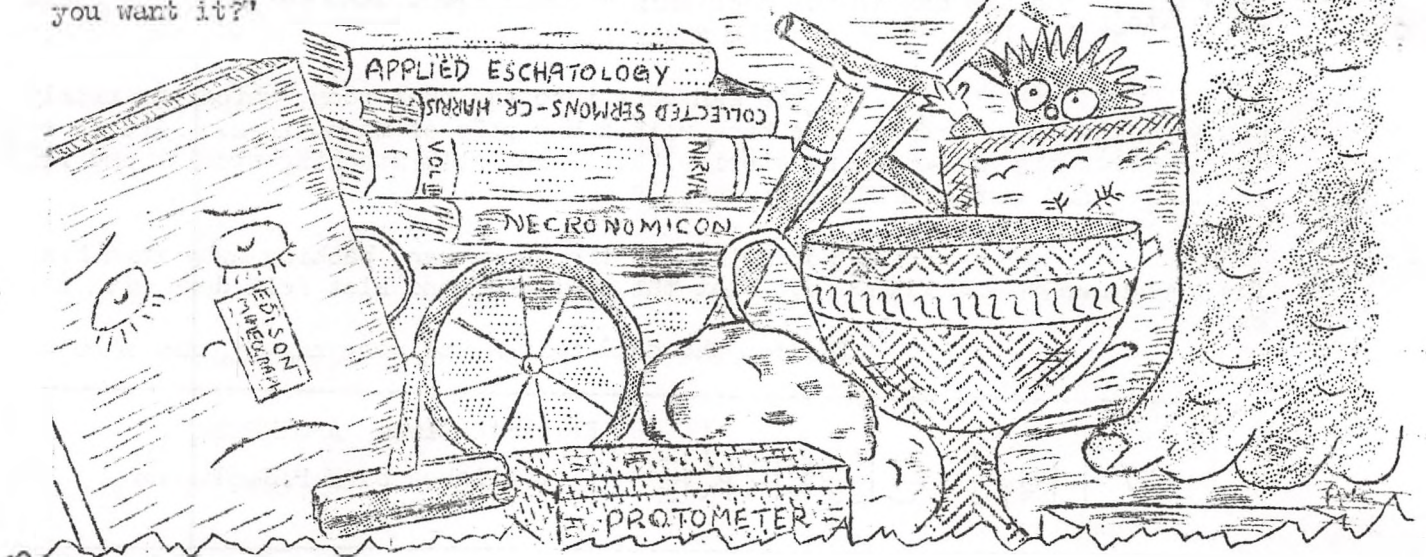
When the sten-cils were fixed on Flat, he found that they were in a fun-hy lang-uage he had never read be-fore, and the things he printed out were very strange indeed. But he did his job well, and although Joe some-times called him names that weren't Flat they were soon sending out lots and lots of dupli-cated maga-zines.

Flat grew to like Joe, even though Joe would some-times make him print pict-ures that were not right, like big lad-ies who bulged more than ladies really bulged, but Joe never did grow to like Flat much, and some-times he would look at his black hands and say "I don't know why the hell I don't turn pro."

Joe was saving his pen-nies for a long, long time, and then one day he went out and bought a new type-writer, and Flat never saw Oliver again. And Joe wrote lots and lots more stencils on his new typewriter, and called Flat more and more names that weren't Flat be-cause Flat was not able to print maga-zines like a friend of Joe's called Dag, although Flat was print-ing as well as he could.

And one day Joe came into the house with a friend who also read stories about things to come, and between them they were carry-ing a big parcel. When they took the paper away from the parcel, Flat saw that it was another dupli-cator, but it was a Rotary, and when it saw Flat it just sniff-ed.

Then Joe said to his friend "I can get rid of this con-trap-tion now, and he kicked Flat's case, and said "Do you want it?"





The friend said "How much will you pay me to take it?" and they both laughed. So Joe took Flat and put him in a corner and used the Rotary duplicator instead, and Flat grew as dusty as he had been in the junkshop, and he used to say to the Rotary "I suppose it shows that machines are only useful when Man needs them and are not an end in themselves," but the Rotary only sniffed.

If you like a down-beat ending to a story you can finish this one now.

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However, we must not let Mr. Patrick Moore say that bed-time tales are Gloom Stories too, so I must tell you what happened to Flat after all.

One day, a very young man came to see Joe, and he had purple fingers and a worried expression. And he said "Where can I get a cheap duplicator because I want to do some extra colour work." So Joe said "You can have that for a couple of Galaxys," and he pointed to Flat. The young man said "Yes, please," and took Flat away to his own home, where he had a Rotary Duplicator that sniffed at Flat and also a dainty little jelly hektograph that he used for postcards. The little jelly hektograph was named Kate (because she shim-mied) and she thought Flat was wonderful.

So they were married by the neighbourhood Multi-lith and lived happily ever after. They had lots of little hektographs, too.

My, was that young man surprised!

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#### GLOSSARY FOR 1982 FOR THE ABOVE

"....stories about things to come..." A minor art form which flourished circa 1940/1960, sometimes called SF. Not to be confused with later products.

"....a friend called Dag..." Dean A. Grennell, mid-fifties USA BNF, who produced an incredibly well duplicated fanzine, GRUE.

"....Mr. Patrick Moore...Gloom Stories..." Amateur astronomer who in the fifties wrote a not very apt survey of SF, a major criticism of his being that the genre was pessimistic.

"....purple fingers...." Said to be the sign of the publishing neofan in the fifties, derived from the purple ink of the elementary hektograph.

"....hektograph..." Ask your neighbourhood oold fan.

Anthropomorphism....ask Daddy.

— A.VINÇ CLARKE

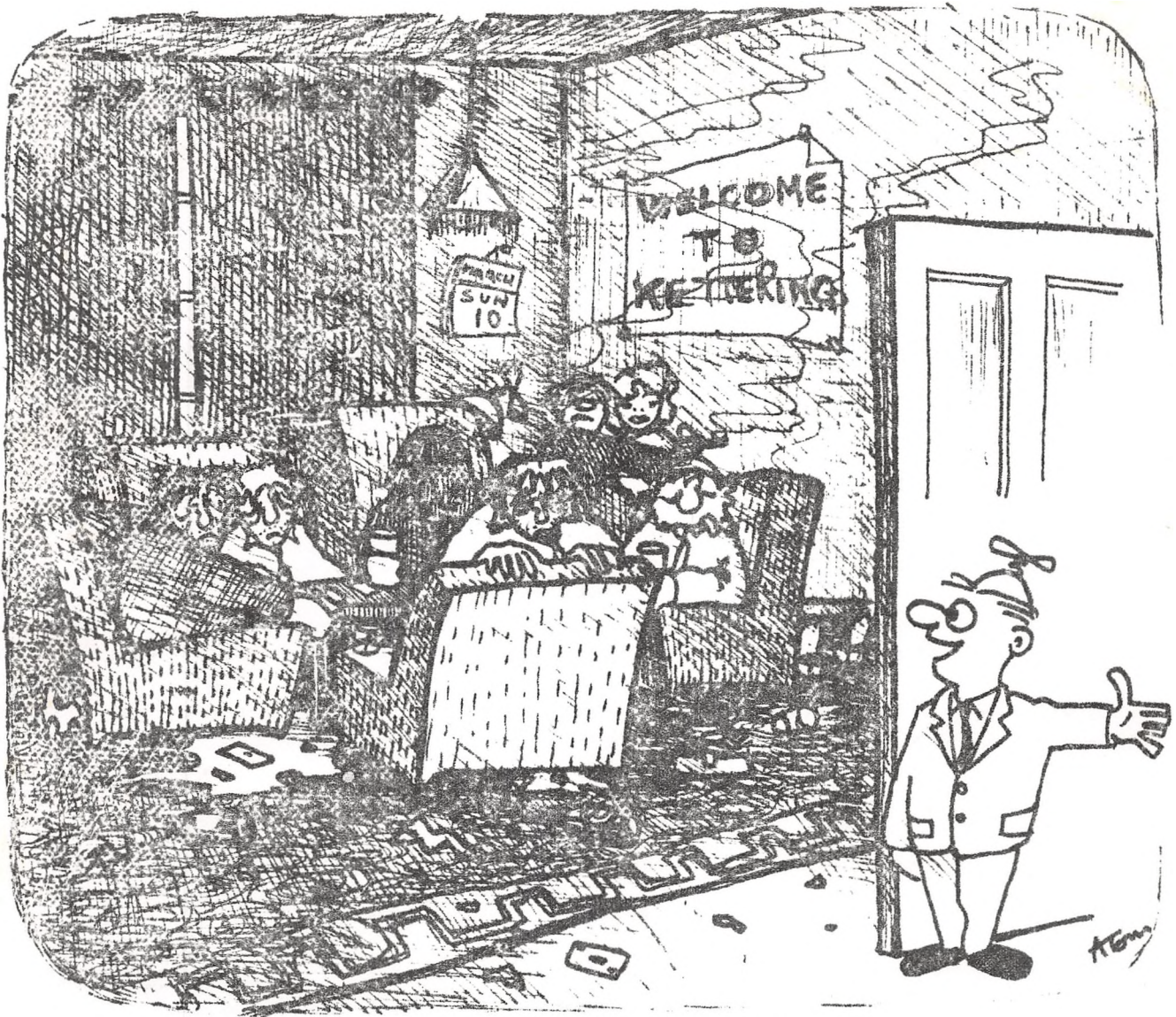
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REPRINTED from FEMIZINE No.6, 1955 (edited by 'Joan.W.Carr' (H.P.Sanderson))

"I had been reading science-fiction since before I left school but the first other addict I ever met was a boy called Walter Willis. You may have heard of him. As a matter of fact we'd been going out together for nearly a year before we discovered this similarity between us....I suppose we'd been too interested in the differences... and it might have been longer if we hadn't taken shelter from the rain under the awning of a newsagent's shop. Suddenly we both dashed inside and found ourselves trying to buy the same copy of Astounding. There was only one copy left so we read it together...and I think I realised his intentions were honourable when he started to let me read the novelette first." MADELEINE WILLIS



" King Canute defied the sea,  
But couldn't stop it flooding.  
He should have made a barricade  
of WIDOWER'S XMAS PUDDING."

...Archie Mercer.



"CHURCH, ANYBODY?"

"As Salome shed her seven veils  
With Herod as an audience  
They beheaded John to the sound of one  
of WIDOWER'S PIANO ACCORDIANS. "

...Eric Needham.