

Still D. Webster. Still "Idlewild", Fountainhall Road, Aberdeen. Still keeping well, thank you. Still...in need...of material.

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Tete-a-tete. A musical number this time, meseemeth. And you'd be surprised if you know to what lengths my few correspondents will go when they start arguing; which means that the extracts are going to be l o n g . Few comments received; none so far on Ragatzy's teaser, the rest of which will thus appear next month; ditto Smith remarks, which I expect to arrive the day after I finish stencilling this. ...Flash on, to---  
JOHN T. BURKE, world-renowned clarinettist, litterateur supreme, dabbler in all the arts: "Your little collection of verbiage was good, though I fizzled over one or two things. /That makes them bad, eh?/ You may put my remarks on our degenerate homeland in if you like, but I insist on a few comments on the subject of jazz. Dave talks the usual shop. I should think he would provoke a laugh from the most ignorant when he talks of the sexual significance of swing, &, in the same letter, mentions the things that Scriabin et al do to his spine. The L.R.A.M. points out his fallacies very well, but makes a bad generalisation - "the use of jazz is functional". While admitting that jazz would never have lasted in the world of popular entertainment but for the fact that it provided a new kind of dancing after the last war, and that swing has enjoyed/suffered its boom because of those peculiar beings, the jitterbugs, there must be more in swing than that, else why should so many non-dancers like myself be so interested? Dave's remark about technical flashiness is silly - some years ago I wrote him several letters from Rye on that subject, but he's still as dense as ever. /Rye: where lives the Burkish grandmother. Burkish grandson has oft spent his holidays there, while Dave takes a fiendish delight in shocking her with letters addressed to "Johnny Sebastian Ludvig van Burke", "Teschmaker Burke", "John Centaur Burke" &c./ The greatest figures in jazz have not been technicians. Eddie Lang could not read guitar music, but his appealing melodies will live a lot longer than Django Reinhardt's flashy nonsense (the Hot Club, of course). Benny Goodman is a greater technician than the late Teschmaker, but Tesch made music that can still move me more deeply than anything else in jazz, or most other kinds of music. Not sexually, not in the jitterbug manner, but with a reverence for the qualities of his phrasing & ideas, not to mention the proverbial Teschmaker tone. Technical brilliance makes for bad jazz: a man who is a good technician will be tempted - and will usually succumb - to fill in his off-moments with a lot of showy stuff that destroys the form of his playing. The instrumentalist with little technique beyond the primary requirements will be forced to rely on his inspiration and the quality of his musical invention. Too many notes per bar have produced the slick, noisy, over-exuberant "swing" musician, who will die out & cease to be long before the little enthusiasts in honky-tonks or small halls have exhausted their powers of musical creation. Jazz is of value to me because of its wide possibilities for improvisation. The bounds of a popular - or old, unknown - tune's harmonies provide the necessary discipline & provide the player with his background, & then he has freedom ( and freedom is not licence) to produce the music that is in him. If he had to descend to loud noises & fast passages without any meaning, he reveals his own insincerity. Swing, thank heavens, is dying. It gave us some good things, but the good things were nearly all the old, true jazz that had got mixed up in the enthusiasm & given a bad name, quite often, along with all the junk. Goodman is a surprising example of both sides of the question. A sensitive artist, brought up on the Mississippi river-boats in the company of negroes & the great white musicians of the early days, he has provided some really beautiful jazz, both in his young days & recently, even when his band was the No. 1 choice of the jitterbugs. It is incredible that the man who played that breathtakingly beautiful "Someday Sweetheart" could produce such rank nonsense as "Sing Sing Sing". The latter is amusing, clever, efficient - and very dangerous. This is the case of the great artist who followed the call of money rather than the call of music. For a long time Benny was really lucky - he managed to combine the



two things, & we had six months or so with his early band when he produced good music and got paid for it. "Blue Skies", "Devil and the Deep", &, surprisingly, that pop tune "Goody Goody", were all perfect records, & we shall never forget the quiet, intimate music of the Goodman trio and one or two of the Quartet records. Swing also gave us Bob Crosby with his resuscitation of the old Dixieland style adapted to a modern, full-sized band. The success of this venture was amazing. Now flashiness, drum-breaks, & "novelties" like bass-and-drums duets are creeping in, but that appetising mixture of carefree improvisation & modern tonal & rhythmical perfection gave us "Royal Garden Blues", "Sugar Foot Stomp", and an impressive list of other dressed-up old-timers. Even when he reached the stage of the intricate "Yancey Special" Crosby was producing good music." \* \* In between parts, comes the penned advice to "Read 'Young Man with a Horn' by Dorothy Baker, an excellent novel based on the life of the late Bix Beiderbecke." All right, you read it - I've got one, two....ten books on the shelf just now. Gracious, I don't believe that - it's not possible. Might as well finish off JTB, though---"I've probably been quite unintelligible for most of the time [Remarkably intelligible, but remarkably lengthy too] but people seem to harbour more misapprehensions about swing than about anything else. Technique, rhythmic appeal, don't matter all that much. Jazz was originally folk music, & the best jazz still retains the simplicity & sincerity of folk music. If jazz had given the world nothing more than the 12-bar blues it would still have left a noble legacy." ....Too tired to make any comments just now - may after Dave McIlwain's 4-page (8vo!) views on the same subject, which differ merely in saying Down jazz, Up swing. In this respect, it should be noted that while I like long letters (snickers from my experienced correspondents), it would be difficult to fit into two sheets the above 4 pages + at least another one from JTB + ditto from DRS + from RGM some four on matters psychic & remarks on Smith's gory mind. So - Ragatzy & McIlwain next time, and now---  
D.R. SMITH LOCKS ROUND HIM & FINDS.. Fantasy - Enemy of Peace. "I have been wondering of late what can be the real reason for my not being a pacifist. Examined in the light of reason there is little to commend war as a state of international affairs, the high degree of discomfort suffered by the individual is hardly compensated by the Nietzschean theory that he will, if he survives, be a better man than before. The conclusion of any one round of hostilities naturally causes a spasm of extreme happiness, similar to that achieved by the lunatic banging his head against the wall in order to sample the delight of ceasing to do so, but afterwards comes that lengthy period of vast confusion while the nations wait for the next outbreak of active belligerency. In wartime there is, of course, a great impetus given to invention owing to the vast funds made available for the purpose, but the things that are invented are singularly useless, while the progress of useful work is retarded on the government's theory that it is better to keep men idle than allow them to make things which cannot help in any way the "elimination of enemy personnel". \* \* \* As a logically minded person, then, I ought to be against war (and when I say war I mean war in general, not the particular one at present in progress). If I am to be honest enough though, I cannot say that there is anything repugnant to me in the idea of fighting, either between individuals or nations, always provided I am not placed in a position of danger myself. For I am not a belligerent person by nature or training but a sound believer to the soft answer to wrath, & have taken care not to hit anyone near my own size since a youthful encounter demonstrated the imprudence of such a course of action. My nature is a sensitive one & greatly affected by the prospect of danger to my person, so that it is strange indeed that I cannot violently despise war. The whole thing points to my being affected by some malignant influence. \* \* Which influence is obviously fantasy. It is difficult to call to mind an outstanding fantasy not built up on one or all of the ideals of battle, murder & sudden death, occasionally in disguise perhaps, but basically depending on that great triumvirate. All the really important stories are built up on the theme of war, & major war at that, and the better the war, the more widely is the story acclaimed. Campbell, Smith, Merritt, Howard, Taine & the rest of them form the bloodiest-minded clique of authors in any one branch of fiction. Wells started with a few timid murders, worked on to massacres & soon could not write a fantasy on any other theme but Armageddon, while Stapledon's name is revered for a



colossal compilation of successive annihilations of humanity. The red gods of war never had stronger propagandists than the writers of fantasy, who present war in a most appealing light, prevented by the sensitivity of their readers from being realistic - remember the howl that arose about Black Lem Gulliver? [For our more illiterate comrades: BIG - a perfectly charming pirate in WONDER of about '31; authors - first a gent called McDermott, then McD. & P. Schuyler Miller.] It is no wonder that such an ardent follower of fantasy as myself should be unable to view war from the rational aspect. The only thing that science-fiction teaches us is that science is only useful as a way to bigger & better wars, the rest of fantasy preaches the joys of slashing about with swords & other lethal weapons. And this is the "Literature of the Future"! I shall think twice before allowing myself to be projected into such a future by the first time-machine inventor.

Back to Burke: I might question your statement that DHL [Tut-tut, fancy you not knowing L stands for Lawrence.] would be stumped were he confronted by a psychopathological case. While he might not know the correct technical phraseology, DHL would know instinctively the faults of the case, & would probably be able to explain it much better than the specialist using his over-involved jargon. The magic & mysticism of yesterday is the science of today. Science says only the same things as the magician of yesterday but with a different set of terms, & I doubt very much whether they are making things any clearer by the use of such terms; in many cases the man in the street (always providing that alarming creature really exists) would probably be able to understand things much easier phrased in the language of instinct, superstition & mysticism than in the involved technicalities of the scientist. Einstein is no different from Buddha, Confucius & Pascal, save that it is doubtful if he understands fundamentals as well as they did."

Brief interview with RGM: "One of the last things stf. fans quarrel over is books!"

D. WEBSTER: "This is part of an argument on DHL, leading to Scientific Philosophers vs. Non-Scientific ones, & I started off by saying that in the past the mystics had always got excellent results. But with the above par. I disagree. Johnny's 'technicalities' are probably the sort of thing like Eddison's "Nature of the Physical World", which is hardly meant for our vile man in the street. No, DHL would be stumped by a neurosis, a psychosis, a schizophrenia; he might come to an immediate plan of action (after half-an-hour's study of the case his procedure might be diametrically opposite), but one could hardly have confidence in him. Many readers will have read Freud's two Polioan books (bad introductions to the subject, by the way) - can they imagine Lawrence solving many of Freud's cases? Orgler's "Alfred Adler" or any of Adler's books will cite dozens of cases which would leave DHL dithering; even a general book like Cattoll's "Your Mind & Mine" will show you how unsure DHL would be if dealing with somebody else's mind, not his own. (Incidentally, if anyone is feeling short of reading matter & interested in mind-workings, he may have any of the above on loan just by asking; or any of a dozen others. RICHARD G. MEDHURST, back in London for Christmas vacation, should stir up thought among both the "hard-headed little 'scientific materialists' & the lofty if rather tenuous 'mystics', who between them make up the larger part of fandom. There exist, in Cambridge, branches of the "Christian Spiritualist Church" & the "National Spiritualist Church". One of them holds "services" in what appears to be a sort of converted barn: the other in a room over a cinema. They are largely supported, my dear comrade Materialists, by credulous & no doubt, superstitious old ladies. A "medium" is employed by each. Of the mediums I have heard so far, one gives "trance" addresses in which the spirits of the departed are described, by some sort of coloured "guide", as wandering around in Grecian robes. Nothing so subtle as your pile of assorted astral planes, my dear Comrade Mystics. No Words of Power, none of the deeper mysteries of your Occultism. Sometimes the good lady medium forgets her accent in the middle of her address... Another of these mediums reeled off a sort of pop-talk, full of long words memorised charlatan-wise to dazzle an unlearned audience. In addition to the addresses, these mediums also give exhibitions of "clairvoyance", which expression they use not in the strict sense, but to denote a sort of glorified fortune-telling, combined with description of friends and relatives from the spirit-world. Now, the higher occultism is all very well in Merritt yarns, but in practice most of the analysable claims, like Astrology,



soon to have a catch in them. But the efforts of these obscure little spiritualists have so impressed me that I am seriously considering joining one of these churches to investigate better from within. Well, my materialistic fans, have you any remarks to make? Please, please, Richy - making remarks would entail them thinking. Never..never To give you something to work on, I might give you a fairly typical case. The medium got, in connection with a man in the audience, the spirit of an elderly gentleman who made a great show of an umbrella. Meant nothing to the bloke in the audience. She concentrated further, for more information. Finally it came out that the old gentleman used to pass the school which this bloke attended, when very young, & apparently he & some other members of that uncouth genus, the Common Schoolboy, used to jeer at the old gent. because of this umbrella! Spirit wanted to say that all was forgiven & forgotten. \* \* Not all the shots are so successful....But I am prepared to say that the percentage of clear-out successes is wildly above chance. Myself, I prefer an "impossibility" to an extreme improbability any day!"

In future, this thing is going to be called "JFBurke Says". He's at it again! ---

"Did I say that the British race was the most conceited & decadent on earth? Tush. How hasty of me. However.... Connolly, in the November HORIZON, says quite rightly that "the utter poverty of the cultural impulse in the Empire cannot be too lamented". Bernard Shaw /Careful with that shallow thinker Shaw - he's not in favour just now/ says "the English do not deserve to have great men". /I know - you're going to tell me next that Smith & Burke are Scotsmen./ Both these are true, & both tie up rather well. It should be obvious that my criticisms depend on my own viewpoints, which place most importance on the artistic standards of life. Politics are artificial, something not inherent in man; art, literature, music, the expression of his soul, are all natural, & essential. No race in the world is so contemptuous of intellect as the British. No race has persecuted its great men so regularly & unsparingly. When "democracy" became a catch-phrase & people were supposed to be allowed their own opinions, the trick became more subtle; ribaldry, derision, and abuse were poured on those who dared to have unorthodox opinions. "Free speech" in this country means the freedom of the ignorant to abuse the intelligent. \* \* \* Shelley was more or less driven from the country by the behaviour of his countrymen. Lawrence was persecuted as a German spy, banned because he actually dared to suggest that love is more than two angels holding hands. His private letters were seized by the police, and, despite his great love for this country as a country, he had to go abroad to find anything approaching decent living. \* \* \* The spheres in which the British excel are, of course, fighting & standing up when they see the Union Jack. /This raises an interesting point. Will as many people as possible please drop me a note, or mention it when writing, saying whether or not - be honest now - they have ever experienced (or always experienced) an impulse to sit down when "God Save The King" is played. When in a large company, that is - you never stand up in the midst of family or a few friends./ Looking upon war as I do, I find nothing admirable in the "never say die" spirit, even if it is possessed by my countrymen. If we "never know when we're beaten", then we're blasted fools. Our politicians are more interested in their private lives & the prestige of their damned flag than in real peace, and we are still suffering from the mistakes of the generation that handled the Boer War. Our French master at school -- the only master with whom I ever got on well /the only one who agreed with you?/ -- said that although we imagine that foreigners believe in our maxims about an Englishman's word, his honour, his courage and all the rest of it, no-one abroad believes in such things at all. I don't myself; there may be races worse, but I happen to be living in the middle of the English. I see their pettiness, their meanness, & above all, their complete obliviousness to anything beyond football (sorry, not meaning you), beer, and bawdy jokes. If we are fighting the "Hun", who, we are assured, has always been the same since the days of Attila, we are facing a race that has produced Goethe, Nietzsche, Kant, Spinoza, Beethoven, Wagner, Thomas Mann....fill in the rest yourself." ....Now: you will have disagreed with much of that; I'd appreciate it if you would go over it carefully & see just why you disagree. In his most recent letter, JFB says "Agree completely with your views on British people". Are you shy of contradicting two such noble warriors? \* \* \* And, friends, the very best of luck & a Happy New Year.....DdoubleU.