Merry Christmas to everyone at the outset of whole number 104, FAPA number 98, volume 27, number 1, the November, 1965, issue of Horizons. The greetings and fanzine come from Harry Warner, Jr., 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland, 21740, U.S.A. Dick Eney continues to fill the indispensable role of publisher from my stencils, and remains unresponsible for opinions expressed herein.

In the Beginning

Gently and calmly, please accept the fact that there are no mailing comments in this issue. This is partly the outcome of my ceaseless quest for something different in every issue of Horizons. But mostly it's the outcome of the time factor. The summer mailing did not reach me until August 26. That leaves only about two months until Dick must get the completed next issue mailed off to California. In those two months, I must squeeze three weeks of vacation, sweat out a World Series of indeterminate length, get an unusually large mailing read, and make allowance for any jam-up in activities that the trip to England may create for Dick. The most graceful way out was to start stenciling before the mailing arrived and finish off those stencils before I read the mailing. I like FAPA publications too much to rush through them, anyway. If I can get my Christmas cards addressed efficiently, I shall try to put into the next Horizons at least a skeletonized set of mailing comments on this summer bundle. Meanwhile, I suppose it would be prudent to explain a few things about the item that takes up half of this issue. It is all that I plan to write of that novel about fans which I once considered putting onto paper in full form. Maybe it will make at least partial sense in this form, which represents what would have constituted the first chapter if I'd set out to write the whole shebang. The only thing I changed from my original intentions was the title. It seemed fitting to borrow a new title from a really great fantasy story that has one common trait with mine, unfinished condition. Several FAPA members have been complaining that either they or I or maybe both are experiencing difficulty distinguishing between fact and fiction, because of material in previous Horizonses that has hovered delicately on the dividing line between reality and imagination. So I'd better emphasize that all the events and characters depicted in the story in this issue are wholly fictitious and I have not used in the story any fannish events or personalities known to me. If anyone else in FAPA wants to write the remaining 63,800 words of this novel, go right ahead and publish it. I'd like to see if it comes out in the same way as mine would have ended up. Aside from this disclaimer, I must make just a few remarks after the briefest sort of glance through the mailing. Most important, of course, is Norm Clarke's courageous statement of the facts about Hagerstown. I hope that this will save everyone in fandom the trouble of any further speculations about whether my bachelor situation is the result of choice or necessity. Nearly as encouraging is the apparent trend to distribute in FAPA some excellent fanzines primarily intended for other ayjay groups. As long as I have time for membership in only one apa, I'd be delighted to see FAPA inherit the leftovers from the cream of the servings to the other groups. Maybe I'll change my opinion after a thorough reading, but I also sense a welcome change of atmosphere in FAPA in the form of more toleration for the shortcomings and bullheaded ideas that others seem to possess. In fact, I can't even find anyone newly lacking his temper because of something I've done, the first time in many mailings that I haven't riled up emotions. In view of this situation, I believe it's safe to wish everyone a happy new year, in addition to the merry yule.

A Man Dwelt by a Churchyard

They were driving back from the worldcon when they began to argue about a visit to George Alfred Frontley.

"He was drunk when he told us to stop by," Ken Willard said.

"But I've just got to find out about these marks," Tim Tativer said. He tightened his grip on the books that he hadn't allowed to go out of sight since the auction.

"We might get a meal out of it." Betty Smith wrinkled her nose as if attempting to catch the first odors of something frying at a distance. "He wouldn't send us away hungry, if we got there at dinnertime." She patted her pocket of the shapeless sweather. It was empty. Ken decided that it was a deliberate effort to work up sympathy and tried to concentrate on his driving. Tim wished he hadn't accepted the portion of the last of the candy bars that had once bulged that pocket when the drive started.

"I feel like a couple of guys in orbit," Ken complained. "We go straight back to splashdown and home and we're all right with a little left over. We start to maneuver on what margin we have and we might get stranded out here on the edge of nowhere. My folks warned me, two straight worldcons we've bailed you out, and you help yourself if you go broke after this one."

"I'd hate to have to worry about whether I'm going broke," Betty said. "I can just barely remember the last time I had any doubts about it. The only thing that bothers me now is my crazy notion that someone will hold the baby for ransom if I go much further into the hole."

"I'll tell you what." Tim took a tremendous breath before he managed to risk it. "Turn off so we can go to the Frontley place, Ken, and I'll make you a promise. If he doesn't put up up and feed us, I'll sell off two of these books for the highest price I can get and pay you back that way."

"You'll raise enough to tip the girl who cleans our room at the next worldcon," Ken said. "That's about all. You're the only fan in captivity wild enough about Frontley to care about how he reacts to other people's books."

"No, I'm not. I talked to a couple of fanzine editors about my plans for an article. They said they'd like to run it. All I've got to do is find out why those particular spots meant something to him. I've looked at the marks and I'm not sure. It might be places where he gets ideas for his own stories. He might think that these are the places where the writing is best and if that's the case I want him to explain what he finds in those spots that I can't find. Don't you see what a special kind of research this can be? We don't know much about what other science fiction authors thought about other people's fiction except for general statements that they read such and such an author a lot when a boy or think that Blackwood is the most underrated fantasy writer. It's the next road to the right, Ken. Turn off there."

Ken looked at the gas gauge and at the way the landscape billowed up, off to the east. There goes part of another gallon, fighting gravity if we climb that, he thought. He filed away in an unused corner of his mind the mental note to reserve another thirty cents somehow, to prevent that hill from leaving them gasless in the middle of the Holland Tunnel. Experimentally, he kept one eye on the road, another on Betty's face, and his foot on the gas pedal as they approached the intersection. Something in the way her nose continued to experience little ripples and groundswellings struck him suddenly as pitiful in the extreme. He flicked on his turn signal.

"It must be somewhere along here." Tim squinted in an effort to pierce a combination of mountain haze and approaching twilight. "Remember how he answered that question about people from Porlock by saying that nobody lives close enough to take the trouble to bother him?" The weatherboards of the last houses in the village were lost behind them. The slope was still upward, but not as sharply and the road was now straight.

"Well, if we don't accomplish anything else, we might make you appreciate fans more and get over this love affair with the pros," Ken told him. "Don't think for one minute that Frontley really cares about fans. He's too tough a guy to need the egoboo. I know his kind. It's just like the way Heinlein takes the time once every two or three years to snow all the fans at a worldcon, just in case it might be useful to him somehow. A man back home used to invite every one he knew to dinner once every two years. He hired the ballroom of the biggest hotel we had, got a real good price per plate, and then he could accept hospitality for the next one year and eleven months and three weeks and six days without giving a thought to paying it back. Are you sure that the letters on that last sign back there didn't say Mordor under the arrow?"

"I think this is pretty." Betty was gaping down into the valley they had just left like a tourist. "It's better when everything is hard to see. There's no danger of having the drive ruined by a dead cow. I saw one once right beside the nicest barn in all my experience. I'll bet we'd be disappointed in those old buildings just ahead if we got to see them close up and knew what it was really like in them. But they look romantic as all get-out."

They were past the lane to the buildings when Tim almost pulled off Ken's right shoulder. "Hey, that's it! I saw Frontley on the mail box!"

"You're crazy. He lives away from everyone, not in a metropolis like that."

"But it's got to be. They said it was between Cashton and Poplar and we're getting so close to Poplar that we'll be in it before long, and we've watched all the way since Cashton. Turn around."

Ken swore when the car almost refused to negotiate the rut at the side of the road. Then he resisted the impulse to hustle back to the lane, because Betty was running a comb through her hair with one hand and fumbling with a used-up lipstick with the other. He stopped as soon as he was into the lane off the road and waited for her to finish. He didn't think that any of the houses was quite ostentatious enough to jibe with his concept of the Frontley personality. Five of them were visible from here. They looked as if they might have been built at about the same time by someone who wanted to construct paragons of old-fashioned gracious living but didn't possess the architectural abilities to do a good job. Stone and brick were used in apparently indiscriminate manners to form the walls. The porch roofs were sagging in spots. The best thing about the houses, Ken decided, was the way they neither formed a geometrical design nor appeared to have been built at random sites. An old artists' colony, maybe, he thought.

"You might as well go ahead," Betty said in a small voice. "It wasn't worth the effort, I guess." Ken grinned at her but wondered for the thousandth time if those prominent cheekbones and the sharp thrust of her chin came from a strong personality or from chronic inability to get all she wanted to eat.

"There's light in that one," Tim pointed. "Why don't you ask which one belongs to him?"

"You'd better do the talking, Tim. I enjoy being an old cynic, but my status isn't very good for getting ourselves invited in. You're eager enough that they might take pity on you."

"Well, at least he'd remember me. You and Betty never paid any attention to him all during the con. You didn't even listen to much of his talk and you didn't try to get close to him at the party. He ought to remember how I tried to ask him about the margin markings five times and got interrupted every time." Still clasping the books to his bony side, Tim jumped from the car and ran up the path to the house where lights gleamed. Insects were making complicated noises all around them and the surrounding hill was turning black rapidly. Ken thought fleetingly of the wrecked budget and timetable and wondered if his boss would accept an excuse for missing an extra day's work again this year.

Then Tim was back. A tall figure in overalls followed him slowly. "This is it," Tim said. His mouth opened and shut several times but nothing more emerged.

"This is Frontley's place?" Ken asked the man who stopped at a slight distance and looked carefully over the car.

"Yep. Only he isn't home."

"Oh. Look, we've come a long way to see him and we'd like to wait on him. But we haven't eaten. Is there some place around here where we could buy some food?"

"That depends on Mr. Frontley." The man now was leaning on the side of the car, staring at the three within. His eyes rested on each for ten seconds, shifted to the next, and continued to make the circuit at the same pace after he had completed one cycle.

"But if you're a member of his family, maybe one of the neighbors would--" The man interrupted Betty. "I'm not a member of his family. And there ain't no neighbors."

"You mean all these other houses are empty?" Ken pointed to one where curtains waved through an open window. Tim was trying to whisper something in his ear and wasn't coherent.

"I'll tell you like I told him. This is the Frontley place. This here's Mr. Frontley's house. That's Mrs. Frontley's house next to it. Mine is the last one down that way. Those two are for the kids, as soon as they get old enough to stay in them all the time. The secretaries live in the little one. The last one is for visitors but it doesn't suffer much wear and tear. I go from one to another just as I'm needed. Now, what in the hell do you want and who in the blue Jesus are you?"

Ken felt something alien impinging on his emotions. After a moment he recognized it as his sense of wonder, which he hadn't encountered for quite a few years. Meanwhile, Betty was turning on the charm, the only thing she had salvaged intact from her troubles. "You see, this younger gentleman is one of the nation's foremost admirers of Mr. Frontley's fiction," she was saying to the man. ""He probably will be an important literary critic in a few more years and he's specializing in Mr. Frontley right now--not just as an author but as a man and as a personality. He saw as much as he could of Mr. Frontley at the science fiction convention. But in all that confusion there wasn't a chance to ask all the questions. So Mr. Frontley said we should stop by on our way back to New York and he'd give Mr. Tativer some of his valuable time. Now, I suppose you're Mr. Frontley's secretary--" Ken almost interrupted her, with a warning against laying it on too thick. But Betty put her hand gently on the arm of the man where it rested on the windowframe of the car and that was an inspired move. The man opened the door of the vehicle wider.

"Well, I'll tell you. Mr. Frontley doesn't think much of literary critics. They don't know what they're talking about and he had an awful fuss with one of them a few years back. But this kid won't be old enough to be a literary critic for a few years, I can see that in the dark. But I'm not Mr. Frontley's secretary. He's got a couple of them but I'm just generally in charge here when he's away. My name's John Krieger. When Mr. Frontley's father was sheriff, I was his deputy. I helped him settle down here. He'll be back from town any time. If you want to come in and wait for him, come ahead. I don't guarantee what kind of reception he'll give you. Are you sure he told you to stop by? He doesn't take to visitors much."

Betty got out of the car and stood close to Krieger, looking up into his face as if a food parcel might descend from the lips at any moment. "He doesn't even know who I am and he didn't invite me. But he said something to Mr. Tativer and I'm sure we all admire his work so much that we'd just be happy to see the house where he lives. Do you mean that all these houses belong to Mr. Frontley? Did he have them built?"

"Now, you know better than that." Krieger looked calculatingly at her. "You're just trying to make talk. Some religious bunch owned this land a long while back. The biggest preachers made a lot of money and built these big homes to live in when they retired. Pretty soon they were all fighting among themselves on some idiot matter about God or St. Paul or someone and pretty soon there were six religions instead of one. They couldn't stand it around each other even when they were retired and they all sold back the place to the original church and the original church couldn't pay taxes. Mr. Frontley got it for a song, the whole shebang. He likes it because it's peaceful and he owns a lot of land all around so people can't build and crowd him."

Krieger began to walk slowly up the path to the house with the lights. The others followed him. "You said something about Frontley being in one house and his wife in another and the kids--" Ken stopped when Betty poked him in the ribs.

"That's right," Krieger answered. "Like I said, Mr. Frontley doesn't like to be crowded. Understand, there's nothing going on between him and his wife and he loves the kids just as much as I love this mountain. Hell, nowadays married couples don't think anything of having separate beds and even separate bedrooms when they're on the best of terms and can afford all those sheets and pillowcases. Why shouldn't Mr. Frontley have a little more room to relax and stretch out by having a separate house for everyone? Come on in, but don't go beyond the parlor. He wouldn't like you running through the house without his sayso."

The three fans looked at the room as if it were a combination of the lair of the cyclops and Byron's den. It was big and contained too many chairs, tables and lamps. Ken sat down on what appeared to be an old morris chair which some interior decorator had tried halfheartedly to disguise with a new covering. He stretched his legs and motioned with his eyes for the others to follow his lead at manufacturing hospitality. Krieger left the house without another word. Tim was looking around as if attempting to memorize the room. Betty moved closer to the door. "Don't go yet," Ken said. "It seems like we've hardly come."

"Ken, I'm scared." Her voice was just above a whisper in volume. "I shouldn't have come. Of course he didn't know who I am in that mob at the convention. But with just the three of us here--"

"You said he'd never laid eyes on you before. We'll keep quiet. Tim, for God's sake, sit down and relax. You're making me nervous."

Tim sat. Then he leaped up again as the lights of a car flashed across the wall of the dimly lighted room. Gravel crunched and a car door slammed heavily. A very large man stood in the doorway, staring at them. They stared back, motionless .

Surprisingly, Tim broke the spell. He gulped audibly and advanced toward the door. "Maybe you don't remember me, Mr. Frontley, but I asked you a couple of times at the worldcon about these books of yours I bought at the auction and you didn't have time to talk to me then, but said you'd be glad to see me after you got home." He stopped as abruptly as if a spring had run down.

"I believe I told you I would talk to you about it." Frontley's voice sounded as if he'd rehearsed his statement. "I don't recall an invitation to my home. A long distance call would have been sufficient." He remained standing at the doorway as if unwilling to enter his own home in the presence of visitors.

"So we're not welcome." Ken rose, pulled Betty up by yanking her where her arm met her shoulder, and nodded at Tim. "Glad to see you again."

Frontley still didn't move. He glanced at the books in Tim's grasp, threw a briefer look at Ken, then stared at Betty.

"Sit down again," Frontley said abruptly. He finally walked into the room and took off an expensive-looking coat. His shirt was dark with perspiration. "I see some of my books have come back home," he said to Tim. There was still a prerecorded ring to his remarks.

"Yes. I hope you had a good time at the worldcon. You certainly seemed to be enjoying yourself that early morning on the seventh floor when--" Tim was off again but he was aware enough of dangerous ground to change his verbal course when Ken's elbow dug into his ribs. "Maybe you didn't go to the auction. But I bought these books from your own library that you donated to the auction. That's why we're starting to run over our trip bddget. Of course, I haven't had a chance to study them carefully. But I saw right away how you'd made marginal notations and I wanted to know your reasons for thinking these places were so important."

Frontley frowned at the books and took the top one from Tim's hands. It was a slightly battered copy of Keller's Life Everlasting. "I don't recall that I found a great deal of interest in this novel," he said. "Of course, my writing has entirely different purposes from that of Keller." He was leafing through the book and saw several of the distinctive, hook-shaped marks in black, firm lines. The frown went away. He hesitated, then handed the book back to Tim. "Well, you can appreciate that it would take a long time to expound the multiple considerations that cause one writer to respond to specific passages in the writings of a minor novelist." He turned to Betty and asked directly, "Now, may I ask to what I owe the pleasure of this visit?"

"You owe it to the enthusiasm of a nice kid," Ken said. "Since you don't want to take the trouble to answer him, we'd better go. Come on, Tim."

"I'm afraid you must think I'm as rude as you are behaving," Frontley told Ken. "But a man in my position is bedeviled constantly with unwanted letters and visits and demands on his time. Young lady, I'm sure I've seen you somewhere."

"We were together most of the time at the con," Tim said. "She's Betty Smith and I'm Tim Tativer and that's Ken Willard. We're all science fiction fans and we all admire your novels and short stories very much. I'm awfully sorry if we came when we shouldn't. You're right, Ken, we'd better go." He turned back to Frontley. "I guess you wouldn't want me to write you asking you some more about the marks in

the books, if you get too many letters."

"Sit down, sit down." Frontley gestured grandly at the three and continued to look at Betty. "You with the books--you aren't by any chance planning to publish a fan magazine and looking for material for it?"

"Oh, no, sir," Tim said hastily. "I feel that fanzine publishing is fine for fans who don't have any special interest in one particular kind of fanac. But I'm mainly interested in sercon articles, writing rather than editing or publishing. Right now I feel that science fiction is the most important kind of writing in the world. But I also feel that this is good practice, if someday I try to become a bigshot in the mundane literature world."

"Listen to me--did you say your name is Tim? Make no mistake about it. Science fiction is the most important kind of literature today. Years ago I had the choice of specializing in science fiction or making a name for myself in mainstream. I am certain that I chose wisely. Mainstream literature is something like the horse. It's good for a few minor functions. But the world is permanently science-oriented. And we shall find ourselves forced to pay more and more heed to the future because of population pressures, the effects of space exploration, a thousand other important considerations. Science fiction will be as important a molding force for the world of tomorrow as religious controversy was to the Middle Ages. Now, if you young people will be patient for a few moments, my man will be bringing some light refreshments. And there is something else I want to tell you, Tim. You should think long and hard before spending your time on essays and reviews and other forms of literary criticism. This is work as sterile and unrewarding as attempting to find flaws in valuable diamonds. If you feel yourself blessed with a gift for writing, you should channel it into creative streams as I have done. Write fiction, or create valuable non-fiction works about science and the changing world. Don't bury your talents by grubbing around in the muck of criticism."

Krieger was back. He had tall glasses of milk and cookies. "You can have some fruit if you wait a little longer until I go for it," Krieger told them. "I always say there's nothing like fruit. When I was deputy to his daddy, I always made it a point to take apples to the fellows in the jail a couple of times a week. Kept their bowels open while they were sitting around there locked up." He looked at Betty. "Don't you feel good?"

"I'm afraid I frightened her, John," Frontley said. "Author, abrupt entrance, hot night--a bad combination."

"I'm all right, thanks. I'm just worried about getting back home. We'll have to move along pretty soon or we'll never get back on schedule." She knew she was gulping the milk and couldn't slow herself down.

"You're going to drive all night, then? Young people never cease to amaze me. I feel quite weary after that convention, and you seem to have thrived on it."

Ken stood up and stretched deliberately. "No, we'll have to find a place to spend the night. I can't see straight after being up all last night and Betty's scared to drive after dark and Tim forgets to look at the road every time he starts talking."

"Then let me make you an offer. If you promise faithfully not to broadcast around fandom this offer, I would be most happy to offer you hospitality for the night. The children's house is unoccupied and you young men are welcome to its beds. One of my secretaries has resigned her job and the other is away just now on vacation. This is throwing my writing schedule out of kilter but it leaves the secretaries' house

empty. Miss Smith looks as if she could use a good night's sleep and a big breakfast. Is a romance brewing somewhere among you three, incidentally?"

"Golly, no. Betty's older than either of us. And it's Mrs. Smith. ..." Tim stopped abruptly, remembering.

"It's very kind of you," Betty mumbled. "But we'd better go."

"We're staying," Ken said decisively. "It's safer than driving all night and we don't have enough to spend on motel rooms without going broke before we get home. I'm afraid I'm not the enthusiastic type of fan, Mr. Frontley, but I do like your stories and it's very good of you to take us in like this."

Krieger was walking them down the path to the third house in the group. "That's where the kids are supposed to live, only they're still too little to stay there most of the time. You fans believe in ghosts, I suppose? Some of the mountain people say there's ghosts around here. Right over that rise there was a little church that burned down after they had the big fuss but there's still a little overgrown graveyard. Every so often, a few people go up there and clear out the weeds and scrub trees. They think it'll keep the dead where they belong if people pay some attention to their resting place."

"I know of one ghost who wasn't here until we came," Ken said gently to Betty. She squeezed his hand briefly. Krieger was still talking:

"I've never worried much about ghosts. Back when I was his daddy's deputy, I used to go down to the cut pretty regular. The cut's what we call the penitentiary around here. I don't know why. Anyway, seemed as if every time I'd take a new guest down there, someone had just died and I'd get there in time for the burial. There was the wisest mule you ever saw had the job of hauling the body away. Now, that mule had gone through the procedure so often they didn't even have to walk along beside him. They'd dump the body into the cart and the mule he'd go off and stop by the pile of dirt where they'd opened a grave and wait until someone got around to finishing the burial. They buried them deep down there. Ghosts might have an easier chance of coming up for air on this mountain. Now, you fellows go right in there and make yourself at home and I'll show the young lady to her house. You needn't worry about being safe, either, ma'am. I've got the only key to the door and I'll give it to you, last thing I do. Not even Mr. Frontley has this key. It's part of the bargain I made with his daddy to watch out for him. He has good control of himself but there's no use throwing temptations into his path with his wife away so much and he's perfectly willing for me to deliver him from evil this way. He doesn't even mind paying for a new lock every six months. I change it regular, just to make sure."

"You're going to get a bad opinion of my character, Mr. Krieger," Betty said in her politest voice. "But I'll have to unpack with the fellows for a few minutes. You see, I went to the convention on a shoestring and didn't exactly register. Ken and Tim smuggled my things in their suitcases, I bummed sleeping space with a couple of girls, and we had quite a time getting my things out of their room and back again. It won't take long for us to sort it out. Would you think I was terrible if I asked you for that fruit you promised? This mountain air makes me hungry."

"Sure. I'll go for it. I've heard about you fans but I'm learning things." Krieger ushered them into a room that appeared to be an exact duplicate of the one they had just left. He went away, whistling.

"It just isn't right, Ken." Betty pawed listlessly through the scrambled clothing and personal effects. "He's a fraud and there's lots of reason why I should be deceitful here. But I can't."

"You aren't being deceitful. He said he thought you were someone

familiar. If he can't take it from there, why make an effort to introduce yourself?"

"I never thought I'd have a night like this." Tim was looking once again at the books. "Did you ever guess that he lives on this scale? It's like something out of--oh, maybe the land baron days in Europe a hundred years ago."

"Shoddy ostentation, I'd call it." Ken waved an arm encompassingly. "What's he trying to prove or disprove? If he's trying to snow people, why does he do such a good job of keeping most of them away from here? If he's really anti-social, why has he stayed married and gotten along so well with all his buddies in prodom? God almighty, just think of the fuel bill he must pay to keep all these houses going. It gets cold as blazes in this state in the winter."

"Suppose the baby got sick today. How in the world would they get in touch with me? Maybe they don't even have telephones in this godforsaken hill." Betty peered through an open window into the empty black.

"Oh, there is telephone service." Frontley had changed his shirt and Ken suspected that he had shaved. "But my number and even the name of the exchange that serves this mountain is one of my most closely guarded secrets. I hope Krieger isn't attempting to promote immorality by failing to segregate the sexes."

"Betty's going to her house in a few minutes," Tim said. "It must be wonderful to live around here."

"Curiously, that was precisely the matter of which I was thinking. Mrs. Smith, are you a good typist?"

"I'm not really good at anything," she said, trying to hide the more personal components of her pile of stuff.

"Don't let her kid you," Tim said. "She's cut plenty of fanzine stencils in her day."

"Ah, perhaps I've heard of her fanzine. What is the title?"

"I used to cut stencils for someone else."

"Well, Mrs. Smith, I have no intention of putting out a fanzine. But from the excitement of the convention, I find myself returned to the practical problems of my daily life. As I think I mentioned, that daily life now involves the shortage of one secretary. It is impossible to find anyone within fifty miles of this hillside who is competent to transcribe what she hears on a tape recorder and put it onto paper, correctly spelled and with a conservative number of commas and semi-colons inserted. I gather that you have a good knowledge of science fiction and I suspect that your financial status could withstand a moderate amount of improvement. Would you care to fill this vacancy?"

Betty's face drained of color, then went to the other extreme. "I couldn't," she said, and cleared her throat a couple of times. "I have a little boy. I must live where I can leave him with friends while I work."

"Then could I have the job?" Tim's eyes were blazing. "I can type letter-perfect, eighty words a minute. I'd do it for next to nothing, just to get the experience of living around a great writer."

"I'm very sorry, my young friend, but the vacancy must be filled by a female. There are no spare houses and obvious complications would arise if the secretaries' house were occupied by two employes of various sexes." He turned back to Betty, who was at the window again. "Don't decide so hastily, in any event. Your child would present no problem. Krieger is wonderful as a companion to youngsters, you would be on the estate virtually all the time, and my own children are old enough to serve as babysitters in emergencies. In fact, simply for dietary reasons, you would be conferring a real benefit on your child by taking the job. The country food here is marvelous, absolutely unlimited in quan-

tities, and youngsters grow up strong and healthy on it. Of course, your salary would be in addition to free room and board. Now, I must be personal for a moment. I assume that Mr. Smith is no longer in your good graces, and the comparative solitude here might be perfectly fitted for your recovery from whatever emotional storms--"

Betty stuck her head completely out of the window and didn't answer. Frontley turned to Ken, questioning with his eyes. Ken looked away. The author moved close to Tim and said quietly: "Young man, perhaps you can add your persuasion to mine. Please tell me about Mr. Smith."

Tim fought a brief, losing battle. As if he'd been subjected to the fastest hypnosis on record, he muttered: "Her husband died suddenly and she's been trying to bring up her little boy without starving to death. She's too proud to beg help from her people. They didn't like Ly--I mean, they didn't like her husband."

"Shut up, Tim." Ken's voice broke the spell. Betty turned and saw in Frontley's eyes that Ken had spoken too late. "You started to utter a name," Frontley said, staring hard at Betty. "Was it a very odd given name that was coupled with a very common family name?"

"His name was Linus." Tim's voice wavered. Frontley glared at him. "Don't lie until you've learned how to do it properly. Lycurgus. I never knew his wife but I must have seen a photograph of her. I knew the face was familiar." He turned on his heel and stalked out.

"The pest house is done bust loose." Ken inhaled deeply and began to toss his clothing back into the suitcase.

Betty brushed her hand across Tim's crewcut. "Don't feel bad. It might have come out after we'd used his hospitality and that would have been worse." She giggled, a sound that sounded as if it contained overtones of both hysteria and relief. "Do you think we'd better make a mad dash for the car or just run without looking for the car? He might come back shooting."

"Talk sense and help pack," Ken snapped. "This isn't Wagner and he isn't Hunding and even if I'm wrong about that, we'd still be safe for the night. Maybe you'll still get some fruit out of this if we don't get out in too great a hurry."

Krieger was back a moment later, bearing apples. "Mr. Frontley wants me to say he's sorry for running out on you like that and he'll be back when he's in a better humor. What in the world did you little sprats do to get him that excited? I haven't seen him that way since the time he was just a boy and his father had me take him out hunting and he-- I talk too much sometimes."

"Thanks for the fruit. We've got to be moving on." Ken tried to walk out but Krieger barred the door.

"You're here for the night. I put your car in the shed in case it stormed and one of the hands left the tractor and harrow in front of the door and I'll be damned if I'm going to move everything around in this pitch dark. Now, you're Mr. Frontley's guests and I've already promised to watch out for this young lady and I'll not take any more chances on something immoral happening while she's a guest here. You can talk some more with the fellows in the morning, child."

"I'm older than I look," Betty said. Something about the way Krieger put his hand on her back and propelled her out into the night was incomprehensibly confidence-restoring to her. "I'm afraid you must have an awful opinion of me by now," she said.

"Can't have an opinion until I understand it."

"It's an awfully long and foolish story." She stopped, near the end building in the row. "But it's not really anyone's fault, I suppose. My husband and Mr. Frontley had some trouble years ago. I had no

intention of being a sneak when we came here. But Tim is so fond of Mr. Frontley's fiction and wanted to pay a visit so badly that I was outvoted." She breathed in deep. The night was starless, the air was still, and there was a sense of storm in the air. Betty looked uselessly for evidence of lightning. The unseen man beside her was almost as comforting as the priest hidden in the confessional to the devout Catholic, she suspected.

"Well, if Mr. Frontley has a fault, it's that he remembers too much too long. He talked about the hunting trip until he was a grown-up man."

"This trouble wasn't anyone's fault, I suppose," Betty said. "I'm not hinting at a scandal or anything dreadful like that. I don't suppose you pay a whole lot of attention to literary things. But Lycurgus --wasn't that a crazy name to have for your husband?--wrote a nasty review of that novel Mr. Frontley wrote about tidewater families. That was just before Mr. Frontley started to write science fiction. We--I mean, Lycurgus blamed Mr. Frontley for pulling strings when he lost his reviewing work and couldn't seem to get going again as a critic. So my husband started to write science fiction, too, only Lycurgus wasn't as good at it as he was at criticism. We had a terrible time making ends meet. Lycurgus felt terrible one weekend but we were so deep in debt we didn't call a doctor, and he got well for a month and then he fell over dead and the post mortem showed there was bad damage from a heart attack that weekend and he should have been taking things easy. I was three months pregnant when he died. That damned review."

"Folks around here claim there was some reason Mr. Frontley started to write those Buck Rogers stories. Maybe you've explained it. He always was the kind of person that could lose confidence over a little thing. Remind me sometime to tell you why he won't go hunting. Do you think he could have been one of these immortals of literature if he'd kept on writing about real people, instead of making up this stuff about other planets? Right across here, and watch out you don't stumble over the doorsill."

Krieger switched on lights. The house was smaller than the others and bore visual and nasal evidence of feminine occupation.

"Now, don't you be in a hurry to turn down that job offer. These secretaries find life real exciting, keeping up with Mr. Frontley. He tells his stories into two tape recorders. He puts one at each end of his den and stomps around the room all the time he's telling his stories. There's one microphone in each corner because they're stereo machines, so wherever he goes there's a microphone close enough. But it keeps the secretaries hopping to fiddle around with those dials when they type off what they hear, what with the voice coming first out of one speaker and then out of another."

He left, finally, impressing on Betty the uniqueness of the key and the importance of keeping it in her possession throughout the night. It became suddenly silent, except for the insect noises. Betty flopped onto a couch, and faced the reality that she lacked the courage to turn off the lights. The silence or the dark separately was pleasant, but she didn't fancy them in combination. She poked mental figures at the lumpy little new concept that had just lodged in a conspicuous area of her brain. It was now clear that Lycurgus had shattered Frontley's confidence as a mainstream writer, with that one hastily written review, just as Frontley had then smashed up Lycurgus' own writing activities in deliberate and thorough manner. She had had no part in these literary matters and this might explain why she felt no real fear of Frontley.

A scratching at the door interrupted her inspection tour of the house. "I wondered if I'd have visitors," she told Tim and Ken. As soon as they were inside, she doused the lights, without hesitation.

"Betty, do you think that guy Krieger knows what he's talking about?" Tim sounded on the verge of bawling.

"He seems awfully good. But that might just come from the contrast with Frontley," she told him. "What do you think?"

"I don't know what to think. Do you know what Krieger told me? I was telling him about buying Mr. Frontley's books and about getting information on the marginal markings. And Krieger made me show him some of the places and then he snorted and told me not to pay any attention to those marks. Krieger said that Mr. Frontley makes those marks to keep his place when his wife calls him to a meal while he's reading. That can't be true. Mr. Frontley would have come right out and said so, wouldn't he?"

"There's a lot about Frontley I don't understand." Betty couldn't see Ken but he sounded very close. "Listen, we'll have to sleep in this house tonight. You stayed faithful to Ly's memory all during the world-con and you won't succumb this last night. I don't trust this whole setup."

"Oh, Ken, you'll work yourself up to another proposal if you don't stop worrying about me. Oh, God, don't make a sound." Gravel was crunching outside the house. Betty had time to congratulate herself on forbidding cigarettes when Frontley's voice drifted through the window, softly but resonantly: "Are you still awake, Mrs. Smith?"

"Yes. But--"

"Don't be alarmed. I have no intention of forcing my way inside or asking you to emerge. I merely wish to extend through the open window my most sincere apologies for my emotional reaction to the discovery of your identity. But I'm sure that an intelligent young woman like yourself can understand that taken unawares, suddenly assailed with memories, confused a little by natural respect to the dead and continued resentment toward the dead from older days--well, you can learn that I remain somewhat rattled, by the way that sentence refuses to end. Please, won't you reconsider and accept this job I've offered you? Besides all the advantages that I had previously outlined, your acceptance would signal the end of an old grudge."

"But you could find a more capable girl in any big city around here. I don't understand why you should suddenly decide that I'm the logical one for your purposes."

"Something about your face or your personality or your aura impressed me as soon as I saw you in my home. And I'm sure that you liked the idea of working for me, no matter what you said. If you had no interest in my offer, why didn't you simply say no and refuse to talk further about it?"

Betty was silent. Tiny scrambling sounds while Frontley talked had told her that the two fans had crept to some safer place of concealment, away from the window. Betty had the feeling that if Frontley lit a match, the whole world would be illuminated in an all-revealing incandescence.

"You're a shrewd person," she said finally. "I admit that I liked the idea when you proposed it, no matter what I said. I couldn't help thinking how little it would take for expenses for the baby and me, if we had our room and board supplied. I imagined my wages going to get all those debts paid off and enough left over to supply a cushion if the evil days come again. But then I knew I couldn't do it without revealing who I was. Then it came out accidentally and I was relieved."

"There is only one condition on which I shall stop forcing this offer on you," Frontley said slowly. "If you are declining because of another man, plans to marry again perhaps, or the desire to live close to someone--forgive me if I speak frankly. If the memory of Lycurgus is no

longer so overpowering--"

"Mr. Frontley, the memory of Lycurgus is as overpowering as it was three years ago on the day of his death. Go away now. In the morning I'm going to tell you how much I would ask to accept the job. If it isn't too much, maybe we can work something out. Good night."

Breath whizzed rapidly out of the lips just outside the window. "I shall await the morning impatiently. Good night, Mrs. Smith."

The noise on the gravel dwindled. Betty groped for the blinds, pulled them, and switched on the light. Ken was advancing on her from a hallway, scowling. Tim was behind him, casting frightened looks at the direction in which Frontley had gone, through the opaque blind.

"Have you gone bats, girl?" Betty cut Ken short by putting fingers to her lips and answering in guarded tones: "Be careful. He might still hear us. Ken, there's something you don't know that's influencing me. Look here."

She led the way to a door at the rear of the building. It opened into an unexpectedly large storeroom. The contents looked like the greater part of a 19th century general store. Barrels of apples, huge hampers of potatoes, piles of corn still in the husk, covered the floor. Two walls were covered with home-canned fruits and vegetables. Shapeless clumps of smoked meat hung in the shadows of the ceiling. Other cupboards looked promising but were closed.

"I guess it's where they store the food the farm produces," Betty said in a small voice. "Can't you imagine what this does to me? For years and years, I've watched every penny in my food budget, bought third quality stuff in cans and pieced it out until it was half-spoiled. I've listened to a hundred women tell me how marvelous it is I keep this figure, wishing to God I could afford to eat enough to let it spread out all over. I always used to think horses were stupid because they'll eat themselves dead if they're let loose where there's too much grain and stuff. Now I know how they feel. Ken, I don't see how anything about Frontley or his job could be terrible enough to make me sacrifice all this." She cast a last tragic look over the treasures before her and with an effort shut the door of the storeroom.

"Go on back to your place," she told the two. "I'll be all right here."

"I never thought you'd do such a thing." Tim suddenly grabbed her around the waist and drew close to her. "Think about Lycurgus. Think what fandom will say if it hears about this. Don't sell yourself just for the sake of a lot to eat. If you want me to, I'll help you out a little whenever I can. I might even sell my Frontley collection--that novel manuscript and the galley proofs and the books and all the rest. I don't think I want to write about Mr. Frontley's science fiction stories any more."

"Don't be silly, Tim. Now that Lycurgus is gone, maybe I'll need you as a critic. Maybe you can write something one of these days that will shake up his confidence so much that he'll stop writing science fiction stories."

Tim let go of her. "Golly, Betty. If I didn't know you so well, I'd start to think that you had some hidden reason for taking this job."

"You mean it looks as if I'm doing it in the hope that I'll figure out a way to get revenge on Frontley? Maybe I am."

"That's a strange thing," Ken said. "You taking his offer to try to get some kind of revenge on him. Just a little while ago, I had the thought, the only reason Frontley could have made such an offer was to try to get some revenge on you."

Poor Man's Oktoberfest

This August, I attended the Hagerstown Fair, a procedure I've rarely neglected since I was too young to know what was causing all the confusion through which I toddled. This was the year when I had the best hopes of attending something more impressive, the Oktoberfest that Tom Wolfe described so compellingly. Instead I simply read a biography of Wolfe and settled for the much milder rites of the Hagerstown Fair. It might require a whole bevy of psychiatrists, working in cooperating teams, to unearth in the lower regions of my id or ego the pleasure that I take in the Hagerstown Fair. I've never been the all-out social type who goes to the fair as part of a crowd and lives it up wildly. My tachycardiac insides discourages me from going aboard the rides that make up the major appeal of the fair to all children and most adults. I have never been enough of a farmer to appreciate the subtleties of the agricultural exhibitions, and even before I have reached the halfway point between my house and the fairgrounds, I get the sickening certainty that once again this year, no matter how careful I may be to avoid the awful mistake, I shall somehow betray to guffawing yokels my chronic inability to distinguish the Guernseys from the Jerseys.

Besides, the Hagerstown Fair ain't what she used to be. I understand from various sources that it is customary in all parts of the nation to decry the decline of the local fair in the same despondent tones as the folks bemoan the complete collapse of the morals of teenagers or the inability to keep a new car in operation for more than two years. But the decline of the Hagerstown Fair is not altogether subjective. Some objective phenomena exist as a guide: the fact that the race track has expanded from one-half to five-eighths of a mile, gobbling up the midway through this bloating, and the habit possessed by buildings on the fairgrounds to burn down, at the rate of one every two or three years, and never get replaced.

But still I go to the fairgrounds and totter around those dusty acres in much the same manner as I did when I strode more firmly in my younger days. My fairgoing biography could be distinguished, like the compositions of Beethoven, into three divisions. For a while, I attended the fair solely for pleasure. Then came the years when I was a sincere journalist who had eyes only for the things at the fair that should be covered. In recent years, my fairgoing partakes of both former manners: I still get some work done and I get some pleasure out of it, because by now I'm as much an institution at the fairgrounds as the model railroad exhibit and people come to me to give me judging results or reveal the new attractions, information that I used to spend hours tracking down. I can think of only one possible explanation for the fair's fascination. It may be the very alienness of the institution that intrigues me. It is real, this strangeness, unlike the shadowy unreality that we find in the movie theater, and it is an unreality that can be sopped up by practically all the senses, unlike the unreality of a great painting that can only be seen or a great symphony that can only be heard. Normal adults do not take animals off the farm to show them to other people, children do not normally stay alive on the kind of food that is sold on the fairgrounds, employable persons do not normally earn a living by wiggling their bellies in front of a crowd of gawking Appalachians in an obscure corner of Maryland. But those things happen during Fair Week.

Some other things are improbable about the local fair. Unlike the majority of such institutions, it is an in-town operation. The fairgrounds are barely a half-mile from the center of town. Except for the railroad rights of way, the fairgrounds is the only large tract of land

without residential or office buildings in private hands in a city that now stretches in unbroken builtup condition two or three miles from its center in all directions. The fairgrounds is about four blocks long and three long blocks wide, not counting some ground recently acquired for parking purposes when that expanded racetrack also digested a parking lot. Even less probable to anyone who knows Hagerstown, the fair is run by an organization whose stockholders earn no profits. The Agricultural and Mechanical Association of Washington County is the legal name of the corporation that runs the fair and the race meet. During most of its history, its charter forbade payment of dividends. A few years ago, the legislature changed the charter to provide for distribution of largesse, but nobody has gotten a cent yet. The fair loses impressive sums each year, which are more than recouped by profits from the race meet. The difference goes into additional amenities for the jockeys' building and such things. All the stockholders get out of their investment is a pair of free tickets to an interminable annual dinner meeting, yet the stock sells for eight and ten times its par value on the rare occasions when it comes onto the market. The directors would dearly love to concentrate on the race meet, but the charter provides for instant dissolution of the whole shebang if the fair isn't conducted. It even kept going during World War Two when the suspension of such things elsewhere in Maryland caused it to become unofficial state fair.

When I was a very minute boy, it was an Oktoberfest in chronology if not in vigor. It was held in October, when the harvest was completed except for the latest apples and the hot roast beef sandwiches were absolutely irresistible to the nose. Older fairgoers back in those Fair Weeks of the 1930's relished finding someone who would listen to their laments about the decline of the fair from its previous giddy heights, back in the time before electric wires had been strung on the grounds, when everything closed down at sundown and business and commercial life in the Cumberland Valley halted to permit people to attend in the daytime. But around 1938, I believe, the fair was moved up to September, in an effort to avoid loss of grandstand revenue on chilly October nights. The positioning of Fair Week in August is only a few years old, inspired by various considerations arising out of the assignment of race meet dates in Maryland and in competing West Virginia tracks. Now the heat is the worst thing about the Hagerstown Fair, farm exhibits are thinned out by the refusal of vegetables and fruits to mature early enough for entry at the fair, and the original cause of change has come full circle: nightly grandstand attractions have been discontinued for lack of patronage.

But some things about the fair don't change with the passing of years. I can still count on finding the wonderful oasis of peace and tranquillity in the judging arena for livestock. The cattle show must be the most restful contest ever invented, in the Hagerstown Fair incarnation. All the farmers who enter their cows, heifers and steers know one another. If anyone really cares about winning or losing, he never shows it. Only rarely are there entries whose exceptional merits or inadequacies are arresting enough to disturb the unruffled placidity of the show. Even the public address system that the judge uses to explain the reasons behind his choice tones down its decibels as no other public address system has ever been known to do; his slow flow of talk soothes my nerves as the muttering of the farmer must relax the cow at milking time. The unreality exists here, of course, particularly when the puniest 4-H club members enter the ring with the largest animals. It is remarkable, how the cows and calves gauge their balkiness to the dimensions of the human holding the halter. Obviously they could pull most of the adults and all of the children anywhere they wish. But they

offer only enough resistance to give some healthy exercise to the human muscles in control, weak or mighty. My favorite time at the judging arena is late afternoon. This provides backlighting on sunny days that suffuses all visible portions of the world in gold. The dingy wooden cattle sheds to the west of the show ring are transformed into something out of an old novel, the straw and the droppings on the path in front of the sheds partake equally of the very quintessence of golden yellow, the pimples on the faces of the girls and the day's growth of whiskers on the cheeks of the men are softened by the overhanging roof of the arena, and even the Black Angus cattle appear to have suddenly betrayed a bit of miscegenation in some distant past era on sections of the skin that are pure white on all other occasions.

I'm not altogether comfortable at the sheep and swine show, however. The animals are not as polite. Worse yet, time is catching up with the Ernst family, who have been indistinguishable from this department as far back as the memory of Hagerstown extends. The head of the family has been ill and almost didn't get out of the hospital in time to attend the fair this year. He is still superintendent of the department, but his wife did most of the work. Equally serious, from my standpoint, is the grim evidence of how fast time is passing provided by the two daughters. I've known them since they were wriggling blonde creatures small enough to fit in my hip pocket. Now both are married, and I felt even older than usual, a considerable feat for me, when I saw Betty Ann taking care of a tiny blonde boy, the very image of her. I felt a little better, although embarrassed, when I complimented her on the health and handsome appearance of the baby, only to be told that she had been married for just six months and this was her nephew. Vera Mae took me back behind the sheep pen but there is really very little that I can say about this event in Horizons. It just happened to be the best place to confine an exceptionally frisky lamb that needed its picture taken.

I know that we are living in the welfare state, where Madison Avenue lavishes its wiles on the public. But you'd never guess it, from the decline of the giveaway at the Hagerstown Fair. The first fairs that I attended could be enjoyed simply from the standpoint of seeing how much you could take home without spending a cent. For reasons that I still don't comprehend, yardsticks were the favorite giveaway at those old fairs. Conceivably, it was that way because such long commercial messages could be imprinted on them. I get as depressed as all getout when I poke through the offerings at a public auction and find in a box of junk one or two halfrotted yardsticks with a barely legible inscription, somehow surviving all the needs for kindling wood and sword battles of kids down through the years until the family reached the impasse of the auction block. But there were other things, too. I still have somewhere one or two of the songbooks that a local music store used to distribute to anyone who glanced at its booth. They contained as much music as you'd pay 50¢ or thereabouts for today, and from them I learned to love devotedly the old chestnuts that most of my friends consider hopelessly corny: Juanita, Aunt Dinah's Quilting Party, and She Was Bred in Old Kentucky, for instance. I am not quite so sure about the balloons. I know that some of them cost money but there must have been some free ones, too, because nothing else could explain the ghastly sight that always greeted me the morning after. I always insisted on bringing all my balloons into the house, overnight they would gradually deflate, and the sight of the flabby, empty corpses scattered over the floor was woeful the next morning. Nobody would have bought me enough balloons to set up this type of gaseous carnage. There were also impressive quantities of free advertising booklets, almost all of which dealt with abstruse considerations about chicken feed or disc harrows. The men in charge of the dis-

plays seemed eager for small boys and girls to help themselves to the piles of pamphlets. Maybe they didn't want the job of carting them away when Fair Week ended.

I mentioned the grandstand shows a few paragraphs back. These have also changed in the direction of the vanishing act over the years. At one time, there was harness racing at the fair every afternoon and free admission to the grandstand to watch it. Maybe the fair directors feared that the public would begin to request equal honesty in the unharnessed races, because these pleasant contests were dropped long ago. Then ensued a long period of experimenting with grandstand attractions, always encountering some kind of disaster. For a while, the fair hired pretty good talent and it rained every night. They built a stage with a roof so that the show could go on, and the fire authorities condemned the grandstand. Then as soon as the present steel and concrete grandstand was constructed to replace the old rickety wooden structure, television came along and the new grandstand wasn't big enough to hold the quantities of customers needed to pay the bills for first-line entertainment, and second-rate entertainment didn't draw the people who had grown used to seeing the best in their livingrooms. Minnie Pearl perked up interest one year, but flopped when she played a return engagement. A hillbilly singer who has become quite a celebrity among the more primitive residents of the valley was hired to manage the grandstand shows for several years, but he spent most of his energies devising plots to get his picture into the newspapers. A desperation strategy, turning the week's grandstand entertainment over to a gigantic local amateur contest, resulted in hours that nobody can think of calmly, after the passing of years. This year, the fair authorities tried the only thing not yet attempted: a grandstand show on only one night, composed only of an auto thrill show. This seemed to arouse public interest, because of the likelihood that blood would spurt from a fender or hubcap after one or more deliberate crashes. But it was scheduled for Wednesday night and on Monday someone noticed that midway attractions were set up across two sections of that new race track around which the daredevils were supposed to race. Like Lear at the latest evidence of a daughter's perfidy, the authorities announced that a modified version of the thrill show would be given, confined to the empty part of the race track, and no charge would be made for admission. People stormed the fairgrounds in such quantities that the gate take more than compensated for the lost grandstand revenue, the show was held over for a second night with identical results, and it's been signed up already for next year.

SAPS once had a member who traveled with a large carnival. Maril Shrewsbury, or something of the sort, was her name. Every year at fair time, I get this wild uneasy notion: will this be the year that the police crack down on the midway for gambling or lewdness and one of the female prisoners suddenly remembers that this is the city where a fan lives and makes a dramatic appeal for me to rescue her? It might be worth the risk of exposure of all my fanac to the citizenry of Hagerstown, for I remember her as an interesting writer who wasn't unhappy in a way of life that I could never survive. But I sometimes wonder what happens to all the other people who put on the sideshows, operate the booths, and run the concessions at county fairs. Few of them are old. Do they die young or do they somehow manage to convert themselves to a stationary existence? If they do settle down, are they happy about the new way of life and do they keep their old occupation a secret? I can think of nobody here in Hagerstown who admits to a past of this type, although nearby Boonsboro has a former burlesque comedian who is proud of his trade. What has happened to all the organ grinders who used to show up at the fair? I haven't seen one for years. There is a man in

Hagerstown who looks exactly like an organ grinder. But he has no monkey and has no time for one. He spends all morning walking from his home by the river to Hagerstown, where he visits various stores whose managers give him empty pasteboard boxes, which he dissects. Then he leaves in late afternoon, bent low under the weight of all this pasteboard strapped on his back, is home by sundown, and places the cardboard in a large barn. Nobody knows what happens when he fills the barn completely but we'll find out soon. I believe that the monkey shows outlasted the organ grinders a few years. The monkey shows came in two varieties. In one type, the monkeys did tricks, hunted fleas from one another, and generally concentrated on being cute and amusing. The other variety put the monkeys into small vehicles and raced them against one another while the public placed bets. It was sickening to me to discover that monkeys get grim and serious about life, as they did in the races. I know that glassblowing exists today as a skill that produces expensive objects. But the glassblowers don't make the fair circuit to Hagerstown as they once did. The creation of lovely things out of molten glass somehow struck me as much more dangerous and thrilling than swordswallowing. It is not even possible to buy souvenirs of the fair nowadays with the date and place inscribed on machine-made glass. Somewhere around the house there are two or three little tumblers with some ancient year inscribed in clear letters against the red band along the lower circumference.

Once I admitted in Horizons that as a boy, my favorite card game was the simplest and dullest ever invented, whereby two players turn up cards from a deck, both cards go to the one who turned up the higher card, and seven hours later all the cards have passed into the hands of the winner. I'm afraid that my money-spending at the fairgrounds used to be equally conservative. Instead of putting money on a certain number for a wheel of chance, I would go instead to the stand where you shot at things until you finally knocked down something and got a worthless trinket as a reward, or I would choose a duck from the hundreds floating along in a trough under a sign that guaranteed a prize for every number in the duck. However, I attended a Catholic school for a few years when I was very young, and the enforced religious instruction was bound to have some manner of effect on me; it took the form of making me a bingo fan. This county now has a law putting a five dollar limit on the value of prizes given to winners at this particular vice, but the town was wide open in this respect in my youth. I was rewarded by winning a couple of wrist watches that actually ran for years and years. I came across one of them while rooting in old drawers a short time back. It ticked as loudly as the air conditioner nextdoor but it kept time after a fashion. My greatest moment came on the Sunday before the fair started one year. My father took me to the grounds to look at the preparations. A few concessionaires were ready to go. My father gave me a dime to play a wheel of chance. I used it, even though every boy in Hagerstown knew how those wheels were weighted to prevent them from stopping at a number that would award anything of real value. The man twirled the wheel and when it stopped his eyes met mine in looks of equal incredulity and horror. I had won a bicycle. He didn't want to part with an object that was supposed to be a permanent unattainable goal and I knew from previous attempts that I didn't want something from which I would fall every time I tried to ride it. But my father was so proud that neither the concessionaire nor I had the heart to object. It was one of those small-size bicycles but entirely too much for my small and puny frame. I was bruised for several years after that from my efforts to stay aboard the thing for at least ten feet. Even a cousin out in San Diego somehow learned of my awkwardness and wrote me a scathing letter about it. Eventually I discovered how much fun it was to put the

support under the rear wheel, climb on the firmly balanced vehicle with an atlas in hand, and pedal furiously away on the same spot, pretending that I was traveling to the distant spots of the nation that I knew I would visit in reality in later years. I've never seen most of them yet.

Despite all the changes, it's nice to go to the fair each year because of the probability that some things will remain unchanged. I can be sure of finding around the poultry building L. L. Toms, one of my favorite men. He is a tremendously intelligent man who has worked all his life in a shoe factory on a low-paying, dull stitching job, apparently so that his mental powers will be undiluted when his free time arrives. He knows everything that has ever been recorded about the history and theory of breeding pigeons and chickens, likes to tell of the most famous show birds of the 19th century in much the same manner as Los Angeles old timers like to write about Bixel Street, and somehow is ferreting out of theoretical non-existence a complete set of fair catalogues for the Hagerstown library. He retires next year and plans to begin world travels on a shoestring, first in Europe.

Somewhat less gratifying is another annual sure thing, the visit of the governor. He sets the date for his visit weeks in advance. A few days before the chosen date, the rumor pervades the fair officials that he can't come because of some more pressing appointment or because of political vendettas. Nevertheless, at least three directors of the fair contact me to make sure that I will be on hand with camera and note paper at the right time, I promise that I'll be there, and an hour before the appointed moment, the governor arrives and the office is bombarded by frantic telephone calls from fair officials who have panicked at the thought that I've forgotten the appointment. I always get there on time, wait outside the room where dinner is being served and try to identify the strange noises emerging through the windows from it, and then comes the climactic moment when the governor's picture is to be taken with whichever three fair officials are most likely to have their careers advanced by appearing in print in the company of the governor. Sometimes the governor has time to go onto the midway and pat a cow on the head, sometimes he is too rushed to do more than cast a soulful look at the distant ferris wheel. Inevitably, just as he is leaving, someone remembers that they haven't given him anything to take to his wife when he goes back to Annapolis, and the household arts department is raided for whichever prize cake feels and looks safe for consumption after several days of the heat and dust of the fair.

This is great fair country. There is hardly a Maryland county that lacks its own. In nearby areas of Pennsylvania, there are some really tremendous fairs, the kind that get 50,000 visitors in one day and hire the Nelson family to highlight the grandstand acts. But currently I'm on the pass list for only one of the big area fairs, the one at York, Pa., in September. It's three or four times the size of the Hagerstown fair in every respect. Invariably, I get completely lost on the grounds and must remember to start for home a half-hour early because it will take me at least that long to find a gate leading out of the place. But somehow I don't feel at home at the York Fair. It's quite probable that my entire day there will not produce one encounter with someone I know. There will be the nasty knowledge that there is too much to be experienced in the time available. I can take pictures for my own amusement, not for the newspaper, but the crowds are so big that it's hard to get the clear shots without someone's unwanted head hiding an important portion of the item I've chosen. The vague dissatisfaction I feel at York has only one good angle. It makes me realize that life in Hagerstown has at least one advantage, pleasant fairgoing.

The Worst of Martin

(Again continuing "The Spirits Were..." from the winter, 1954, issue of Grotesque, written and published for FAPA by Ed Martin, Berlin, Conn.)

She spoke up: "There are spirits both good and bad. Your grandfather has been pressed back by a vagrant evil on his own plane. But there is someone else. I feel someone else trying to get through from another plane. They are close--so close."

The trumpet climaxed her lead. The voice was high and the words poured out at a great rate:

"Josephine--Josephine Perkins, this is Aunty Josephine. Have you found the money yet? I told you where I left it and when you find it I want you to give half to Queen Mary. Have you found it, Josephine?"

Mrs. Perkins spoke up, matching her voice to the intensity of the moment. "It wasn't in the attic, Aunty. I tore the place apart."

"It must be there," the voice of Aunty began to trail off. "I put it there myself and it must be there. I want Queen Mary to have half. So you must find it. You must!"

"How much was there?" asked Mrs. Perkins.

That was the moment Queen Mary had been waiting for. The woman would not find what Queen Mary herself had dreamed up, and now she was beginning to feel responsible. There would soon be a large contribution.

"How much was there?" repeated Mrs. Perkins.

But the voice in the trumpet was disappearing. It membled some double-talk--words that almost made sense. Shiela was careful to mention no specific amount.

Suddenly a clear voice issued from the neighborhood of the trumpet. Although the voice was different from the original Aunty Josephine, there was no mistaking the words: "It was exactly twenty-seven cents. Let's see you split that with Queen Mary."

"You're fired!" Queen Mary bit her armpit in desperation.

"I didn't say that. And if you tell me I'm fired just once more, I'll blow the whole thing up." The earphones indicated that Shiela was pouring an extra long refreshment.

The "twenty-seven cents" was like a wet dishrag in Mrs. Perkins' face. She got up from the table. She had felt rather silly tearing her attic apart. Particularly when the search had revealed nothing but endless dust.

"What?" she asked. Her head crossed an overhead wire. The trumpet bobbed in response and she was rational enough to see that she had caused it. She jerked the wire again and then it slipped out of her hand. The trumpet and whipping ectoplasm sped into a corner of the room and disappeared.

"I felt wires," stated Mrs. Perkins.

"Who can say what the spirits feel like?" shouted Queen Mary in some semblance of a pious tone. The following moment of silence assured her that she had the upper hand again. "Now look what you've done." Even in the darkness there was no question that she was addressing Josephine Perkins. "You've broken the circle." Her tone suggested that Mrs. Perkins had acquired leprosy.

"Imagine," whispered Helen. "She's broken the circle."

"There will be no more spirits tonight." Unless they come out of a bottle, thought Queen Mary.

"They've run out of spirits," said Tom to Helen. There was a snicker in his words that Helen felt would keep the evening going.

Queen Mary struggled through the darkness to the wall switch. She turned on the lights. The half-dozen people around the table blinked

in the sudden light. They would have continued blinking for a while and then after a few sheepish remarks have started home but for a startling sight. The group was still seated, with the exception of Queen Mary and Mrs. Perkins. But in a second they were all hugging the wall farthest from the table. Queen Mary had lost complete control and in view of the development did not care in the least.

A hand was walking up and down the table. It was not a severed hand. Rather, it gradually disappeared above the wrist; faded into nothingness. The fingers walked to the center of the table. The hand hopped up and down on the first two fingers and then began to execute a clever can-can.

"Wonderful!" said Shorty Waldo. "The spirits really are strong tonight."

Queen Mary was convinced of that but did not feel a bit of enthusiasm.

"What goes on?" asked Shiela.

"I couldn't begin to tell you," said Queen Mary aloud.

Mrs. Perkins looked at her sharply.

"Don't you hear voices?" asked Queen Mary. "I hear voices asking the strangest questions."

"Are the lights on?" asked Shiela.

"Even with the lights on," said Queen Mary. "The spirits manifest themselves."

"What does 'manifest' mean?" asked Helen.

"Can't tell offhand," said Tom. "But whatever it is she'll make a little money on it."

"The hand must have something to tell us," continued Queen Mary. "Let us return to the table."

"At least she's no coward," said Helen.

The closer the group got to the table the more agitated the hand became. A point of balance was achieved about five feet from the table. The group stood hesitantly at that distance while the hand continued its amazing gymnastics. Queen Mary maintained her leadership by being the closest--by five or six inches. That would not be enough, she knew. She must have complete control of the situation or she would forfeit her clientele. She decided to sit at the table.

As though in response to her intent the hand rose high into the air over the table and then materialized into a perfect skeleton.

By the time the skeleton was complete the room was empty. There had been a momentary jam at the door, but Queen Mary, by use of her preponderance of bulk, managed to get out first.

They were followed by Helen and Tom, at a much slower pace. For of course they were used to such manifestations and were not in the least alarmed.

Helen and Tom strolled out into the night air. It was late spring and it was pleasantly cool. The night was clear, and the countless stars lighted their path.

By the time they reached the country dirt road there was no sign of the rest of the group. They walked along the road a ways and then cut off into the dense wood.

"This is a kind of scary route," said Helen. "Even if it is a short cut."

"What on earth could you be scared of?"

"That's exactly what I'm scared of," said Helen, with typical rationality. "I'm scared of the fact that I'm scared-of."

"Just like a woman," commented Tom. "Are you scared of people or ghosts?"

(To be concluded)

Trio

Some of my recent reading has been enlightening respecting music, in one way or the other. I don't intend to bore anyone with useless facts about the secondary dominants in the lesser contemporaries of Bach, because I haven't read any thesis that may have been written recently about them. It's been too hot this summer to plow through the more technical books about music, anyway.

One wonderful surprise has been an anthology of Mencken's writings about music. I knew that my Maryland predecessor had enjoyed amateur poundings at the piano in his spare time. But it hadn't been very plain from his autobiographical works and the anthologies of Menckeniana, how deep and permanent was his interest in good music. Moreover, he had the endearing habit of writing about music just as he wrote about topics that he revered much less. It comes as a considerable surprise to find a man who wrote a definitive study of his native tongue, who published millions of words of essays and reviews, admitting the following: "I'd rather have written any symphony of Brahms' than any play of Ibsen's. I'd rather have written the first movement of Beethoven's Eroica than the Song of Solomon; it is not only far more beautiful, it is also far more profound. A better man wrote it. I believe that Anatole France and Joseph Conrad are the best writers now living, but neither has written anything so good as the first act of 'Der Rosenkavalier' or the last ten minutes of 'Electra'. In music a man can let himself go. In words he always remains a bit stiff and unconvincing." I'm immensely fond of almost all Mencken's writings while disagreeing with the opinions expressed in almost all of it. It's wonderful, to find a paragraph that I can second devoutly.

Some of Mencken's epigrams on music have already become famous, of course, like his definition of the music of Haydn, "A girl on your knee and another in your heart" or on Chopin, "Two embalmers at work on a minor poet". But this collection shows how splendidly Mencken could dispense with the old cliches and vague statements in musical criticism. He says of an inferior performance of the first trumpet part in Bach that he thought "that a stupendous B flat clarinet had been introduced into the orchestra, and that it was being played by steam". When Mencken wants to emphasise the difficulty for singers of certain arias he says that even a piccolo player would get out of breath tackling them. When Mencken goes into hyperbole, it has a conviction that is hard to resist with the instinct, even if reason tells me otherwise. Of Schubert, for instance: "Within the limits of his interests and curiosities he hatched more good ideas in his thirty-one years than all the rest of mankind has hatched since the beginning of time." Positive that Beethoven's trouble was syphilis, Mencken insisted that nobody will write another Eroica without a positive Wassermann test.

Louis Cheslock, who compiled and annotated this book, seems to have been one of Mencken's best friends. I'll bet that Cheslock didn't dare to act as pedantic around Mencken as he does in this volume. It is funny when Cheslock solemnly inserts a footnote to explain that Haydn wrote 104 symphonies, as Mencken is referring to Haydn's 100 symphonies. But it is criminal that Cheslock took up so much space in the book by writing dully about musical matters in the style of a music appreciation textbook. But the tremendous energy of Mencken causes me to overlook this stuffy old fellow. And the book contains many marvelous added attractions, like the picture of Mencken as he formed part of a vocal quintet of Sunpapers workers for Christmas of 1944 and the manuscript for the prissy, conventional music to which he set a stupid poem by William Watson in his earlier years.

Another volume involves a gentleman who was just as disruptive a force, a century and a continent away from Mencken. But Paganini devoted himself primarily to playing and creating music, and the sad difference is this: Mencken might have revolutionized the whole field of musical criticism if he'd concentrated on writing about music, while Paganini might have changed the world's standards of musical execution if he'd put down on paper a trick of the trade.

The Renee de Saussine biography of Paganini is no great shucks in any respect. It mixes fact and invention without warning, it wanders off into unrelated cultural and historical matters without a byyour-leave, and the translation is bad from an original that may have been worse in style. But it does provide a bit more information on the ticklish question of the Paganini secret. There's little chance that we'll learn the secret, after all these years, but its discovery would be much more useful than more publicized musical riddles like the real tune on which the Enigma variations are based.

Maybe I'm naive to assume that there was a secret. It is conceivable that Paganini's extraordinary abilities as a violinist can be explained away by other means. It could have been a simply physical accident, because physicians found certain unusual things about his muscles and joints around the left hand and wrist. Or it might be one of those accidents of heredity, the kind that makes a Mark Twain or a Wilt Chamberlain appear out of nowhere for no apparent reason. Paganini might have simply been inflating the legend he had blown up around himself, when he said that he had a secret which would enable anyone to become a virtuoso after only three years at much less trouble than the normal process of struggling and practicing most of one's waking hours for two or three decades.

But I still believe in the secret. This might be partly the result of an unhappy family secret of my own. My great grandfather Klipp made a fortune out of pretzels, kept his recipe a secret, didn't get around to telling the facts to anyone before his death, and so I am not the heir to a pretzel empire that might have existed. It's equally possible that Paganini had a secret and really did intend to impart it to pupils when he got tired of being a performer, and was surprised by death too soon. The Paganini cult was not something like the Beatle phenomena. The kids went wild over Paganini but the most intelligent and cultured people of the day were even more flabbergasted with what he did with his violin. And we do know a few of the ways in which he helped along that secret. He tuned his violin higher than usual on occasion, to increase the brilliancy of the tone. He cheated by using his left hand for some apparently impossible pizzicato effects. He invented bowing techniques that simply weren't known at the time but were instantly imitated. But there must have been something else. We can be fairly sure that it wasn't some secret modification of his instruments, many of which survive and got a good going-over. I doubt that drugs did it. Too many physicians issued learned reports after careful studies of him, without even hinting at addiction, and he lived longer than constant dosing of himself would have made probable. He traveled with next to no luggage and performed under such a variety of circumstances that it's impossible that he should have had a confederate always in hiding to play along with him in the more hairraising passages. If I had to guess, I'd say the only possible explanation lies in hypnosis. Possibly in the sort of hypnosis that Hitler accomplished--some listeners swore that they heard his violin utter actual words as he performed. But much more likely, self-hypnosis that made possible feats of dexterity and endurance that were unknown. His mother seems to have been a hysterical sort of person who had visions. She might have set an

example to her young son of odd mental behavior that impelled him to try to do likewise and in the process Paganini may have stumbled into a self-hypnosis technique that gave him the edge over his rival fiddlers.

The third book rarely mentions music, but it's important to a person who likes a certain Donizetti opera as much as I do. I am still wading through the novels of Sir Walter Scott, and recently this splashing in the former type of historical romance brought me to The Bride of Lammermoor. For anyone who is thinking of going and doing likewise, I can offer a couple of inducements: it's shorter by one-third than most of the Scott novels and it is much better as a story, possibly for that very reason.

Anyone who has seen or heard Lucia di Lammermoor has had the impression that events happen pretty fast after one another and that they don't make a great deal of sense when viewed from a distance after they have all finished happening. Part of this impression can be blamed on the severe cutting almost always observed in performances of the opera; whole scenes vanish, important connecting links are snapped, and we never learn why Edgardo shows up in time to start off the famous sextet, or what in the world he is doing, wandering around that cemetery when Lucia's funeral waddles by. However, the Scott novel reveals how much more was lost by the fact that it's impossible to put a lot of fine detail into a musical work for the stage. Even the best of today's movies don't try to include all the subtleties of the books on which they are based. I imagine that the audiences when Lucia was brand new and Lucy was only slightly less than new were amazed at all the things the librettists had squeezed into Donizetti's opera and their memories of the novel automatically supplied the fine details that we miss today.

So I would recommend strongly the novel, if you have any interest in the opera. At the start of the opera, we learn how the hero had saved the heroine when she took fright from an angry bull. It sounds like a mild sort of heroism. But in the novel, it's much more convincing, for this was a special bull, from one of the wild herds that ran wild in Scotland at that time. Moreover, in the novel Edgar also saves Lucy's father to provide an important complication for the plot for which there was no time in the stage work.

The one telling charge that can be levied against the opera is its failure to include any of the humor that provides contrast in the tragedy told in the book. The fact that the hero is broke and that his famous home, Wolf's Crag, is dilapidated becomes the meat for genuinely funny events in the novel, which contains an old servant who thinks up one ingenious way after another to save face when someone comes calling and there's nothing in the place to eat. The family curse also is to be found only in the novel, but there is a fairly good reason for this: it causes Edgar to die by riding his horse into quicksand, a rather difficult end to portray in the opera house and one that wouldn't provide as much time for a final aria as the conclusion adopted for the opera, where Edgardo punctures himself. For some reason I cannot comprehend, the villainous brother of Lucia is named Enrico in the opera, while in the book he is Henry, hardly more than a boy, who contributes to the plot only by making available unwittingly to Lucy the dagger with which she butchers her bridegroom on her wedding night.

Incidentally, improbable though the opera seems, it is probably closer to actual history than the novel. Scott elaborated considerably an actual event that embarrassed the Dalrymple family very much when they found a best-seller based on something they'd been trying to forget. It isn't quite clear what went on in the bridal chamber that night, but the opera probably adds fewer imaginary events than the novel.