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The spring of this year of madness 1948 produces still another issue of Horizons. This is volume 9, number 3; FAPA number 28, whole number 34, VAPA number 3, produced by Harry Warner, Jr., on the Doubledoubletoilandtrouble Mimeograph.

In the Beginning

I don't feel much like publishing a fanzine, gentlemen. The remarkably successful efforts of this wondrous country of ours to cook up war fever again have left me dazed, dizzy, disgusted, and slightly sick at the stomach. I respectfully submit that the manner in which public opinion has been swayed within the last six weeks is far more remarkable than the discovery of the atomic bomb, and the combination of sentiment against Russia and the bomb seem to me quite likely to be the beginning of the end of everything we know as civilization. I hope I'm as wrong this time as I've been wrong in the past about other things.

To the reviews, then, and once again there isn't space to comment on every item, nor have I had time enough to read the post-mailed FAPA publications. First, the VAPA:

Not much of interest to me in this mailing. It's rather interesting to remember how proud the VAPA was at the beginning that here was an organization that wouldn't devote most of its efforts to reviews. "The poetry is incomprehensible to me and gives me an inferiority complex because I can't understand what it means or why it is supposed to be considered poetry." I'll save Phanteur comments for the FAPA section of this. "Apologies for the very large number of typographical errors in the last issue of Horizons, and for the presence of only one staple to the copy." I ran out of staples unexpectedly, and decided it better to send them out that way than to risk missing the mailing by waiting until I could get into a store and buy some more. "The activity of Stevenson is the one bright spot in this mailing. Let's hope it keeps going on and on." I think that "This Has Nothing to Do with Fantasy" had that "flavor" because I reported only on the eccentric side of these people, omitting to mention the ways in which they are pretty much like everyone else. The "realist" writers dress up characters who have just as many fantastic ways of acting, but they also include their normal traits when presenting them in fiction, and it isn't such a stiff jolt. In any event, I'd like to tell the skeptics that my article contained no fictionizing and no exaggeration; the things were just as I've told them. "My note in the Vanguard Amateur turned out to be unnecessary; Horizons showed up at the old Blishish address." I enjoyed the record review, Doc. My only complaint is that you pay too little heed to records that aren't orchestral. Of course there is nothing wrong with symphony orchestras; but I think that too steady a diet of this type of music can cause the ear to become a little tone-deaf to the beauties of chamber music, vocal music, organ music, and several other fields. At a guess, I'd say that not more than ten percent of all the great music in existence was written for symphony orchestra, so the person who concentrates on those luscious sounds of the modern orchestra is shutting himself off from a lot of great music.... I think Columbia chose the lesser of two evils by merchandising the Handel concerti grossi in bulk. Putting them out in individual albums would have been very hard on anyone who wanted to buy them all--

about seven bucks more in the purchase price, and a doubling of the shelving space. And several of the best of these works are already available by themselves in other waxed versions. My kick on sales tactics is against instances where compositions that don't even belong near one another are tossed into one album, just because they happen to be sung or played by the same person. It's particularly bad in the case of groups of songs on records; in a three-disc album of operatic arias, for instance, you're almost sure to find at least one side that you already own in someone else's version, and another aria or two that you don't want to own at all. "I heard an announcer on a radio station in Washington introduce a tenor solo entitled ~~Mamma~~ "Vesti" from an obscure work entitled "La Giubba." Could you supply any information on the plot of that particular opera, now that you've taken care of Mr. Palhetigue?

Someone commented this time on the better enveloping that the FAPA offers over the VAPA. But my FAPA mailing almost didn't reach me; the bulk of the contents had split the bottom, and publications were beginning to ooze out. Apparently that's where my copy of the New Testa ent went, for it wasn't to be found anywhere. I'm going to find out if the volume is available around town; if not, I'll have to ask for a copy from the surplus stock, for I'd like to know what it's all about. "The Cold War" isn't bad at all, despite the impossibility of crowding it all into three pages. But, Henry, can't you give your readers credit for enough intelligence to look at the next page without being reminded of that? A little more care in the makeup would help, too; there's no reason why you shouldn't wait until less than a page of each story or article is left before jumping it to the back of the magazine. However, this is easily the best issue of Sparx so far. "Electa" also turned out to be much better than I had dared hope. As far as I know, the twist to the plot is a ~~new~~ new one. I liked the cover, too. You are definitely on the right track with Moonshine; now if you can force yourself to omit the "poetry" and the drawings, you'll really have something there. It's astonishing, to find Don reviewing books in Phanteur. He interested me in "The Forbidden Garden," the only one of the recent crop of semi-pro fantasy volumes that I feel the slightest desire to purchase. Waiving activity requirements for officers doesn't sound necessary to me. I can testify by experience that the post of president and vice president don't take enough time and effort to make any difference. If worst came to worst, the official editor could claim activity for publishing The Fantasy Amateur, and I don't think anyone would kick if his reign had been a good one. The secretary-treasurer's work shouldn't be too much of a burden if he keeps his records up to date and doesn't wait until just before a mailing to do everything. Larry Shaw produced an FAPA index three or four years ago, Cosval; another is badly needed now, though. "Heimrhibeat" isn't German for Lonework, and I doubt if it's German for anything, 4e. Old and Rare isn't decent and isn't funny. Since he has done it in his paper on the rating of rocket fuels, maybe Tom Gardner can explain why some writers insist in scattering footnotes all over the premises when it would be so much easier on the reader and the printer to put the information in parenthesis at its proper place in the text itself. I sympathize with Milt's feelings toward crackpots, but I think he omits several important considerations from his article. Inasmuch as it's impossible to determine the rare genius among the crowds of crackpots, I see no

way of frustrating the crackpots without holding back a certain amount of progress. I'm inclined to think that it's better to put up with the nuts and the aberrants for the sake of the few who may seem to be that way but really aren't; of course, I'm thinking of things in a broad sense--the fields of sociology, art, and so on, not just physics or any particular branch of science. Even more important, though, is the nuisance value that the aberrants have toward orthodox methods and ideas. The aberrants may not have the right ideas, but if they keep hammering away with the proposition that accepted ideas may be wrong, they serve a definite value. MAR seriously overestimates the willingness of scientists to accept new concepts, I think. Best example that occurs to me offhand is that of the chiropractors. Because their ideas about treating illness were obviously a bit too extreme, and because they upset so many sacred cows of medicine, the orthodox physicians fought them tooth and nail without admitting that the chiropractors might be partially right. So the chiropractors still aren't licensed to practice in Pennsylvania, but hospitals all over the country are setting up special sections for chiropractic methods, teaching people to operate them, and as a ~~sanction~~ face-saving method are calling these new methods "physical medicine." "I think Ray Higgs is sincere but I fail to see where the Lone Indian Fraternity will succeed when organizations backed by a thousand times as many people and ten thousand times as much money, using similar ideas, have failed. And I definitely wouldn't include mail order among hobbies to interest youths "in living a better and cleaner Christian life." "I also applaud Dale Hart's motives without enjoying the result. This kind of poetry seems to contain nothing but a few impressive combinations of incongruous adjectives and nouns, and apparently expects to intrigue the reader by never letting him know what it's all about. I still think that good poetry should be good reading even if the reader doesn't know all the intimate biographical details of the poet's life and doesn't have an expert's knowledge of all the other important poetry written within the last century. "Very good to see Redd Boggs begin his activity. He has either an absolutely phenomenal memory, or a hobby of looking up things in his files of old magazines! "Tom Gardner's method of trying out Cummings' novels on people unacquainted with science fiction proves nothing as to their value, except as introductory wedges to the field of science fiction. As science fiction stories, I'd rate them even lower than Hamilton, because Hamilton's stories have at least decent pulp plots and few of the cloying mannerisms of Cummings' style. "Remember "Thunder and Roses," Fran; even if this country struck first and struck hard in the next war, the enemy might very probably be able to strike back once, just as hard, before collapsing. "Some sort of vital spark seems to have disappeared from the Speer publications. I think he chose some bad examples to argue about originality and genius, too; we certainly don't know enough about Homer to cite him--did he exist? are the two epics the great ones of their kind or merely the ones that happened to survive? is the Iliad meant seriously or as a satire on jingoism? And Wells in his fiction certainly had little or nothing except ~~mere~~ originality; who in or out of fandom can even remember the titles of more than two or three of the numerous mundane short stories and novels? "Willie Latson sounds more and more like Joe Fortier. WW should know

Quick, Watson, the Needle!

The record reviewing bug has bitten me, gentlemen. This article is experimental in its aim, and I won't burden you with a series unless the response is favorable from the beginning. It might help if you understand that I don't claim to be an expert on records and record history. When I say something nice about a record, I don't claim that it's one of the greatest discs ever cut. Instead I mean that it's a record which I liked very much for one reason or another. And in order to be a little different, I'm going to restrict my subject matter. I'll keep away from the new releases altogether, and try to write about only the less publicized music, in the hope that I'll recommend something that you'll like but that you might not have investigated without my remarks.

This time, I'm going to speak of three vocal discs, all of them great operatic scenes for female voices, one of them representing the finest in the older Italian school, another a prime example of Wagner at his greatest, and the third an example of a transitory work that falls exactly halfway between these two high points.

First is the great music from the first act of Bellini's "Norma," usually referred to as the "Casta Diva" aria for the sake of simplicity. None of the versions available now on records contains this soprano scene in its complete form, but an old Victor disc featuring Rosa Ponselle comes the closest. Further, I think it contains the greatest singing of the available choices, even though the reproduction isn't up to modern standards.

The Ponselle version starts off with the recitative which Norma sings upon her first appearance in the opera. If you think all Italian opera recitative is like the careless shouting that Verdi dashed off for his earlier operas, this dramatic section will change your mind. It is tremendously impressive, all the more so because of the tremendous contrast with what follows--an infinitely peaceful, long-sustained melody, the "Casta Diva" aria itself. The melody contains just a touch of the exotic, and if you like to visualize things when you listen to music, you can think of the setting of this act--a shrine of the ancient Druids, flooded with moonlight.

The other side contains the quick complementary aria for Norma which occurs a little later in the act, "Ah, Fello a Me Ritorno," that in concert is usually coupled with the "Casta Diva." It is a more conventional melody, but there is something immensely moving about the sudden slackening of tempo at one point where an entirely new theme intrudes for a moment, and the abrupt manner in which the famous march sweeps up in the orchestra at the end.

The recording is far from good from the engineering standpoint. The orchestra is thin, and there is such a wide range between the extremes of volume that you're deafened by the climaxes if you turn up the volume high enough to hear the soft parts. But Ponselle sings so magnificently that she puts to shame every coloratura of the present day. Her rapid passage work sticks to the pitch, her rapid staccato notes are rounded tones, not neutral squawks, and her lower register is as impressive as her upper tones.

The halfway point is the Flagstad recording for Victor of the big "Ozean!" scene from Weber's "Oberon." As usual, Flagstad's voice doesn't fare too well on records. In particular, her very first note sounds more like a steam whistle than the greatest dra-

matic soprano of our generation. But the sheer virtuosity of the singing more than compensates for this defect, and the orchestra is good--it's the Philadelphia, under Ormandy.

However, the music is the most interesting thing here. Weber came very close to the ideal of the Wagnerian "continuous melody" here, at the same time retaining the framework of the old Italian scena--slow air, fast tune. The slow opening section has a vocal line that is as fine as anything in Wagner up to the Ring. It is half-aria, half-recitative, with no formal melody, but mirrors and emphasizes the meaning of the words. Only the accompaniment betrays the fact that Weber lacked the final vital something that makes the all-out genius. This accompaniment has no leitmotif system to hold it together, rambles, and several times becomes hackneyed. But you will hear the brass section playing a queer anticipation of the "sword" theme from the Ring, and you will recognize the final fast section because it is the melody is contained in the familiar overture, in a slightly different rhythm. (In this vocal form, it betrays its genesis in the final movement of Beethoven's "Lebewohl" sonata.)

Finally, the Wagner record. It's the newest of these three with the advantage of modern recording, and features an artist almost as fine as Flagstad and Ponselle in the person of Blanche Thebom. It is the latest Victor version of Waltraute's narrative from "Gotterdammerung," and easily the best buy of the several produced in this country. You aren't apt to find the old Schumann-Heink version these days, and the excellent Thorberg recording doesn't contain as much of the music, stopping two minutes too soon.

I can't conceive of anyone disliking this music. It isn't as fine as it would be in its proper place in the opera, but it suffers less than most excerpted pieces from Wagner. There is a definite balance to it as excerpted here, a sense of progress to a final climax, and there is no need to cut or omit the vocal lines of other characters. Understanding of the German words is not necessary, though desirable. The music speaks for itself, but its effect is heightened if the listener knows that Waltraute is speaking of grave events--the doom that hovers over Walkalla, Wotan's gloom, and the growing urgency of the need for Brunnhilde to return to the Rhine the all-powerful ring. There is none of the "too much brass" in this music. Most of the orchestral part consists of tired, faltering echoes and reminders of familiar leitmotifs. The vocal line of Waltraute is heart-breakingly beautiful, and the moment when she describes her effort to console Wotan, and his reaction--"er gedachte, Brunnhilde--dein!"--is one of the greatest things in all art.

Thebom does superb work with the extremely difficult music. She gets a baritone quality into her tones, as she quotes Wotan, in a manner which no singer to my knowledge aside from Marion Anderson can achieve. Most difficult of all, she manages to provide plenty of dynamic range throughout the two full sides of the record, yet saves her full vocal volume for the pressing appeal contained in the powerful three final lines.

You shouldn't have much trouble finding any of these records. The Thebom disc was made only about two years ago. The Flagstad disc is considerably older, but available in vast quantities at every record store in Hagerstown, and I didn't have to hunt for the Ponselle record, though it must be 15 or 20 years old.

Genesis

That was supposed to be the title of a wonderfully learned and important article that I was planning to write. It was to be my masterpiece of fanartcling, a manuscript that would be spoken of in hushed tones for months, maybe years. I intended to show how most of the stories that have been outstanding in the prozines actually owed their ideas and plots to the Bible, through conscious or unconscious borrowing on the part of the authors. But the article was never written. I decided that it would be necessary to re-read a good part of the Bible and a lot of science fiction to do the job properly. Then I got the suspicion that it really isn't a case of derivation, but rather an instance of certain basic characteristics of legend or fiction turning up in both religion and fantasy. So this page in Horizons will commemorate the failure to achieve my great project.

I planned to start off by pointing out that few of us escape vast childhood influences of religion and the Bible, influences that stick in the subconscious in later years no matter how cynical or agnostic we may grow to be about such things.

At this point, I would have been forced to admit that part of my task had already been done by writers on the stories of H. P. Lovecraft. His commentators have already pointed out how much LPL's weird fiction owes to the Old Testament; Lovecraft simply added the concepts of repulsiveness and strangeness to the old accounts of how the personification of evil was enchained and banished. In Christianity, the devil is let loose when men sin; in Lovecraft, tampering with forbidden things both takes the place of sin and is regarded as a sort of sin itself against the ideals of beauty, sanity, and humanity.

But from there on, my article would have been on its own. The next point of departure might have been the novels of E. E. Smith, almost all of which have been concerned with the conflict of good against evil. The allegedly final story in the Lensman series would have been a strong talking point, because it points up the parallel to the New Testament; both Smith and the Gospels describe the manner in which mankind was redeemed from the forces of evil through the suffering of a human made more than human through the efforts of a semi-comprehensible higher power. Smith splits up the redeemer into a number of Kinnison offspring, but it's the son who does most of the hard work, and even Mrs. Kinnison acts suspiciously like her Biblical parallel at times, to the great detriment of the story's literary worth.

"The World of A" seemed hauntingly familiar to me when I first read it, but it took a little time to see where it could fit into my great article. Then recognition came: the resemblance to Christianity as arranged for Wagnerians in "Parsifal." I don't know whether Wagner's opera consciously influenced van Vogt but there's a mighty powerful similarity. Both van Vogt and Wagner are concerned with a great power for good which is hampered by a tampering in the past--in one case, the Gurnemanz scandal, in the other, the equivalent of tilting a pinball machine. There is, in both cases, a mysterious woman about whom we are never sure of anything, call her Kundry or the president's daughter. And the hero in both cases is an innocent bystander, apparently, who doesn't know much about himself or the tremendous powers playing around him, but turns out in the end to be the key to the whole

situation, helped along by that very innocence.

Naturally, the final step in such an article would have been to take up the Shaver legends, and point out that their borrowings from the myths of the near east are even more pronounced than those of any of the other stories. It is true that they place their version of heaven in some planets, rather than an indefinite place in the sky, and it is also true that they fix the hell in caves, instead of deeper underground; but such differences aren't particularly significant.

But about this time, I began to get tired of the whole idea, and so I never wrote the article.

[illegible]

Philosophical Implications of Complexity

The FAPA is taking quite a beating from several sides at this moment, which is nothing new, for it's been lambasted by the most prominent fans from time to time throughout its ten years of existence, and seems to be at least as solid and firm as it was at any time in the past. All of which is as it should be: if anyone took the trouble to say nasty things about the NFFF these days, it would demonstrate that the NFFF has some vitality left. Further, I'm usually in agreement with what the FAPA's harshest critics have been saying. Where we differ is that I don't understand why these critics don't either produce or shut up. It is all very well to criticize Heifetz for sugary phrasing, because someone must criticize the great artists; but it is an entirely different story when it comes to criticizing lack of the right sort of activity in an ayjay group, when the critic is in a position to come forth with what he thinks is the right sort of activity himself, and fails to do so.

However, even worse than this is the new philosophy that is springing up, to the effect that if you don't find quite what you are looking for in the EAPA, you should start a new ayjay group. Lowndes and the others in New York continue to insist that their new groups aren't competitive with the EAPA. In theory that may be true, in practice it isn't. Right now the VAPA is in the very uncomfortable organizational situation of a bunch of people who are sitting around trying to converse and unable to think of something to talk about. I suspect that the new "Spectator Club" is going to be in the same boat after the first three or four mailings.

The whole thing in a nutshell is this: no organization can be successful unless its members have a common interest or a common goal that is strong enough to compensate for the trouble of forming and maintaining that organization. The general ayjay groups like the NAPA and the UAPA function because their members love to print magazines. It's more a love of the handicraft and mechanics of printing than an interest in writing and criticism. The FAPA has lasted as long as it has because it consists of people who are interested in fantasy, and who also like to talk about things related to fantasy or suggested by it--science, math, the future of the world, and such things. Unfortunately, the VAPA has taken this same sort of persons and has set out to keep fantasy material out of its mailings. The result is an absurdity: the VAPA publications, if they are to fulfill their aim, must treat of things that turn up in any conversation among intelligent

people everywhere, the only difference being that you spend hours in stenciling and mimeographing remarks that you could make in a few minutes of actual conversation, then are forced to wait two or three months, instead of a few seconds, for the other people to answer you. When I want to talk about the poetry of Ezra Pound (which isn't very often!), the ethics of sending food to Europe, and most of the other current or recent VAPA topics, I know where to find in Hagerstown people who are just as intelligent as the VAPA membership, and it is much easier to talk with them than it is to put out a magazine containing my views. But if I want to discuss matters connected with fantasy and fandom, I must resort to correspondence and publishing, simply because the local people who read science fiction confine their remarks to "This was a good story, but that other one sure was a classic!"

I'm inclined to think that the VAPA will continue to exist only as long as Lowndes and Blish remain interested in it, and I don't see any brighter future for the new Spectator Club. Further, I fail to see why the latter was organized to begin with: I don't even see how its aims differ from those of the VAPA, and suspect that it was organized only because a few New Yorkers feel the fannish influence in the VAPA is becoming too strong. Nevertheless, I'll continue membership in the VAPA as long as I'm permitted to hold it, and I may subscribe to the Spectator group, because I like Lowndes' writings on things musical, Blish's dissertations on almost everything, and occasionally the work of some of the other members.

The whole point, gentlemen, is that life is terribly complicated already, and there is no reason for deliberately increasing that complexity. Yet that's what you do, every time you start a new ayjay group. The existing ones are flexible enough to distribute the sort of publications you may like the best, and if you don't like the more fannish things that go along with the FAPA, you're under no obligation to read them, no more than you are required to read every line in every column of the daily newspaper. What is the earthly reason for paying dues to three groups each year, voting in three of them, sending bundles of magazines to two of them and feeling guilty because I'm letting others do the work in the third, when the whole thing could be done with one large organization?

On the other hand, if anyone wants to start an ayjay group that will offer something the FAPA can't provide, I'll be quite eager to join and do all I can to further the cause. I'm inclined to think that an ayjay organization centered around music would be practical: there aren't enough members of the present ayjay organizations with enough liking for and knowledge of music for me to write certain things that I'd like to write now--the response wouldn't be worth the effort. Yet I think that there's enough of us interested in the art to form the nucleus of such an organization, and it shouldn't be too hard to recruit some more members from friends who never heard of amateur journalism or fanzines. But I can see no reason why anyone should want to try to combine the "little magazines," a sort of round-robin letter writing, and comments on commentson comments, then call it the Vanguard Amateur Press Association or the Spectator Club.

It's wonderful to have a typewriter that can make signs like *#0 q&c1

When We Were Very Young

No one knew then the significance of the name, but the Spring, 1943, mailing of the FAPA was the first one to contain prominent references to that pre-Shaver menace, Claude Degler. This mailing came out before the objectionable features of Claude's personality had made themselves fully felt. As a result, Art Widner wrote at some length and in great good humor in Yhos about Claude's bunglingly successful efforts to attend the Boskone. But Ashley's The Stefan was highly prophetic in an unintentional sort of way. The publication consisted of an illustrated parody of Poe's "Raven" with Claude as the villain. "We felt an irresistible urge to rib somebody," Al explained in a postscript, indicating that he might just as well have picked on some other fan. But a year later, many another of us felt just the same way. "And the Stefan, never flitting, Still is draped there, unsubmitting; Every effort, still outwitting, To expell him through the door; And his eyes have all the gleaming Of a demon's that is dreaming; All my plans and careful scheming He seems able to ignore. Won't some sympathetic being Come assist me with this chore-- Scrape this damn thing off my floor?" "A military tinge predominated the mailing. A half-dozen of the publishers and contributors were in the service, and their experiences there colored their writings. Said Corporal Milt: "The fine-upstanding-young-man at the mission mentioned above tried to get me to accept Jesus Christ as my savior. I said it was such a new concept to me that I couldn't give him an answer right then. For some reason or other the LASFS became quite hilarious over the story." "I promised in Horizons to publish the long-delayed "Joe Fann's Journal" as soon as possible. Does anyone remember what that was supposed to be? I don't. " Russell Charvenet was represented with 20 of his poems, subtitled "Fragments from a Broken Dream." I always thought his poetry was second-rate, especially from a person who did first-rate work in everything else he attempted. Russell also came through with a big issue of Sardonyx and the one-sider, Zizzle-Pop, one of his last big publishing spreos. Just think of the other contributing members who have disappeared along with him in a half-decade, though. The Fantasy Amateur membership list that issue contained such names as Ashley, Bridges, Freehafer, Jenkins, Shaw, Swisher, and a half-dozen others who did good publishing outside the organization but never became active inside. " Incidentally, it probably is of interest only to me that this is the only FAPA mailing which I have ever allowed to leave the house, once the postman tossed it inside the door. It came while I was working for the railroad, and the railroad, in one of its most monumental inspirations of bureaucracy, sent me on a lengthy train trip to accomplish a mission that could have been achieved in ten minutes right here in Hagerstown. I never have felt more kindly to the FAPA than during the 18 hours of boredom that it helped me to survive. " Stanley, unexpectedly, came up with this remark: "There is probably no more expressive statement of the individual's faith in his religion than the ancient Lutheran hymn "Ein' Feste Burg" with its words as set down by Luther himself over 400 years ago. Even more remarkable is the tune to which it is sung, which is believed to be over 2,000 years old. Our descendants will probably be hearing it millenia hence, as its survival value seems well-tested by its coming through the mediaeval period...."

ALDOUS HUXLEY

Time Must Have a Stop

Huxley's books have varied all the way from the fiendishly realistic depiction of a certain tiny segment of the upper middle class in "Point Counter Point" to the futuristic and fantastic "Prave New World." But I don't think he has written a real fantasy even in this latter volume, which has always seemed to me to be a thinly disguised satire on the present day, rather than on the future. In "Time Must Have a Stop" he definitely injects a fantasy aspect here and there, and the result is none too pleasing, in a volume that lacks the bite and the forcefulness of Huxley's earlier novels. "I felt some sympathy for the people in "Point Counter Point," but I can feel only disgust for the attitudes and actions of most of those in this recent novel, even though the author apparently expects the ~~main~~ reader to admire several of them. The gentleman who provides the fantasy aspect is Uncle Eustace, described on the wrapper as "the intellectual Sybarite, the comic, the dilettante and the excessive admirer of beauty," which sums up things pretty well except that it is hard to conceive of anything remotely comic in him or his actions. He turns the book into a partial fantasy by dying in his bathroom about one-third of the way through, then from time to time reappearing on the scene in a formless way and even becoming the inspiration for a seance. Huxley has described his adventures in the next world with the lengthiest ~~string~~ string of nonsense that I have ever seen in print. "The whole of existence was brightness-- everything except this one small clot of untransparent absence, except these dispersed atoms of a nothingness that, by direct awareness, knew itself as opaque and separate, and at the same time, by an excruciating participation in the light knew itself as the most hideous and shameful of privations." It goes on like that for interminable page after interminable page. "None of the other characters in the book are anything better than stupid. There is Sebastian, the hero, who is in his teens for most of the volume. The author seems to be fond of him, although he is a hopeless snob, a dreadful pretender to appreciate what he does not have the capacity to know, and a Judas to the only sympathetic minor person who appears on the scene. At the very end of the book he turns up a couple of decades older, allegedly rich in the philosophy of life and minus one arm that he lost in the war. He writes, and the author quotes, a number of deep thoughts that are intended seriously but have somewhat less literary and moral value than the famous writings of the author's father in "Point Counter Point." "I think that one reason for the book's failure is Huxley's insistence on giving it a plot. Most of his earlier books began at one point and stopped at another, and the reader was satisfied although he knew that they could just as easily have begun and ended at almost any other points. When Huxley tries to hold his writing style and his characters into even the simplest of plots, as in this volume, the artificialities of such a procedure stand out in painfully bold relief. "I can't see any particular reason for recommending the volume. If your aim is to acquire as many fantasy books as possible, you'll find it easy to pick up second-hand or remaindered; but you won't find anything in it that wasn't written much better in the earlier novels of Huxley.

Of Many Things

Not many papers use more than a small fraction of the huge amount of Associated Press feature materials. So this excerpt from a long article about New York's Washington Square probably didn't get published very widely: "Another ghost of the square is Robert W. Chambers. He came back to New York in 1894 at the age of 29 after studying art in Paris for seven years. But he didn't become a writer, and his first book of short stories, 'The King in Yellow,' is saturated with Washington Square. " 'Scene of two stories in the book, 'The Repairer of Reputations' and 'The Yellow Sign'--the latter one of the greatest horror stories ever written in America--were laid in a red brick one-time bachelor apartment building known as 'The Benedict,' near the southeast corner of the square. " The building is still there, but no longer is it an artists' studio and no longer does anyone care what happened to Tessie and her artist lover when the man who had been dead for months clumped up the stairs after them. " Yes, it still stands, but it now is the students' building of New York University. " Now comes a digression, but anyone who opens 'The Repairer of Reputations' today is due for a shock if he bears in mind that the story was written before 1895. It opens: 'Toward the end of the year 1920...the war with Germany...had left no visible scars upon the republic....' " 'Everywhere good architecture was replacing bad, and even in New York a sudden craving for decency had swept away a great portion of the existing horrors. Streets had been widened, squares laid out, elevated structures demolished and underground roads built to replace them.' " Then, just before jumping into his tragic story, Chambers wrote: 'But self-preservation is the first law, and the United States had to look on in helpless sorrow as Germany, Italy, Spain and Belgium writhed in the throes of anarchy, while Russia, watching from the Caucasus, stooped and bound them one by one.' " In all the accounts of the Philcon that I've seen, the most distressing of all the events was omitted. It was the case of Raymond Washington, Jr., who spent the Philcon weekend idling around Philadelphia, looking for the event and failing to find it because his merchant marine activities had kept him from finding out the name of the hotel, and he couldn't locate any fans in the phone book. " Almost forgot the FAPA laureate nominations this time. For art, Rotsler, first; Cockroft, second; Born, third. Fiction, Moffatt, first; Thomas, second; and I don't see anything else worth mentioning. Nor can I bring myself to get enthusiastic about any of the poetry in this mailing, so that department must be ignored this time. Humor, Burbee, first; and there you hit another dead end. Articles, Rothman, first; Laney, second; Sneary, third. Best in mailing, Rothman, first; Speer, second; Laney, third. Some sort of special nod to the gentlemen who turned in a very fine collection of odds and ends of comments, none of which were long enough to classify in any of these divisions--Dons Bratton and Wilson and Redd Boggs, in particular. " I have hopes that the reproduction in this issue of Horizons will be better than last time. I've pounded the keys more energetically, at the cost of some completely amputated o centers. If it's still faint, I'll start experimenting with cushion sheets for the next issue--if the proposed draft permits another issue.