

TERRY CARR FANZINES

ROT



"SHAKE WELL BEFORE
READING"

NUMBER
THREE

Gibberings

from the
Gibbet

I'm gonna be dead; I know I'm gonna be dead. It isn't my lucky day.//I shan't talk to you when I telephone you tomorrow///People don't generally die as often as they change their jobs///It's not fair; when I run away from you you haven't to run by my side///He cries off his elements on my shoulder///I think we can safely answer 'No' in the affirmative///That's why I never publish bi-annually - I'd never know when my magazine was due out///Your tiny eyes are frozen///I don't like mints; they don't agree with my indigestion///I couldn't find the floor and then I looked down and I was kneeling on it///But surely anybody in their right senses would want to dam up this mountain stream so that it would build up into a mighty, raging torrent to sweep man and beast into the river ?///I danced around in my pink socks barefoot///I was an agnostic until last week - then I saw "The Robe". Now I'm an atheist///Look out - fresh air!///Of course, if you happen to be an android and have no navel....///I knew it was prudish, but I didn't think it was so fiendishly clever///Just pass it off ordinarily - you know - just as you would if you had been hit by a dog///Don't bother to pay me - just give me some money///As long as I live I shall never again bet a piano///Well just for that I hope somebody attacks me on my way home///Look how wonderful the moon looks tonight - why, it's just like a Chesley Bonestell painting!///I refuse to wear a dog-collar; it's a matter of principle///I'm not being voluptuous; I'm looking for a train///What Big Louis says, goes - and Big Louis says you///It's your own fault - you should talk legibly///How can you possibly stand there, knee-deep in refrigerators, ...///I'd clean forgotten about Burgess; isn't it lovely when you can//He was a Mexican estate agent - a sort of peon-hut vendor///Do nuns' eyeballs disappear when they pray ?///I don't suppose you can blame her. Well - probably you could, but I don't think you will seeing that you couldn't care less whether she even exists or not///I'm in a gullible position///I wouldn't go live in a penthouse 'cos Aldous Huxley or somebody would come and drop dead dogs on us///I'll bet that man's just been doing a murder because his shoes are all muddy///He goes around knocking people out and solving other peoples troubles; you know - a sort of strong man's Patience Strong///That shows I'm not asleep because if I was I'd have wakened up by now///I know why the lousy ones are lousy, but what I want to know is why are the good ones lousy ?///The customers always riot///How could you like to live on the edge of civilisation like this, with nothing between you and the golf-links ?///Oh, this is hopeless! We're having such an interesting conversation and I can't hear it!///Kissing and making love is only like shaking hands really; isn't it funny that it's so different ?///You mean he's died ? Ghod - what will he be doing next ?///He was a Man of Letters - letters like 'When are you going to pay me the money you owe me ?', 'What have you been doing to my daughter.?', etc.///He was a kind-faced man, or rather, a tramp///I thought the best thing to do was get another house so I wouldn't have to bother distemping the staircase///Yes I know, but this is a new tradition///I wonder if there's enough tea left in here to throw out ?///I'm glad to see you've got the thing that smiles behind your face back with you///He was a bit of an illiterate swine on the quiet///We're not snogging! we're just keeping warm///I suppose you get on all right with them if you just refuse to acknowledge their existence///11,902 moths were trapped at Little Horton in 1952///Try walking through the hotel lobby in your underpants///She could outgrabe a mome rath on any wabe in the world///And this is our little bungle of love ///

To blame (in no order whatever) are: Eric Bentcliffe, Brian Varley, Harry Turner, Pat Doolan, James Thurber, Ken Potter, Mike Wallace, Tom White, Sheila, Massel, somebody in a film, Vernon Ashworth, and a clutch of folk who shall remain mercifully anon.

OVER

THE

C E M E T E R Y

WALL

A PROUD AND HUMBLE THING:

Of a sudden I feel proud and - yes - kinda humble. A little of the vast and mighty sweep of Man's conquest of crude Nature has entered into my soul and I feel a little awed. I have seen a man, naked and alone, (naked, that is, except for shirt and pants and sweater and all the usual things, and alone except for his wife downstairs and so on) - I have seen this man take a huge and monstrous chunk of raw and hostile environment and shape it into a thing of meaning and co-ordination. And I have seen the fruits of his labour; I have seen Order created out of Primaeval Chaos by the exercise of Man's ingenuity, and the sight has reached deep into my soul and thrilled me. The fact of the matter is, I have filed all my fanzines away.

Whereas previously they were piled many feet high all over the bedroom floor, now they rest in perfect harmony in properly catalogued and indexed files, in neatly numbered and cross-referenced boxes. Where before there was only mounting confusion, now my eyes find nothing but sweet and perfect Order. And my spine tingles a little.

Tonight a friend came and in the course of our talk I told him of an article I had written for a fanzine. And in that moment I felt a wondrous lifting of spirit to know that I was one of the first True Human Beings - one of those creatures who rose from archaic mud and evolved through a million trillion years to a final climactic state of being able to file fanzines. I knew that I could go and look in my book and instantaneously I would know just where that fanzine was. And that is what I did and how I became so overawed by the fineness of it all.

Of course I couldn't get to the fanzine because of the other five big boxes piled on top of the one it was in but that isn't the point.

VERY BELATED THANKS: are hereby offered to Michael Rosenblum, who is a Good Man, for the use of his Ghlorious Ghestetner in running off the last issue of ROT. Upon whose pounding presses the current issue will first glimpse the light of day still remains to be seen, but they can rest secure in the expectation of acknowledgment within a generation or two.

GIDEON'S NIGHT: One thing has often intrigued me, when staying in hotels. In even the barest of rooms - those containing merely a bed, a half inch strip of linoleum and the remains of Great Aunt Maud's invalid chair - there is always a Bible. If there is any semblance of a dressing table in the room, the Bible - virginally untouched - lies upon it. Open it, and inside, on the very first page, appear these words: "Placed by the Gideons."

I have wondered much about these Gideons. Who are they? Why do they feel impelled to place Bibles in Dettolised hotel rooms? Are they labouring under some sort of Divine Injunction, or some Eternal Torment, which dooms them to wander through the ages and out to Eternity placing Bibles on worm-eaten dressing tables in worm-eaten hotels? I have wondered much.

Many a time, in fact, I have imagined myself waking in the heavy dark of night to discern a shadowy figure fumbling at the creaking dresser. As my eyes probe the gloom I see that it is a man, clothed in black from head to foot, wearing a cloak and a broad-brimmed hat like a 'Sandeman' wine trade-mark. As I gradually make out more of his vague figure he becomes aware of my wakefulness. Turning towards the bed he says, in a sonorous and peaceful voice:

"It is all right, my son, have no fear. I am a Gideon."

But he won't catch me unawares. Forewarned is forearmed and it is not for nothing that I have imagined this scene to myself nine hundred and thirty four times. Assuming the role of a roistering farmer's lad, with an ease born of nine hundred and thirty four rehearsals, I shall breeze boozily at him:

"Well, nah, Ah'm a bit of a giddy 'un, meself, lad. Let's go dahn an' 'ave a drink."

BEWARE OF FROUT'S FROING: One of the major saving graces of my erstwhile secretary, Beryl, was that she was halfway crazy, rather like a fan. At times it helped the day to pass most pleasantly. One of her more lovable foibles was an imaginary Thing, of unspecified nature, by the name of FROUT. One day, coming across the words 'Non Froing' on the back of a piece of carbon paper, (it later transpired that the words were 'Non Fading' but they were nearly illegible due to fading) I wrote Beryl a note:

"What does 'Froing' mean? It says on this carbon paper 'Non Froing'. Is this some diabolical machination of FROUT's?"

She wrote back:

"FROUT certainly had a hand in it, but it is a process which he hasn't perfected yet, and he was rather hoping to keep it quiet. When it is completed, I gather it is going to prove itself a typically FROUTian agent of destruction."

I replied:

"Oh, you mean just another scheme to sweep Man and Beast from the face of the earth in a raging holocaust of death and destruction, or some thing like that?"

Beryl's final note said:

"Yes."

WE WENT TO THE THEATRE:

Just the other night. Now, Sheila and I have known each other for upwards of four years, and in that time we have been to the theatre (the 'live' theatre, as some people, without any justification in my opinion, would have it) just twice. The other night we went for the third time - to see "Dracula"

The opening was reasonable enough, the sort of thing you might expect in any play. A man with a green face stood at the front of the darkened stage and emitted a casual sort of scream, before walking off calmly through a door at the rear. After the first three minutes of the play, the explanation became obvious - it had been either Bram Stoker or someone who had already seen the performance.

The action (if that is not too strong a word) of the play takes place in Jonathan Harker's house on Hampstead Heath, where his wife is languishing in a state of acute anaemia and a pair of ornate earrings. His friend, Dr. Seward, is baffled (in addition to simple-minded and spinally-paralysed, to judge from his performance). So his friend, Dr. Van Helsing is sent for. He is horrified. However, being a brilliant fellow, in whom everyone continually stakes their lives, reputations and unshakeable faith, while disputing every word he says, he forms his suspicions after only three Acts. He knows that a vampire or werewolf (he is not sure which and remains in this state right up to the final curtain) or something mysterious is at the bottom of it all. The others beg him to tell them whom he suspects. He ponders long and deeply and eventually confides in them that he has just the teeniest, weeniest doubts about Count Dracula, who has recently taken the house next door and the liberty of wandering in and out of Harker's house whenever the fancy takes him, i.e. whenever he gets hungry. They recoil in horror and ask him if he is sure. Oh no, he says, he certainly isn't sure. It is only the merest whiff of a suspicion based on such inconsequential little things as the Count showing no reflection in a mirror, gibbering incoherently at the sight of garlic and becoming uncontrollably ravenous upon seeing human blood. They will just have to wait for any real evidence. And wait they do. Even though Dracula himself tries to help them by wandering in regularly every three minutes and telling them, in words thinly disguised by dint of having more than one syllable, that he is a vampire.

Strange sounds and sights surround them. In the middle of one conversation Dr. Seward and Van Helsing are interrupted by blood-curdling screams. Van Helsing looks perturbed for a moment (he is a very emotional fellow), but Dr. Seward smiles mollifyingly. "It is nothing," he says, "Just my lunatic asylum across the road." Van Helsing looks relieved.

A short while later they are again interrupted by screams. Van Helsing seems irritated. Dr. Seward is apologetic. "I imagine my men have him under lock and key by now" he says. From the noise he was making I think that my own guess that they had him on the rack was nearer the truth.

Peering out of the window in the depth of night, Jonathan Harker sees a strange shape at the bottom of the garden. "It looks like a big dog" he tells them. "Are you sure it's a big dog?" gasps Van Helsing. Peace-loving, imperturbable, Hampstead Heath-dwelling Harker takes another look to pacify him. "Well" he says, in a Happy Solution tone of voice, "It could be a wolf."

An insect-eating lunatic by the name of Renfield breaks out of the asylum and into the house, and on bended knees implores the rest of the cast to leave immediately (adequate proof, in my eyes, that he was every bit as sane as the rest of us - and felt pretty much the same way too). After he has gone on in this vein for some considerable time he is taken away, still entreating

them to fly for their lives. One of the company makes a critical remark, but Harker, always a thoughtful man, says slowly: "Still, you know, --- I think he came here for a particular reason."

After Dracula kills Renfield - almost before their eyes - for treachery (or food) they decide that The Time Has Come To Do Something About Him. Accordingly, the next scene opens to show Van Helsing, Seward and Harker grouped around an earth-box (ostensibly in a dark crypt) containing one serene-looking vampire. Van Helsing is carrying a short brush handle with which, after meaningful glances all round, he lunges at Dracula's heart and, with unerring accuracy, hits the wall four feet away from Dracula's left shoulder. A black cloth immediately drops over Dracula's face. (I didn't know that things happened this way; obviously I must bring my studies on the mechanics of vampire-killing up to date.) Van Helsing then delivers everyone into God's hands (where they should have been right from the First Act) and the curtain falls. (My brother Vernon expressed the opinion that it was a shame about Van Helsing missing with the stake because the man who played Dracula also produced the play.)

WHEN THE POTTERS HAD A PARTY: We went. We have been to several of their parties, in fact, but the particular one I am thinking of was Ken's 21st birthday party. We went by bus and travelled through 70 miles of universally flooded countryside and a non-stop downpour and learned when we got there that the tenant of the flat above the Potters' had gone out camping for the weekend after hearing that they were having a party. ("Would you like to come down for a sort of housewarming drink ?" Irene asked him when they first moved in, "And have you got a bottle opener ?") We all stood on the path in the pouring rain while Irene searched through her handbag for the door key. After several minutes of this she turned and smiled at us; "It's nice to be looked up to" she said.

Dave Wood and Brenda were there, along with Harry Hanlon, Roy Booth, an army friend of Ken's by the name of Don, plus Ken and Irene and Sheila and I. Also present, though in sound only, were Louis Armstrong, Big Bill Broonzy and a fellow who tried to pass himself off as Charlie Parker but whose real identity, I was assured, was God. The party, naturally, was indescribable.

All I can offer are a few rather battered memories and the more printable items out of half a pocket-book-full of quotes.

Such as:

"Harry has a theory - he had a theory when he was sober, anyway."

Or:

"Let me go back to my husband - I'm fed-up of men."

Or even:

We interrupt this magazine to bring you the sound of the Vega-Arcturus express rocket hurtling along its starry path to Vega (or possibly Arcturus):

"POCKETA,POCKETA.....POCKETA,POCKETA
.....POCKETA,POCKETA.....POCKETA,
POCK.....POCK.....PHUT!"

Oh, well, we may as well return you to the magazine - there will be nothing more to hear from the Vega-Arcturus Express.

"It'll probably fall on its nose - if it gets that far."
(The 'It' was a paper aeroplane. The young fan of today is nothing if not technically minded.) Among the battered memories is one of Dave and Brenda trying to leave in the early hours of the morning on the strength of an appointment with toast and crumpets at Brenda's house. With a flight of fiery oratory, it seems, I persuaded them to stay, and clinched the matter with the indisputable argument that (so it says in this little book) "the ethereal soul does not cry out for toast and crumpets."

Then there was Ken's comment about Harry; "Perhaps he's talking by human standards - he gets them at the most peculiar times." And Harry's own desperate "I work somewhere - just a minute, I'll remember."

And then there was the Fur Teacup. When everyone was in the most receptive mood (in a 'succulent mood' as Irene said about Harry) I told them about an exhibit at the 1936 Surrealist Exhibition (you will notice that I keep absolutely up-to-the-minute with my reading; in these turbulent times it is the least a man can do. There is no telling, for instance, when this fellow Hitler will start to make trouble.) This exhibit was a fur teacup, in a fur saucer, with a fur spoon (I am not sure whether it was a solid exhibit or just a painting; with the Surrealists either seems equally likely). When I had first seen a picture of this thing it had struck me as being quite illogically revolting and I wanted to find out if other people felt the same way about it. Apparently they did. My simple matter-of-fact description of it turned Don a pale shade of green, sent Roy retching across the room, Harry tripping over outsprawled legs and feet in a mad dash for the door, and nauseated Ken. I was satisfied.

But before the night was done we were to far outshine the Surrealists. For, rising phoenix-like out of the smoldering embers of our conversation, there came forth a vitally new, I might almost say a revolutionary, concept to astound the mind of man - a Braille Spittoon! After this, were any further eminences, we wondered, left to the human mind? (Ken subsequently used this as the title of his BRENNSCHLUSS column.)

As for the rest, 'Cry Havoc, and let slip the unchecked quotes' as I don't doubt for a minute Shakespeare would have said had he been there.

"Self respect demands that you should be sick."

"You have the sexiest toenails in the North of England."

"I was voted the fan most likely never to wake up again."

"Ghod, there's life in the other room - or if there isn't Ken's laughing at Death."

"Ah, now just a minute. Something comes back to me. I fell in the bath, didn't I?"

"It's a most ridiculous system expecting human beings to stand erect on two feet!"

"I'll be struck off the list of Alcoholics Anonymous."

"Harry's one of the Undead Dead; only this morning he isn't so Undead"

"I am a man of the world; the trouble is I'm still trying to find out which world."

THE
RETURN
OF

THE GIBBERING GIBBET

HEEN?

Your questions answered by Johnny 'Mama'
Nordegg

Don't you remember that terrific party up in your room - or weren't you at that one? /// He thought: there are two kinds of things going on around here. One is the kind of thing I understand, and the other is the kind of thing I don't understand. /// I'm too intelligent - that's your trouble. /// I shall have a letter written to you! /// That's not a quote - that's a cry from my heart. /// There's only one person I want to be lustful with, with all due respect to my fiancée. /// I'm going to make up a T.S. Eliot sort of poem about you. /// Oh, I'm unhappy really - that's why I laugh so much. /// Unhinge your mind if you're stopping. /// Oh - hello, Vicar. /// I'm fed-up - everything I drop falls on the floor. /// Why did you say "Good Heavens", I'm only wearing a hat? /// Oh, I loathe being kissed by people! /// It's only me; I'm semi-private. /// He pretends to be so intellectual with his dead dogs! /// I don't mind elephants eating people. /// It's a sort of a metaphysical hen. /// I don't know many women but those I do know would sooner shoot me in the guts than speak a civil word. /// Don't you come into my house damning souls! /// Kill him, kill him - he's going to win! /// I didn't come up out of all that primeval slime for nothing. /// You've got a Portuguese Man O'War in your bosom, I can see that. /// I've got a wonderful vocabulary but I can't use it because I don't know how to say things. ///

Thanks to: Lee Hoffman, Theodore Sturgeon, Beryl Nutter, Rev. Richard Allen, Sheila Ashworth, Vernon Ashworth, and others including our old friend, me.

- Q: Can you plait sawdust?
A: I am sorry but I can only deal with serious enquiries here.
- Q: Why does one always raise one's hat when meeting a lady?
A: This mannerism dates from the time, many years ago, when it was customary to carry some small animal on the top of the head in case one suddenly became hungry, met a monkey-less organ grinder, etc. It was then usual when meeting a lady to raise one's hat to show her that one was not carrying a dog or a monkey on top of one's head and she need have no fear of having her eyes scratched out without warning. Although the original custom fell into disrepute for reasons of hygiene, this charming survival has continued to exist right up to our own time.
- Q: Can you plait sawdust?
A: Will you get the Hell out of here?
- Q: Why is it customary at Midnight on the 13th of June to sacrifice to Beelzebub three goats, four male siamese cats, twenty six horses, forty three spiders and five hundred and seventy two circumcised rhinoceroses?
A: Ah - but is it customary?
- Q: Can you plait sawdust?
A: ~~Q: Can you plait sawdust?~~
~~A: I am sorry but I can only deal with serious enquiries here.~~

And that is all the queries we have time to deal with this issue. Send YOUR question to: Johnny 'Mama' Nordegg,

Free Information Bureau
ROT,

enclosing a stamped addressed Mona Lisa (no stamps please) and you will probably never hear another word about it.

H A L E W A Y

H O U S E

Notes on a Mescaline experiment

We were buying chicken legs in a delicatessen the other day when I pointed out to Sheila a counter display in which streams of coloured diamond shapes were flowing outwards from the centre, without ever seeming to lose or change their original position. "That's the kind of movement there was in our wallpaper" I said. As Sheila pointed out later, anyone overhearing this remark must have wondered just what kind of wallpaper it could be that moved around like that. The fact of the matter is it is perfectly normal wallpaper - downright ordinary in fact - and most of the time it stays quite stable and behaves itself with as much decorum as the best bred wallpaper you could wish to meet. Its only lapse from this exemplary behaviour occurred one Sunday a few weeks ago, when I drank a solution of Mescaline.

The drug Mescaline is a hallucinogen derived from the Peyote cactus and has, to the best of my knowledge, no known therapeutic uses. Peyote has been used for centuries in the religious rites and festivals of Central American Indians, and both Peyote itself and the derivative Mescaline have been taken at various times by a succession of moderately distinguished people who have written accounts of their experiences whilst under the drug. Weir Mitchell saw mighty, soaring, fairy-like towers and architecture which changed shape and form. Havelock Ellis saw fields of jewels and 'gorgeous butterfly forms or endless folds of glistening, fibrous wings of wonderful insects.' More recently, Christopher Mayhew, under Mescaline, spent an afternoon 'outside time' - experiencing events that happened at 3.30 before events which happened at 2 o'clock, etc., and Aldous Huxley not only had a valuable aesthetic experience, but what he also considered to be a profound 'spiritual' insight into 'pure existence'. (His book THE DOORS OF PERCEPTION describes the results of this experiment, and his later book HEAVEN AND HELL (which suggested my own title) carries on the theme. Both tend to wander a great deal, but make fascinating reading nevertheless. Penguin books have just published both titles in one volume.)

Mescaline came out of all these accounts with flying colours. The Mescaline taker was assured, at the very least of highly colourful and exotic visual imagery, and at the best, direct 'spiritual' insight not far removed, it would seem, from Supreme Revelation. The drug is non-habit-forming and non-deleterious as regards either health or personality, even if taken consistently over a long period. The Mescaline taker remains conscious and rational the whole time, able to describe his impressions (as far as words permit) and carry on a

normal conversation etc., not to mention being far less likely to become aggressive or obnoxious than if he had taken alcohol; and he has no hangover. Aldous Huxley, in fact, suggested the adoption of this drug on a general scale in place of the far more harmful (officially approved) drugs currently in use - tobacco and alcohol. (The official reaction to Mescaline has been much as might be expected. In the U.S.A it is classified as a 'Narcotic' and so branded illegal, and in Britain its sale is restricted to 'scientific workers in recognised research institutes'.)

But there is another side to the picture. Aldous Huxley hinted at it in the title of his second book, HEAVEN & HELL, and, in fact, stated that to anyone suffering from a disorder of the liver, or subject to chronic fits of depression, the drug could bring almost unendurable 'hell' instead of the peaceful, heavenly side of things attained by the majority of Mescaline takers. Even that, apparently, wasn't quite the whole story. Winston, a friend of ours with considerable experience of the highways and by-ways of the human mind, had taken Mescaline on three occasions, some years ago, and every time had gone 'down into the basement', and, whilst all the accounts he had read of it had been favourable, everyone he knew personally who had taken the drug had also 'gone down'. The degree of horror and depression experienced depends, of course, on the mental makeup of the individual, but can, it seems, be really bad.

For a long time I had 'Taking Mescaline' filed away in my mind under the heading 'Things To Be Done If The Opportunity Ever Occurs', and recently it did. So one Sunday morning I swallowed two fifths of a gram of Mescaline (the dose taken by Huxley and most other researchers), dissolved in water. Winston came along in case things went badly, and we sat talking and waiting. Mescaline is slow-acting, taking between two and three hours for the effects to commence, but when, after two and three-quarter hours, nothing had happened, I decided to take the same dose again.

Soon afterwards we sat down to lunch and I noticed that my soup seemed endless. Sheila and Winston finished theirs long before, and no matter how much or how fast I spooned mine up, there always seemed to be as much left in the plate. Eventually I did wear it down, though, and after playing with the main course for a few minutes, hardly eating anything, I left table and sat in an armchair. I felt quite relaxed and just sat there, doing nothing in particular, letting my gaze rest idly on the fireplace. And then, quite softly and gently, in an almost living silence in which I was detached from my surroundings, the marbling of the pearly fireplace tiles began to melt and flow. The whole surface of the fireplace flowed in ordered pastel patterns that looked now like dancers in a fiesta, now like an elaborate flowery alphabet. I was so absorbed in watching this movement, so absorbed in waiting to see what it would do next, that for some time I said nothing about it. Then I managed to break my fascination enough to say "There are patterns moving there" and Sheila switched on the tape recorder.

I tried to describe the movement I was witnessing and failed rather miserably. One reason, I suppose, was that a moving pattern in which both shapes and shades are changing constantly, in one continuous flow, isn't the easiest thing in the world to describe anyway. Another was that the Mescaline state, as I found out and as I said time and time again, is one of extreme absorption in whatever catches one's attention, absorption, in fact, to such an extent that it is a distinct effort even to think of words to describe what one is watching. From now on things moved. The flower pattern in the wallpaper moved and flowed - "rather like fish swimming down streams, or eels slipping down streams" I said

- then became one continuous flowing pattern with that on the fireplace. The whole room seemed to be much lighter and I kept finding it hard to believe that sunlight was not coming in through the window. In actual fact the day was very dull and overcast. Patterns flowed on the ceiling and the air bubbles beneath the surface gave it the appearance of an embossed paper; I watched demon theatre masks and other fascinating, nameless shapes in it.

We had vases of irises, tulips and daffodils around the room as I had expected the main alteration to be in the perception of bright colours, but in actual fact these did not look greatly different. The colours were perhaps a little deeper than normal, the petals rather more waxy (there was a rather cold, waxy quality about the light in the room generally), and at times the individual flowers seemed to be standing up very straight and tense - straining upwards - as though about to do something, but they never did. Huxley noticed this same tendency in his flowers, but to Huxley the whole experience was intensely significant in a spiritual sense. Mine, so far as I can tell, was quite without any inner significance of this kind; no doubt this too may depend upon the mental makeup and inclinations of the Mescaline taker. It would be possible, in retrospect, to read significance into things I saw, or rather the way I saw things, but I am certain that there was no suggestion of this significance being there at the time. It was almost totally an 'artistic' experience. The great majority of the phenomena I witnessed were visual and two dimensional - the wallpaper, the surface of the fireplace, pictures etc. The pictures were a delight.

The last title I could ever lay claim to would be Art Connoisseur, and in the past no picture has absorbed me for any length of time, but under the influence of the Mescaline some of the prints I looked at almost literally came to life. A Chinese landscape in pastel shades was the richest of these (most of the things I saw seemed to be in pastel shades; or rather, pastel shades seemed to absorb my attention more than bright areas of pure colour). I watched the pale yellow and pink clouds floating through mountain gorges, I saw the water actually flowing down a mountain waterfall, and I watched the gaily coloured roofs of a group of huts melt and run down the side of the mountain.

Sheila asked me for one of the prints back three times and in the end Winston had to take it from me. I heard her ask me but I was so absorbed in it that I just ignored her words. A small print of Van Gogh's SUNFLOWERS actually vibrated - in, out, in, out - as though it were breathing. I watched purple veins covering the face of the rather sad old warrior in Rembrandt's MAN IN A GOLDEN HELMET, and I saw pearly green shades in it I had never seen before and can hardly detect now, even though I know they are there. And I watched the face change, quite suddenly, into a hard and cruel Mongol face with alive and moving evil eyes. (None of these things bothered me, in a personal way. I knew that I was merely looking at a picture and that I could, if I wished, break my attention.) I got lost in a glorious, rich, autumn-shaded pool in Constable's THE HAYWAIN, and Rousseau's SNAKE CHARMER looked like "a moving jigsaw puzzle" to me.

I seem to remember reading somewhere a comment on the fact that Aldous Huxley, under Mescaline, was taken up with the indescribable beauty of the texture of his trousers, and someone asked why he didn't try looking at a beautiful woman. I have a feeling that it may have been Walt Willis who said that that was typical of Aldous Huxley. That may be true; but it is certainly true that it is typical of Mescaline. People, and other objects seen at some distance, appear fairly

normal; it seems to be only objects seen at closer range which undergo any great change, and absorb the attention far more because of an increased awareness of some aspect of them. My own theory is that Mescaline results in magnified vision within a certain range, and also that it holds the pupils in an artificially enlarged state, thus admitting more light than normal and so making one aware of subtle shade variations etc. Amongst other things I had Sheila show me pictures of beautiful women (beautiful naked women, let it be noted) a subject to which, I submit, I am not normally insensitive. My comments: "I can see sort of flowing streams in just two or three strands of her hair. Or in the sand on her body; that forms a logical flow." "I can see movements in the studs on her bangle. I can look down on it as if it were a conference hall, and see people moving around as if they were going to have a conference, but they never get seated." That is the way it was all the time - not the complete subject but some minute detail of it absorbing one's whole attention.

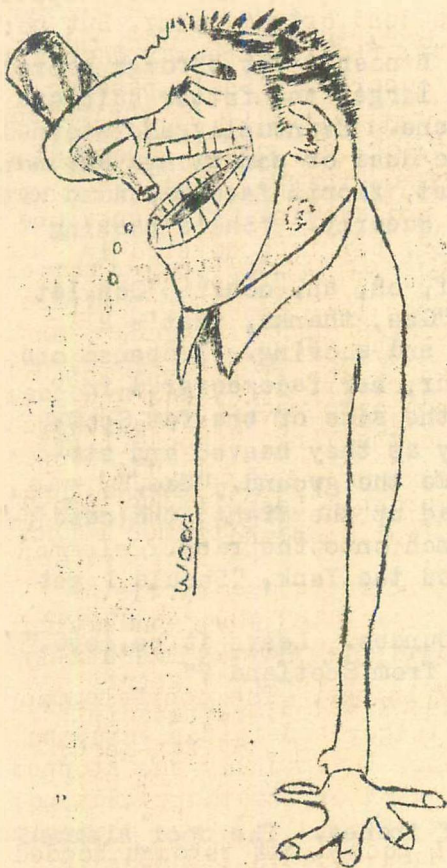
I had a cup of coffee and got lost in gazing at the altered perspectives of the cup and saucer, an alteration I couldn't begin to describe. The cup looked 'bigger' and the saucer 'smaller' but there was more to it than that. I shook my head ruefully.

Sheila gave me a mathematical test - 70 minus 6, down in series. I got the series right but it took me six seconds to manage the last stage - taking six from ten!! The reason was quite simply lack of concentration; I could not remember what had gone before. If Sheila or Winston had told me I had got the answer wrong I could not have disputed their word. (This is an interesting point. Both Aldous Huxley and Christopher Mayhew assert that their intelligence was no less under Mescaline than normal - and yet Mayhew made a worse mess than I did of the mathematical test he was given. Personally, I feel that a certain amount of concentration is a necessary factor in intelligence and that the diminution of concentration under Mescaline does in fact result in some slight lowering of the intelligence.) "Can you be three feet behind your head?" Winston asked me. The answer: " (Pause)...(Long sigh)....No, I don't think so. You can't get lost in the thought of three feet behind your head." Anything requiring sustained or abstract thought was out; it took all the concentration I had left to find the right words to describe things and to answer questions. My sense of humour remained and was possibly even heightened. I laughed easily at things -though not idiotically or hysterically - and sometimes I smiled quietly at the antics of some whimsical pattern I was watching. All in all I was at peace with existence, content just to sit and watch the world flow by.

Possibly it wasn't heaven; certainly it wasn't hell - but it was a very pleasant and a fascinating halfway house,

THE END

PS: If anyone knows a tame psychiatrist who is looking for a subject to try, say, Lysergic Acid out on, or if anyone has any friends with cellars full of mysterious drugs the rats won't touch, this little guinea pig is in the market.



MUTTERINGS

from the

MORGUE

Readers from way back will perhaps recall that this started out as a letter column of kinds, and throughout all the issues of ROT (two) one person has always featured in this column. It is to this one individual, therefore, that we are dedicating the whole of this MUTTERINGS FROM THE MORGUE. (Also because he's the only one who wrote.) Both letters this time, then, come from the one and only

-----DAVE WOOD-----

(Dave has laughingly suggested that by the time his letters see publication here they are usually about a decade out of date, and that any issue he is expecting to find one of his letters telling me that he is just leaving school. I accept this jibe in the good-natured sense in which it is intended and by way of confounding Dave's light-hearted sarcasm I am publishing here two of his letters which are not yet two years old. They were written while he was still in the army (some time after the Second World War.)

DAVE WOOD: " I staggered onto Birmingham Railway Station last Friday loaded down with suitcase and sweat. The train I wanted was just chugging in. There were not many souls about at that early hour and I thought to myself "Good. I'll grab an empty carriage and get some sleep."

I staggered (no, I hadn't been drinking but it was early and my eyes were still mere slits in my weather-beaten face. It was pouring down.) and flopped about a bit until I saw a lonely little Third Class coach. I stacked my cases on the rack, took off my overcoat and, putting down my bag of bulls-eyes, bar of chocolate, "Daily Mirror", "Picturegoer", "Daily Sketch", piece of chewing gum and copy of "Doctor at Large", I slumped into the darkest corner. I shut my eyes and a blissful expression covered my face. "Ahhh" I thought. And furthermore, "Ahhhhhh".

Crash. " 'Ere's an empty one ducks. Only a young lad in. You'll be safe here." (Sic.)

"Ee, isn't it warm after that other thing ?"

"Och aye. Well, maw, thanks for bringing us. Aye, I'll be fine."

"Ee, well, look after yoursel', love. Write, wontcha ?"

"Och aye."

Crash. Mumble, scrape, puffing and panting. I peered out through hooded lids. A large fat woman was attempting to lift an even larger and fatter suitcase onto the rack. I closed my eyes on such a primitive scene. Eventually she stopped her scuffling. I peered out again, thinking she might be dead or something. But no, she had crouched in the opposite corner from me. Her fat, florid face was damp with sweat and her beady eyes were glazed; she was breathing queerly. "She's passing away, poor soul" I thought and dozed off.

The door slammed open again. "Puff, puff, oaf, oh, ah, ooh." "Och, let me help ye." "Gee, thanks." "Och, it's a'right." "Gee, thanks, that's a great help." Scuffle, scrape, panting, "Uff", heaving and shoving. I opened one eye. A large stringy woman, her hair dyed a pinky colour, her face covered in savage war paint, her nails a bright crimson, stood by the side of the fat Scot; they looked like a female equivalent of Laurel and Hardy as they heaved and strained at a large crimson suitcase, which refused to leave the ground. "Gee." "Och." "Erf." Suddenly, almost as if gravity had packed up the fight, the case whistled up in the air and crashed with a sickening crunch onto the rack.

"Gee, I hope it didn't break nuthin' " murmured the Yank, "Should I get it down and take a look see?"

"Och, nay. What's done is done as we say i' Dundee. Leave it be, love."

"Gee, I guess you're right. And, gee, are you from Scotland?"

"Och aye noo."

"Gee, honey, I just love that accent!"

I sighed.

"Gee, is he with you?"

Kerist, I thought, and shrank a good couple of inches. The door slammed once more, so the fat Scot's answer was lost.

"Are these anybody's seats?"

"Och, nay, come rect in."

"Thank you. Cold isn't it?"

"Och, aye, but ye shoulda been in the last train I was in. Damp!"

"Yes, they can be cold, can't they?"

"Cold! Och, frizzen."

"Gee."

"Tut."

"Och."

"Hell" I muttered. I opened my eyes fully and straightened my tie. Nobody looked at me. The fat Scot sat opposite me, the Yank was in the far corner, and between me and her was the newcomer - another peculiarly built specimen rather like an animated football.

"Och, ah could hardly feel me legs."

"Terrible!"

"Gee, in the States we have everything centrally heated."

"Och, it's really disgraceful here."

"Gee."

"But look at yon lass trying to struggle in wi' her bairn. Poor thing looks cold."

A young woman with a baby in one arm and a suitcase under the other was struggling about outside. The fat one leaned out. "Give me yer case, love, and get in. Here, this lass will hold yer bairn."

"Gee, er, yes. Of course I will."

"Oh, thank you."

"Gee, is ickle baby cold?"

"Tch. Tch."

"Och, ain't he sweet ?"

"Gee, cute."

"Te..te..te. Ickle baby, look at me" said 'Football' shoving a playful finger into the poor kid's stomach.

"Aaaaaaah. Aaaaaaah."

"Oh, poor Eddy."

"Och."

"Gee."

"Te..te..te."

"Aaaaah. Aaash."

I opened my copy of 'Doctor at Large' and attempted to immerse myself in it. Gabble, gabble, aaaaah, och, cold as ice, gee, te..te..te, British Railways ought to do something, freezing it was, where you going, Dundee, Edinburgh, Carlisle, home ?, yes friends, Father...sob, sob, sob. Oh well. Father's d....sob. Poor lass and with a bairn as well. Gee. We've all to die someday love. Sob, sob, sniffle. Father's.....aaaah, sniffle, gee, och. 'There was already a queue of patients on the pavement as I unlocked the door...' Aaaaah, gee, och. Father, te..te, baby wantum drink ? ' "Adiposa Familiars" I said brightly as they entered.' Och, an me face was blue with the cold. Gee, te..te, Father! ' "Where's the doctor ?" "I am the doctor" "No, the real doctor" ' Och, sorry that we are, but as we say in Dundee... Sob, sob, yeh, tch, tch. ' "Well, I can't say I like the idea of you meddling with our Eva" ' Gee, in the States.... Och, Father.....sob, boohoooo.

Whistle, rumble, plonk as the train surged on. Gabble, gabble, gabble from without. Within, Doctor Richard Gordon tackled his first patient. The fat Scot oched, the thin Yank geed, the sad mother sobbed, the baby burped and the 'football' tched all over the place.

' I took my stethoscope and laid it over the heart, winked at her pleasantly and said with a smile "Big breaths." A look of interest at last illuminated the child's face. She glanced at me and grinned. "Yeth" she said proudly, "And I'm only thickthteen." '

Haa - ha - ha - haaaaaaa! I roared out loud. There was a sudden deathly silence in the compartment. I looked up. Fat Scot, 'Football', Thin Yank, Sad Mother, Burping Baby; ten accusing eyes; ten threatening pupils.

"Modern youth!" muttered 'Football'.

"Noisy ruffian" sobbed Sad Mother.

" Och" said Fat Scot.

"Gee, is he a Teddy Boy ?" asked Thin Yank.

I gulped. The ten eyes continued to stare. Hurriedly I picked up my coat, suitcase, 'Mirror', 'Picturegoer', 'Sketch', bulls-eyes, chocolate, crammed my chewing gum in my mouth, and fled.

To hell with the people who bang on the door, I thought as I crouched uncomfortably across the bowl, at least it's peaceful and quiet.

((Some considerable time ago I sold a story - almost by accident - to a woman's magazine, which we will call WOMANS SHINING STAR WEEKLY. Originally I entered it for a Publisher's competition with a tempting first prize. Several months went by and then one day I received a letter saying that my story hadn't won but they would like to buy it for WOMANS SHINING STAR WEEKLY; also they would be happy to think twice about any more I might send them. I gulped figuratively and sat down to earn their further appreciation (and some more of their money). But the knowledge that I was writing for WOMANS SHINING STAR WEEKLY was my undoing. Whereas the first story had no plot and even less action, could hardly in truth be called a story, and was completely unlike the usual things which appeared in W.S.S.W, the second story had a plot, a beating-up, a robbery, a romance rescued from the rocks

right on the last page, and was just the type of thing which W.S.S.W. published every week. It came back within a week with a little editorial note saying they were sorry but it hadn't enough action in it. I mentioned this in a letter to Dave. This is his reply.....))

" To come to the lamentable fact that you aren't selling to WOMANS SHINING STAR WEEKLY. Now look, Mal, as a well read man (I've read James Joyce and Dylan Thomas) - although J.J. can get away with saying 'F---' and 'Sh--' without having to put 'F---' and 'Sh--', you can't! Neither therefore, in the same way, can you write for WSSW without spilling at least 3 gallons of blood and committing a couple of dozen murders, along with an eternal triangle and either Old Miss Murdock from the corner shop or Farmer Spiel, the harsh old landowner, who is determined to 'have' virgin Jenny. It was Dylan Thomas who said: "It would be wrong, however pleasant, to begin a story for a girls' popular weekly - "Myrtle's" or "Pam's" or maybe it is "Greta's" now, or "Ingrid's" - with a subtle analysis of the state of mind of a neurotic young man of letters about to meet a phobia, socially, in a disused Nissen hut. It would never make the grade, and is doomed to perpetual immurement in magazines with a circulation of seventeen poets and a woman who once met Kafka's aunt."

Take it from Dylan, me boy, and get at grips with WSSW. Not too many or you won't be in a fit state to write even to your maiden aunt (god bless her) without sinking to using paragraphs of one or less (if possible) sentences. If it's at all a help, maybe this rough synopsis of all the stories ever to appear in WOMANS SHINING STAR WEEKLY (and, for that matter, WOMANS PURPLE STAR, LITTLE WOMANS FAITHFUL FRIEND, MY PURPLE WEEKLY etc.) will come in useful.

"It is all (naturally) Old (got to be old, remember) Mrs. (sometimes Miss, depending on whether she is wicked or just downright nasty) Mumfchamps' (names such as Merridans, Haigh, Crippshaw, Smith and Jones are all equally sinister for such a story as this) fault in the first place. (No need to explain what the first place was even if it was a brothel in New Orleans. It would still leave the shallow reader cold). It had been her idea that her grandson (step-son or ward) Robert Kewson (a fine, clean name) and Monica Page (sweet, innocent) who taught in the village school (worked in the village post office will do) should pretend to be a little in love with one another (never, never lovers!!)

Monica was living (staying) at The Hall (The Lodge, The Grange, The Estate) while her Head Mistress (Post Master or Riding Mistress) with whom she lived (never solicited, please!) was in hospital (Canada, Australia, New Guinea or Brighton). And both Robert and his cousin, Daphne Marlow, were living there too. Which is unfortunate (for whom?) (the reader) as Daphne's husband, Basil (or Boris or Carl or Karl or Fritz) is coming home after being lost during an exploration (don't say where, except it was very, very cold (he got frostbite) or it was very, very hot (he got sunstroke)) abroad, and he had always been insanely (madly; never neurotically, if you don't mind) jealous of Daphne's affections for Robert.

If he believed (sucker) that Robert was falling in love with Monica, Mrs. Mumfchamps thought, the situation would be saved..... "

Mighod, I just can't go on. And I haven't even reached the part where Robert finds out (discovers) that Mrs. Mumfchamps is in fact Jack The Ripper reincarnated (brought back from the dead) by the evil Basil (or was it Boris?) and that he is the next victim for Monica who is one of Daphne's zombies. Daphne being, of course, none other than..... "

((I took Dave's advice and I am now waiting to hear from the editor of WOMANS SHINING STAR WEEKLY. He is taking a little longer this time. About seventeen months longer.))

-----END-----END-----END-----END-----

a dozen or two wise men —

— and one wise guy

On the 25th August Francis Bacon said to me "Atheism is rather in the lip than in the heart of man", and I said simply, "Futs!"

This started me off on a bad habit; since then I have quibbled with Massinger (who he ?), been sarcastic with La Rochefoucauld, applauded Talleyrand and amended Publilius Syrus. And I have become rather addicted to the practice. Only this morning, I see, I amended Syrus again; I doubt if he's going to take it any too kindly. And Thoreau too - I gave him rather a rough time. I feel that in a very short while I shall be distinctly unpopular with Great Men if I go on this way. But, as I say, I have become quite addicted to this cowardly practice of sniping at them without fear of retaliation, and, in a way it serves them right for sitting there so smugly on my desk calendar at the office and saying things. Especially first thing in a morning; anyone who says anything to me first thing in a morning takes his life in his hands, and I am enough of a filthy proletarian not to let it make any difference if he happens to be Benjamin Disraeli or Thomas Carlyle.

The next one to suffer, after Francis Bacon, was John Ray. On the 5th October he said, "The wise make jests and fools repeat them" and in the interests of topicality, and probably with the international spy situation in mind, I amended 'jest's' to 'jets'. Then, on the 16th November, I was a great help to Laboulaye (who he too ?). He said: "On the first day a man is a guest, the second a burden, the third a pest." For the sake of euphony I altered 'burden' to 'test'. Laboulaye hasn't thanked me yet. On the 7th December, Seneca said "What should be done must be learned from one who does it" and I added on the end "most successfully." He hasn't thanked me yet either. On the 15th December (Ember Day; you know Ember of FOREVER EMBER ?) Benny Disraeli said: "Religion should be the rule of life, not a casual incident in it", and I rapped him over the knuckles rather boorishly with "Bilge! Pure, unadulterated bilge!" Poor Disraeli, I fear he took it rather hard; he hasn't uttered a word since. After this the Great Men either took a vacation, or I had better breakfasts, until April 15th, when Massinger said "A wise man never attempts impossibilities". One of the typists underlined this and added her initials; I'm sorry, but it is all a long time ago now, and I really don't remember why. Anyway, whatever the reason was, I was, apparently, still optimistic because I replied "To a wise man there is no such thing as an impossibility."

On the 13th September Richter said "The chief fault of man is that he has so many small ones" and I added "especially when he's married." A few days later La Rochefoucauld averred that: "The end of a good thing is an evil thing; the end of an evil thing a good thing" and I did the only logical thing and went

through the aphorism changing all the initial letters of the good and evil things to capitals. Livy was next, on the first of December, with "He will have true glory who despises glory", only to be met with a sour "HOO-JOLLY-RAY!". La Rochefoucauld tried again the next day: "What we find the least of in flirtation is love." That evoked nothing more than a deadpan "So ?"

The Great Men seem to have been a little put out at the churlish reception they were getting, and they must have taken a rest until early in February. I can't help thinking that they could have made a better start than Carlyle's weighty: "We have not the love of greatness, but the love of the love of greatness." The "Uh ?" which he got seemed as much as he deserved. On the 10th Dante discovered that "From little spark may burst a mighty flame" and, overcome with awe, I exclaimed "Sheer, dog-blamed geniwurfst!" On the 16th Vauvenargues thought that "When a thought is too weak to be expressed simply, it is proof that it should be rejected" and I argued "Not so - it is proof that it may be so original there are no words to express it." On the 15th March Burke declaimed: "Example is the school of mankind and they will learn at no other" and, throwing up my hands in mock seriousness, I wailed "Alas - they have no other to learn at." (A caustic comment which causes me some pangs of conscience now; I thought he said 'Experience' not 'Example'.) Herbert, on the 28th, announced: "Better the foot slip than the tongue" and I announced, "Useful type motto when climbing down precipitous rock-face (or even up for that matter!)"

On the 14th April Froude tried to convince me that "As we advance in life, we learn the limits of our abilities" but I was not to be easily convinced. "Sure it's not as we advance in life we acquire limits to our abilities?" I asked him. Four days later Thoreau said: "It takes two to speak the truth - one to speak and another to hear". I underlined his ambiguity, as here, and gave him a disrespectful raspberry. Oh, I was a wild one!

Horace, on the 20th, advised me to "Shun the inquisitive person for he is also a talker" but I rejected his advice with a curt "or a scientist". And then, on the 25th, I must have confounded them all - I actually approved Pascal! He must have caught me in a good mood when he said "The world is satisfied with words. Few appreciate the things beneath." To make up for this lapse I was inexcusably rude to Phaedrus a month later. He said "Everyone ought to bear patiently the results of his own conduct" and I replied "Sure - if he sleepwalks off the roof he should bear it patiently". (Phaedrus, can you ever forgive me? I find that, really, I agree with you.) Syrus got on the wrong side of me again (poor Syrus - he never seemed to get on any other side of me) on the 27th with "Forgive others often, yourself never". "Thus", I snarled, "you become Big and Tough - and probably psychopathic."

"Justice renders to everyone his due" said Cicero on the 31st, and I amended 'everyone' to 'the judge' and added "and most of everyone else's too." On the very first of June, Schiller rhapsodised: "Brief is sorrow and endless is joy" and I said "My, my, my! Where have you been?" On the 6th Rabelais propounded that "It is folly to put the plough in front of the oxen" and I ribbed him with "Unless you happen to have oxen which eat ploughs." Goethe, on June 13th, expressed the opinion that "Behaviour is a mirror in which everyone shows his image." "But", I inquired, "does everyone spell his 'image' that way?" On the 2nd of July I overflowed again with the milk of human kindness and patted Talleyrand on the back for saying "Speech was given to man to disguise his thoughts."

Early in August, Statius (a new boy) declared that "Haste administers all things badly" and I asked, "But then - don't we all ?" About the middle of the month Publilius Syrus (is this the same Syrus trying to sneak in under another name ?) came out of the blue with "What you fear happens sooner than what you hope" and I added "it will" on the end. On the 17th of August Cato pronounced: "Wise men learn more from fools, than fools from the wise." To him I suggested "'Maybe the fools are the better teachers ?" And, as I said early on, I amended Syrus again only this morning - and in a particularly sour and misanthropic way. What he said was: "It is good to see in the misfortunes of others what we should avoid." I simply crossed out the words 'in' and 'what we should avoid'.

I suppose that really I ought to feel rather smug and self-satisfied about all this; but somehow I don't. The fact of the matter is that I can never quite shake off the feeling that tomorrow morning I will tear off a sheet, and at the bottom of the new day's page find: "He who jests at the expense of others will soon choke himself" - Syrus, Burke, Cicero, La Rochefoucauld, Bacon, Seneca, Laboulaye, Disraeli.....

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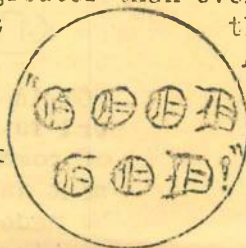
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