

NUMBER 5 SUMMER 1981

THIS MAGAZINE LACKS

(Well, - almost.)

A DILIGENT AND UNTIRING SEARCH THROUGH ALL THE HIDDEN NOOKS AND CRANNIES OF THIS MAGAZINE SHOULD REVEAL:

OVER THE CEMETERY WALL, where you are likely to find anything.

VILLAIPY, WHERE ART THOU? by Doc Weir, in which is mentioned ++!! Science-Fiction!!++

PUNKAH PROMULGATES (again) by Irene Potter, written as a result of the thousands of requests we have had for an article on Shrivelled Vicars, Warts and Galvanised Tin Baths.

R.I.P., which the oldsters among you will remember as MUTTERINGS FROM THE MORGUE. Like, letters.

THE CONFESSIONS OF AN EMGLISH BOOK-LOVER, part two. Entitled: "We've Got 'Eight Great Comedies'", in which The Teenage Booklover Meets The Creature From W. H. Smith's:

And covers - back and front - by Atom.

What more could you ask for? (I don't really want to know!)

A MESSAGE FROM THE CIRCULATION MANAGER

Circulate.

A MODEST MODICUM OF GIBBET GIBBERINGS (Commonly known as 'Quotes')

He has found several fresh fields to be conquered by.//My Ship has come home at last - empty and leaking.//I don't want my stars in constellations; it's been done before.//It's a British Railways owl.//I'll send you my plan for' conquering the world in a plain, sealed envelope.//No I'm not behind with my washing-up; I'm three days in front.//You ought to make sure of your facts before you say 'Phew'.//I don't want to be bossed - it's not worth the trouble.//I come to curry Caesar not to braise him.//It is a proud (Irene Potter, Ted Forsyth, Sheila and Masel')

ROT publishes itself - occasionally - through the reluctant agency of:

MAL ASHWORTH, 14, WESTGATE, ECCLESHILL, BRADFORD.2., ENGLAND.

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GEM	FIE	3 1	11 -		(b)	
	And Andrews			111		<u> </u>

DU BE CAREFUL, AN EL IK: From the 'Daily Telegraph':

....I D.N'T BLANE YOU FOR GETAING MAD: From the 'Sunday Times': SQUIRREL 'DEMON OF THE CODS'

" Women and children have been attacked, and householders bordering on a woodland.....are terrorised by the ferocity of a.....squirrel. Several people have been bitten.

In two.....instances the squirrel jumped on the back of an old lady and had to be beaten off with a walking stick.

THINGS THAT GO 'BURE' IN THE MAILEON (and never seem to get acknowledged):

My CRY Letterhack card from Donald Franson (hoo, this was a long time ago!), a picture postcard from Opatijska (yes, indeed) sent by a fine fanish crowd of folks like Norman and Ina Shorrock and many more, including the Illustrious MARRISON (this was quite a long time ago, too!) and a Mercer's Day card from Brian Jordan. Thanks, people.

THE KLUNK OF THE HOUSE OF USEER: There's this dank, miasmic swamp, see, oozing brightly coloured Hollywood mist, and this o-o-o-o-l-d house standing by it with a dirty great crack in the wall. A fine young feller comes riding by on a horse and stops off to marry the young woman of the house, Madeleine Usher, whom he had met in Boston. Her brother, Roderick Usher, says 'No. Please go away. You con't understand. ' The young feller says, 'But...but...', Roderick says 'No. Please go away. You don't understand, '; the young feller says 'But ... but ... '; Roderick says 'No. Flease go away. You don't understand. '; the young feller says.....you get the idea? And Madeleine? She simpers sadly in the background. Anyway, by way of helping the Young Feller to understand, Roderick locks Madeleine in a metal coffin and gets himself all het up because he can hear her scratting to get out. I don't know if he figured she was going to accept her incarceration with equanimity and not scrat, but she does scrat and he gets mighty perturbed about it. The Young Feller isn't any too pleased about the way his courting is going either.

New York furriers report that American women are going 'fur crazy'. They are buying bathing suits with Chinchilla tops for cool days, while one customer has ordered a bathing suit lined with squir-rel.

Madeleine scrats considerably and manages to get out of her coffin with a finesse which would have made houdini curl up and 30 home, and a few scratches on her immaculately manicured hands which then proceed to drop thick gobs of tomato ketchup about two inches in diameter and three inches apart in a regular line all around the house. She leaves a gallon or two on every door handle too. The Young Feller follows her around - no faint-hearted swain this one, but one of the good old ardent woo-ers - until she jumps out at him and scrabbles at his throat, which finally seems to damp his ardour a little. It all ends in the usual fiery holocaust with the house and all sinking into the dank miasmic swamp in a way that I - and probably Edgar Allan Foe too - had never really seriously considered - straight down, all in one piece, like a Mighty durlitzer organ in some plush theatre. That is 'The Fall Of The House Of Usher' 1961, a la Hollywood and Richard Hatheson (he wrote the screenplay); and do you know - I may be just a little old-rashioned - but I fancy I prefer it Edgar Allan's way.

'DOC' WEIR

It is very difficult for me to realise that 'Doc' Teir is dead; death seems to have no business approaching so lively and youthful a mind as his. Difficult to realise that he is not there any longer to share opinions with on any of the thousand and one things we touched upon in our brief but, to me, utterly engrossing correspondence; to pull me up sharply but kindly in a piece of sloppy thinking; to let drop, unselfconsciously, a hint of one more of the many fascinating things he had done in his life. Were I to list the virtues I knew in him the list would be meaningless to those who did not know him, and incomplete to those who did. But if one per cent of all humanity had half of 'Doc's' fine traits, perhaps we need not worry about the future of the race. He will be missed enormously. I know.

Mot a single person whose name begins with 'Q' wrote a letter of comment on RCT No.4 and no exchange fanzines were received from people whose names begin with 'X' or 'Z'.

DEPARTMENT OF MIND-SHATTERING DISCOVERIES: As the world's 'First Spaceman' is heralded up and down with due Fomp and Circumstance (the

papers reported one un-named U.S. spokesman as saying 'It makes me sick') I reflect once again on the fact that 'They' are merely pulling the wool over our eyes. Space Research is actually far in advance - very far in advance! - of anything we are allowed to know about. It is some months now since Sheila, waiting for me in the local Boots library while I was bargain-hunting among the library remainders, spotted a copy of A.E. Van Vogt's VOYAGE OF THE SPACE EEAGLE. It was firmly and snugly ensconced in the middle of the "NON-FICTION - TRAVEL" section.

TEIS WORLD WE LIVE IN - SOMETIMES: Which is intended to be a department of Things Funny (Peculiar) and Things

Funny (Ha-Ha), along with, no doubt, quite a few Things Funny (Pec-Ha). Contributions for this section will be appreciated with wild and screaming enthusiasm, and you will Get Your Name Mentioned (or a reasonable facsimile thereof). Send genuine, original clippings, or other similar items, which strike you as being funny, peculiar, out-of-the-ordinary, ridiculous, etc., to the fellow whose mame you will find somewhere around this magazine, and if they strike him the same way they will end up here. And even if they don't, he will say Nice Things about you. Sgd. Chas. Fort. So here goes:

Things Funny (Peculiar)

- " A 3,000 year old sun chariot, one of the treasures of the Danish National Museum, was damaged to-day by a youth of 20. He threw at it a sledge-hammer which he had smuggled into the museum under his coat.
 - The youth told ((police)) that he had acted on instructions from his 'chief', and showed them a note: "Start a heathen conspiracy against the Government. Smash the sun chariot, then go underground and await new instructions. Your fiancee is in danger."

 ---- 'Daily Telegraph'
- "Magistrates in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, are in a quandry over what to do about Miss Mabel McCombs, 57. She has been accused by six of her neighbours of being a common scold, that is, of cursing them. The law dealing with common scolds is 101 years old and states that anyone found guilty of the offence shall be placed in a ducking stool for a watery punishment."

 ------!Daily Telegraph!
- "Faye Papa Diene, 26, the Senegalese member of the African Dance Company who, after collapsing on arrival at Newcastle upon Tyne airport said he believed he was under a spell, might be discharged from Newcastle Infirmary tomorrow.

 The spokesman ((said)) that a number of other dancers in the company also believed that Diene was under a spell. Though they had not introduced any special routines in their show they had probably put greater effort than usual into those items which dealt with the exorcism of spells."

 -----'Daily Telegraph'
- "A duel with horsewhips has been arranged between a prominent Conservative and a former Fascist Parliamentary candidate to 'settle a dispute'."

 -----'Daily Telegraph'
- "Raymond James Filer, 33, of no fixed address, who removed his mother's body from a grave and tried to bring her back to life, was sent to a mental hospital by Mr. Justice McNair at Chester Assizes yesterday.

Er. David Pennant, prosecuting, said Filer took his mother's body to an empty house and attached her foot to an electric socket. A prospective buyer who went to view the house discovered the body."

-----'Daily Telegraph'

(Vernon, my brother, says the man was a fool; he must have used a five-amp socket and you need at least a fifteen amp for that.)

" A woman was stated yesterday to have plagued a major's household

with telephone calls, offensive letters and parcels containing 'voodoo and black magic' objects.

Among other annoyances, Mrs. Fierson had sent by post to the major's house a model dagger in bloody paper, and a minature coffin with nails driven through it and containing a doll's head with Mrs.

Burton's picture fastened to it."

-----'Sunday Times'

" 'Something kept telling me to do it,' Gary Geiger, 13, told the police after admitting he had murdered his mother. The boy said there was no trouble between them. But he could not resist the urge to creep up behind her as she played the organ in their home and shoot her in the back."

And while I remember, does anyone have any information on a strange business I only heard about casually some time ago, in which, young men, usually rather pror people, Mexican labourers, etc., kept suddenly screaming in their sleep and then dying suddenly, for no obvious reason? I think most of it happened in California, and one, who wakened immediately after screaming, said something about 'a little man' trying to strangle him. There was no obvious connection between the victims, I believe, and quite a number were supposed to have died. Anyone? Please?

Things Funny (Ha-Ha)

.....there was no record of a licence having been obtained since the officer called at the souse on January 17."

----'Telegraph & Argus'
(Bradford evening paper, God Bless

its typographical little heart),

" WHERE TO OBTAIN YOUR 'TELEGRAPH & ARGUS' IN BRADFERD ON EASER MONDAY.

Most newsagents will be closed on Easter Monday, April 7, 1961. The above map shows where news vendors will be stationed from 3 p.m. to 6.30 p.m. Don't forget your 'Telegraph & Argus'. "

-----From the 'Telegraph & Argus' for Easter

Monday, April 3, 1961

DIED PREPARING FOR SUICIDE

- "The excitement of trying to gas herself was too much for an 85-year-old widow and she died from natural causes." ---- 'Daily Telegraph'
- "Napier (James) "FOLK LORE". Superstitious Beliefs in the west of Scotland within this Century; pub. 1879"
 ----From a Bookseller's List for July, 1960
- " H. WALPOLE 'Rogue Herring' Macmillan
 ----From PAFERBACKS IN PRINT
 ((Fearful story of a killer fish?))

SPECHAL!!!!

* FOR ONE ISSUE ONLY *

A SLIGHT SLIP OF THE STYLUS (or was it the year?):

Those of you who started at the front cover of this magazine and worked

in from there, will no doubt have noticed this issue's deliberate - ha, ha - mistake on the inside front cover. I mean, of course, the bit that reads "Summer 1961". Well, you see, I thought - ha, ha - I'll put this false date on the inside front cover, like - ha, ha - "Summer 1961" - and for just a teeny minute after they read it they'll think the issue is late. Of course, when they come to think about it they'll know - ha, ha - that it just couldn't be that late; I mean they won't think for a moment that the issue could just have been lying around since "Summer, 1961" (and, of course, they won't even for a second so much as begin to consider that even then it would have been late!). Then they'll think 'Ho, ho, Old Ashworth is trying to fool us into thinking this issue of ROT is late. Ha, ha'. So now, you understand, of course, that it isn't really late but that it's just - ha, ha - one of my gay, irrepressible little practical jokes. I had you fooled there for just a second or two, huh? I mean - ha, ha.

FANZINES COME AND FANZINES GO:

This is a word about the ones that come.

Originally I had several pages of fanzine

reviews here; but because of the practical joke mentioned above (you know where I decided to hold the issue up for two years so I could fool you into thinking it was late) they became a little out-dated and have been dumped. Among the fanzines mentioned in those pages were CADENZA (Chas. Wells), COMIC ART (Don Thompson), THE ATOM ANTHOLOGY (Miz Parker, bless whatever it is she keeps in place of her heart), FANFARONADE (Jeff Wanshel), ESOTERIQUE (Bruce Henstell), CACTUS (Sture Sedolin), VOID (one of the very best - Ted White), WARHOON (Rich Bergeron), CRY OF THE NAMELESS (Buz Busby and Others), ORION (Ma Parker, bless....), EMANATION (John M. Foyster), SMOKE (George Locke), SI-FAN (Jerry Page), KALEIDOSCOFE (Jack L. Chalker, alias Chesapeake Publications), SPECULATIVE REVIEW (Dick Fney - a Good Man, if ever there was one; and there was.), DISCORD and THE GOLDEN APPLE (Boggs and Grennell, two Good Men if ever there were two; and there were.), AFFAMATO (Ernie Wheatley), ETWAS (Peggy Rae McKnight), ZYMURGY (Richard A. Koogle), LES SPINGE (Ken Cheslin), PARSECTION (George C. Willick), HAVERINGS (Ethel Lindsay, whom may Ghu reward), SATHANAS (Richard P. Schultz), FANZINE and LETTERSVILLE (Sylvia White), dubious (Algernon Jeremiah Budrys), BUG EYE (Helmut Klem), DAFOE and others (John Koning - also a Good Man), SCRIBBLE (delightful, whacky SCRIBBLE - Colin Freeman), NEW FRONTIERS (Norm Metcalf), SHANGRI L'AFFAIRES a topnotcher - Los Angeles Science-Fantasy Society; various editors), FANAC (Terry Carr and Ron Ellik, Terry and Miri Carr, and latterly Walter Breen), HYPHEN (Walt Willis - the magazine and the man which, more than any other, changed the face of Fandom), BANE (Vic Ryan), INTROSPECTION (Mike Domina), ESPRIT (Daphne Buckmaster), and one of the all time greats, Bill Donaho's HABAKKUK.

Then there was the special case of Les Nirenberg's QUE PASADO; after I had written a review of this, Les changed it to VAHANA; struggling wildly to keep pace I included a later note of this also. So you know what he did then; he changed it to PANIC BUTTON, which is similar to, but better than, the famed PRIVATE EYE magazine which has been getting so much publicity over here lately.

Since that time, of course, there have been many other fanzines to reach these parts and, as I don't have them all in front of me, I am greatly afraid some will be missed. There was AXE, for example, Larry Shaw's magazine which did such a fabulous job of getting Walt and Madeleine Will is to the Chicon, and which he sent me for Ghod knows how many issues without so much as a sneeze by way of acknowledgment. Sorry, Larry; the gratitude was all here but I just never got it mailed to you. There has been also the never-failingly excellent STEFANTASY from Bill Danner, who made me sad by dropping from FAPA, INSIDE from Jon White, the delightful UCHUJIN from Takumi Shibano, the dandy BHISMILLAH from Andy Main Bem, and the beautifully reproduced SALAMANDER from Fred Patten. And many, many more, forgotten but not forgotten (well, you know...) Sorry, folks.

PAYOLA FROM PARADISE (Or CHEE, I WUZ NEARLY RICH!):

All I had to do, ya see, was to copy out this short Good Luck

Prayer, making at least four spelling errors ("Trust in the Lord with all they heart; in all th@y ways, acknowledge Him, and He will directy th@@y path" was the way it went) and money would have poured into my lap like to knock me down. By Golly, yes. That's the way it went with General Atkins, it seems; three days after he 'recieved' it he also 'recieved' 17.000 dollars. Jolly Good Show. General Patton 'recieved' 8,000 dollars and lost it again after he broke the chain. Jolly Bad Show. The same sort of thing was likely to happen to me, it seemed, if I broke the chain; I would have 'bad, bad luck'. Twenty-four hours after I 'recieved' it the copies had to leave my hands, or else.....bad, bad luck. Anyone who knows me well has already like to died with hysterics at the thought of me getting anything done within twenty-four hours. I guess. Even picking my nose. So my lot was just sort of automatically cast with General Patton. But I want to put it on record here and now that I have been rooked. Shysters have gypped me. Not only has my luck not got any worse than it normally is ('atrocious', I believe, is the correct description), but I haven't even received my 8,000 dollars yet, let alone lost it again. And I worked so hard at it by doing nothing. Why, it's enough to shatter my faith in Chain Letters for life!

A LOT OF ROT: Ken Potter doesn't like the title of this magazine. This isn't really very bad since we make a habit of deploring anything at all that each other does, and, in any event, who could take seriously any title criticism from a man who, even if only twice in a lifetime, puts out a thing called BRENNSCHLUSS? Then again Arthur Thomson doesn't like the department headings; thinks they may have been mildly amusing at first but are now beginning to pall. Myself I think they should strike with thunderflash impact every time, after the lapse of time I manage to achieve between issues, but if Arthur Thomson says so it must be so. Anyway, to try and make him halfway happy I have changed the title of the letter-column this time from - um - er - to - er - well. Anyway, I have changed it. I'm sure I have.

It sometimes surprises me that a person can be in fandom for AN UNSUNG FAN: a number of years, one of the steady, constant influences behind the scenes, and gain practically no recognition from Fandom as a whole. The chap I have in mind has been around, collecting fanzines a lot longer than I have and probably longer than almost anyone else I could name, his name is on most fanzine mailing lists, and he probably has a larger collection - both of fanzines and science-fiction books and magazines - than anyone else this side of Forry Ackerman (and perhaps even the other side too!). Admittedly, so far as I know, he has never yet attended a convention, but lots of other well-known fans could claim the same and this doesn't bar them from fannish recognition. A little while ago I thought that the fan I have in mind must at last have gone gafia. but then he wrote to me asking for the latest issue of ROT, and that was what started me off on this current train of thought. And it has led me to one inescapable conclusion - a person with such a long-lived connection with fandom, who has taken the trouble to build up a collection like that, and who, as far as I know, never fails to acknowledge a fanzine, deserves better of fandom than that; therefore I am nominating for TAFF, the Official Keeper of the Printed Books at the British Museum.

AND SO WE SAY.....

I guess one doesn't have to be the World Champion Realist to admit that the state I have been in for the past year or two looks like a

pretty reasonable facsimile of gafia. I had intended, whatever else I didn't manage to keep up with, to hang onto my OMPA and FAPA memberships, but the OMPA one slipped through my grasp suddenly last summer, and then there was one; and that one I really do mean to hang onto. So this is just to kind of ratify what is already staring me in the face, and to say, 'Well, yes; I'm afraid I am gafia'; to say, also, if - incredibly enough - any of you long-suffering people still feel kindly disposed towards me, send me just one more copy of your fanzine and if I don't lift my head out of the mire long enough to do something about ensuring future supplies, mutter 'To Hell with him' and don't send me any more; I mean that. Fanzines are a labour of love, but a labour nonetheless and you want to be getting some return for your efforts, not just pouring them into a bottomless morass that doesn't even manage to say 'Glug'.

If there are any future issues of ROT, they will be distributed through FAPA; in which case there may just be a few spare copies for other folks. But that's a whole long string of 'Ifs'.

One last little thing - that isn't really 'little' at all - and that is: thanks, everybody, for everything.

Bye, now.

VILLAINY,

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ARTHUR R. WEIR

"Thys millere is a perilous man," he seyde,
"And gyf that hee out of hys sleepe abreyde,
He mighte doon us bathe a vileynye."
Aleyn answerde, "I coont hym nat a flye!"

CHAUCER: THE REEVE'S TALE

And Aleyn's ego and his standing with the reader are by that much enlarged! I wrote an article some time back (VECTOR published it - ask them why!) in which I maintained that Fantasy was preferable to Science Fiction because it had more to say about moral and ethical problems.

Hence the preoccupation with villains; how can you make the virtue of your hero shine forth unless you have a really villainous villain with which to compare him?

But - seriously - can you remember <u>any</u> really notable villains in Science Fiction?

One of the best villains of all fiction dates from nearly a century back, in the person of Count Fosco, of Wilkie Collins! THE WOMAN IN WHITE. He was a thorough-going blackguard, and made no secret of it. What he wanted was enough money to make life easy for himself, and he had no scruples about how he got it - in the story in question he was willing to connive at the secret death, if not actual murder, of a weak-minded girl, and at the immurement for life in a private lunatic asylum of another girl in her place, so that he and his employer could split the fortune of the latter between them. He even maintained, with some show of reason, that he was generous, since he contented himself with one hundred thousand pounds, allowing his respected employer no less than double that sum!

Moreover, was he not a model husband? Married to a wire of strong will and doubtful character, he had, within a year, reformed her to obedience to his lightest word, elevated her to the highest position in society, in which she was able to move with dignity till her death, and educated her to such reverence for

himself that she published a two-volume eulogy of him after his death. And, besides, was he not fond of animals? He kept roller canaries, which he himself trained to sing, not to mention a parrot with a startling vocabulary in four languages, and white mice of unique intelligence!

Indeed his death, while at the height of his incomparable powers, was not due to the wits or courage of the hero, or, indeed, to any one man - it was merely that, in his youth, he had run foul of the dreaded <u>Carbonari</u>, and their long-delayed vengeance happened to catch up with him at a moment fortunate for the hero.

Where, then, has our much-boasted S-F any character to set beside this - a double-dyed robber of the widow and orphan and grinder of the faces of the poor, who is also an excellent husband and family man, and withal entirely believable?

Several American S-F magazines show signs of going back to the uninhibited slam-bang "action adventure" kind of tale of the late nineteen-twenties and early nineteen-thirties. This is, presumably, to catch the present younger generation, who made their first contact with S-F too late to have read anything of the kind; this, also, may account for the local success of SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURES. Some of these early tales really had villains.

"Blackie" DuQuesne of THE SKYLARK OF SPACE was a really notably villainous character who stuck at nothing, but who was capable of good manners and even of chivalrous behaviour to such characters as did not, in any slightest degree, stand in the way of his getting anything he wanted. Unfortunately Doc. Smith killed him off most wastefully in the early chapters of SKYLARK III, greatly to the loss of S-F. Another of his characters, "Roger", the interplanetary Napoleon of Crime in TRIPLANETARY had just made a promising start when he also was most regrettably killed off. Villainous races, such as the Fenachrone of SKYLARK III or the Eichkek of GREY LENSMAN, are no substitute - a villain has to be a single person to have a really memorable personality.

Another kind of villain who can be memorable when really well done is the very-nearly-hero; the all-time pattern for him is, of course, Jane Austen's Henry Crawford in MANSFIELD PARK; his easy good manners and London-trained good breeding make Sir Thomas Bertram's sons look like country clod-hoppers, while his invariable kindness and studied courtesy to the shy little poor relation, Fanny Price, cover him with glory, and it is not till the very end of the book that he is finally relegated to outer darkness, as the result of a runaway love-affair with the one married woman above all whom he should have respected.

Alfred Bester has produced no less than four of these: Ben Reich in THE DEMOLISHED MAN, Gully Foyle, Sheffield and Presteign in TIGER! TIGER!, while another of the type is Sam Reed in Kuttner's FURY. Van Vogt has produced some rather similar creations, but less clear-cut: Prescott and Thorsen in THE WORLD OF NULL-A together with Enro the Red and The Follower in THE PAWNS OF NULL-A, while Hedrock in THE WEAPON SHOPS OF ISHER has some claim to this kind of personality.

H. P. Lovecraft has produced at least three unforgettable villains, but all belonging to his supernatural stories, not to his Science Fiction. Fantasy, however, has given us some really first-class specimens: Saruman the wizard and his hanger-on Grima Wormtongue, Shagrat the Uruk, Azog the hideous Orc-King, all from THE LORD OF THE RINGS, while C. S. Lewis' trilogy is by no means behind with the evil Devine, afterwards Lord Feverstone, who is the embodiment of reckless greed, or Miss Hardcastle, sarcastically known as "The Fairy" the head of the N.I.C.E.

secret police; who delights in inflicting and witnessing physical suffering.

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But desirable, meaty, irredeemable villains, such as these, are entirely lacking in almost all modern Science Fiction, which is why it is such curiously insipid reading, since the characters are deserving of neither warm sympathy nor hearty condemnation - we simply cannot work up any great interest in them, since they are not worth it.

Nineteen and a half centuries ago a Roman sycophant and social climber, who happened also to be a born poet, defined the whole duty of a hero, as he saw it, as:

"To spare the humble, and smite down the proud".

Can't some of our modern S-F authors manage to provide a few characters so proudly villainous and so villainously proud that their smiting-down will provide us with a deed really worthy of both our sustained attention and our applause?

Cnc

Recently published: OSSIAN'S RIDE - Fred Hoyle

• Four Square 2/6d is

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I believe that Fred Hoyle and I used to go to the same school (though not at the same time as each other; and, I may add, if he had dome nothing other than write OSSIAN'S RIDE I doubt that I would admit even that tenuous connection), but I am going to try and disregard the Old School Tie for a few moments. It won't really be too difficult.

The blurb describes OSSIAN'S RIDE as '... a fantastic, hair-raising adventure' and for once it is quite impossible to quibble at the description. It is fantastic - one of the most fantastic books I have ever read. It is hairraising; very hair-raising. It is 1970, and in Southern Eire has grown up the Industrial Corporation of Eire, an organisation with incredible scientific resources. The whole place seethes with spies trying to get at its secrets. Into this maelstrom dives Thomas Sherwood, daring boy University student who, by dint of his supreme intelligence, application and endurance, makes monkeys out of everyone else and penetrates the I.C.E. stronghold by the tremendous and unforseeable stratagem of taking a small boat, landing on the coast and walking in. Since he is the hero of the book everyone else has to be at least twice as stupid as he is so I guess that gives you a pretty fair idea of the level to be expected from the rest of the characters. But they are not cardboard characters; not by any means. More like tissue paper; thin tissue paper. ordered with officer or a common

The level of sophistication of the plotting and writing is about that of Billy Bunter with occasional heady upward surges to somewhere near that of Biggles. These dizzying heights of literary grandiloquence are sometimes; maintained for as much as three lines. The heroine is called Fanny; her twin sister is Mary Ann. They are both described as 'half blondes' which had me perplexed for a while until I finally concluded that each of them must have got only half the hair that was going and a full description of (Cont. at end of 'Punkah Promulgates')

PUNKAH PROMULGATES

Or: THE WORLD AROUND US AND ON TOP OF US

On the whole people are silly creatures. The things they do and say are absolutely ridiculous. Comes a knock on the door, or a ring of the bell and what do you find?

A lady in a black hat, veil and large black car standing on the lower step says "Oh - I wanted to buy a dog". This is terrible because I don't sell dogs - in fact I never have. Or perhaps this type - knock knock - a large fat bald man with a dirty raincoat has leaned his rusty bicycle against your gate post and is smouching loomingly in the tiled porch. "Excuse me. I hope I'm not troubling you. but I'm an Artist". "Oh yes", I say, wondering whether he's wanting someone to pose in the nude and where I last saw the poker. It turns out that he wants me to get him a job in a simply huge place where I happen to be working, because he knows I work there as he saw me talking to one of the lorry drivers. My Ghod! He must have been dogging my footsteps for days. How dreadfully sorry I say I am, that I cannot be of assistance to him at this time, but wouldn't he write a letter to the Personnel Manager. I assure him the Personnel Manager is such a kind man and that in my opinion we could do with a few more artists. He is highly pleased and backs away almost bowing, staggering awkwardly back to his ancient bicycle. I watch him fumble with his confounded machine from behind the curtain for a good ten minutes before he mounts painfully and sets off down the road at a good four miles per hour.

Or again - a small sharp ring, and a thin shrivelled vicar stands erectly on the top step at a polite distance from the inner door. He asks after our upstairs neighbour who is out. (He's always out). "Oh dear, how terribly inconvenient". "Would you like to leave a message". "Oh, could I really?" And after a long search I find him a piece of paper and a biro which only just writes - and he scrawls a few words of comfort, hands it back with many a thank you, and a "Please be sure not to forget to give it to John upon his return".

On John's visiting nights I act more as a receptionist. I stand in the hall for what seems hours saying, "Yes - yes, straight up the stairs please - the door on your right", as the guests file past blocking each others way with umbrellas, walking sticks, fur coats and dainty - not to be squashed, hats, and if I was lucky the boy scout meeting wouldn't be until

1 1 5 1 5

POTTER

the next evening. The door would then be blocked with sports bicycles, tin cans of all varieties etc. etc. and so forth.

One bright spring morning as I was sitting crouched in an old armchair, clad only in a dressing gown and idly reading "The Hunchback of Notre Dame", a dear old lady - who until that very moment I had never set eyes upon, walked in, and laying down the morning papers on the table remarked "Have you passed your scholar-ship?" I rushed horror stricken into the bedroom and stared at myself in the mirror. Yes - I certainly looked more than eleven years old. "It's such a shame" she told me, "when you try so hard and don't pass, isn't it?" I must admit that Dear John from upstairs had to help me get rid of that one.

Then there was the little fat man who smiled and said "Good morning - are you going to Wigan?" I moved fast.

It wouldn't be too bad if it were only people ... but then there are those stupid little incidents which take their wicked toll on everyone.....

"Well, why don't you go and see the Doctor", said my Mother to me, one blooming Saturday morn, "And then you'll have it over with" she added with a smile. "Yes" thought I intelligently, "Yes, I'll do that small thing." After all that leg had been bothering me for weeks. I limped away dutifully, and after spending at least an hour in a waiting room full of coughing, sneezing adults, wailing naughty children and the 'silent ones' overflowing with bandages, my dear doctor took one look, prodded me, said "H'mm" and then, in a reassuring voice, "You've got T....." "Oh", I said, not feeling very sure about it all. "Now then", he went on adopting a friendly attitude, "Which would you rather do, spend six weeks in bed or three weeks in plaster?" I plumped for the plaster and he sent me away with a little white note and a little white face to have his instructions carried out. It can only be expected therefore that when I arrived home at 2 pm, in a large ambulance. with a solid leg, a pair of crutches and was carried bodily up the garden path by two sturdy ambulance men, my Mother exclaimed "Where the devil have - OH MY GHOD!"
"Na then Missus, don't tell 'er orf" and I was dumped on the door step. The world didn't seem concerned that at 3.pm. I was due to serve jelly out at a Sunday School party, and at 4.pm I had a date with someone called Ken Potter. But then I always had the weirdest ailments anyhow.

For instance, all proper right minded people who have warts keep them in specially selected wart places, such as the hand - not me. My first wart grandly appeared on the end of my nose. I was furious, I was even more furious when complete strangers would stare at me for a few moments and kindly tell me that I'd "got something" on the end of my nose. I tried to remove it by treating it with sulphur, but when I had erased half the skin from my face, without I may add removing the wart, I gave up this foolishness. I saw my doctor, who on the spot decided to "whip it off with a pair of scissors". At least that was the expression he used. He had me all ready there with head back and an expectant stare. "When I say 'Now'," he said vaguely. Quick as a flash he whipped a pair of the cutest little scissors you ever saw from behind his back, gave a light ming slash, and then, and not until then shouted "NOW". I winced - and was just about to recover when he stuck a caustic stick into the open wound..... When I came to myself he was wildly waving a large white handkerchief, patting me on the shoulder and assuring me that I was very brave indeed. After the fullness of time the wart reappeared and I had to go through the whole ghastly procedure again.

There were other warts too, and many are the people I met who knew

someone who knew someone who had a daughter who got a remedy from a farmer's son who wouldn't tell anyone what he put in it. In November a Canteen worker told me to rub dandelion stalks on the affected part. I was told to lick them each morning before rising, to rub sliced potato on them, afterwards throwing the potato away, to sell them, to have them electrocuted, to rub apple on them and another effort which had something to do with live frogs. I was told they were all due to messing around with egg shells and being short of calcium.

The last lot I tried to smother by covering them for weeks on end with elastoplast of all sizes and descriptions. Eventually I went to Guy's Hospital, London to see a little man who was apparently fond of them. As I opened the door of his consulting room he pointed an accusing finger at me and shouted "Diagnose". I was immediately surrounded by a host of shining eager students who peered at me from all quarters. After a while however, the little man called them off and as a result I ended up on the operating table. They removed one only. A fortnight later the other two had disappeared with fright. That was last year and they have never had the courage to show their ugly faces again.

Then there's the chilly side of life like bathing in winter, which is nothing if not far removed from the lovely comfortable experiences of childhood.

The first time I can recollect I was sitting (not too comfortably, because of those ridiculous ridges on the bottom) in a galvanised bath in front of my home fire, while the radio blared out "Once again we stop the mighty roar of London's traffic". The varrious lapped comfortingly around my chubby knees. "This would be wonderful" I thought "if only these ridges..." At this point I was lifted sharply upwards and deposited on my Mother's towelled lap where she began to counteract my protests with ridiculous shushing noises. This seems to have had a marked effect on my later life, throughout which I have continued to wash at regular intervals. Old habits die hard, they do say.

The old galvanised bath is now, alas, no more, for as time passed I went on to bigger and better things. First I passed through a much larger galvanised bath with even larger ridges and unsafe sides, to the large bath upstairs. This was an improvement as I had at least got rid of those god-damned ridges. However it was a trifle rough, due to the fact that the house's last occupants used to bath the dog in it and had poured in large amounts of strange damaging liquids - or so the story goes.

A nasty vicious bath, had the flat in Lancaster. One night I remember in particular. I had heated the water very nicely via the 1/- in the slot meter, and pranced delightedly upstairs to begin. This bath did not have the usual hole complete with plug to prevent the water disappearing. Oh no. Instead it had a sort of grillelet into the front side at the bottom. I gathered that there must be a hole behind this contraption somewhere, as a long metal rod which protruded from the top of the bath between the two taps, could be dimly seen continuing on into mysterious depths. A sort of something hung heavily on the bottom. I could never be too sure about all this as I never actually saw any of it. To continue. I pressed a little knob on top of the huge rod affair and turned on the water merrily. I smiled and sang and whistled and found myself some wonderful soap and turned again to the bath. It was empty! With an agonising scream I clutched time and again at that horrid little rod, as the last of my hot water slid gugglingly away. I crouched blue and shivering and stared at that gaping grille. The grille gaped back. Well, that's the way the cuckoo crumbles.

However this same bath seemed to have a horrid fascination for some members of the community. One bright party when things were really swinging, I was sitting in the back room playing a wooden xylophone with two celery sticks, with Harry Hanlon on trombone and Roy Booth's thumb over the spit valve (tricky things these trombones), not to mention two local bearded individuals on other noise-making contraptions. Right in the middle of 'Black Bottom Stomp' there was a crashing noise without and the door flew open to reveal a Smiling Exuberant Face. "I say" exclaimed the face "How much will you bet I don't have a cold bath?" "Sixpence"I offered, laying down my celery. "Crazy Maaan" said Harry. "One Shilling". "One and six" upped a bearded figure. "Five bob" said Roy Booth flashing his gleaming teeth. "To the bathroom", I shouted. "Bathroom Hoy" they cried, "Make way there".

We surged forward in a seething mass. "I'll run the water" I said excitedly. Half way up the stairs I was startled to see the Smiling Exuberant Face staring desperately up at mine - now white with horror. "But you....." it began "You're a woman". "It happens to the best of us" I replied. The seething mass surged around us and he was duly deposited in the bathroom, where cries of "No, No," and "Send her away" could be heard. "How much?" I enquired. The sum of 9d was eagerly thrust into the palm of my hand. "9d" I cried, "Is that all?" "Go away - Go away", and whilst we were thus arguing, Ken turned up to announce the arrival of a few more guests. After a short scuffle the victim broke through the crowd and took his 9d back. "The bet's off". "Rubbish", I said, "I want my 9d back". "I want my 5/-" said Roy. "Yer Man" said Harry. There were murmurs of "Rhubarb" from the gathered crowd, but it never really came to anything.

Recently I moved into a caravan and would like to know where I may be able to obtain a good galvanised bath. Perhaps one day a small man with two thumbs on his left hand, and a puce waistcoat, will stop by and offer to sell me one, which he is no longer using for keeping albino jackdaws in. You never know.

'OSSIAN'S RIDE' cont.

either one of them would therefore have run 'half blonde and half bald'. The hero sits up studying until '4 a.m. in the morning'.

It is perfectly true to say that I just couldn't put this book down until I had finished it. I was just led on and on in a state of fatal fascination, wondering always what the catch was (no, of course it couldn't really be as naive as it seemed), and when the payoff line would come. It never did. This is certainly a most unusual addition to anyone's science-fiction library and will definitely help to cement Fred Hoyle's reputation as a foremost astronomer if, for no other reason, because one feels that he must be better at something - anything - than he is at novel writing

----Mal Ashworth.

Perhaps the earth's crust is trying to wave to you.

The French say that the sea is feminine but sometimes I disagree with the French.

Miz Irene Potter

B. J. P. previous issue

BILL TEMPLE,
Regency Square,
Brighton,
Sussex-by-the-Sea,
For the time being,
Till tomorrow,
Easter Monday '60,
((Now past))

I've read ROT, which is beyond comment. So how do I write a letter of comment? Anyhow, the letter wouldn't reach you. You're not at home. Are you? ((No.)) You're at the Eastercon. Aren't you? ((Yes.)) I'm smarter. I'm at Brighton. So are 1,000,000 other people. They're all standing on my foot. (('I don't like you 'cause....')) It makes letter writing very difficult. Called on Ron (Brag) Bennett last Wednesday. He was still suffering from priles. Don Ford was there too. A Man is Ten Feet Tall. Don Ford is a Man Ten Feet Tall. You have a lot of books. I have a lot of books. I've read all my books. Including He Carried A Six Shooter. (About Wyatt Earp And his brothers). I came to Brighton with one book Literature And Western Man. I return from Brighton with 21 books Literature And Western Man And The Windsor Shakespeare In twenty volumes. My wife is mad At me. I don't care. Do you? ((No. My wife in and

At you
Too.
Because she is having to cut this stencil.))
What is Atom's cover
All about?
This question is
Not compulsory.
((Neither is
This answer.))

WALTER BREEN, 311, East 72 St., New York City 21, N.Y., U.S.A. Received and enjoyed ROT. I also applaud your decision to make this a more frequently appearing zine. ((Gulp.)) (I would applaud more loudly but for the likelihood of attracting the attention of the local police.)

So the bunch of you in the Chinese restaurant discussed other things "too numinous to mention"? Like Ghu, FooFoo, Roscoe & similar Beings?

((Something like that.))

It's Jnana Yoga, not Gnani Yoga; and the "other subjects of equal importance" might well include topics like how one finds and proceeds on the path towards the Absolute. From what I have been able to learn, jnana yoga has some resemblances to other mystical techniques, to Zen and whatever leads to samadhi or satori or the "superconscious state" or whatever one calls it. So that catalogue isn't nearly as funny as you think. ((Well, now, if you want to go into all that (The quotation was : 'GNANI YOGA; The Highest Yogi teachings concerning the Absolute and its manifestations are given and many other matters of equal importance are explained!) I agree that the more normal spelling is 'jnana' but that book has it 'gnani' and since the final 'a' in Sanskrit is often not sounded it probably doesn't matter a lot. The Advaita teaching is that everything in creation - and outside it too if that is conceivable - is a part of the Absolute, and the Absolute is a part of everything in creation. Therefore my contention is that the phrase 'The Absolute and its manifestations' is totally inclusive; every possible topic is covered within it. Indeed, every possible topic would be covered simply by 'The Absolute' since its manifestations are merely one aspect of It. Ergo 'other matters of equal importance' becomes laughably inconceivable (to me, anyway). Included within the 'manifestations' is little old us, and our strivings on the Path. However, by taking as a basis the teachings of some other school, it might be possible to arrive at different conclusions. The true aim of Jnana (the yoga of wisdom, or learning), as of all yoga, is 'Moksha' or Release (from the imprisoning misconception that we are separate from the Absolute). Samadhi, as I understand, is a less permanent (and therefore 'lower') state than this, consisting of a state of 'infused contemplation', from which one returns to live a normal life and continue striving for the higher goal. Ho hum.))

Harry Warner Jr. was excellent as always. He is more optimistic than am I about the state of the world circa A.D. 2000 if he thinks either that 20th Century-Fox will still be around or that a break-through will come shortly afterwards. Actually, he may be right about that latter, IF the world is neither destroyed nor completely subjugated by a Soviet Chinese tyranny nor denuded by earthquakes and volcanoes related to the next crustal shift. There has been some evidence for a 100-year cycle in many different fields of endeavor: visual

arts, music, even wars.

And happy cycle-plotting to you, too.

DONALD A. WOLLHEIM, Thanks for sending me ROT. Fitles of fanzines are certainly 66-17, Clyde Street, reaching the bottom of the barrel since my day...((Yes. ROT Forest Hills 74, N.Y. is what was left on the bottom of the barrel after every-U.S.A.

thing else had gone.))

I found it very pleasing reading — personal stuff of course — but still it had the elusive fan flavor you just don't find elsewhere. The faint seasoning of je ne sais quoi that indicates the stf fan, even though there's no visible evidence of what the fanzine is referring to. You know what I mean.

Liked Wintoff, liked Bibliophile, liked Rotsler, liked Potter.

Didn't like Warner, but that's just an old psychic block.

Like to get the next number. ((Voici. And thank you for the kind contingent offer in your letter.))

SHEILA ASHWORTH, 14, Westgate, Eccleshill, Bradford.2.

Many thanks for ROT 4, which I received about five minutes after you had finished stapling the first copy. ROT has many highlights for me, and it is a very nicely produced fanzine. I thought that some of the stencils were especially well cut - particularly the ones which weren't in the usual

ROT typeface.

How on earth did you manage to reproduce that Dave Wood illo so well? I bet you had to get some help with it. In fact, I bet you had to hire the services of an excellent, experienced slip-sheeter to do it.

I was very pleased to note that there were no boob copies with blank pages, badly printed pages, or any of the small, annoying mistakes one comes across in fanzines occasionally (and I have no hesitation in stating that there were no boob copies, blank pages etc.!)

The stapling, too, had a very practised air about it and

could hardly have been better.

One thing has me rather puzzled, though. How is it that when you have a wife who, I have it on Good Authority (Mr. Kenneth Potter's) ((Good Authority?!!)), turns out reams of brilliant, witty, scintillating material, you never feature any of it in your magazine? ((The fault seems to have been remedied this issue.))

I look forward (apprehensively) to the next issue.

JIMMY GRCVES, Thanks for ROT 4 and herewith my comments (at last!) Cover: 29, Lathom Road, I approve, naturally. One thing, though - that wall looks as East Ham, if it's looking out of the corner of its eyes ((How many?)) London.F.6. at the vertical piece of crazy paving at the back. Why? ((It was a very well-bred wall and it didn't want to stare; on the other hand it was very curious because that paving sure had been carrying on in a crazy way.)) It looks like a perfectly normal piece of crazy paving as such things go. ((That was all a false front. In actual fact it was the craziest paving you ever saw, and all the neighbours had been talking about it.))

SHROUDS AND SHREDS and OVER THE CEMETERY WALL I liked but I cannot comment to any extent because I cannot think why I liked them as much as I did (how's that for a mindwrenching bit of waffle?) ((Mind-wrenching.)) THE WINTOFF INCIDENT was good. Rotsler's illos I like especially when they look more like illos and less like caticures. ((I absolutely agree with you. I never have much cared for caticures, and as far as I am concerned the less caticures we see the better. For my money caticures can be left out completely, and, believe me, it wouldn't bother me any if I never saw another caticure in my life. I think it is quite true to say that the only good caticures are dead ones, and even then they're not very good. I don't feel that it would be right to outlaw caticures completely, but they certainly ought to be discouraged and we can only hope that from now on everyone without exception will stop using caticures. What are caticures?))

See you next ish. ((Hello.))

AL LEWIS
706, San Lorenzo Street,
Santa Monica, California
U.S.A.

I understand your magazine is in need of a policy, I don't have any used policies on hand, but you are very lucky in that I am sending you a far superior substitute. There aren't many of these around these days. It's part of a lot my grandfather picked up on speculation back in '32.

It's a Russian War Bond. It's a Czarist Russian War Bond. It's a $5\frac{1}{2}$ % Czarist Russian War Bond. Now I'm not suggesting that you hold it as an investment; the Russians paid off in pennies on these last year, but I think you'll find it an invaluable conversational gambit. All you need is a pair of scissors, and then some day you can casually drop into the conversation, "back when I was clipping coupons..." (So now I have a fanzine with A Czarist Russian War Bond. Thank you.))

Thanks muchly for ROT. It seems a shame to call such a fine and friendly zine by such a decomposing name. Obviously it is only a nickname for something elegant such as Ramshorn-on-Thames, or Reverbrations-of-Tintinabullations, or Rest-on-Thursday or something of that sort. ((As you say - obviously...))

Shrouds and Shreds was quite delightful. Being a 1/10th of 1/2 owner of the LASFS Gestetner, I looked back fondly to the acquisition of our own machine. Obviously you weren't a fast enough talker. We got four pages and a cover of SHAGGY run off as a demonstration so they could talk the club into buying the machine it was going to buy anyway. What you need is a Bjo. ((True, but they are hard to come by so I understand.)) Of course now that we've run our count above 200,000 and still clicking merrily, everytime we go into the store we hear, "Wouldn't you be interested in a new electric?...."

I must say that I detect a kindred spirit in a book lover. I've got a couple of hundred items sitting around, all of which I know are intensely interesting, but which I somehow haven't gotten into yet. However, you don't seem to mention my main problem, and that is the half-read book. ((I'm taking it in easy stages. First the wholly unread book, then the half unread book, then the book left off two chapters from the end, then the book where I missed the last full-stop, and so on.)) It seems like I've usually got three or four books going at once, and everytime I get a new one I've got to sample it. Since I buy books faster than I can read them, this means that some of them never get finished at all. Still, I'm happy.

IAN McAULAY
Ballycorus Grange,
Kilternan,
Co. Dublin, Eire.

Spring is here, and my fanac is soaring towards a crescendo of apathy. ((You too?)) However, in a probably vain attempt to avoid developing a guilt complex, I have bestirred myself sufficiently to jot down a few idle comments on ROT 4, which I received in

good order and condition, ta very much.

"Witchcraft at Pendle" left me stone-cold, though not with icy chills running up and down my spine. Would I be right in thinking that Satanism and/or Demonology are among your interests? ((Yes)) I don't mean from the practising point of view - at least I hope I don't! ((No?)) I've just had a sort of mental picture of one M. Ashworth, complete with sinister leer, making a little image of me in wax preparatory to transfixing it with skewers. Of course, I don't really believe all that witchcraft guff - there must be some simpler explanation for the fact that my left leg has gone completely dead!

HARRY TURNER
10, Carlton Avenue,
Romiley, Cheshire.

Why does everyone, from near and furrid parts, suddenly bombard me with fanmags... It seems like a conspiracy. Anyhow, after all this gafia I find I react but little to the gay fannish chatter: I'm free... free! And so I

shall continue to spend the closing years of my life huddled over the hi-fi, trying to find time to listen to all the stuff I am driven to record. When are you

getting a tape recorder? Spending money on a Gestetner indeed - think of all the tape you could have bought with the cash. Or records.

You see how my standards have changed. Perhaps you will help spread the <u>Truth</u> that Harry Turner is a non-fan of your acquaintance. Then my listening won't be disturbed by the flop of fanmags through the letterbox. I hate to sound so ungrateful but there it is. You may cross me off your mailing list without a qualm (if that's the right word). Most other folk don't seem to believe me when I say this, or else my letters aren't delivered. Strange. But I can assure you at firsthand that I am now a complete loss as a fan, so far as fanmags and fangatherings are concerned. Perhaps there is slight hope of future activity on tape. Perhaps. ((We are all sitting hoping for a Second Coming.))

ETHEL LINDSAY Courage House, 6, Langley Avenue, Surbiton, Surrey.

How very nice to see ROT 4, and I hope this rot sets in often.

Curiously enough, you and Ken seem to be the only ones carrying on the good old quote collection. Perhaps you will stimulate some of the others to start again.

You can WRITE. I hope you appreciate your good

fortune. There are lots of people who can write, and in fandom more than in mundane, but in fandom, as in mundane, there are very few people who can WRITE. I envy you.

I gotta Gestetner too. An electric one. Mine hasn't been delivered yet so I can still hardly believe it. I wake up in the middle of the night and pinch myself to see if its really me with a Gestetner. What type your type? ((A Gestetner))

Sid does you proud here, as good as anything I have seen from his pen. He seems to improve all the time too.

I am not going to join that society. Disapprove of it. ((Well, that's O.K. I disapprove of your society too. Saving Life indeed!))

Liked your witchcraft article so much, my only complaint was that it might have been longer, and cried out for your own thoughts on the affair more.

Rotsler folio was a good idea, and I think this method showed up his work to better advantage than usual. Made you stop and say, goodness, this is good!

Harry Warner set me to calculating will I live to see 2,000. Hmm yes, I think so all being well. My Grandmother lived till past that age, ((Your Grandmother lived till past 2,000? Good Grief, you are a long-lived family.)) and my Mother looks all set for it. My chances are good. It should be fun.

Yes this book buying is crazy alright, and especially this business of always feeling that you don't have enough time and that you just must get them read. Its the Guardian that is haunting me these days. It is quite a big paper, and I just know that if I get a day behind I will be in deep trouble.

Irene was very much in excellent form here. She has a few surprises to come yet I think, if only she can be kept at it. If this is how she writes with as little practise as she has had lately, I faunch to see what it will be like when she gets going.

ALAN BURNS Goldspink House, Goldspink Lane, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.2. Just to reply to your infernal cheek for asking me to write I shan't, I shall typewrite, and while all this writings are coming and going why not a comment on the copy of Northlight which must have reminded you that I live yet and which I recall vaguely having sent you.

((And which I recall vaguely having commented on))

Well now you'll expect some comments so here they are. I have a rooted objection to Gestetner script stencils, and shrouds and shreds heading did not diminish it - if you didn't use a script stencil lettering guide then you should, it makes things so much tidier. ((I - uh - how was that again?)) In shrouds and shreds you suffer from a most dangerous malady, namely that you like your fanzine. I don't, I hate Northlight ((Seems reasonable))

The confessions of a book-lover. The moment I see the title of an article using the word confessions I think who the hell does this guy think he is. De Quincey? ((By Jingo - do you?)) Well if you like books why tell everyone that you do, that way you persuade them that you are a square or a beatnik or something, the way to go on is the way I do - never under any circumstances mention that you like books, and then when some four eyed bibliophile says what do you think of Ceasar on the Gallic Wars you remove your face from the copy! of Adventure, of whatever your current taste runs to and say well candidly old boy I regard Caesar as just about the dullest script-writer that was over employed by Italian Films, I much prefer the Satyricon of Petronius Arbiter "But", bleats your victim "The Satyricon is only available in the original Latin because it's posnographic" and you say "well surely you can read latin -- Hell it's almost as easy as pre-Cyrillic Greek". I once took on a bibliophile such as that in the indicated manner. At last I let him go, secure in the knowledge that he had only started to read. ((Well, er, thank you for the tip. I never thought of that, Did you ever know Derek Pickles, by the way?))

((A reviewer in THE SPECTATOR, giving notice recently of a projected new edition of the Memoirs of Casanova, added: "It will be the first really complete edition of

the memoirs; even the clean bits will be left in".))

JOE PATRIZIO

I heaved a sigh of relief when I read year book liver.

72, Glenvarloch Cres., article - it was good to know that I am not the only one to buy mags and books, and leave them lying around oinburgh, 9. for years before reading them. I always have in the region of a dozen or so books just waiting to be read, and this sectis right and just, because I sometimes go on a reading spree, and read book after book, and having these books spare makes it unnecessary to go out and spend money. Things have got a bit out of hand recently, tho Ted Forsyth left for London a few weeks back, and before going left me an almost complete file of Authentie - I now have an embarrassment of riches. ((In AUTHENTIC's case I wouldn't exactly call it an embarrassment of riches.)) I know how you feel about throwing cub mags, too. I was up in Ted's house one night, and as we stood looking at the piles of boxes. filled with mags, he decided to have a purge, "We must be drastic" he said, "The slightest doubt about one, and we'll throw it out". So we had this drastic purge and the sole outcome was that one mag got the heave. ((Yes, I've had drastic purges like that myself)) I think Ted went to London to escape from his collection, because he left it at home - so you see if things get out of hand you can always sneak away while you collection isn't looking. ((But what if you can't get out of the door for the collection?))

DONALD FRANSON 6543 Babcock Avenue. North Hollywood, California, U.S.A.

Harry Warner's "Going Like Sixty" is quite true, at least when I started reading sf in 1930, there were two magic years, 1960 and 2000. The car of 1960 was to be a streamlined, low, rear-engine job with large glass area, not only in sf predictions, but in automobile magazines.

So now that I am in 1960, I have a Corvair, which answers very well to that description. However, I don't have a private helicopton, spaceship or flying belt. ((You're just not "Keeping up with the Joneses (or Doakeses)", are you?))

Your article on books makes me feel better. as I keep wondering why I buy more books than I can possibly read, and why I keep buying more, even if I try not to. One of the old of plots that appealed to me was the one where time was slowed down or life extended so that there was more time to read; or the one where one absorbed page after page by merely glancing at it. A needed invention is a machine to read books for people who don't have time to read books. I think the time to worry is when I get to the point, as I almost once did, when I find that I have bought a book that I already have. Did you ever get this bad? ((Shamefacedly I have to admit that I did. Several times.)) Actually, I guess I could get along with the books I have now, if I could keep away from book stores.

REDD BOGGS.

I made the grievous mistake of reading Rot 4 before I went 2209, Highland Place NE. to sleep last night. This caused me to dream about you Minneapolis 21, (don't tell Laney's ghost, or Sheila) and Rot half the Minnesota.

Night. I don't know about you, but I count this a wasted four or five hours; after all, I could have been dreaming

Paige and Galaxy. The only productive part of the dream, so far as I can remember, centered around some department titles I suggested to you. These are extremely clever, even though I did think them up while I was asleep, and I'll pass them on to you: For your letter department, "Maledictions"; for your editorial, "Malevolence." I believe I had a few more, probably "Malignancy," "Malice," and perhaps even "Malaise" and "Malady" and "Malheur," but I'll spare you. As WAW once said, everybody is already aware of the many puns that can be made on his name, and I'm sure that these have already occurred to you. In fact, you may even use them on your ompazine or somewhere. If they hadn't occurred to you, probably you were happier in that state. ((I wonder if this pun-dreaming is a uniquely fannish phenomenon. I remember the time I dreamed I was introduced to Sir John Hunt and talking to him about the Everest expedition I said "I suppose you were the expedition doctor, Sir John?". Most disconcerting.))

I'm afraid Rot 4 doesn't quite compare with the Rot 4 I dreamed about, but nevertheless it's one of the best fanzines I've read in many a fannish era. I don't know whether it's just me, or whether our prayers are being answered (those of us who pray to FooFoo, bin entendu), but recent fanzines have seemed especially lovely. Recently I've received Hyphen 24, Spacewarp 66, Habakuk 3, Yandro 87, and Void 21, and I can't imagine a more delightful harvest of fannish wit and intelligence. One might think that the golden age is returning, just like Shelley said it would. And, as I say, Rot — lest you think that I am losing sight of essentials in this lyrical outburst — is right up there with the best of them.

I'll admit that I was a little disillusioned to learn that you liked "On the Beach." I read your remarks on the movie three times, suspecting that you were kidding or satirizing, but you seem to be on the level. Well, of course you're kidding, but you seem to have enjoyed the picture. What was so "logical" about the movie? Is it logical that Australia should survive, virtually unchanged, except for a shortage of gasoline (petrol. I mean, you know), for five months after the rest of the world gave up the ghost? ((Sure. I know of places that would go right on for years and years never even realising there had been a war!)) And what's so awful about sailing way into the radioactive sunset when one has had a love affair with Ava Gardner? ((Well Ava Gardner may be irrelevant, but sailing away into the radioactive sunset is not an occupation to be anticipated with great joy, whatever precedesit, I feel.))

"Over the Cemetery Wall" is easily the best thing in the issue and then some, but also first-rate are your bibliophile ramblings, Harry Warner's "Going Like Sixty" and Irene Potter's "Promulgations." I'm lost in admiration for all these women over there who can write so wittily. As I said

somewhere recently I have seldom met a woman who has a creative sense of humor (Lee Hoffman is almost the only exception, and her wit is balanced off with a very dark streak of melancholy) and over there in British fandom you have a couple dozen of them. I rather suspect that you have a corner on the entire supply of witty women in the British Isles; when I was over there, I didn't find that British wemen were any wittier than American women. Maybe this is a postwar phenomenon, like Industrial Corporation Eire and H. J. Campbell.

As Warmer says, I haven't written any learned essay on the philosophical import of January 1, 1960, but I just wrote a long essay on the Big Three during the last ten years. Possibly this only proves what Harry says, that we are growing old -- for isn't looking backward instead of forward a sign of middle, if, not old, age?

EMILE GREENLEAF 1309. Mystery Street, New Orleans 19, LA.

Thankee kindly, sir, for Rot No. 4, and congratulations on your 4½ birthday. You are not being smug; very few fanzines are around after four years. Some never even make four issues. You have done both. ((By Ghod. I never thought of it like that before))

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences showed its usual lack of taste by almost completely snubbing ON THE BEACH, except for nominations in minor categories. For my money, Fred Astaire was Oscar material, as was the picture itself. In general, movies with any amount of thought, especially if said thought makes the viewer sleep a bit uneasily, or have doubts about things which he previously has accepted as a matter of course, are looked at askance by the Academy. THE ROOTS OF HEAVEN was a superb movie, but hit home too closely to anyone who has taken a shot at a duck or deer, though the main application was meant to be toward man himself.

Mighod, does every booklover find himself screaming for space to keep things? I thought I was unique. Also, I am reminded of the time I was dating a girl who managed to kill herself with me (as far as getting seriously involved!) by remarking: "I can't see why you have so many books when there's always the public Library" (!) I should marry a Philistine? Try and get out No. 5 before the end of 1961, please! ((Well

- I'll try.))

CHRIS MILLER, Lancs.

This scrawl is from a neo on the scrounge. A friend (by 44, Wheatclose Road, post only) of mine - Alan Rispin, suggested that you might Barrow-in-Furness, let me have a copy of ROT, for a letter of comment.

Well, if you can manage to send a copy, comment will be forthcoming, probably to reach you on the day after the fmz reaches me. I always try to reply promptly to mail, and as

yet am not getting so many fmz that a "some-day" read" and comment is impossible.

((Er - would you care to exchange identities?))

A few personal details about self - I am 182, in the 3rd

year 6th at the Grammar School here. I hope to go to University in October this year to study Physics. I have been reading S-F since about 1950, mags and paperbacks since about 1957 (August) and fmz for about a week or two (!)

I have thus been a fan (or reader) for sometime, and a faan (or fan) for a very short one. ((Well, it will get longer as time passes.))

CRAIG COCHRAN, 467 W. 1st Street, Scottsdale, Arizona, U.S.A.

The beautiful ATom cover on ROT 4 was excellent. It is really odd and I am still trying to figure out what it is. There's some mountains there and some type of building but those are the only recognisable items there. Interesting

Well, Mal, you deserve an honor for finally getting out a 42 annish. Most fanzines fold in the first four years but ROT didn't did it? No sir, it has lasted 4½ years. ((Yes, Sir.))

"Over The Cemetery Wall" is such an adorable name. use MANGLED MORTICIANS once in awhile? ((I tried it once but they sort of s-q-u-e-l-c-h all over the page)) Or maybe GRAVEYARD GREETINGS. Such nice names for a fanzine.

I think it is about time somebody told you that one club cannot hold over one annual party a year. ((Curses - foiled again.))

VIC RYAN. 2160, Sylvan Road, Springfield, Illinois, U.S.A.

Many thanks for ROT No. 4. Although you have provided a great number of ways by which a person might continue to receive you fanzine, I have decided to be daring and write a letter of comment. Hope you don't object. ((Not at all, not at all. We try to cater for everybody.))

Most faneditors find that it's hard to keep their mailing list in hand, especially if subscriptions are looked upon as near-worthless. you're as kindhearted as I, you probably don't want to cut an old friend just because he failed to comment once; also, new fans, with new fanzines, are continuously springing up all over the place. And your list grows. ((Yes, it takes years and years of practice to reach the hard-hearted, deadwood-chopping stage I am just approaching, said he with a snarl.))

I can fully understand your wide range of reading matter. The same thing has been growing upon me ever since bad stf done gone and disenchanted me. Now I can read and enjoy just about anything, even stuff one must read for English literature classes....stuff like BEOWOLF, which is insufferably juvenile, and YOUNG GEOFFREY CHAUCER, even more so. ((Sadly, I agree with you about BEOWULF. It could hardly be called "polished")) At that tho, I doubt I'm anywhere near ready to read CRITIQUE OF BURE REASON, unless the reports I've read on same exaggerated the mental stress which accompanies reading it.

JEFF WANSHEL. 6, Beverly Pl.,

As I sit here at my velvet desk, with incense burning and hefting exquisete odors into the atmosphere, the thot Larchmont, NY. U.S.A. strikes me that one of the words in that last sentence is spelled wrong. Ah, the perils of being a fuzzlehead. scene is very peaceful; to my left is a cache of stamps,

followed by a dodo-shaped object grasping various Wanshel drawings - the dodo denoting the fact that Wanshel artistic talent is extinct. Then we come across the top of a propellor beanie, some pornographic match covers, a horde of pencils evially secured from the Brooklyn Hebrew Home & Hospital for the Aged, whose emblem is emblazoned on the side of each, a window blowing in various amounts of nitrogen, oxygen, and fall out, a cube of mahogany 1 in. sq. (this going from left to right) a used typer spool, some inflammable cement which I use more for its adept flammable abilities than its minute sticking powers, a copy of ROT, followed by a copy of APE, followed by a copy of a bird book, followed by a swimming award which I imagine at times is a Hugo, followed by a wallet with-well, jingle - er a wallet that just a second ago had some cash in it, followed by another desk on top of which are piled A) my Fanac collection, B) a pile of unread zines which I do: not have to comment on, topped by Shaggy No 41, and C) a pile of unread zines which I do have to comment on, headed by Shaggy No 50 (why I always manage to have Shaggy on top is a mystery), under which lie a pile of 100-150 fmz which have been read and commented on, most of them and which are neatly filed by number of copies I have, and then quality. Last on the topside is a collection of various music

Name of

which I play on occasion.

The ATCM cover, I have decided after much navel-contemplating, is the best straight art thing I have ever seen by him - a true masterpiece. The designs are beautiful - wish I could build a house like this. When did he do this? ((About February this year.)) The best - and most worthwhile - artistic cover I've seen on a farmag this year.

That Man Who Could Cheat The Viewer Out Of A Buck was a real squirmer, wasn't it? I love some of the movies like these; various parts which are completely and scientifically ridiculous usually send me into hysterical gales of laughter - like times when they carry enough plutonium to wipe out half of North America in a wooden box, unshielded, on a jeep going over rough roads. Seeing it jouncing around was hilarious. Then, of course, the hoods steal it - and rip apart the box with some metal - then it really became amazing - such utter stupidity as I've seen in few places before. This occured in the film "Lost Missile", in case you're interested.

I am interested in supporting the National Society for the Abolition of Life - am forming a Larchmont chapter. At least someone has a Cosmic Mind. Now what do I do? ((For the time being, until we get detailed instruction manuals printed, just carry out the Society's high aim in any way you see fit. If you really want to get into the Big Time on an international scale, you could write a letter to Mr. K. saying "You wouldn't dare attack us you bald-headed old Boozer" and sign it "Ike".))

LEN MOFFATT, 10202, Belcher, Downey, California, U.S.A. Somehow I get the impression that all you eat is Chinese food! This couldn't be true, but... is it??? If I get to attend the Pittcon (which at the moment seems highly unlikely) I'll probily start looking for an almond eyed Englishman..... ((Do that. His name will be Bentcliffe.))

Wonder who Birchby had in mind when he had Wintoff say (in Incident of same name) that a Martian had attended a fan con "a year or two back"? Suppose one could figure it out by deduction. First it is established that the visiting Martian "had a thoroughly good time" at the con. Now all we have to do is make a list of all the fen who have had a thoroughly good time at a convention. This is certain to be a rather lengthy list, but one mustn't become discouraged so early in the game. You go down the list and check off those who were weird or unusual in appearance in action—those who could possibly be Martian... well now, hmmm...yes...er—ah...hum.

Well, that kills that.

Wouldn't mind reading more on witches. One of those subjects I have always intended to investigate more thoroughly. But with so many (self-imposed) writing and researching commitments already, it would be much simpler if you did it for me......I still haven't read anything that has convinced me that witches were anything except victims of superstition, their own and others!....

More Rotsler too, yes. And more ATom. It's true that one tends to take their good work for granted because they are so prolific, but when stops to think about the talent and genius expressed in each of their pics—one marvels, and should never cease to marvel.

I must have known this before (considering all the Warner articles I've read in fanzines over the years) but it still seems funny// strange // odd // (check one) to me that Harry is only one year older than me. He says he'll be 78 in 2000. I'll be 77— actually I won't be 77 until November of 2000. Trouble is that fannish time isn't quite the same as mundane time. I've always that of

Harry as one of the Elder Fen. I suppose there are some younger fen who think of me as an Old Time fan, and I suppose I am, having discovered fandom in the very late thirties. But Harry, Beb Tusker, Art Widner, Forry, and several others were (to me) Big Name Fans in those days. I den't recall the BNF term being used then. There were terms such as the Number One Face (Forry) and the Number Ones Face (Tucker), and the FAPA Brain Trust, etc. but anyway-even though I was about the same age as some of these fer-they seemed, even then, like elder fen to me.

BETTY KUJAWA, 2819, Caroline South Bend 14, Indiana, U.S.A.

Thankee for ROT 4. Twas mighty thoughty of you. Was enjoyed. The high spot for me was that article on the Witches of Pendle. Tony Glyn sent me a pocket book a few years back that was a romantic novel based on the events you mentioned-so I gotta large charge out of your factual

report on those happenings. Hope you'll do more of this sort of thing sometime

Am a rabid Anglophile and dote on olde history, legends, please? spooky doings, haunted manses and like that. Also dote on British comics (Sellers, Charlie Drake, Spike Milligan, etc .- thanks to tapes from Alan Dodd and Don Allen my to and radio sets don't seem to pick up programs from that far away---would that they did.) And the same for British movies-my idol of idols being (not Kenneth More of Bogarde) -- but Alistair Sim-he fractures me. ((We agree on a lot of things it seems - olde history, legends, spooky doings, haunted manses, Peter Sellers (a genuine genius in the world of comedy) and Spike Milligan.))

That film THE MAN WHO COULD CHEAT DEATH must be a remake of the old classic play THE MAN FROM HALF-MOON STREET, isn't it?? Enjoyed your review of it. That clipping from your local paper sounds like some of the classic boners

we get in ours here-"it's the sime the whole world over",

Liked Birchbys opus, too. And, of course, Rotsler. And Irenes rememberances really took me back-how very very different her english girlhood was from my american one, though! But charmingly so-hers was charming to me, I mean there. Harry Warner made a point there that I myself noted to husband Gene just the other day-that NOW is the era that I read of in the pulps so long ago. I, too, used to figure out how old I'd be when 2,000 A.D. came around and as a cheefld the age of 77 looked darn near impossible to reach-and hardly worth it-now I dunno!

Next to the Pendle article in my estimation is the CONFESSIONS OF AN ENGLISH BOOK-LOVER. Being much much like you in this respect, I envy you for living in a land where you CAN find shops where old and older books are lurking—thats a rarity in So. Bend-mores the pity; ((Yes. I noted with horror just the other day that for over 8,000 bookshops in the U.K. there are only about 3,000 listed in the U.S. And there is no separate classification for Second Hand bookshops over Your Side, whereas we have nearly 1,000 is seems. Those are waves of sympathy you see shricking towards you over the Atlantic.)) I keep certain books for centuries positive I'll schoday read tem-like Riesmans LONELY CROWD, for instance-and someday I'll even get round to finishing Graves's WHITE GODDESS-I keep telling myself.

Have waves of panic at the thought of not having a backlog of books on hand to read-frightening thought to be stranded someday with nary a book in the house to turn to not that thats likely to happen in the next hundred

years or so. Note (in Bennett's FAN DIRECTORY) that you, too, have a taper-if ever you want tapings of this and that let me know. ((Alas, the Fan Directory is wrong, I do not have a Tape Recorder. But semeday I will have and I will bear your very kind offer in mind then. Thank you.))

Westonbirt Village, Nr. Tetbury, Glos.

ARTHUR R ("DOC") WEIR, D.Sc. I don't believe that I ever reacted to the copy of Primrose Cottage, ROT that you were kind enough to send to me: the item that I found of most interest was "Witchcraft at Pendle." Am I right in thinking that you got hold of Thomas Potts! "Wounderful Discoverie of Witches in

His Majesties County of Lancaster" of 1612? ((Yes.)) I notice, by the way, that you put the dates in the modern style - the arrest of the Demdikes, etc. in March would have been in 1611 by the contemporary reckoning, since the New Year did not start till April 1st (which is why the financial year still starts on that date -the Exchequer wasn't going to be bothered with new-fangled reforms of the calendar,

especially if they might lend a loophole for tax-dodging.)

A propos of Pendle, there's a rather famous Witchcraft Museum here in the Cotswolds at Bourton-on-the Water, and one of their exhibits is a contemporary portrait of Edith Nutter -- a direct descendant of Alice Nutter -and a noted "cattle-doctor", (by occult means of course) together with one or two objects that were found in her house after her death that strongly suggest that she practised blacker arts in secret. I personally think that the Witchcraft Museum should be burnt down -- far too many people take a very unwholesome interest in this sort of thing, and it's altogether evil -- but it's quite an interesting collection. Some of the objects in it are embarrassing; one peculiarly interesting specimen that they imported a couple of years ago they had to chuck out again in a hurry, as they found that they had imported with it the poltergeist that was supposed to be associated with it, and it nearly wrecked the whole museum! They also had some terrifying disturbances at nights, too, till they altered the arrangements of some of the ritual pentacles, etc. inside.

I see I've left out what I meant to say — that Edith

Nutter died quite late in the nineteenth century.

My encounter with Zen swordsmen isn't as romantic as you would seem to believe; ((This follows on a point which came up in our correspondence.)) in my youth, my Latin tutor was one of the people down on the official list as suitable for foreign students to be sent to who wanted to learn English. Many of his students at that time 1919-26 were Japanese officers of the army, navy or police, and many of them were kenjutsu (fencing) experts of some note. He was himself no mean hand with the sabre, and it was his great delight to take them on - standard international light sabre against the Japanese "shinai". I sometimes came in on this, but, as I said, with little success - at about 92 stone and 5 ft. 8 ins. as I was then, I haven't got the sheer weight of beef that's desirable for sabre-play! (Tenses unforgivably mixed up - tut! tut!)

At that time the Japanese sword-play still carried strong reminiscences of when they used to wear armour; e.g. their only thrust was a double-handed upward jab, with all their weight behind it, aimed at the throat, and obviously designed to get in between the top edge of the gorget and the chinpiece of the helmet. The only time it got home on me, it nearly broke my neck, having nearly thirteen stone of blockily-built Jap about 5 feet cube behind it, so that I have the most painful recollections of it to this day. I'd amused myself using an epec technique on him, getting in thrust after thrust all over him, till suddenly he landed me a cut on the elbow that almost paralysed my arm, even through the padded jerkin, and then, before I could recover, got home one of his own classic thrusts as hard as he could put it in!

Several of these Japs were Za Zen adherents, and some

taliviti and on

of them were good, though not the very best.

But the Jap two-handed technique is a very nasty and efficient thing to meet, and a steady volley of cuts coming in at all angles at about three per second, aimed indifferently at your knee, jaw, forearm and the pit of your stomach, will keep you amazingly busy keeping your skin whole!

GIOVANNI SCOGNAMILLO, c/o Banco di Roma, P.K. 464, Istanbul, Turkey.

I've seen the important message on ROT number four's back cover and, even if a bit late, I'm writing.

First I must express my thanks for your kindness in sending me your much enjoyable zine (in fact the first british zine I'm receiving), then I must also express

my intention of reading, by all means, Part Two of your breath-taking and spinechilling, terrific "Confessions of an English Book-Lover".

Yes, without doubt you must be crazy. But, who cares. I'm crazy too and in the same way (and the girl I'm gonna maried is to, boy). Books? They are more devillish than women, brother, when you are possessed by them it's the end. ((Yes, and they don't cook your meals, either.))

Look, at the age of twelve I was collecting historical novels, at fifteen every kind of books and mags about movies (and still am, by the way), around eighteen books on art and music, plus poetry and theatrical books (to all those you have to add novels, comtemporary and classical), four years ago I meet a gal who was real crazy about mystery novels and after a while we became engaged; finally two years ago I discovered SF and began to collect SF novels, mags and zines.

My english spelling is, unfortunately, a mess, but I'm also reading, and speaking, italian, french and turkish. So I have an international collection.

Well, lets change the subject. Lets talk about ROT. I loved "Over the Cemetery Wall", with a particular mention to "How to cheat death and like that" (including the poor, unarmed moviegoer), also Rotsler's portfolio and Warner's Going Like Sixty"; as a result I have spend, thanks to your zine, some really enjoyable hours. ((Let!s hope you get lots more British zines now. And don't worry about your English Spelling - you should see what the Americans do with it! (Ducks for cover).))

JILL ADAMS 54, Cobden Avenue, Bitterne Park, Southampton.

Many thanks for ROT, a most unexpected pleasure. Where did you pinch my address from? ROT received a rare distinction. After reading it my husband (hereinafter known as John) said "Why haven t we had this before?" Thus placing it in a class up till now solely occupied by only one other zine. (Guess which?) ((The Morticians

and Undertakers Fortnightly Gazette? Right?)) Can't make up my mind what I like best. Birchby was very good, so was Irene. But I think your speil on/about books was best. I know how you feel, parting with books is like parting with ones first born.

I'm quite sure my books have a life of their own. They never seem to stay where I put them. I put them straight and tidy, then about an hour later they're lolling about leering at me in what I can only call an obscene way. ((Ah hah. At last - a truly obscene publication!))

I thought Harry Warner's piece was quite good, but John says he found it putting off. "After all he's only two years older than me, and there he is talking as though he's an old old man." My reply of "So?" was not well received.

KEN HEDBERG, Rt 1, Box 1185, Florin, California. U.S.A.

I, of course, have complaints to make. Rot it all, why not number your pages and print a foot full letter column? I can guess why you didn't number your pages. You don't want anybody saying, "That thing on

page such-and-such was horrible!" You want then to say, "That thing on page-er-that thing between-eh-oh, well, forget it." Don't worry, that thing on page eh, er-well, it wasn't horrible at all. But you make it difficult for us to say that. See what I mean, bloke?

You annotince a policy of giving green stamps and free balloons. I wish to murmur irately that I didn't receive any of them goodies. They are beginning to abandon trading stamps over here; I suspect they will be valuable as collector's items in a few years. SO GIMME, bwa! You might use that copy of ROT 5 laying there to send the stamps with. I'll get rid of the ROT somehow. ((Just wait a minute while I dye these old black stamps green. They are only ld bos anyway.))

HARRY WARNER, 423, Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland, U.S.A. You gotta Gestetner but I gotta Print-o-matic. I didn't have a salesman call, because I was smart and bought by mail order. Then I started to feel a smarting wound in the pocketbook when the machine wouldn't work. By some improbable circumstance, I

had picked the right mail order firm, which told me to return the defective machine express collect and had a new one on its way to me before I got the old one sent back. However, if it weren't for that Gestetner handle that your salesman had trouble with, I might not have needed to invest in a new duplicator. The office has a Gestetner, only about 50 feet from my desk. It is presided over during the daytime by an ogre who frightens me badly, but in the early morning hours when I'm finished work and nobody is around but the janitor (who wouldn't stop me because I know too much about his own nocturnal habits) I could have brought in paper and ink and produced a Gestetnered Horizons. However, several months of off-and-on probing and experimenting failed to show me how the cover comes off. I even mentioned it to Derry, who told me it was quite simple and wrote two or three pages of instructions on how it's done for the various models. ((Certainly it's simple; I've had the cover off my Gestetner twice already and I've only had it eight months.))

Apparently Russian books are as cheap in England as they are in this country. I've purchased three or four fat volumes of Russian science fiction, including Andromeda, but it's all in the original and my reading speed in that language is slow enough to have kept me from doing more than browsing so far. They're even cheaper when you buy them in the original Russian than in the English translations. Apparently the Russians pay their translators but not their authors.

The first installment of your bibliophilic confessions strikes very close to home. My book-buying did decline for quite a few years on Bryan Place, when I had filled up the house, ((What a paltry excuse for stopping buying books!)) but now that I'm on Summit Avenue, there's plenty of room agair at I'm afraid that it's beginning again. From my pocketbook's standpoint I'm luck, because I prefer used books to new books. I don't feel

rtable reading a brand new book. One that is battered and stained is much attractive to me, so I can purchase in the second-hand stores instead of ying the fantastic prices that new books cost in this country. ((They are only slightly less fantastic over here.))

RICK SNEARY, 2962, Santa Ana St., South Gate, California, U.S.A.

Word is that I'm six month in writing about ROT 4, which means my rate of fanac is picking up. Some chaps I know have gone from neo-fan to gafia-er, and still think I don't write letters thanking them for fanzines. This isn't true at all. I almost always

write.. It is just that some don't live long enough to read my letters....

Well, lets get on to ROT.. If I don't, another issue will come along in about a year, and I'll feal so bad about not having written, I won't write again, hopping you will think I have died, and all the letters you see printed are by some other Rick Sneary.

Your remarks about old letters, strikes a familure cord. (To such an extent my pants fell down.) I too save my old letters — pluss carbons of nearly all my answers. These pile up, fall over, and get into all sorts of places. Early in my fanlife I desided to run my correspondence like a office, and bought a box of file folders, and made out folders for everyone I was writing too. Then my plan was to file the letter and my carbon in the folder as soon as it was answered. But you know how this goes. And besides, there are always lots of people you don't really write enough to make folders... And there are the odd years when you don't do anything...so some are filed, some in order in shoe boxes, amd some in piles. —But by an large (far to large for the buy), most of my correspondence is in some kind of order. Collected into old mailing envelopes, and files in order... But, there are still the boxes of letters from those years, that have not been put in.. And I don't have a wife to help me.. ((Borrow one. Why, there must be dozens about!))

As I've said before — somewere —we seem to have the same love for books—and the same kind.. Namely something written between to covers that might be interesting, sometime.

I check you completely on the need for books I have never read and may never read. For I to never know were my interest will turn next.. I resently read a French historical novel, and ended up reading three more books on the same period, and consulting two books of reference... I have a very poor memory, but am very good about being able to find information in books.

Please tell anyone you hear curse the kookie name of Sneary, for being a gafiaed fake-fan, that I mean well, and will try to answer my mail in time.. I'm not sure who's time... or even which life time...but in the time to come... And, save the stamps for that stamp collector you know...

BOB SMITH, 1 Timor Street, Puckapunyal, Victoria, Australia.

"he ATom cover on ROT 4 didn't impress me - I like him better as a cartoonist. Hope ROT will be fairly regular from now on - I hate commenting on a zine, then have to wait two or three years (okay, so I'm over-doing it...) ((Don't be too sure.)) before finding out if my hacking brings forth the rext ish. "Over the Cemetery Wall" seems

to just flow along, and was so homely I nearly burst into tears, although I come from London originally so why should all that yack about the North move me...?

"Punkah Promulgates" was chuckle-worthy. However, you are misinformed; "punkah" is not so a large swinging fan. It's the North Upper Nahuathl term for "Puckapunyal" - an expression of disgust, like; "Gawd, give it back to the natives!" Okay? ((Yeah, just fine and dandy.)) I liked that sad little bit by Harry Warner, jr., and know roughly how he feels - although I'm a dashing young 30 myself. Harry always makes good reading. Ah yes, this book— loving is a problem. These days I only sub to one prozine which I keep; my beloved Fy & SF file; and that is gradually shoving every thing else off the too small shelves. The rest usually get distributed anywhere - who ever wants 'em. Fanzines - most of which I refuse to do away with - are becoming a problem also, and if the army decide to move me again we shall need a three-ton truck for them alone. I manage to keep my P.b. collection down to a mobile 30 odd, by severe and heart-breaking periodical weeding. My wife believes that all who edit, sub to, write or illustrate for, collect and treasure fanzines; or sub to, collect, read science fiction are firmly nuts but we've stayed happily married for some seven years, so...

MARION Z. BRADLEY, Box 158, Rochester, Texas. U.S.A. I note from reading the inside front cover of ROT that I am going to write you a letter of comment of this issue. See, you're clairvoyant! I even admit that you knew it before I did.

Steve (my kid) and I just finished giggling our heads off over your review of The Man Who Could Cheat Death. (Actually Steve and I both got rather a kick out of that film, because the photography was lovely, and Steve, being ten, is at the age where he is not yet blase about horrible greenish vaporing poisons fuming in the bowl, murky fog-bound Paris streets, and sinister doctors in sweeping long black cloaks — in fact, he owns a Sweeping Long Black Cloak and can do Anton Diffring, and Christopher Lee, in a fashion which I wish those two chaps could see).

Since we do like Anton Diffring (say what you will, the chap is handsome and has marvelously expressive hands, not to mention the manner in which he suggested various states without the help of makeup — if they'd left out that final gruesome transmogrification, I'd have enjoyed it without qualification), we went to see CIRCUS OF HORRORS.. since, also, I have a thing about circuses.

If you haven't seen this one, oh, brother, you dunno what you're missing. To start with, there is this screaming female ripping the bandages off her face after a sort of unsuccessful face-lift. When she sees that half of her face rather resembles a sagging-jowled sheepdog, she quite naturally goes raving mad. ((Quite natural.)) The Mad Doctor (who isn't quite so mad yet) racing to get to her BEFORE she gets the bandages off, quite naturally has an accident and smashes his own face into a lovely mess, but since he is a plastic surgeon, who botched up the lady quite innocently, a little thing like that doesn't stop him any longer than it takes to say "Hammer Films Horror flicks". Running away from the lady's naturally irritable husband and father, who don't like her new face, he runs over a policeman, so he and his two sidekicks take refuge on the continent in a broken-down circus, where after a rather touching scene in which he beautifully repairs the face of a cute ten-year-old with braids, thus winning the confidence of her father, he maneuvers to get the circus into his own hands by tricking her father into playing palsy-walsy with a trained bear and then standing by and letting the bear kill the man. ((Tell me; who did you say trained that bear?))

Now this chap owns a circus, so what does he do? Does he go out and hire the Flying Concellos and Clyde Beatty and their ilk? Oh, no, nothing so sensible, he goes out hunting the alleys of Europe for females with faces ruined by bomb accidents and so forth, who have turned to crime; then he does plastic surgery on them and turns them all into raving beauties and trains them to perform in his circus. (About the best bit of the picture was a lovely female aerialist doing a star turn on a "Spanish Web" — a rope, that is.)

The Doctor, being queer for beauty, naturally takes free samples from all these gorgeous creatures, and then when they start to pester him, he arranges accidents for them, which isn't difficult, since they spend their lives on trapeze and aerial webs and tight-wires and similar places where they can't buy insurance. The uglier they are to start with (and one girl in the audience went out and was sick in the lobby at the face of a young lady supposedly scarred by acid throwing) the more gorgeous they are when his supreme science has washed off the greasepaint and morticians wax. However, it gets so tangled up that he can't kill them fast enough, and with a little help from a Bright Young Scotland Yard detective, and the original looney with the sheepdog face-lift, they start comparing notes, and the mad doctor, in rapid succession, gets his own face tore up again, the bandages ripped off before it can heal, gets squeezed by a gorilla, chased all over the grandstand, and finally run over by a car, dying with his hand pitifully outstretched to his Temple of Beauty. And you English chaps have the NERVE to sneer at Hollywood! ((Certainly we have. You let me see Hollywood make a funnier comedy.))

DICK ELLINGTON, P.O. Box 310, Canyon, Contra Costa Co., California, U.S.A. I now find myself with time again, for the first time in about 4 years, to actually sit down and write letters without worrying about the clouds of work hovering over me alla time. In the evenings I can read books and play with the baby and work on the cars or just sit and vegetate if I want to, and I find it a new and highly pleasant exper-

ience. I won't go into the details of this little patch of wilderness we live in. Suffice to say it's wild and woolly, with no neighbors within sight or shouting distance, lots wild-type critters abounding-deer, racoons, possums, skunks, rabbit and such like --and we <u>like</u> it. ((It sounds like the sort of place I would take to, too.))

Crazy life. On Saturdays when there isn't a fan party we trek over to the nearby drive-in movie for a regular picnic affair. They have a playground down under the screen for the kiddies and Marie plays on the swings and rides the little train and generally lives it up. Everybody brings all their kids, togged out for bed and they show the cartoon first so the kids can go to sleep—which they do, pretty much after the first film gets going, though the older ones generally stay up for at least the first one. ((Now that is an idea I hadn't thought of. The very next time I go to the cinema I shall go in my pyjamas and then I can go to sleep after the cartoon too.)) On Saturday nights they have a special bonus show and show three features which, as much as I like movies, leaves me logy. Then again, what with the kid and all, it's an easy way to go to the movies without worrying about baby-sitters and such like so we go probably oftener than we would do otherwise.

Hell, I never even commented on BEM 6, which makes me even more annoyed than usual about the lack of time I've been suffering under. Because it was a gem of an issue. Vince on the Mike Wilson caper was especially choice. I'd heard a much foreshortened version of all this from Mike but never all the details and never in such glowing terms. As a matter of fact my own first introduction to Mike was weird to say the least. It was when the Bulmers were in New York and I got a call from a group sitting around Sheckley's apartment one night and after chatting amiably with several of them, Bob said, "Wait a minute, somebody wants to talk to you." and this, this ... voice comes on, in a most atrocious cockney accent, asking me, "D'you have any Sheilas up there?" repetitiously and then switching into half a dozen different zany accents, including German with a Nazi harangue and Japanese with Sheckley's own, "Sssssso, Yankee soldier, you think you are-uh smahter than Imperial Japanese Army." routine until I was, frankly, slightly dazed, especially since I didn't have the faintest idea who it was. I eventually met Mike, sprawled out on the floor of Dave Kyle's apartment, in the midst of a jungle of undersea camera equipment he kept taking apart and putting together. next time I saw him was around NYcon time when he was sporting a demoniac beard and while he was still equally zany, a lot of the rough edges were worn off and in society he was the model of a modern English gentleman. All in all I found him a fascinating character and an only disappointed I haven't run into him oftener than the half dozen times I actually did.

ROT 4 is also on hand. Birchby's bit is a gem but that's all I have to say on it. And I particularly liked the Ad for the National Society for the Abolition of Life. We're engaging right now in a pacifist demonstration bit, but, being the type of people we are, are foregoing the usual prayer vigils (I'd look kind of silly at one of them anyway), peace marches and such like and instead we will be publicly demonstrating, probably in the streets of Berkeley, the new King Kong missile defense system. The King Kong missile is made of one old nose cone, a frame of cardboard painted with aluminium paint, fins, a little red line and abuzzer controlled by a big red button, labelled aptly enough, Big Red

Panic Button. The point of the leaflet is that the U.S. and Russia must both be forced to adopt the King Kong missile to replace all existing types of missiles. Then, if some neurotic type gets goosed by a flight of geese on radar he can wham down on the buzzer button and the buzzer will buzz, lights will go off and we might even arrange a small explosion like a skyrocket or something to add realism, but nothing flies off and blows up anybody's real estate and the savings in tax dollars will, of course, be fantastic.

Warner is minor-key but interesting. I have no hopes myself, pro or con for 2000 A.D. I am a bit inclined to overall pessimism though how I manage to couple this with a rather ridiculous faith in human beings individually I've yet to figure out.

MIKE DECKINGER. 85, Locust Avenue, Millburn, N.J. U.S.A.

OVER THE CEMETERY WALL was midly interesting, but I'm surprised that you don't make any mention of the players in THE MAN WHO COULD CHEAT DEATH. It's a Hammer film, and was originally shown as a half-hour telecast called THE MAN ON HALF-MOON STREET, remember? I hope so, because I

never saw it on tv. How could you neglect to mention Hazel Court as the model for Anton Diffring? I don't see how anyone could pass her by, and with some of those poses, it's practically an impossibility to disregard her presence. ((Oh, I didn't disregard her presence. I just didn't take a note of her name.)) I thought it was a pretty poor film myself; the best Hammer film was HORROR OF DRACULA, and this was near the bottom. And by the way, her boyfriend who pretends to operate is Christopher Lee-very unobservant, aren't you? ((Why, what's with this Christopher Lee? Does he maybe have three heads or the eye of a basilisk that I should notice him particularly?)) There were a lot of things that could have been better with the film, which unfortunately weren't.

Now ON THE BEACH is another thing entirely. I've seen that a number of times (5 or 6 to be exact) and I wholeheartedly agree with your recommendation of it. There were a few faults to it, possibly the biggest one being the absence of bodies anywhere. I don't care what anyone says, there would have to be dead bodies in California after the radiation hits, and not have the streets as clean as if they'd just been swept. ((Well maybe they had just been swept. Now we only need to know - who by?)) That was too implausible. The trouble with Anthony Perkins' performance in the film is that he seems totally unconcerned about the whole thing—as if he feels the end of the world is a dreadful nuisance, but that's about all. ((Perhaps that was what appealed to me about his performance. After all, the end of the world might be rather inconvenient but it's not the sort of thing to get het up about, is it?)) And he has more to lose than anyone else, really. I thought the ending and the scenes of the line by the hospital getting the pills, and oh yes, Fred Astaire committing suicide in the auto were magnificent. And the music integration was notable too.

HAL SHAPIRO, Detroit 38, Michigan, U.S.A.

I have heard various complimentary/slandering remarks 2689, Clements Avenue, about previous issues of your zine but paid them little heed. I trust that you will exercise your judgement and pay my remarks as little. Incidently, I notice that you use the term, "reps" in reference to your work. Just what

do you do for a living? The reason I ask is that I am termed a rep (as well as other names) by some people upon whom I call. In fact, I solicit advertising (and so am a publisher's rep) from people for various trade and consumer magazines and newspapers, as well as a chain of directories of freight companies. From the sound of your mimeographing, I imagine that the reps to which you refer are manufacturer's representatives, however. ((Printer's representatives mainly, since I am a Print Buyer with an Ad agency. Also Blockmaker's reps and sundry odd associated individuals like paper reps, ink reps and those omnipresent and parasitical outcasts, the dreaded office Supplies reps.))

Don't laugh at the idea of reps hoping to land your account by pretending to be a reader of that crazy Buck Rogers stuff, though. I know one fellow who sells presses, milling machines, etc. in Cincinnati who will sometimes spend an entire year acquiring hobbies, likes, dislikes, etc. of prospective clients just so he can go out on the golf course with them and sell a few hundred-thousand dollars worth of stuff to them. I don't know what you deal in/with or whatever and whether or not you are worth going after, but that is for the salesmen to decide, not I. And how the hell did I get on this subject anyway?

Irene Potters made nice light reading. But then, I always enjoy hearing (or reading) fans discoursing on other subjects than fandom. And usually at fan meetings there is discussion of almost everything except fandom. With the Cincinnati group it was usually sex, politics, civic duties and bridge.

With the Detroit group, it is sex, politics, sports and bridge.

Incidently, I have been told that I am a remarkably egocentric person. So I'm compiling an ego rating for myself. If you would be so good as to count the number of times personal pronouns referring to myself appear in this letter and tell me what their ratio is to the total wordage, I would appreciate it very much. However, if you decide to tell me to go to hell, I shall admire your independent spirit and applaud you for it. ((The percentage was 103%. But you can go to hell anyway, if you like. Now send for my Correspondence Course on How To Be Obliging and Independent At the Same Time.))

JOHN BAXTER, 29, Gordon Road, Bowral, N.S.W. Australia.

As a fellow book lover, we have one thing at least in common, besides fandom. Unfortunately, I don't have your eclectic attitude to reading - Kant, Machiavelli and even Carroll are over my head, though I have read a little of each over the years. However, my shelves tend to provide

some surprises to the uninitiated. Take my "To read" shelf beside the desk here. Yes, just shove that coffin under the bed. Uh huh, now the body over there behind the wardrobe.... Yes, now you can see it. Well, reading from the left, we have Greenmantle (John Buchan), No Boundaries (C.L. Moore/Kuttner) The Catcher in the Rye (Salinger) The Incas of Peru (Linton) On the Road (Kerouac), Jam Session (R.J.Gleeson) Pickwick Papers (Dickens) - most of those are re-reads, actually, and I like to have them near me while goofing around the room or lying in bed. Altogether, I probably haven't got more than 600 or 700 items in my library, including sf prozines and books, which is pretty small, considering the years and years of prozine runs. But if I counted fanzines also.

I agree, the final scenes of "On the Beach" really brought home the horror of a world dying, but again, the magic wasn't there for Australians. Somehow, there's no thrill in a film which you've seen made, in places where you've spent a lot of time. The final stirring Salvation Army Rally was held in front of the public library, where I spent some time when I was last in Melbourne, reading or talking to other loafers under the trees. I saw some studio handy-men handing out "poison capsules" to some rather bored looking extras just before the very moving sequence was put on film. Merv Binns, well known club fan and co-publisher of the Melbourne club's 'zine Ether-line works just opposite the 'Department of the Navy", into which Perkins strides purposefully from time to time. And the imposing columns of the Department of the Navy actually comprise the entrance to the Melbourne Telephone Exchange Building, brightened up with the addition of a bright new brass plate. John Mellion, the local actor who plays the US gob who swims ashore at San Francisco to die, is a well-known figure around Sidney. He does a lot of shirt and soap commercials. So do most of the other Australians in the

cast. And one of the dead and desolate streets shown in those final sequences happens to be the one in which I work. Somehow, there just isn't any horror in the familiar. ((But think of the title it will give you for your memoirs - "I Worked On The Street Where The World Ended".))

LES NIRENBERG. 1217, Weston Road. Toronto 15, Ont. Canada.

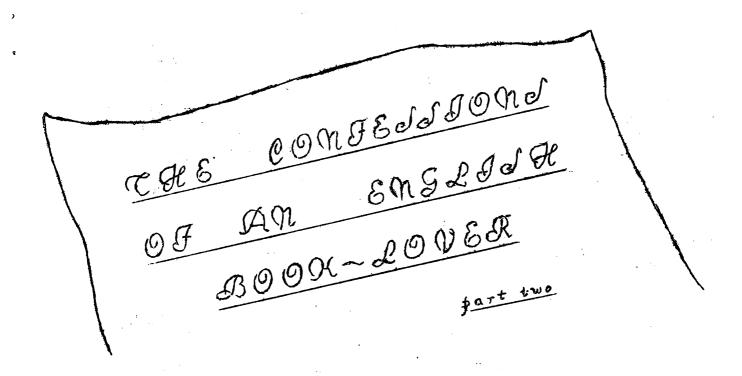
Aside from the morbid column titles in ROT I have no The Coexistence Candy Store, beefs to register. "Cemetery Wall" was good. That little bit about the knocking over of milk bottles reminds me of the regular, standard word we give to customers who knock over bottles in the store. It's "Strike!" The damn things sound so much like bowling

pins it's hard to resist yelling "Strike!" whenever some clod kicks the scores of bottles which are usually found cluttering up the joint. // In "How To Cheat Death etc" you forgot that that's usually "murky, misty, fcg-bound, cobble-stoned, 1890 Paris". Don't forget the cobbles. On second that, raybe you'd better leave out the cobbles. Somebody might confuse it with misty, fog-bound, cobble-stoned, 1890 London, where such things happen just as often (in the movies that is). You go on to mention "I do not feel constrained to hide delicious tit-bits". That last word is no doubt a Freudian Typo. I did a double take when I saw it. But when I got down to the thing about the "ravishing redhead" I understood the reason for your Freudian Typo. ((No typo. The phrase really is "tit-bits" over here; I guess it is just you genteel New Worlders who sublimate it into "tid-bits". Why, we even have a weekly magazine called "Tit-bits" - though now I stop to think about the kind of stuff they feature, I begin to see why.))

Well I've finally found a guy who huys books and doesn't necessarily read them. I'm just like that. I have a big stack of books in the back of the store. They sit there on the shelf with all my records and stuff and people who happen to wander into the back room can't help but see them. Everybody asks when I'll get the time to read them all. I usually say, probably never. And they also say it's a waste of time and money but I don't pay any attention to them. I read them whenever I get the chance, but there's some kind of strange feeling of satisfaction that I get just seeing them standing there on the shelf. Also, anytime I want to look something up in, for instance, "The Theory Of The Leisure Class" it's there.

One thing in Sid Birchby's story struck me as pretty funny. Ask yourself this question: "What could be the reason for a guy's disappearance while strolling in Picadilly carrying a pile of money?" The answer seems pretty obvious. Even we Canajuns know all about the various "diversions" of Picadilly (and we're pretty far away from London tco.). It would be interesting to see how many American readers caught on. ((By Jingo. So Wintoff didn't go to Mars after all! Why, the caddish rotter!))

The following people were lucky enough not to get their names mis-spelled, their addresses wrongly shown and their fine letters backed into little pieces by the lettericidal editor: Alan Dodd, Éric Bentcliffe, Ken Cheslin, Les Sample, Bob Lichtman. Sture Sedolin, Daphne Buckmaster, Steve Schultheis, Dick Schultz, George Charters, Ted Forsyth, Arthur Hayes, Maggie Curtis, Alan Rispin, Sid Birchby, R. A. Wilson (sometimes affectionately referred to as The Principal Keeper of Printed Books, The British Museum), and Archie Mercer who sent a postcard. All you loyal letter-writers are the backbone of the magazine, but we've got a few slipped discs.



"WE'VE COT 'EIGHT GREAT COMEDIES' "

(In last decade's instalment of this gripping, breathless serial, you may remember, we were Utterly Astounded to discover that our friendly, neighbourhood Bibliophile Had A Lot Of Books, Hadn't Read Most Of Them, Probably Never Would Read Some Of Them, and Intended To Buy Some More!!!! In this instalment we learn how, despite Storm, Tempest and W.H. Smith's our intrepid hero accomplishes this well-nigh unbelievable feat. NOW READ ON......)

It was, I recollect, a fine, sunny afternoon in the month of May when I strolled nonchalantly into a Leeds bookshop with the assured air of a man who owns the shirt he is wearing. "Have you", I demanded of the girl behind the counter, "a copy of EIGHT GREAT TRAGEDIES?" "No, I'm sorry" she sparkled, searching the inside of her head for the closest possible alternative, "....but we've got EIGHT GREAT COMEDIES." It was still a fine, sunny afternoon in May as I slumped brokenly out of the shop with the unmistakable air of a man headed for the nearest high bridge.

I know of no other sport cuite like book-hunting. Show me the man, I always say, who has tracked down a book which is not in the current Top Ten, until he has finally run it to earth and actually made a bookshop assistant sell it to him, and I will show you a man who will, blindfold, hunt wild boar with a penknife, and even have the apple-sauce ready made for his return. For while, on the face of it, hunting wild boar may appear more dangerous (only rarely does a hunted book come charging at one out of a thicket, tusks extended), and Fox Hunting more traditional, there is in

Book Hunting a peculiarly high proportion of that most awesome ingredient the Human Element. I am prepared to back my claim for Book Hunting's preeminence among challenging sports, with positive proof. Give me a fox and I
will have it booked into stock at a bookstore of my choice. Then, after a
reasonable lapse of time, let the Master of any Hunt you care to name - with
mounts and pack and all, if you wish - go into that shop and try to retrieve
that fox. I guarantee you he will fail. "Fox?" the assistant will say,
"Fox? Is it a chinese fox with pink spots? Naw, we haven't got it. It
isn't published yet." And your fox, I am sorry to say, will be lost to
human sight until, twenty-five years later; perhaps, it may be spotted on a
Bargain Table, shop-soiled and reduced to sixpence.

How well I remember some of the major contests which I have engaged in over the years; how well I remember the fatuous smiles, the shaken heads, the blunt "No's" - and the rapid, heady surge of triumph which marks the occasional victory.

Over my many engagements with that mightiest of adversaries, W.H. Smith's, I shall pass lightly. The memories of endless failures and defeats still race around my head and set me groaning in my sleep. The vivid details of those dreadful encounters return to haunt me. "Have you got a book called ARIZONA'S DARK AND BLOODY GROUND?" - "I BEG your pardon?"......"Have you got a paper-back called A MODERN ELEMENTARY LOGIC. I think it's been out about a week." - "Oh, if it's a new one we shan't have it yet. Try again in about a fortnight."....."Have you got WHY PEOPLE BUY by Louis Cheskin?" (a 35/-book) - "No, I'm afraid not" - three minutes after which I found it on a shelf not four yards away (and didn't buy it). One of these days, I tell myself, gritting my teeth and putting in more hours of fevered practise and preparation, one of these days.....

Sheila, too, has taken up the sport, mostly on my behalf. Her particular speciality is the Telephone Attack and she has brought this to a fine art; the great beauty of this approach is that it often takes one's adversary, the Bookshop Assistant, unawares, and it is sometimes possible to win an engagement and actually buy a book solely on the basis of surprise. But Sheila, too, has had her set-backs. There was the time, for instance, when she tried to obtain for me a copy of THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF SUPERSTITIONS. She rang a Bradford bookshop and asked for the book. "No, I don't think we've got it in" said the woman at the other end, "but I know the one you mean. It's a German sex book isn't it?"

Or the time we started to make an inventory of second-hand bookshops which we could visit and browse through at leisure. Sheila phoned around all the ones we could find in the Directories and asked them "Do you sell second-hand books?" One reply was: "Only our own". Sheila rang off quickly, hands shaking, and we have never dared to go and probe the hideous truth behind the phrase. But occasionally, in the small hours of the night, I still wonder; just what, in God's name, are they doing there - publishing second-hand books?

I have related elsewhere the long, heart-rending story of THE UNIVERSE & DR. EINSTEIN; of how it was published in paper-back as part of a series; of how I tried to buy it at a station bookstall only to be told

that they had never heard of it but would ask their Head Office; of returning a fortnight later to be told that Head Office had never heard of it either — and picking up on the same stall another book in the same series which listed the title I was trying to buy; of thinking 'To Hell with them all. I'll go get it at the University Bookshop; they're sure to both know it and have it'; of asking a tall, studious—looking man there for a copy of THE UNIVERSE & DR. EINSTEIN and of his immortal reply "Is it a comic strip book?", and of finally buying the book in a scruffy little back street shop.

I sometimes wonder where they come from, these bookshop assistants with this special talent. Are they only mutants? Or are the flying saucers really with us, bringing in bookshop assistants from some unguessable world where the most outstanding geniuses have IQs one quarter of that of the average earthly cretin. Whichever is the truth, this much is certain; they must be subjected to the most assiduous selection and screening processes ever devised by the mind of man, only the first stage of which is the failing by a large margin of IQ tests for road-sweeping or emptying dustbins (see future issues of this magazine for letters from Fred Guggins and Bert Trog, Heads of the Road Sweepers and Dustbin Emptiers Unions respectively, beginning: "Dear Sir, Hi 'ave been instructed by our Joint Standing Cermittee ter inforrum yew that Road Sweeping (Dustbin Emptying) is a fine craft needing a 'igh hintelligence on the part of the person wot is doing the sweeping (emptying). Furvermower....") Whatever we may say about it, one thing we must concede; the System works.

Occasionally, after months of this uneven, heart-breaking struggle, something snaps in the mind of the Book Hunter; some subconscious mechanism takes over which forces him, despite his Better Self, to take a vicious revenge upon his lifelong enemy, the Bookshop Assistant. This strange, catatonic state once overtook both Sheila and me at Book Sale time. Windowshopping in Leeds late one evening we spotted a book I wanted in a window on Bond Street. "Ring Jones!" I said to Sheila next morning, a pouring wet one, "And ask them how much that book is that we saw in the window". So Sheila dutifully rang, and the little man scurried out in the rain to look at the book in his window and scurried back to say "We haven't got it". This was ridiculous. "Of course you've got it" snapped Sheila, "I was only looking at it in your window last night". "Just a minute" said the little man, and scurried again. He came back more slowly, but with the same answer. Sheila was a little sharper. He went away again and took another little man outside with him. It was still pouring with rain. They both peered in the window. They both failed to see the book. The first little man apprehensively reported the fact. Sheila, exasperated, rang off. It was only later that we realised that Brown, who is also a book-seller, has a shop on Bond Street. With a window. With a book in that we wanted.

I certainly wouldn't say I hoped that those two poor little assistants caught pneumonia. I wouldn't say that. But it sure would even up the score just a little

