

SALLY — PORT I

"It is utterly inconceivable that a highly complex mechanical brain, such as will perform the feats you claim for it, could fit into such a small cabinet" Professor Hamiz pronounced angrily, "I cannot but express the theory that you gain your alleged results by trickery".

"It is true, as the Professor says" said Meek, looking around at the assembled audience benignly, "that the cabinet is rather small - but then, I told you I was on to something new, as for trickery, Gentlemen, you have your instruments to hand, I invite you to make any kind of inspection you like before I commence the demonstration, and during the actual tests also".

The room echoed with the sound of dry coughs and nervous mutterings, and the squeaks of rubber wheels on concrete as the various scientist hauled their equipment into what they considered more advantageous positions. At length all was quiet again.

Meek walked over to the concrete-plastic bench upon which there rested his...device. A dull steel globe some 14 inches in diameter, supported on four equidistant short rubberoid looking legs.

He tapped the globe with the blunt end of a pencil. "Perhaps Prof Groves would like to suggest a subject?".

Should do? Oh, the introductory paragraphs of a pseudo Holmes story, that

To the background of humming and clicking testing machines the globe began to speak.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE LOST LOCUST MOTIF.

It was shortly after the horrible affair which I have chronicled under the title of "The Adventure of the Uncooth Butler", in 1921, or perhaps early 1922, when Holmes was drawn into the case of THE LOST LOCUST MOTIF.

The incident began harmlessly enough one chill night made miserable by intermittent rain. I, having at that time having given up my practice after the death of my first wife, was living again in the old rooms in Baker Street.

I was dozing comfortably in front of a cheery fire while Holmes busied himself with his notes on the chemical properties of pollens, stirring only from time to time to refill his pipe, or to massage his aching typing finger.

I must have dropped off because I was suddenly aware that the doorbell was ringing, and, as I sat up, I could hear Mrs Hudson's footsteds crossing the hall downstairs. "who might this be who come calling on such a foul night" I thought.

"We shall soon find out, my dear Wattsonn, for if I mistake me not Mrs Hudson is even now helping a portly gentleman out of his oilskins" said Holmes.

"Oh," I replied "I was not aware that I had spoken aloud" Holmes smiled and described a slow circle in the air with his pipe stem, "Ah, but you did not speak Wattsonn, there was really no need for your face speaks for you" seeing my puzzled frown he continued "an expression of puzzlement so obvious, the glance towards the rain bespattered window, the slight wince at the sight of the murky night, and your doubtful stare towards the door, really Wattsonn, it is quite elementary....but hush, here comes our visitor now"

At that moment Mrs Hudson knocked upon the door and a moment later showed our visitor in.

He was a sunbronzed gentleman, somewhat elderly, white whiskered and with a wrinkled goodhumoured face, which wore at that moment an expression of woe quite alien to his normal self.

He advanced across the room to where we stood. "Mr Holmes" he asked, "Mr Sherlock Holmes?"

"At your service, Your Grace" replied my illustrious friend, "and this is Mr Wattsonn, upon whose discretion I assure you you can rely.

You wish to see me about the unfortunate incident which occurred at Wharf 11 this morning".

"Yes, yes, that's right" the elder man's face blanched, and he staggered back. "But, how did you know Mr Holmes?"

Meek tapped the sphere. The voice ceased at once.

"Are you gentlemen satisfied?" he asked.

Lindsay stepped forward. "I don't think that really matters" she said, "you know as well as I do that we're all just cardboard characters in somebody's OMPazine, we have no choice in the matter. Go ahead and poke that darn thing again and let's get on with the story, or column or whatever it is that we're in" The assemblage murmured their approval at these outspoken words. Meek tapped the sphere again.

A SORT OF FUTURE HISTORY, or SLEEPER AWAKES, or SOMETHING.

At the risk of belabouring the obvious I think that I should first of all point out that most of the detail contained in this manuscript was discovered by myself only long after the events described took place. However, in the interests of writing a smooth easy to follow text I must needs insert these details, and events, because of their happening at a significant time, or in a significant manner.

Everything in fact from July 18th 1964 until Merak 11 549NE I know of only from the records, copies of contemporary newspapers and because I read it in the histories. Most interesting, because of their effect on current events, were the mental recordings of the fanzines from the New British Museums vaults.

I was born of poor but honest parents, (it figures), in Kings Lynn, Norfolk, on July 4th 1934, and promptly christened Gerald Montgomery Twell, a combination of initials which earned me a variety of curious nicknames throughout my youth, and even followed me into fandom, which I discovered early in 1949.



HAVE PUN —

WILL TRAVEL —

Due to a combination of circumstances which it would be irrelevant to discuss here I remained on the fringes of fandom for some years, until 1954 after I'd finished my National Service. I subscribed to many fanzines however and by the time I was able to take up some activity I had become fairly well acquainted with fandom, though with only a very few fans.

From that year, 1954, I became fairly active, published a fanzine called MERIDIAN and an APazine called SALLY - PORT... (get it?). During this time I was a regular attendee at the British conventions and made quite a few friends in fandom. Most of them in the London area of course, my job in Fleet Street had caused me to move to London in 1954.

Of course I did meet many of the legendary Ancient Fans, but you must realise I had no idea of their real stature at that time and, apart from the admiration I felt for certain of them I had no pressing reason to make myself anyone's Boswell. Anyway, Jekketes' GIANTS OF IF; WILLIS, THE MAN; ANGLOFANDOM IN THE 20th Century, and his monumental FANDOM REVISITED, do a far better job than I can do, so it would be best if you just read your history books if you want to know about the Old BNFs, my tale is more of a personal history - what parts aren't Terran History that is.

Now, where was I?. Ah yes. I was living in London and was working as a reporter.

On July 16th 1964 the USNS MOHAWK was in collision with the tug Burns Knight just outside Holy Loch, fortunately without loss of life. The submarine, however, foundered.

By July 18th I'd been on the scene for over 24 hours but due to bad weather no attempt was scheduled to be made for raising the submarine so I found myself extremely grateful for the offer of a night or so's lodging at the US Navy base, (I had friends in the Salvage branch of the US Navy, having done some work as liaison during my service).

At about 2am, in the middle of a violent thunder storm, I was awakened by the noise of my messmates being hastily aroused by a couple of shaken looking MPs. This was too good to miss, I thought, obviously something is happening. I struggled swiftly into my clothes and strapping my oilskins (borrowed) tightly around me, I set off to have a look see.

The place to look seemed to be the ocean, so I hurried off as fast as I could in the wind towards the bay.

Knowing that I might not be welcome amongst the harried officials and, besides, being a reporter they might well want to keep me out of the way, I made my way to a spot on a rocky eminence where I would get a good look at the sea and the base at the same time. On the beach and in the base there were signs of tremendous activity, searchlights, sodium lights, lights, lights, trucks roaring - their sound muffled in the wind, men struggling back and forth, all in a frenzy of activity. By the light of the lamps, and in the lightning flashes, I could see men

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pileing into trucks and being driven off inland.

The alarming thing was that the beach was obviously being abandoned, and, as I watched, the crowds in the base thinned as the men left there too.

Frightened now, but not knowing what to fear, I turned to retrace my steps down the hill to the base, in the hopes of getting hauled out too.

Before I could take a single step however two things happened simultaneously.

There was a blinding flash of lightening at my feet, which was drowned immediately as the earth heaved and the whole bay behind me turned to vapour and light.

That was the last conscious impression I had for close on 1,000 years.

END OF PART ONE.

as they say on TV.

"Now that that's over"

rasped Dr. Loki, "What about us? Do we have to hang around listening to the raveings of a fictional machine, or can we go back and be characters in some decent story!...he mused "Y'know, I've allways wanted to be selected by van Vogt...he's complex you know!" he stared round, half wistful, half in defensive acueation, at the other cardboard characters.

"Hmm" hmmd Meek, "it is rather hard to say, there is, as far as our science can concieme, anyway that we in our universe can control the actions of the Writer whose characters we are. Its not so bad for real characters, like that Middle Earth lot for instanee, they are almost alive themselves, but, sigh, for us Cardboard characters there is not much enjoyment in pseudo life" "Ach, Mine Lieber Meek" roared the German Broffezzor, "We are cartbort kharacters borned, and sudch is our broffession we havf no right to ask for enjoyment. We are the Cardboard Scientists, we havf certain obligations, and certain brivileges but we are not really alive. Why, I envy you Meek, you have been supplied with an abnormal number of reactions, for a Cardboard Scientist, ahc, as for me I am condemned forever to Tuetonic accents most atrocious and this big black beard (vich I do not like) count yourself lucky mine friend, count yourself lucky." Proffessor Hamis dried a stray...something? a tear? with the cuff of his laboratory smock - something he was not allowed to do by many Writers - and spoke... "Ah, yes..yes, I remember in one of my incarnations, as a Proffessor Sumerlee, I was almost alive..it was, was, rather wonderful".

THIS HAS BEEN SALLY - PORT.

for the 31st OMPA Mailing

a sort of experiament.
the zine, not OMPA.

from. K M P CHESLIN
18, NEW FARM ROAD
STOURBRIDGE
WORCS.,
ENGLAND.

AND IS FOR CERTAIN THE LAST OF THE
OMPAZINES OR ANY ZINES I'M DOING ON LEGAL LENGTH
PAPER. BECAUSE - I HAVE NO MORE LEGAL LENGTH NOW.