

SCARF

ATOM



# THE SCARR

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Conventions often neglect to encourage neofans to subscribe

DOGGONE	by John Berry	Page 4
ANY MORE FOR THE SPYLARK?	by Ian MacAulay	Page 8
PEEPS INTO MY DIARY:-	Irish Hospitality by GLC	Page 10
LETTERS	by The Victims	Page 17
TAILPIECE	by GLC	Page 21

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# DOG-GONE

JOHN BERRY

Funny, isn't it, that for your whole life you've maybe been the possessor of some skill which most other folk haven't got. And yet you don't realise it...at least, you don't until someone tells you about it, one day. Such a thing happened to me quite recently.

My wife's sister dropped by to leave her two small children in our custody. Then my wife went out, too, and I discovered I had to look after them. My own two children are older, now, and I'd forgotten how to converse with kids about eighteen months old. Like, I wasn't sure what the current topic of conversation was with these tads. So I sat them down on the back-door step, looked at them out of the corner of my eye, and meditated. Hmmm. Then it struck me...I don't know what gave me the inspiration...but I sat back, raised my head to the sky, and gave a superb imitation of a cock crowing at dawn.

"Cock-a-doodle-di-do," I crowed.

I felt funny all over, as if I'd tapped some new and previously undiscovered plane.

Little Bruce looked up at me.

"That was a chuck-chuck," he said.

Ah. I'd made mental contact. Good.

My imitation of a cat being de-gutted was perhaps advanced, considering it was only my second attempt at mimicry, but the final twist of torment I gave with a sudden flip of my epiglottis caused the tads to shrink back in terror.

"Pppppussy cat?" mumbled Bruce.

I tapped him affectionately on the blonde head.

"Any requests?" I asked.

"Do a kangaroo," said Bruce. His younger sister applauded.

I'd never though very much about it previously, and possibly it tends to show that my education was neglected, but I just couldn't imagine what sort of noise a kangaroo made? These kids had faith in me, and I realised that I had the ability to transport them from a mundane world into the realms of childhood dreamland, and I was damned if I was going to let them down.

The kangaroo noise was definitely out. But there was still scope for my newly discovered talent.

I crouched down. I let my hands dangle loosely in

front of me. I puffed my cheeks out, wriggled my nose, and did a hopping circuit of the lawn. They both laughed so much they nearly wet themselves.

"Funny face," said Anne.

"Sorry, dear," I explained in gooey child-type chit-chat, "me no can do funny face."

"No," said Bruce. "She means you have a funny face."

And then a strange thing happened. The celestial choir was distant, admittedly, but nevertheless present...I looked across the lawn, and the stilted sycamore at the bottom of the garden became a vine-covered jungle. I stood up, then assumed an uncomfortable crouch. I allowed my hands to barely scrape the grass, and I trundled round in circles, gibbering 'Eek eek' rather inanely.

Heck. How they laughed.

My imitation of a hyena, both physically and orally, was a wow. I could see my reflection in a long window. The ant-eater gave me trouble, but I do modestly admit here and now that my walrus, and especially the flapper hand-clap, was the climax of the afternoon's entertainment.

At least, the young man next door thought so. I'll never forget the look of relief on his face when he found out that I'd been entertaining two little children. From where he'd been standing, completely unobserved by me until I'd finished the impela, he hadn't seen the children. He just naturally presumed I'd gone mad. But he said I was good, very good....

When their mother finally came to carry them off, they didn't want to go...I was thrilled with this egoboo, but at the same time it made me think. I really was a superb mimic...I'd have to watch out for opportunities to impress people...

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There's always an anti-climax concerned when you let people into the secret...like...I could have gone into the office and said "Say, I've just discovered I can impersonate any sound," and some cynic would have said "How interesting, let me hear the mating call of a spotted dickwiddle," ...anti-climax. But suppose, just suppose that I waited until the opportunity came along...like Willis does with his spontaneous puns.

Instinct, I suppose, afforded me the luxury of my first public manifestation. I'd just left my office, with several of the boys. We all espied this wonderful example of femininity crossing the road. She had that superior poise which attractive females have when they know that what they have to show is appreciated by the panting male. Without thinking, I took a deep breath, and gave forth a noise I had been experimenting with for a week, it had been dark and silent in that coal cellar, practising, but it was worth every sotty second.

My screech of brakes was so effective that the traffic seemed to stop. The gal crossing the road gripped her dress at the knees and leapt to the footpath. She looked over her shoulder, eyes wide, and then they grew wider when she saw that it obviously hadn't been a car which had made the spine-tingling screech.

The boys said I was a genius. All lunch time we walked around, me screeching like mad until I was blue in the face, and I spoke in a hoarse whisper. I drew the line, however, when they wanted me to do a brake screech when an old woman was crossing the road. There's such a thing as prostituting one's art.

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I had, over the weeks, perfected the terribly difficult Pekinese Yap. No big time mimic had ever attempted it before. You've got to look and think Pekinese to get it right. I didn't go quite as far as eating dog biscuits, but I was wont to curl up on my wife's lap.

I confided this fantastic new achievement to my associates in the office.

An hour later, one of them sidled up to me.

"Try it on Miss Winthrop," he suggested. "She's talking to someone, and her back is to the door. She'll never see you creep in."

I crossed the corridor, and peered into the other office. She had her light green coat on. I licked my lips at the thought of pleasure to come.

Several people were in the office, typists and so on. They looked at me, but I gave the 'hush' sign, finger vertically across pursed lips. Miss Winthrop, one of the superior types I've mentioned before, was chatting amicably to one of the men.

I got down on my hands and knees.

I allowed my arms to bend in the middle, making me bow-legged, or, if you will, bow-armed. But you know what a Pekinese looks like.

I then trotted across the floor, head held to one side, sniffing purposely. My eyes were level with her calves. She wore seamed 40-denier Taylor-Woods nylons, with the slightest suggestion of a ladder where the stocking disappeared northwards under her coat.

I tore my eyes away, and willed myself to the job on hand. I felt a lot of eyes looking at me as I prepared the Pekinese Yap. But Miss Winthrop was still talking.

The first yap was a tentative one. Then I snarled. I imagined someone was trying to swipe my bone. I growled, and then arrived at the choice part of my impersonation...a Treble Yap, delivered with some venom, accompanied by a frenzied scrambling of paws, er, hand, on the linoleum.

The nylons jerked upwards about six inches, and a stiletto heel came down heavily on my right ~~pal~~ hand.

I looked up, and such a shock I got. It was even bigger than Miss Winthrop's shock. Because it just wasn't Miss Winthrop. I'd never seen the lady before. She put a trembling hand to her mouth as she looked down at me.

I saw it was time to go. I realised I'd been hoaxed. My 'pal' had noted that this strange woman, probably a visitor, was wearing the same coat as Miss Winthrop.

But I saw one last chance to obtain some egoboo from this embarrassing situation. The normal thing (if you can call the situation normal) would have been to have stood up, apologised profusely, saying it was a joke and I'd mistaken my victim, and then stagger away.

But I think I did the right thing.

I did the difficult Pekinese cringe-type Yelp. I backed away, looking furtively up to her. Then I turned around, and scuttled out of the room on all fours.

Honour was satisfied, particularly when the medico next day confirmed that I was sound in wind and limb.

I have steadfastly refused to enter my act at the office concert, though.

It wasn't because I'm shy at performing  
in public...it wasn't even because I thought perchance my talent was too  
good...actually, to be quite frank, I'd just gotten to the stage where I  
could actually do without wearing the collar round my neck, and I didn't  
want a relapse.....

John Berry  
1963

ATOM  
AND  
WEBER  
FOR  
TAFF

ANY MORE FOR THE SPYLARK?

by Ian MacAulay

SOMETIMES I think it is a bit unfair that I've never been contacted by a representative of a foreign power which wants me to sell it atomic secrets. Going by what some of the papers say, it appears to be practically an everyday occurrence in the lives of most physicists, even if their work consists only of attempts to build a better mousetrap. Admittedly, I might not have given any of the agents of any of the foreign powers the opportunity of contacting me, at least not in the way that some of these contacts seem to have been made. If an under-secretary from an embassy asked me to go up and see his etchings, I'd immediately refuse without even considering the alternatives. There'd be no hesitation whatever in my reply; nobody could accuse me of vassallation. But there are other approaches that could be tried, like money, or 1942 issues of ASTOUNDING, or an E-type Jag. I just mention these in case any of you happen to be representatives of a foreign power which wants to get hold of atomic secrets. Some of you may wonder how Ireland managed to finance the research necessary to discover things in nuclear Physics which are still unknown to America or Britain or Russia. Well, the research did start in a small way a few years back, but developments and applications have come so fast that a huge industrial combine will probably be formed fairly soon. It might be called something like The Industrial Corporation of Eire, for example. You don't have to take just my word for it even; it's all, as they say, according to Hoyle.

There is one thing which might have discouraged the agents of foreign powers from contacting me; that is the fact that I am probably under constant surveillance by the Irish equivalent of MI5 because of the two years I spent actually working for a foreign power, to wit, the Government of Northern Ireland. Come to think of it, my return to the Republic of Ireland might well be the reason for the Irish Government's expenditure on Secret Service work during the financial year. This item now accounts for £7,000 of our Government's outlay. (Honest. The figure but not necessarily the Government.) Of course, I suppose that a lot of this secret agent business of taking information across borders in tins of shoe polish, &c., has been built up with a vast amount of false glamour. Sorry or later, you'll be caught; in the long run you can't wyne.

While I was working in Belfast I did quite a bit of midnight crossings of a land frontier situated in densely-wooded mountainous country. In a fast car, naturally, usually with some contraband goods concealed under the seat. Apart from the regular customs examination, there were often spot police checks made in Northern Ireland. For one of these, a policeman dressed in near-black clothing would wave a dim red lamp from somewhere near the edge of the road as a car approached him on a dark wet night. If the car did not stop, either because the driver didn't see the light or because he was nervous of stopping on an isolated country road in the early hours of the morning, the policeman's mate down the road riddled the car with Sten-gun bullets. I was lucky and always saw the warning lights; after stopping the car, I was interrogated by one policeman while his mate kept the Sten-gun



trained on the car. On one occasion the gun was rested on the car window and I could actually see the policeman's finger on the trigger. I was really sweating when I drove away from that particular pair.

I suppose that this most un-secret-like concern for my own skin was noted by those whose business it is to choose physicists to buy secrets from. Probably they decided that my courage was not of a high enough calibre; I don't mind being a b----- coward, but I'm not a BB one. Perhaps I shouldn't worry too much about it and should try to escape this nagging feeling that my atomic secrets aren't as good as the next man's. Maybe even now a cloaked figure is surreptitiously slipping under my door a carefully worded invitation to contact a Mr X in a bar somewhere tomorrow night.

Even assuming that this happens, it's still possible that I might not pass the qualifying tests for the E-type Jag sort of secret agent salary. After all, few may be called and none may be chosen.

Still, if any of you do want to buy a few atomic secrets, don't hesitate to get in touch with me. I just happen to have one or two instantly available, in near mint condition, which I'd be prepared to let go in exchange for even a second-hand Jag. Or a second-hand Ford. A motor-bike? Bicycle?

Any offers?

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BOOKS WANTED

George Owen Baxter

Free Range Lanning

BOOKS WANTED

The Killers

BOOKS WANTED

Brother of the Cheyennes

BOOKS WANTED

Ringoland Avenger

BOOKS WANTED

Rusty

BOOKS WANTED

Tiger man

BOOKS WANTED

Whispering Outlaw

BOOKS WANTED

Trail to San Tristo

BOOKS WANTED

Train's Trust

BOOKS WANTED

Wooden Guns

BOOKS WANTED

Red Hawk & White Horse

BOOKS WANTED

Frederick Frost

Secret Agent Number One

BOOKS WANTED

Spy Meets Spy

BOOKS WANTED

Bamboo Whistle

BOOKS WANTED

Walter C Butler

Cross Over Nine

BOOKS WANTED

Night Flower

BOOKS WANTED

David Manning

Bandit's Honor

BOOKS WANTED

Blackie and Red

BOOKS WANTED

The Black Signal

BOOKS WANTED

The Brute

BOOKS WANTED

Western Tommy

BOOKS WANTED

Jim Curry's Test

BOOKS WANTED

Mountain Fugitive

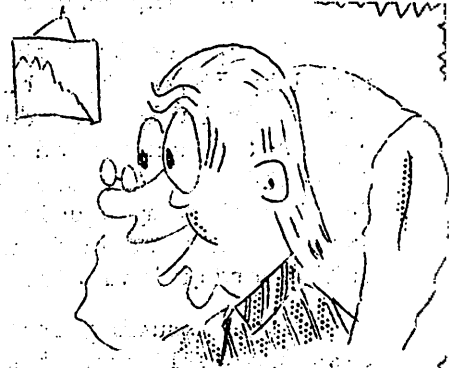
BOOKS WANTED

Bull Hunter's Romance

BOOKS WANTED

BOOKS WANTED

# IRISH HOSPITALITY



MONDAY THE FIRST OF OCTOBER my eye was giving me a bit of trouble. There was no pain, but, playing snooker with Dick and Bob I could not see the balls properly, so next day I went to see the doctor. I waited two hours, and as there were still some people ahead of me I came away. I did not think it was anything serious and I did not want to be late for work.

I went back next morning and the doctor said he would write to the hospital to have an eye specialist make an examination. There was, by this time, a small black blob in one corner of my field of vision. My left eye was normal. The doctor told me it would do no harm to visit Webb, the High St. optician, and have him give my eye the once over.

Saw Webb the next morning, or rather I saw his receptionist, who said he was terribly busy but could see me at 11 the following morning. Which he did. He said that it was, in his opinion, a serious matter, and gave me a note to give the doctor. This scared me, especially as the blob had got bigger, so back I went to the Doctor (a different one this time: there are four in the partnership) who rang the Ophthalmic Hospital. They told him that I would have to be there before 1 o'clock. As it was now after 12 this made it a rush job. So I hurried home, got out the car, made two sandwiches (I was starving!) and drove the 13 miles to the hospital. This was the first time I had ever driven with only one eye functioning, as by now the right was just about covered by a black curtain. Still I managed 70 mph for a good part of the way.

At the Belfast Ophthalmic Hospital Mr Logan told me I had a detached retina and would have to come in that evening. I explained that as my work involved a lot of details which would be very difficult for anyone else to pick up it would be more convenient to come in next day. "Your eye is very bad," he said, "and delay will make it worse, but I can't force you to come in." "Okay," I said, "I'll be here at 8 o'clock."

Perhaps I might as well say something about the hospital. It was built

100 years or more ago, but for what purpose is anybody's guess. The architect must have been completely bonkers, as it would be inconvenient as a dwelling-house, store-house, church hall, pool-room or any other business whatever. As a hospital it is the last word in inconvenience. One side of the building has the Male wards and the eye theatre, the other side the Female wards and the ear, nose and throat theatre. The two sections are divided by two short flights of stairs which means that patients have to be carried to and from the theatres. Carrying is done on canvas stretchers, 6' x 3", with four handgrips on each side. Nurses do most of the carrying, but cleaners, patients and even surgeons are sometimes pressed into service.

Cecil came with me to the hospital and came in with me in order to take away my clothes. We waited awhile in the hall until a nurse came to conduct me to a bed beside a window in Ward One. There were six other beds there. The window overlooked some roofs and chimneys whereas the window at the other end of the ward showed only an uninteresting blank wall. The windows were old and warped and let in streams of fresh air. The window at my bed was particularly bad in this respect and one stormy day let in a gale until Jim (tonsils) Rice put five newspapers into it and reduced the gale to a stiff breeze. The reason for not carrying out repairs was that a new hospital was being built and it was considered that it would be silly to carry out repairs when the building was to be evacuated in a few years time.

On Friday morning my eyes were bandaged: a thick cotton-wool eye-pad held in place by yards and yards of gauze. This was taken off on Saturday for a few minutes while Mr Cowan and his assistant Mr Logan examined the eye. They said it was doing nicely and they would operate in a day or two. They were accompanied on their rounds by Sister Hafferty, tall and slim. She noticed my name on the card at the head of my bed and asked, "Any relation to Leslie Charteris?" Afterwards she would greet me, "And how's the Saint today?" or "How are you, Leslie?"

On Monday Mr Logan examined my eye and said they would operate in a day or two. On Wednesday he said they would operate soon. Friday he said it again. Before tea-time that day I asked Nurse Agnes Dock if my name was down for operation on Saturday. She went away to look it up, came back and said No. So I took no tea: I couldn't. It seemed as if I'd been blind for a month. Later on Staff-nurse Sadie McGuickan came to ask me what was wrong. I told her I was unable to eat because I was sick with apprehension, not knowing what was happening with the operation being postponed for a week. She rang up Mr Cowan and came back to tell me the op would be on the following Monday or at the latest Tuesday. Thereupon I graciously consented to take some nourishment.

On Tuesday the 16th I feared they wouldn't operate because I'd had breakfast, but I was reassured at midday because I got nothing. (The feeders, so called because they could not see to feed themselves, were fed at twelve o'clock and the rest at half-past. I, of course, was a feeder.) At 1 o'clock they gave me an injection. At 2.30 they took off my bandages and pyjamas, allowed me to shave, put on white socks and smock and carried me into the theatre.

Everybody there had bandages on, so although mine were off I still couldn't see their faces. The last thing I remember was somebody putting my limp right hand under my hip.

Two hours later they carried me out. Wakened about 4 a.m., was a little sick and slept again. Awoke at 6, got tea and toast and fell asleep. When I woke again later that morning I felt fine and able to resume a wordy battle with Nurse Mona Riley. When Mr Logan took off the bandages two days later I thought my eye was as good as before, but he warned me that very often in these cases there was considerable deterioration, and that mine was a particularly bad case. I did not believe him — then.

For two weeks I was not allowed to shave or have a bath of any kind: all they did was wash my hands and the tip of my nose and chin. I felt dirty and I was dirty. I imagined everybody who came into the ward looking in my direction and wrinkling their noses in disgust, but all my pleas for a wash were in vain until at long last they gave me a bedbath. This is done by placing a brown blanket beneath the patient and another above. The ends of the top blanket are turned back, pyjamas removed, legs and chest washed, blanket-ends replaced and the patient gets a wet wash-cloth to finish the job. It was good to get clean pyjamas and clean sheets.

Monday the 29th my bandages were taken off and ended THE BIG DARK. The bandages were, in a way, comfortable enough, but they became tiresome after a while. Their chief defect was that I couldn't see through them, but they had another defect: the people speaking to me couldn't see through them either. I did not realise this until one occasion when Madeleine was visiting me she said, "It's a bit embarrassing talking to you when one can't see your eyes." And Walt murmured, "Eyeless in Gausa."

They gave me "pinpoints" to inaugurate THE TWILIGHT WORLD. These were very dark sunglasses covered with tape except for a small slit from the centre of each eye-piece to the bottom. Wearing these goggles I looked like a man from Mars. Lottie asked me: "Will you always have to wear them?" I looked at her all goggle-eyed and said: "NO!"

On Wednesday 7th November, for the first time I had no visitors. But an hour after visiting-time Jim came in to keep the record unbroken. (Visitors were allowed in for 45 minutes each day.) I told him the Surgeon had examined me the previous day and had said I could go home as soon as the Sister would let me. As she had not said anything I asked Jim to tell Cecil to call for me the following day, and so at 9 o'clock next day Cecil came in with my clothes in a suit-case. (Cecil was not in the suit-case — just the clothes.) Just after he came Sister Clark passed through the ward and I told her that I was being called for at 11. "I hope," she said coldly, "I will be able to find time to give you your instructions."

So I back-pedalled a bit. "I'm terribly sorry, Sister, I didn't know you'd be busy with operations. But I can change to any time that suits you."

She was mollified at that (though her name was Gertrude) and said one p.m. would do. Later on she told me: "Two drops anti-biotic and one drop atropine each day. Wear "points" all the time. No running, jumping, driving ever bad roads and no women." This type of remark was typical of her. One day when attending Davy Hassan's eye she said, "Oh — oh, that's bad." "What's wrong, Sister?" Davy asked apprehensively. "Dry-ret has set in," said Sister Clark, gravely.

About noon I packed all my gear except the handle of my safety razor which I, in my Twilight World, had dropped down the outlet of the bath that morning. Then I wrote out a notice which I stuck to the head of my bed:-

IN SAINTLY MEMORY  
OF  
GEORGE LESLIE CHARTERS  
WHO DEPARTED THIS BED  
8TH NOVEMBER 1962  
DEEPLY REGRETTED

In five minutes most of the nurses had read it, and then Sister Clark came along, took it down and substituted another saying that everybody, patients, nurses, cleaners and all were glad to get rid of their most cantankerous patient. It was disgraceful, apart from being untrue. I wanted to tear it down so as to use it in a libel action and maybe get £25,000 damages from Sister Clark, but those brutal nurses wouldn't let me.

I said goodbye to all the patients and staff I could see and went out with Cecil.

As we came down the steps of the hospital and saw multitudes of horseless carriages whizzing past at tremendous speeds I exclaimed, "What immense advances have been made in methods of transportation during my incarceration!" I find it quite easy to exclaim sentences like that.

We went in the M-1000 to Whitehouse where I had a meal and a bath. When I had finished and pulled out the plug the water did not just run out as it normally would: it sorta oozed out.

Odd memories of that Dreadful Darkness pop up now and again.

Like for instance when I got a pencil and writing-pad and wrote a letter one night, in the dark, with the pad lying on my stomach, and trying to measure off distances between the lines with my thumb. Next day I proudly showed the effort to Lottie. It seemed to take her an awfully long time to read it; then she said it was very good. But her voice sounded funny. My second effort I showed to Bob and he said I should always write that way as it was much better than my usual hand-o'-write. Since then I have seen two of the three such letters I wrote and they are dreadful.

Like for instance the way the patients help each other. They helped me especially. Davy Hassan, with an infected cornea, was very helpful and saved me many embarrassing requests to the nurses. He is a fellow-townsmen and works for the B.B.C. (The Bangor Borough Council — not the British Broadcasting Corporation.) A Mr Mawhinney, too, was very kind. He'd had one eye removed, as, although he had lost the use of it many years before, the other eye was being affected by it. Jim Rice, commercial traveller, as well as fixing the window, let me help him do a cryptic crossword puzzle one day.

And there was Billy Earls from Larnoe, with an eye infection that defied treatment. When 10-year-old Raymond was brought in after having a firework explode in his face it was Billy who sat by him, talked to him and helped Nurse Ruby Smith to dress his burns. Raymond's left eye healed, but the other was permanently damaged.

Like Sammy Harris, who just couldn't call any girl "Sister," and always

said "Sister Nurse." That man enjoyed an orange more than any man I ever heard. He was about 25 feet away from me but when he was eating an orange it seemed as though he was only two feet away. And, although he was a small man, he had a big voice. One night, after lights out, somebody turned restlessly a couple of times and Harris's voice boomed out: "IT'S HARD TO GET TO SLEEP, SOMETIMES." You could have heard it over at the City Hall.

But for talking at night it would be hard to beat Jimmy McAlinden. He was a small man, too, about 80 years old, but chirpy as a cricket. He kept on talking one night until 1 o'clock. Then he went to sleep, but woke up to go to the bathroom, and while going and coming he sang for us "South of the Border, Down Mexico way." Then he got back into bed and started talking again.

And there was Billy Dawson. He was a lorry driver and came to the extern when one ear gradually became deaf. He was told he would have to come in for an operation. Some time later he got the usual notification, with a card for him to reply saying he would be in at the time stated or that he would not be in and giving the reason for not doing so. The reason Billy wrote was just one word: "Terrified." He said he was the biggest coward in Belfast, and he only came in for the op when his other ear went bad. He also had the distinction of being the only man there during my visit who said anything when coming out of the anaesthetic. Actually he sang. He gave us "The Valley of Slieve-namon," "Put Me Among the Girls," "I Don't Want to be a Millionaire," and two or three others. He sang quite well, too.

Billy Pennington, a welder, was working at a pipe with 6,000 lbs pressure when it burst in his face. Luckily he had turned slightly away from it at the time. This happened on Thursday. His boss said to him, "Don't worry about money, Billy, just get well." The following Monday he got his pay packet: he was not paid for the full week — just up to the time the accident occurred. I tried to console him by pointing out that he was lucky his boss didn't sue him for damaging the plant. Later on he told us he'd had to sell his car to meet bills. (It will be a year or more before he gets Workmen's Compensation.) Cars still being a newance to me I asked him what kind of a car it was. "It's a 1937 Austin Seven," he said.

Martin White hurt his eye when he smacked a big stone with a hammer and a chip flew up in his face. He could not eat breakfast one morning, so a nurse brought him an aspirin instead. His comment was: "This hospital is no place for a sick man to be in."

Old Tommy McFarland had an encyclopaedic knowledge of football, able to name nearly all the players in the leagues, which position they played in, which clubs they'd played for, and most of the international matches for many years past. He was a pretty good whistler, and spent many an hour whistling tunes, some of which were first heard at the turn of the century. Tommy had hurt his eye some 60 years before and it had troubled him intermittently ever since. He was an enthusiastic card-player and I disgusted him one day by asking him which card game required skill only — no chance. He named dozens of games but naturally never thought of the children's game of SNAP.

And there was Johnston McMaster, a student, with tonsils. When a patient was brought back from the operating theatre it was usual for a nurse to sit beside him, call his name, slap his hands, pat his cheeks and so on until he finally wakened enough to take out the choker himself. (The choker, though that is not the official name for it, is a piece of flexible plastic which is put into the patient's mouth when he is unconscious. It goes a little way into the throat to prevent tongue-swallowing and has a flange at the outer end to prevent it being swallowed.) Well, Nurse Dot Hasty, attending McMaster, proceeded as usual, calling, "Johnston! Johnston! Wake up! Take that thing out of your mouth! Wake up! Johnston! JOHNSTON! JOHNSTON!" And from the next ward Nurse Maureen Johnston answered, "All right, I'm coming." Dot shouted back, "It's all right, I don't want you." The patients laughed and Dot began calling, "Wake up, McMaster! McMaster!" And right on cue Nurse McMaster answered from another ward, "Be with you in a moment." The laughter that followed brought in McMaster and Johnston to see what the merriment was all about.

After Davy Hassan was sent home a Mr Calvert had the next bed to me. He had a bad ear through standing in a draught in a field. He belonged to some fervent religious sect. One day I heard a caller ask him, "How are you getting on?" "Very well," said Mr C. "Praise the Lord!" said the visitor, "and how is your ear?" "Gradually getting better," was the reply. "Praise the Lord!" said the visitor. Just then my own visitors arrived and I heard no more, but I still think it is an odd way to talk.

Thirteen-year-old James Joseph McNally was the eldest of 11 children, in hospital to have his squint fixed. We called him Jimmy or Jim but his people called him by his second name. He used to come to me and ask me to give him sums to do in his head. I would give him something like: "If you went into a fish and chip shop for ninepenceworth of chips and gave the man half-a-crown, and he gave you sevenpence change, what would you say to him?" Expecting to hear the reply: "You still owe me one and two," I was flabbergasted to get the answer: "Hey, Mac, d'ye think I'm Joe Soap?" He said his brothers were called Seamus, Samuel, Eamonn, Bernard and Padraig. So I guessed he was a Roman Catholic. He whistled a lot, and one day Nurse Burton asked him to whistle "The Sash," a Protestant song, but he refused, saying he didn't bother with it. He was a very obliging boy for patients unable to get up.

A slightly younger boy was Phil McCullough, a sinus case. Nurse Margaret Acheson (from Dublin, bedad!) was feeding me one day when she was called away by the theatre bell, and Phil fed me and was proud as Punch about it. I told him the catch about touching one's fingertips in turn and saying, "Look, Jimmy, Jimmy, Jimmy, Jimmy, hi! Jimmy..." etc. He was tickled pink with it. He ran around the wards telling anyone who would listen — and every time he told it the wrong way!

And old Jakey, who had cataracts on both eyes, wore six shirts, two pairs of "Long Johns," and seldom bothered to take a bath. But Nurses Riley and Quin stripped off all his clothes and washed him twice, the first time with disinfectant. (I'd have let them use the disinfectant on me!) "Now you're a clean old man," said Riley; "you can't live in dirt all the time." He snarled back, "Can't I? I was born in it!" After the baths Mona and Maura had to have baths, too. He complained so much about the cold that they let him wear his cap in bed. He told us his wife ran away from him three times: twice he went and fetched her back, the third time he didn't.

"You might as well be handcuffed to a ghost," he said.

Patrick Spencer complained about the heat so much that the fire was left unlit for two days. "I don't like electric fires," he explained to another patient. "But this one here is a gas fire," replied the other. "Oh," said Patrick, "maybe it would be a good idea to light it — it's cold in here."

Hospital routine ran like this: Wakened at 5.30, beds made, perform our ablutions. Usually Davy was able to blackmail the nurses into bringing us cups of tea: if he got the tea he helped make beds, brush the floor, etc. Breakfast at eight. Immediately afterwards Sister made her rounds, to look at dressings and squirt vitriol or something into eyes that needed it. At ten a nurse came round asking, "Supermilk?" Like most patients I assumed that this was milk specially treated to make Supermen of us, but it only meant "soup or milk." The main meal came at 12 or 12.30, afternoon tea at 3, last meal at 5.30 and a cup of tea at 8. The food was pretty good and second helpings could usually be had. Those who had bandages over both eyes were called feeders, which meant they had to be fed, half an hour before everybody else. It was a performance I did not like. Just before my two-week-old beard was shaved off by Nurse Smith I was fed vegetable soup by Nurse McMaster, who paid more attention to the conversations of the other patients than to me. The result was that my face was decorated by bits of parsley, carrot and so on — a very pretty sight judging by the laughter it caused. Taking tea from a feeder cup was like drinking from a teapot and was not amusing.

Wearing the goggles while walking round the town afterwards was in one way amusing. Everybody moved to one side to let me pass. But women didn't like doing so, and it was extraordinary the number of women who, when they came within a few feet of me, suddenly found they had to look in a shop window.

I went back to the Ophthalmic to see the surgeon on November 21st. He said my eye would never be any use to me, but that it could not affect the other eye. So I'd had five weeks torture for damall. No more "pinpoints" anyway. I took the car out for a run to see what it would be like. It was difficult to judge distances and I had to line the radiator cap with the kerb to be sure of how far out in the road I was. Very soon I got used to judging distance without such aids.

The surgeon prescribed a pair of bi-focal glasses, but after three months trial I gave them up as a bad job and bought myself a pair of ordinary reading glasses. In this connection I have less work to do now — I have only one lens to clean!

Cost? Surgeon's fees: Nil. Hospital fees: Nil. Prescriptions: Four shillings or fifty cents. This sounds wonderful until one remembers that for every working man not on the sick list the Government rakes in three dollars per week. And they say it's a free country.

On the other hand, for all the time I was off, my wages were paid in full by my employers, the oldest aircraft-building firm in the world.



# LETTERS

ARCHIE MERCER, Bristol, England.

"Have a Scarr," said the postman.

"No, thanks," I told him. "I don't smoke."

"Oh go on," he said. "Be a devil." I think I got it. Devils smoke.

"Oh, all right," I grudgingly agreed. The object he handed me didn't look all that smokable, but I remembered I didn't know very much about these matters. So I rolled it up into a tight tube, bit the end off, and spat it accurately at a passing okapi. (The only two okapis in the country live not half a mile from me. You think that's irrelevant? So do I — but you try to argue with an okapi.)

Anyway, I set fire to the other end, but it didn't seem to be working very well. "Try damping it down," the postman suggested, so I took it upstairs and laid it gently in a basin of water. For an instant or two it floated, then suddenly tilted up and sank. The Scarr had heeled over.

I looked at the soggy mess. "Here, you have a puff — Scarrface," I told the postman, pushing the repulsive-looking object into his open orifice. (No — not that one.) He didn't like this treatment, so he fished something else out of his bag to hand me before continuing bravely on his rounds. It was some cruddy pamphlet entitled THE SCABB.

For THE SCABB, I feel it my bounden duty (whatever that means) to acknowledge thanks. Having said which, I'm stuck for want of something to say next. Not that there isn't plenty that could be said at this juncture — it's just that I can't think of which formula to utilise. For instance, I could say that it's not at all bad for a first issue, and if it runs to fifty issues I look forward to No. 100. Or I could say that you ought to have done it years ago — so why inflict it on us now of all times? Or I could say that it's far from being a crudzine — crudzines are good by comparison. Or I could say that it's the best Irish crudzine that's come my way for at least a week. Or I could even haughtily ignore it. Or — yes, I could say that I didn't care for the text, but the illoes were outstanding.

But why the hell should I? Answer me that. Why the hell should I?

I'll just content myself by mentioning that Ian's article might have been very interesting if it had gone on for another few pages. He had a credible subject (credible? Do I mean credible? I don't think I do quite. Start again.) He had a subject that showed vague signs of — no, that's not it. There was nothing wrong with the subject. There was nothing wrong with Ian's treatment of it. It'd have been better longer, that's what.

Apart from an average Barryarn, that's about all though.

Have a good trip. You'll be flying from GATWICK, of course? ((No, but from another Airport just as appropriate: Nutt's Corner, Belfast.))

PETER SINGLETON, Lancashire.

The only complaint I had about "TWICE BITTEN" was that the ending was predictable. I never seem to be able to pull a story apart at the seams in order to bring out into the cruel light of day exactly what was wrong with it. I just experience a vague conviction that somehow All Was Not Right.

Your astounding Science Factual article was a revelation! I didn't realise that such cunning events happened in Belfast amid such frightful gadgets as Television sets and the like. Mr Shaw has unearthed the core of the problem. All we have to work out now is a method by which the detectors can be adapted to implode every set within range.

John's account of his well-timed visit to Lancaster Avenue was most revealing. Until I read this I was entirely unaware what your spare-time interests consisted of. I never could find time to delve into all the varieties of classical literature available to the book-lover so I regretfully admit that the works of Max Brand have entirely escaped my attention, so far. ((The last two words show that there's hope for ye yet, ye spalpeen.))

SID BIRCHBY, Manchester.

When I was last in Limavady I met a commercial traveller in laboratory equipment. He was selling vacuum pumps for love philtres. When we had compared notes, we found that we had both been in Basle at the same time in 1954. If you know Basle you will recall that it is the rail interchange centre for half Europe. In those days, the Orient Express used to halt there and take on Chinese ticket collectors. Agatha Christie could often be seen lurking round the platforms, hoping for a murder to take place so that she could write a thriller about it.

So anyway, we could easily have met in Basle, because it seemed that I had been waiting at the station for the local train for Lucerne, while his train, the Express, pulled in, halted awhile and then left. It was one of those "ships that pass in the night" affairs. He had stayed in the train, gazing out of the window, and I had stayed on the platform.

What confirmed matters was a small incident that I reminded him about. The guard discovered that there had been an error in seat reservations in one of the compartments, and seven men, all Bulgarian spies, I understand, were trying to cram themselves into six seats. I could see a lot of arms waving about, and jabbering was still going on when the train pulled out.

"So what finally happened?" I asked my acquaintance. "Surely it was all simple enough. Couldn't the guard ask one of them to move out?"

"It wasn't quite so easy. In the end, the guard telegraphed ahead to Milan University and got the computer working on it. When the answer came through, he put three and a half men off at Zurich..."

Why three and a half men, you ask. It would serve you right if I retorted, "Why call your fanzine 'The SCARR'?" ((Oh but THAT'S obvious!)) But since we are not all playing guessing games, I'll explain. There were seven men in the compartment, and ONE volunteer is worth TWO pressed men, therefore....

LEN MOFFATE, California

A bit of ill health has slowed me down somewhat, so that I'm farther behind than usual in answering letters, acknowledging fanzines, etc. Actu-

ally, I'm acknowledging your first issue of The SCARR ahead of other zines that have been here longer than yours, for the very good reason that you will soon be making a trip to the U.S.A. If you get as far west as southern California give us a ring. I understand you'll be over sometime in July. Any chance of you making it to the Westercon in San Francisco, July 4, 5, 6, 7? ((Actually I left Ireland on the 5th and returned the 27th, but there was so much to see in New York, Washington, D.C., and Virginia that I hadn't time, even if funds had permitted.))

My only complaint is my usual one when editors of new fanzines write very little for the zine themselves. ((Perhaps you'll find that there's far too much Charters in this issue.))

I guess I could also complain that there were no illoes; Atom was conspicuous by his absence, but maybe you'll remedy that next go-round.

WILLIAM F. TEMPLE, Middlesex.

Tarr for SCARR. An educational publication, I see.

I have an old Monarch typewriter, too. Too old. I bought it as a rebuilt over 30 years ago. Have put it out to pasture but brought it in again just to show — for this paragraph only — that it's still operable.

That's enough. Needed four hands to hold it together while I did that. Some years ago the letter "e" broke clean off just as I was finishing a book against a deadline. Had to type the last few pages using a small "c" instead of the small "e", inking in the little bar by hand. You try that. Your "trouble" with your duper will seem hilarious fun by comparison. Gad, sir, Poe was right (in The Gold Bug): "e" is the commonest letter in the alphabet.

Did you know P.G.Wodehouse still types his MSS on the Monarch he bought when he first started writing? He keeps it together with elastic bands. This is true. ((Zounds, I'm in good company!))

I've read and like some Max Brands in my time. But in my old age I'm more interested in Brand, the Man — a literary phenomenon. Was that American biography of him ever published this side of the Atlantic? ((No.))

After Bob Shaw's outrageous "lipping the trite Fantastic" — no more for me, thanks — I'm jiving.

Jiving what?

A Scarr.

Whose Scarr?

Charter Scarr.

This, you see, is the sort of thing Shaw does to a normal rational man like me.

MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY, Texas.

Will you please inform American fans that it is really all right to drink tea with milk in it? I'm tired of getting stared at when I put milk and sugar in my tea. Tea here is usually iced or else drunk clear with lemon. I don't know how I got in the habit of drinking milk and sugar with it (nobody in my family is English that I know of, although my ancestry on my mother's side is Irish and Scottish) but acquire the habit I did, and maybe I ought to appeal to British fandom to back me up in it! ((Irish fandom is with you 100% except for two characters called Bob and Sadie Shaw.))

I note you are something of a fan of Max Brand. Do you know his THE NIGHT HORSEMAN? ((Yes — second of a trilogy.)) That is borderline fantasy as well as western...

COLIN FREEMAN, Yorkshire.

I mightily suspect that the publishing of The SCARR is no more than another excuse for I.F. to dispose of its surplus puns upon the remainder of long-suffering fandom. Yeah, I admit that the old English feudal lords did make things rough for youse guys a century or two ago, but boy, you've sure got your own back since. In all common decency you should send a tube of throat pastilles with each copy of your zine: the constant groaning plays hell with our tonsils, you know.

I've found a way to retaliate. I shall put you on my own mailing list for SCRIBBLE — my own fanzine (I've caused more fans to gaffate this way...)

HARRY WARNER, Maryland.

As one ancient and decayed fan to another, I could sympathize fully with the production difficulties that run like a red ~~spot~~ mark through this first issue of The SCARR. Several years ago, I took stock of myself and decided that the time had arrived to concede. Dick Eney, who is half my age and twice my size, now does the crank-turning for my FAPA publishing. I can still cut my own stencils, but how long, how long?

Anyway I was most pleased to see yet another non-publishing fan take the plunge. I believe that this leaves only a few insignificant individuals like Bob Bloch, Betty Kujawa, ATom, and Charles de Gaulle among the ranks of those who have never published fanzines of their own.

Ian MacAulay makes me particularly happy in this issue for his fusillade against those who use too many adverbs. I don't know why the adverb lavish-ers disturb me more than those who use adjectives as if a bare noun were something to be censored. Possibly it has something to do with the fact that so many adverbs end in ly and a long succession of them can make the writing sound cute and affected, much as Jimmy and Bobby and Georgey ~~and Patti~~ sound more babyfied than Jim and Bob and George. I cannot understand the hurt and injured attitude that some professional writers have begun to take at criticism of their stories or of stf. in general. They are forcing their readers to pay much more per word for science fiction than at any time in the past, they have had decades of additional experience at writing stf., and editors permit them to write on topics and in manners previously taboo in the field. If they continue to produce inferior stories, what should they expect from the readers? Praise for skill at making fast bucks?

I think I prefer John Berry when he's exaggerating and adding imaginary details. As a straight factual reporter he's just not as entertaining. However, A Family Affaire was welcome in the sense that it indicates that later he may contribute one of his flights of fancy to The SCARR.

XX

((And there I must wind up the letters. I apologise to those whose letters are omitted altogether. If they knew how I have mutilated the letters I have printed they would forgive me. However, when The SCARR comes of age (with its 21st issue, due in 1968) I will print everybody's letters in full — I'll have more room with a hundred pages to play with. In the meantime, if you haven't time to write a letter a post-card will do. And if you don't want to be annoyed with future issues just don't do nothin'.))

## TA I L P I E C E

In the first issue of The SCARR I promised that future issues would appear when I had the time. I have kept that promise, and all subsequent issues will be just as irregular. At least I'm consistent.

John Berry, my adopted grandson, has given generously both time and material. Good though he is, however, he has been unable to teach me how to use a stylus.

ATem did the cover and if you don't like it you must be an odd fish.

Ian MacAulay has shown up again with a contribution marred only by its brevity, by poor duplicating and layout. He has appeared in every issue of The SCARR.

This time around I did not get nearly as much ink on my hands as last time. But you should see my gloves!

A number of fans (well, three to be exact) expressed a wish for more Charterstuff. They've got it — and serve them right!

I had thought of having a Poetry Corner in this issue, but, as I do not know any right-angled poetry, abandoned the idea.

As has been mentioned elsewhere I recently spent three weeks in the United States. My only regret is that it couldn't have been three months. I was unable to see any fans, but perhaps in 1964....or 66....or 75....

Slainte,

Geo.

