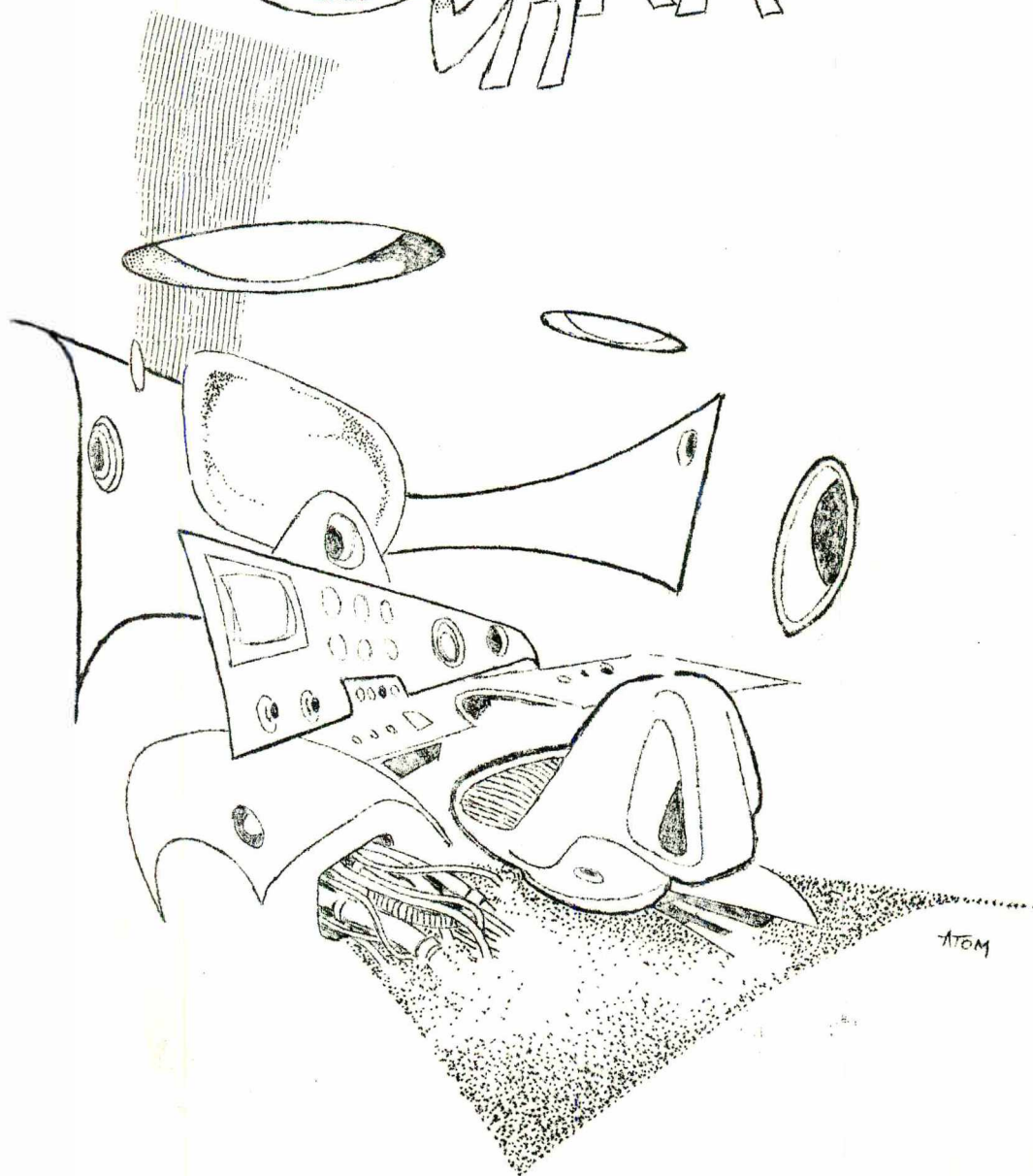
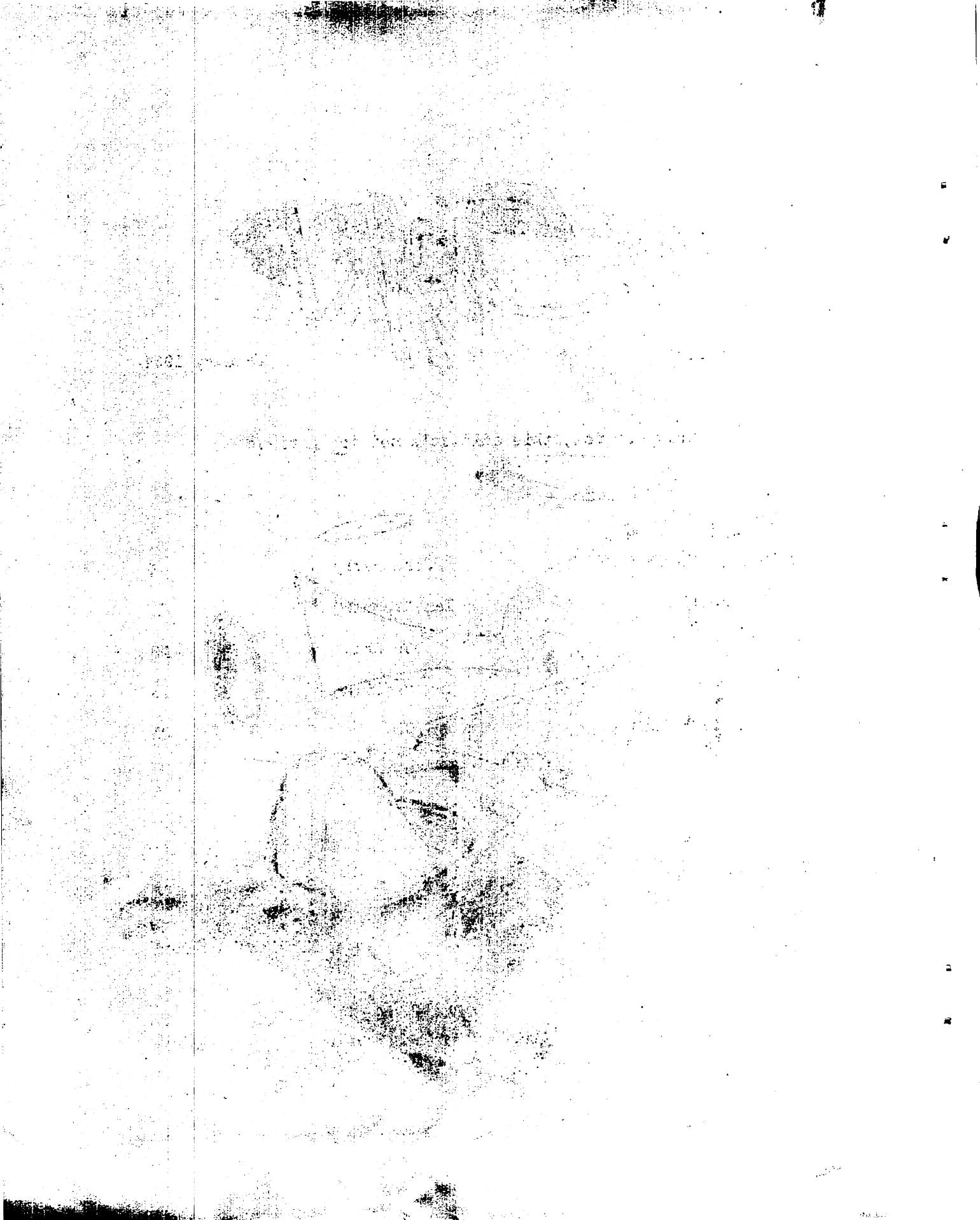


THE SCARR





THE SCARR

Number Three

January 1964

Crazy or not, this edition's not too serious.

Editorial		4
TEAL THE END OF TIME	John Berry	6
MINOR PROBLEM	Ian MacAulay	10
A FUNNY THING	Bob Shaw	13
Letters	the victims	16
Pepys into My Diary	GLC	21

Stencilled
Printed
Collated
Stapled
Mailed

Geo. L. Charters
3, Lancaster Ave
B A N G O R
Northern Ireland

EDITORIAL

MANY A TIME and oft have I read in fanzines apologies for the lateness of an issue. There have even been apologies in prozines. But I always considered it a rather queer custom, like the royal "we" in editorials, or spelling occurred with one r.

This issue is late — even by the loose Charterstandards. Who cares?

Seeing it was late, however, gave me an idea. This summer I will be doing a bit of travelling, including a visit to the United States. So, I thought, why not do the thing in style and deliver The SCARR to the readers personally? I could even do away with the staples and instead stick the pages together, thus using that quart can of gum I got some years back.

But I abandoned the idea. Somebody would be sure to suggest that the title of my fanzine should be altered to: HAVE GUM — WILL TRAVEL.

Mind you, I think this issue looks pretty nifty, especially that Atom cover.

And inside there is a story by John Berry of how he went on — of all things — a duck-hunting expedition. You-all know how John feels about ducks, so I need say no more. An entrailing narrative!

Then Ian MacAulay lays bare some of the grisly details of life at Number 170. It is a gripping tale from start to finish — and future issues of The

SCARR may contain further episodes in the chronicles of Oblique House.

Letters are varied but too few. Paralysis seems to have struck the fingers of a large proportion of the readership. But I'm easy: if you can't write a letter or send a fanzine, an article will do, or a post-card, or a birthday card, or an old copy of CORONET magazine, or Astounding for January, 1930, or a cine-camera..... You have a wide choice.

This is as good a place as any to mention My Diary. As you will see, it is mostly a record of books read, with occasional comments. Generally, too, I put down the percentage marks I would award for entertainment value. It was not always thus. As you will see from the first extract this time the idea was to record for posterity a boy's thrilling adventures.

Lastly, but not leastly, Bob Shaw has written a thought-provoking article. It will, I hope, be followed by a variety of subjects connected with writing, such as comics,

satire,	philology,
punctuation,	comedy,
grammar,	polemics,
idioms,	syntax,
runes,	rhetoric,
poetry,	lithographs,
trochees,	slang,
iambics,	tnesis,
dactyls,	euphuism,
syndactylism,	euphemism,
neologism,	synesis,
sonnets,	mimeoscopes,
anacoluthon,	ambiguity,
paraphs,	periphrasis,
dichotomy,	catachresis,
bombast,	broadsheets,
allegory,	alliteration,
italics,	anagrams,
pamphlets,	parables,
fantasy	authors,
conjugation,	circumlocution,
soliloquies,	parsing,
pulps,	declension,
platitudes,	pleonasm
homonyms,	cliches.

That little lot should suffice until I think up some more. At any rate it should keep Bob busy.

And it should keep you busy finding the word that has no business there at all.

Slainte,

Geo.

TEAL THE END of TIME

JOHN BERRY

BEING OF A somewhat shy and retiring disposition, I am not the sort of person to assert myself very volubly over any subject....reasoning that the person who shouts loudly to advocate his point of view is surely using bluster as a means of stressing his utter confidence in a matter he really isn't so sure about. However, on three or four occasions in my life I have become really violent over one specific subject....a subject I've written about several times in my chronicles....to be precise, I've come to blows over ducks.

Having been a duck breeder of some considerable experience in my days of blissful rurality, I came to love the poor critters. I recall whilst negotiating the Government Locks near Seattle I was unutterably thrilled at the sight of several hundreds of them flying about in apparent security....for take my word for it, there is nothing so pitiful as a duck flying about with a sneaking suspicion that somewhere below is a "sportsman" with a double-barrelled shotgun, waiting to blast it into Sunday dinner.

I have always upheld duckdom....and I have lectured at length to men with guns intent on duck-hunting. To show my feelings about them I've actually refused the gift of a brace of duck when I knew that my family would have loved the treat for dinner. It's become something personal with me.... I'm gullible enough to be swayed into believing almost anything....but I'll never agree that shooting ducks is sport.

It was during such a heated argument with an office associate that I agreed to actually go on a duck safari, and I was assured that on active service conditions, in the field, as it were, I would come to see that not only was duck-shooting sheer sport, but the duck was in fact a very cunning adversary, and that it required all the guile of a more man to actually get within buckshot range. So I went on the hunt, confident that I would be able to save a few ducks from a fate which would otherwise surely overtake them.

It was half an hour before dusk. I was huddled into the shelter of a gorse bush. Unidentified insects were playing "tig" over various parts of my anatomy, my trousers were soaking, and I had a severe cold. My friend was similarly afflicted physically, but he was a happy man.

"I'll tell you all about it," he said. "Now, trying to shoot a duck is one of the most difficult things imaginable. They're dead cunning. So, it is necessary to adopt stratagems."

"Er, you don't just wait here and shoot one then?" I said, in my sublime innocence.

"Dear me no! This is a science. It's taken me twenty-five years to reach my present degree of skill. First of all, I'll have you know that the fact that we're sitting here now isn't just chance."

I blew my nose.

"Mustn't do that when the ducks come," he hissed. "That'd frighten them away. The least movement is fatal. Take my word for it, they're dead crafty."

I made a mental note to wave a white handkerchief when he wasn't looking.

"The field before you," he explained, "recently yielded a crop of barley. Now ducks are partial to barley. Last night I noted one duck on reconnaissance. It came from that duck sanctuary over yonder, and swooped over this field. I'll bet you ten bob that it'll be back here in about ten minutes with a squad of its companions."

"Let me get this right," I shivered. "This is supposed to be a sport, and yet so far you've chosen a field you know they'll come to, you've hidden yourself behind a big bush, and you're waiting until dusk, which you infer is their favourite feeding-time?"

"True," he admitted. "But that's no advantage. It merely signifies that this is the arena, if you'll look at it symbolically. I'm here waiting for them. It's sheer sport."

"Oh, well, if you put it that way, I suppose because it's dusk it makes it harder for you to shoot."

"Well, it would if you didn't circumvent that unhappy possibility."

So saying, he spit between his two palms, picked up a small square of earth, made it into a ball about the size of a walnut, and slapped it on the end of the barrel.

"It's dusk, true, but with that big clod of earth acting as a foresight you can still align your barrels."

"Hmmm!" I pondered. "I suppose you're about even with the duck?"

"Noooo," he hissed. "The duck is at a great advantage. It's instinctively dead cunning. I'd never shoot one as I am now. They'd spot me three fields away. No, this is where the scientific angle comes in. Watch this!"

He ferreted inside a cavernous bag, which bore significant bloodstains, and produced two wooden decoy ducks, each one life size. He grinned at me, and furtively, like a spy about to plant an infernal machine, he sneaked forward into the stubble and planted the ducks looking towards the sea.

"That'll fix 'em," he said with anticipation.

"That's not sportsmanship!" I hissed. "Using decoy ducks shouldn't be allowed."

"No, give me a chance," he grumbled. "Cartridges cost sevenpence each. You will note the careful way I've set down the decoys. Note first of all that they're both pointing in the same direction, into the wind. That's important. I bet you that if a flock of ducks came over, and the two decoys were pointing in the same direction as the wind, they wouldn't land. Ohhhh, They are cunning."

And then he gripped my arm. I looked towards the sea. It was a wonderful sight. I estimated that there must have been almost one hundred mallards grunting towards us. They were high, but they circled the field. It was wonderful to see them arching so delicately, intent only on shovelling up a few dozen grains of barley for their supper. They circled lower...you could almost sense a telepathic command...."Lower undercarriages."

Then, between the two of us, I heard this embarrassing sound. Well, I'd had faggots and peas for tea, and although I was certain I hadn't been the author you must all admit that to a delicately reared person like myself there was but one course of action.

"Excuse me!" I said softly.

The mallards stopped wheeling round, and rose upwards, grunting. They didn't go away, though.

"What did you have to talk for?" he yapped. "For God's sake keep quiet."

I was deeply hurt. I'd acted like a gentleman, taken the blame when I wasn't guilty, and now I was being castigated.

The mallards, meanwhile, had come to the conclusion that the barley supper couldn't wait, and once more they did a penultimate circling of the field.

The blasted embarrassing noise again, although this time much louder and much fruitier. It definitely wasn't me, and when my friend didn't speak to admit his — er — indiscretion, I leaned over meaningly and whispered in his ear: "That wasn't me, you know."

He looked at me. He shrugged, as if self-control had gained the upper hand. He heaved and pulled out of his pocket a thing which, for all the world, resembled a snake with St. Vitus's Dance. And it emitted this funny noise, and now I heard it clearly I had to admit it did resemble the grunting of a duck when eating....

"I made it out of the corrugated tube from a war surplus gas mask, and a Duck Grunter Decoy fitted into the end of it. I move it slightly, and it grunts."

He waved it a couple of times, and these most life-like grunts came from it.

The mallards were impressed. It was almost dark, two of their cohorts seemed to be gobbling the food and grunting in appreciation. They came in like — well — for the sake of a better comparison, they came in like a flock of ducks. Their wings opened, and somehow twisted back, their webbed feet thrust forward, and I waved my white hanky like mad. My friend let off a couple of barrels, and the ducks rose vertically, and away.

"Shucks!" I said, "there goes my duck supper."

"Can't understand it," my friend said, "something must have startled them."

"It was your duck grunter decoy," I hissed. "It isn't any good."

Suddenly, I was seized with a shaft of utter delight. My mouth watered as I carefully assembled the words, ran through them twice to ensure that the announcement could creditably be remembered for posterity.

"In fact," I said, my heart beating in the extreme ecstasy I felt throb over me, "the decoy isn't what it's quacked up to be."

The choir of celestial angels passed away all too quickly. We struggled through the wet grass back to the car, and home to a hot bath, three aspirins and two weeks on the sick.

I don't want you to think that this duck preservation has become an obsession with me, but I cannot deny the rumour that I am the President of Ducks Anonymous.

Care to join?

John Berry
1963

AA

A donkey that kicked a boy to death has been held in the town jail of Venceslau Guimaraes, Brazil — officially charged by police chief Emiliano Gonçalves with murder.

Gonçalves first jailed the donkey's owner, Osorio Fernandes, but later agreed to arrest the donkey instead. Fernandes, protesting that the police chief had been "anti-donkey" since one ate all his personal papers, clamoured for the donkey's release.

The other prisoners joined in, complaining bitterly of the donkey's smell.

And this week-end the donkey is back on Fernandes's farm — "reprieved" by order of the Minister for Security.

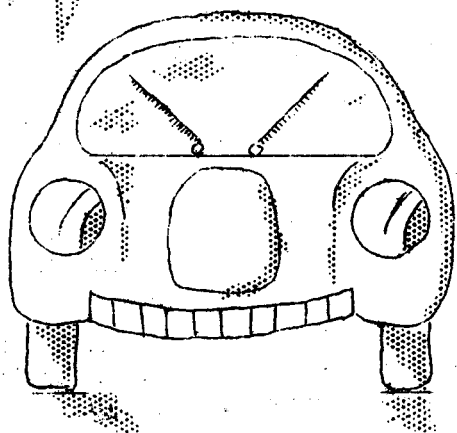
—"Sunday Express"
London (1963).

Probably the most famous spoonerism attributed to the Rev W Spooner was when, announcing the hymn in the chapel of New College, Oxford, he said: "Kinquering Congs their titles take."

Not forgetting his "I believe you are occupegwing my pie," when remonstrating with someone who was occupying his pew in church.

—"Daily Mirror"
Manchester (1963).

((Which remonstrance elicited the apologetic reply: "Don't blame me, sir, I was sewn into this sheet."))



MINOR PROBLEMS

IAN M'CAULAY

LATELY, IT SEEMS TO BE FASHIONABLE to publish full details of any intrigue or experience in which one has been involved in company with a group of notorious characters.

Since everyone even remotely connected with the Profumo Affair has by now published their memoirs in return for enormous fees, I feel the time is ripe for some revelations about the Belfast group of fans. Regrettably, George has not seen fit to offer me £25,000 for a series of articles revealing the true facts about Oblique House, where many of the most nefarious activities of the group take place. In fact, he wouldn't even offer me 5/- to suppress his name. Undeterred, I have decided to tell all. Probably in a long series of apparently interminable articles.

Walter A. Willis, the doyen of the group, is usually considered to be an excellent driver; a shining example of a Government Official who practices what he preaches, namely, Road Safety. Visiting fans have been known to exclaim at his ability to park his car rapidly and safely in a space about three inches longer than its own length, while nonchalantly discussing the decline of contemporary science fiction.

He wasn't always like this though. I was living at Oblique House when Walt got his first car, a Morris Minor, and I can remember clearly the first time he drove it home.....

*** *** *** *** *** ***

"Bring it straight back for about three yards," Madeleine said.

Walt revved up the engine and let in the clutch. The car moved back smoothly about six inches and came to a halt with a sound of rending metal.

"I think that's far enough now," Madeleine said, coughing as the smell of overheated engine reached her.

Walt stuck his head three inches out of the driving side window, the proximity of the garage wall preventing a defenestration of greater magnitude. In a firm, clear, resonant voice he said, "Dammitalltobloodyhell!"

The real reason for getting the car was to enable him to play golf with

somewhat greater frequency, as his club is about ten miles away from Oblique House. I had been a sort of a test case for his newly built garage and had parked my car there every day for the previous couple of months. Since the roof hadn't fallen in and my car hadn't suffered any damage, he had decided to evict my limousine and replace it with his own. With a heartlessness that would have been envied by many a Victorian father, he had cast my inoffensive little car out into the cold snows of Belfast.

However, I am not one to bear a grudge so I decided to assist him in any way that I could. I suggested that he should drive out again and reverse in a little more slowly.

Walt is not a person to condemn an idea just because he didn't think of it, and he conceded that the elegance and simplicity of this solution were strong points in its favour. He pulled the starter.

Unfortunately he had neglected to disengage reverse gear after he had stalled the engine a few minutes earlier. The car tried valiantly to climb the rear wall of the garage, but, as the designer had carelessly omitted to envisage this possibility, it met with a singular lack of success. Walt didn't say anything and I began to think he might be getting a little depressed at all these misfortunes, so I tried to cheer him up a little by suggesting that lights at the back of the car were a needless frippery and I congratulated him on his sensible way of dispensing with them so soon after getting the car. I reeled back a little at the result of this attempt to revive his flagging spirits. A torrent of words poured from him, mainly Anglo-Saxon in origin but with quite a few I didn't recognise among them, as he climbed out of the car and pounded up and down in his hob-nailed golfing-boots. I wouldn't be quite sure but I think the car cringed.

After about ten minutes he recovered sufficiently to consider having another try. He climbed back into the car, started the engine and engaged bottom gear. Afterwards he said that his foot had slipped off the clutch pedal, but, whatever the cause, the result says a great deal for the powers of smooth acceleration of the Morris Minor. When it reached the garage doors, about six feet away, it was only slightly slowed by the regrettable fact that one of them had swung closed. Walt regained control about fifty yards up the road and brought the car to a halt. He got out and walked slowly around the car three times. Unlike Benjamin Bathurst, he didn't disappear.

Madeleine had lost her nerve some time earlier and retired into the kitchen to make some coffee. I went in too, and had a cup of coffee and a couple of lettuce sandwiches. We had lit cigarettes and were starting to talk about the last Campbell editorial, when there was a shriek of tyres and a dull crunch from the garage. A couple of minutes later Walt came in and sank exhaustedly into the nearest chair. He nodded when I asked him if he had managed to park the car in the garage. I joined Madeleine in congratulating him on his perseverance and final success. Then we went out to have a look. Yes, the car was in the garage all right. It was well under the roof and the doors could be closed completely. It was a pity it was in sideways.

Walt couldn't explain how he had managed to do it, but the car could now only move backwards or forwards for about two inches and it was

completely impossible for it to be driven out again. After some prolonged negotiations Walt was able to arrange that a local builder would come the next day and knock down the outside wall of the garage, take out the car and rebuild the wall.

When I got home the next evening the builder's lorry was just leaving after completing the job. Madeleine was sitting worriedly in the lounge. She told me that Walt had taken a half day, gone into town and returned with three crates full of war-surplus equipment. Now he was outside working in the garage and at his car. I picked up some of the books that were littering the table. Relays and Servomechanisms, Radiolocation for the Amateur and Remote-Control Servomechanisms were typical examples of the titles.

Walt didn't appear inside the house for the rest of the evening. The only indication that he was still around was the constant smell of soldering flux and the occasional chatter of rapidly operating relays from the garage outside.

I thought he might be rigging up a system of automatic door-openers for the garage or repairing his trafficator system, but this proved to be a considerable under-estimation of his resources.

It was nearly ten o'clock when he appeared at the door of the lounge, grease-stained and dishevelled, but with a smile of success on his face. He asked us to come out and see how he could park the car now.

The garage and the car looked like something out of an early sf film; wires littered the place, coloured lights were mounted all over a huge board suspended just inside the door and there was a continuous faint hum of electrical apparatus. All it needed was a Jacob's ladder of spark-gaps and I would have automatically looked round for a quiescent Frankenstein monster.

Walt got into the car and drove it straight out of the garage. Then he pulled down a bank of switches mounted above the dashboard and let out the clutch with reverse gear engaged. As the car reached the garage door little projecting wires on each hub-cap made contact with metal strips mounted along each wall, and green lights began to flash on the panel. The car started to veer slightly to the left: immediately an alarm bell started to ring and the lights on the board began to flash red. There was a whine as a servomotor started up under the bonnet and the steering was moved by it to correct this misalignment. The car went straight on towards the back of the garage, every little deviation being corrected automatically; when it approached the rear wall two more wires made contact and the brakes were applied by another servomotor. After a five-second delay the engine was switched off and a relay operated disconnecting the main power supply.

Walter could park his car at last!

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED TO ME ON MY WAY TO THE TYPEWRITER.

BOB
SHAW

I WAS GOING to give this article the brash subtitle of "How to Write Funny Articles," but changed my mind, partly because it might have seemed presumptuous but mainly because I'm still not sure how to go about it even after thirteen years of fanzine writing experience. The best I can offer is a few notes on the difficulties involved.

After every issue of HYPHEN I get the chance to read the letters of comment and can judge the success of various styles, formats, subjects, approaches, etc., and out of this wealth of experimental data several basic facts have emerged. The first rule (if you can have rules in this context) is that, just as in any other form of writing, it is not sufficient merely to have a plot. You must also have a theme. Why this should be I don't know. You can write a piece full of loose ends, poor grammar, "personalized" spelling — and as long as it has a theme it will go down all right; but you can also write a neat, polished, technically flawless piece — and if it has no theme it simply won't come off.

Now, to my mind, the theme/plot relationship is a subtle sort of a thing, and I consider it monstrously unfair that Nature has constructed billions of people in such a way that they are quite happy with "I done" and "you was," and yet are able to detect the absence of theme. Nine times out of ten they can't pinpoint the source of their dissatisfaction, but they have it just the same. In practice, this means that you can't make a really successful 2,000-word funny article out of four little anecdotes each good for 500 words simply by writing them all down one after the

other. You have to find a connecting thread which exposes an underlying unity in the experiences. I'm being a little pompous now, but the point I'm trying to make is that the fact that the events all took place on, say, the same coach trip, is not good enough to form a good connecting thread.

For example, one of my most successful fanzine articles was an account of a holiday I spent at Portrush with the Boys' Brigade. I wrote all the little incidents of that holiday out in chronological order, depending on the B.B. holiday to provide the theme, but when I read it over it all seemed flat and useless. About six months later I went back to the article and realised the most important single truth about the whole experience was that by adult standards I should have been completely miserable during that holiday, and yet as a boy I had loved it. I then wrote a paragraph to go before the title, in which I stated the theme clearly; next I slanted the accounts of all the incidents to bring them into line, and finished by emphasising my point in the last paragraph. The finished piece was, on one level, still just a collection of anecdotes, but in another it was an expression of my observation that children have a tremendous capacity for being happy regardless of circumstances. After appearing in HYPHEN that article was reprinted in one of Guy Terwilliger's "best of the year" anthologies.

Enjoyable convention reports might seem to belie the rule, but they are reports, and, besides, the best of them are those in which the writer's personality and outlook pervade the whole account. It is quite a few years since I read Walt Willis's report of his first trip to the States so I have forgotten most of the incidents described, but what I do remember is his "message" that no matter how far away a fan may live, when you meet him he can be just like an old friend.

Another difficulty is that humour is a gregarious thing and yet you are always alone when you write. I often find that when I'm at a party jokes spring into my mind at the rate of two or three a minute, but when I'm on my own, trying to write an article, my joke-producing centres are completely numb. One way round this is to make notes of various funnies that occur when you are in company and dig them out later on. I have tried it once or twice but I'm not methodical enough, so I usually fall back on a device known as the Spoonerism or "mechanical pun." All you have to do is keep transposing the initial letters of key words in any familiar phrases which crop up in the article. Sooner or later a phrase which still makes sense with the initials transposed will crop up and you can make a joke out of it, often by assuming the role of an ingenuous person who has partially forgotten the original phrase and believes that his twisted version is true. For example, you can solemnly claim that Yiddish is widely spoken in Northern Italy and quote as your authority the well-known saying — "There's many a Jew word spoken in Trieste."

Apparently other people have noticed this thing about gregarious humour and the difficulties of writing alone, and have decided to get

round it by writing fanzines in groups at parties. But the laws of Nature aren't that easily fooled -- and a one-shot of this nature is invariably worse than any of its authors could do locked up on his own in an attic.

Probably the most solidly useful piece of information I have gleaned is that if you want to be funny it is no use writing about events which seemed funny to you when they happened. It hardly ever comes off and you end up by saying, "Of course, you'd need to have been THERE." The safest bet is to recall your most tragic, humiliating and frustrating experiences and you'll find people will laugh or at least look slightly less miserable than before.

Looking back over what I've just written I'm really glad I didn't call it "How To Write Funny Articles." In fact, seeing how little I know about it, I'd be glad if any readers would send me a few tips.

—Bob Shaw.

[illegible]

Neither sunspots nor nuclear bombs are blamed by the Rev A F Abbott (Vicar of St Jude's, Southsea) for the disastrous weather we have had this summer. He puts the blame on the way people behave on Sundays.

—Evening News,
Portsmouth

This isn't my first accident, you know. I've been in quite a few over the years. I find there's an awful lot of things to keep in mind with this driving business.....pedals, switches, levers, knobs and whatnot. And things happen to me that just don't happen to other people. Like this last affair. I simply put my arm through the spokes of the wheel to wind the clock, and it came on to rain, so naturally I went to switch on the wipers with the other hand and this dog ran out in front of me and my woollen glove got hooked up on the wiper switch, and when I managed to wrench it off it turned out the door wasn't fastened properly and I fell out just as I was going across this traffic Island. Perhaps I'm just not lucky with cars.

Red Daniels

Yes, thank you, I'm perfectly aware that it's smoking rather a lot, but if I poke the choke thing in my umbrella keeps falling over. I think cars are designed very badly. Totally without thought. Have YOU ever tried to drive in stiletto heels? Only last week I was driving my husband's car and my heel got caught in the hole under the accelerator so that the wretched thing stuck wide open in the middle of Oxford Street, and now it's got to have a new engine or something. And they're much too wide. People are always scraping the sides of this one. And what an idiotic place for a mirror. I almost have to stand to see myself, and those curved ends on the windscreen distort everything in the shop windows. Accidents? Dozens of them, but then people are such fools.

—Red Daniels

"Drivers Wild"

LETTERS

HARRY WARNER, Maryland.

To begin with, I should offer you from two extended experiences my sympathy for your hospital stay and the less than satisfactory outcome. However, you probably realise your good fortune to get out of a situation like that without complications in the other eye, so I'm not going to try to convince you that you're an object for all-out pity and condolence. Neither of my busted hips will ever be what they were before, but I pull myself up short every time I feel a temptation to send a formal complaint to the fates about stiffness or weakness in that area, remembering how much worse off I could be.

However, I enjoyed immensely your hospital account, despite the fact that such descriptions are legendarily supposed to be of interest to nobody but the person who experienced the episode. Even if you'd been less entertaining, I couldn't have complained, because I wrote approximately twice this much about my longer hospital sojourn for FAPA. There is the additional interest of comparison potentialities in this for me. Hospitals in Ireland and in Maryland are similar enough to be recognisable as two varieties of the same species, I gather, but there are enough differences to cause me to wonder where I'd prefer to be a patient if I face another long bedding down. On the debit side for the hospital you inhabited would be the rising time, 90 minutes earlier than the one in Hagerstown, the need for carrying patients from floor to floor and what I assume to be a lack of private and semi-private rooms. (For certain types of hospital stays I'd like to be in a ward, but not if I were suffering extreme pain.) The ways in which Irish hospitals excel, I gather, are first and above everything else, their eating schedule, and almost as important, the way patients seem to be encouraged to do the best they can to help other patients. I should think that this latter would be the best kind of occupational therapy and a means of getting one's mind off his troubles when he realized that there are others badly enough off to need even a sick man's help. At the Hagerstown hospital there are only three times when a patient eats: around 7 a.m., noon, and 5.30 p.m. There are no tea times and this makes it very hard on a person like me who is accustomed to eating small but frequent meals. If you find a nurse or aide who isn't extremely busy, you can usually get a glass of fruit juice in mid-morning or just before going to bed, but this is nothing to count on. I grew into the habit of hiding some candy or cookies through the day and gnawing on them after the 9 p.m. lights out order, the only way I could get through the night without a severe hunger headache in the small hours.

I'm sorry that you didn't get to see fans while in the United States. But you wouldn't have seen the United States if you'd gone and walked among the fans, so maybe you're no worse off. I'd like to think about going to the 1965

convention, if it's in England, but already I'm wondering how I could arrange to cut myself off from fans for sightseeing purposes during part of that stay over there, without alienating friends and setting up internal conflicts of interests within me.

Maybe you were in this country long enough to recognise that milk or cream in tea is not as unusual in the United States as Marion Bradley thinks. I eat all my meals out, and I can't remember the last time that I ordered tea without either being asked if I wanted cream, or getting a little glass of it along with the tea. Cream in tea is not as American by tradition as in coffee but it's not restricted to one social set or section of the nation.

If I were Ian MacAulay, I couldn't help keeping a copy of one or two Posi and Nega stories by Joseph W Skidmore on hand, from those old Amazings, and handing them over whenever a good atomic secrets deal presented itself. They are so outrageously irrelevant to today's atomic theory that I imagine any spies would assume that they were either an elaborate code vehicle or some esoteric knowledge known only to Americans. Even if the stories were soon proved to be nothing more than fiction, reading them carefully should weaken considerably any espionage system, for they make excellent emetics.

The back cover looks suspiciously like a piece of blueprint material that got accidentally exposed to the light. ((Correct. I tried to make patterns with them but....)) Maybe this is Atom's latest stylistic change so I'd better not criticize it. His front cover is splendid. Looking at it, I want desperately to see these stylized objects suddenly begin to move about like an animated cartoon.

JAMES WHITE, Belfast

A funny thing happened to me on the motorway this morning: a Post Office van overtook me, going in the same direction. This enabled me to see not only the pillar-box red but to read the poster on the side panel. You know how the GPO is with their advertising — for two months before and after the festive season they urge everyone to Post Early for Christmas (it's a seller's market then and they aren't too worried) and for the remainder of the year their efforts to make people go on buying postage stamps become really desperate. This particular poster depicted an old, frail, white-haired granny with gold-rimmed spectacles and crow's feet. (()) (That space is for the inevitable editorial interjection., ((I'm too busy to put one in — I'm cutting a stencil.)) Under the portrait of this gentle, sad, but bravely-smiling old lady, in heart-rending fluorescent blue, there appeared the words "Someone, Somewhere, Would Like a Letter from YOU." For some reason I thought of you, and figuring that I'd have to write about something I thought that it might as well be your -----, ----- and ----- fanzine, elegant though it is. So here goes.

The cover of SCARR TWO was very fine. I approve of spaceship covers as you know, although I thought the back cover a trifle blue. "Doggone" was good and well up to the standard of this master of the fantasy documentary. Ian's bit was very good. Having visited him in the place where he works —

pardon me, having been shown around the lab where he does research and runs off fanzines on the carbon dating of stones and things — I can appreciate his feelings. He really has some good quality secrets to sell, but I think his approach is wrong. He should strive more for the common touch, try to make the agent ask himself, "What will this secret do for me . . . besides getting me shot?" The time I was with him he gave me one, for free, and I must confess that I didn't even know that it was a secret at first. I didn't know what it was, except that I was glad there were no ladies present. Either he should endeavour to describe his merchandise in simple, punchy language or he should stop making such complicated secrets.

Knowing how shy and retiring you are and how embarrassed it makes you when anyone praises anything you have written, I hesitate to tell you that your bit was the best in the issue, but it was. I'm sorry if this offends you, but you are capable of great things, fanwriting-wise. ((Aw, shucks!)). However, you must remember that you have only a limited number of limbs and appendages (I forget exactly how many you do have at the moment) and you should not go to such extremities in search of material. Or if you do go to them, try not to let the doctor take them away from you. I wish Walter or Bob was here. Something could be done with your last extremity . . .

Have you enough material for your annish yet?

Ian MacAulay, Dublin.

This is not a letter of comment . . . ((Okay, I can take a hint.))

ETHEL LINDSAY, Surrey.

What with one thing and another (one thing being TAFF and the other being OMPA) I never did get around to thanking you for the first issue of SCARR. So pardon the belated thanks!

I enjoyed them both; and was very glad to see you started on the fanzine lark. Your own article in the latest issue was of particular interest to me of course after having worked for so many years with Eye patients. This is the first time I have read of what it is like from the patient's point of view! ((Like me you haven't read Harry's report?)) I once read that at St Dunstan's for the Blind all members of the staff have to first have their eyes covered and get around the place for quite some time so that they can appreciate just what it is like. I have often thought it would be a good idea to try this on all staff in Eye hospitals. Admittedly, there the idea is to restore sight, but it would surely help the staff to comprehend some of the difficulties undergone by folks suddenly bereft of light as is the case with the pre-operation treatment for detached retinas.

It has always fascinated me how the mental outlook of the patient can so control the amount he can do with lessened vision. When I first entered an Eye hospital I noticed that the children who were double-padded for squint operations could almost within a day reorient themselves to their surroundings. They often used to put my heart into my mouth the way they would gaily dash about and up and down rather steep stairs if you were not watching. An adult, however, could hardly grope his way from bedside locker to bed sometimes. Not always of course, and this bit puzzled me till I read a book called MY EYES HAVE A COLD NOSE (forget the author's name). He described how

almost from the first he knew he would be totally blind and so quickly found himself adapting to the situation and getting around the hospital where he was. Yet there was another young man who, because his folks were very rich, had been taken from one eye specialist to another for months in the hope of eventual cure. This young man was still quite helpless at getting about because he still had hopes of sight and therefore had never been able to make the mental adjustment to enable him to deal with his lack of sight.

Mind you — I frown a lot on the idea of ENT patients in the same ward as eye patients. One lot are so 'dirty' and the eye lot need such scrupulous cleanliness. I feel it puts an awful lot of extra work on the nursing staff. It's an oldfashioned idea of having the two together, which ought to be done away with by now.

My brother has never had anything more than minimal vision in one eye, yet he is an inspector at the Timex watch factory. All his work must be done by using a microscope! Of course he has superb vision in the remaining eye . . . this often seems to be the case . . . of a 'lazy' eye making the other a more powerful weapon. Nature's wonderful, isn't she?

ARCHIE MERCER, Bristol.

I'm afraid that the Bristol Zoo's semantics seem to have conned me into innocently leading you astray. It's not the "only two okapis in the country," it's "the only pair of okapis in the country." Said country (which remains obstinately unstated throughout) may have a population of single okapis running into the hundreds of millions. Bristol claims to have the only paired set. (In fact, the female is expected to farrow soon — or whatever okapis do when they pup.) If I'd known you were in hospital I'd have sent one over — looking at it would have provided some okapital therapy for you. ((I doubt it: the sight of those eight tentacles would make me sicker.))

Which brings up the point of your Irish Hospitality article, which, albeit it might conceivably have been basically concerned with a somewhat happier occasion, I enjoyed immensely. And I don't normally care for medical reminiscences, either. I also liked Ian's piece, and some of those short letters were quite worth reading, too.

There's just one thing I don't quite understand — what's Ron Bennett's elephant doing escorting you to and from hospital? ((I will explain it in my next Hospitality article.))

WILLIAM F TEMPLE; Middlesex.

Thanks for the latest issue of your Brandzine. I really don't know what else to call it.

When I was young and gay, a fanzine, if it didn't concentrate on s-f exclusively, then did touch on fringe subjects, e.g., weird or fantasy fiction, experimental art, some branch of development in science, economics, semantics, sociology, religion. . . some comment on trends or the shape of things to come. We were united in trying to apprehend the pattern of the future, from many angles.

But what's the touchstone in zines like SCARR? It's rather like picking up a lost letter in the street and reading it. Quite fortuitous accounts of personal experiences, maybe funny, like Berry's, or painful (literally!), like yours. Interesting, but a personal, not a shared, world — and that makes comment difficult.

I'm reduced to asking whether Marion Z Bradley pours milk into the cup before pouring the tea, or afterwards. I prefer to pour the milk afterwards, thereby keeping control over the shade of the tea (medium tan, for me). But this practice infuriates the milk-first school, and has sometimes led to hard words and even tea-shed. I could conceive writing an article about it and calling it Sterm in a Teacup. And SCARR would seem just the place for it. But — I still wonder — where's the place for SCARR?

I found the Max Brand Biography absorbing. Brand was a real man-sized man. As you say, it's rather scrappy, and there's some of that kind of repetition which is unavoidable in a collection of articles by different people on the same subject. But the facts and figures are there, and they're astonishing.

I'm one of the slow, painful kind of writers — sometimes I feel I'm writing with glue rather than ink — and these literary mass-producers fascinate me, especially when their stuff is consistently good, like Brand and Edgar Wallace (of whom I have several biographies), and unlike John Creasey, whose stuff is pretty poor. ((Especially his s-f.))

I think I first became interested in Brand when I saw a silent film (circa 1927) called THE CABALLERO, starring Richard Talmadge. I saw from the titles it was based on a novel by Brand called THE BLACK RIDER, and for years I tried to get hold of said novel, but neither libraries nor shops seemed to be able to find a copy. I see now, from the bibliography, that it was merely a novel in WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, and presumably never saw hard covers.

Re films, am puzzled by the remark on p.97 that "Douglas Fairbanks, Senior, took the lead in TRAILIN' released in 1921." I'm something of an expert on Fairbanks. He made no film of that title. I've a complete list of all the films he made from 1914 on, and can't trace anything based on a Brand story.

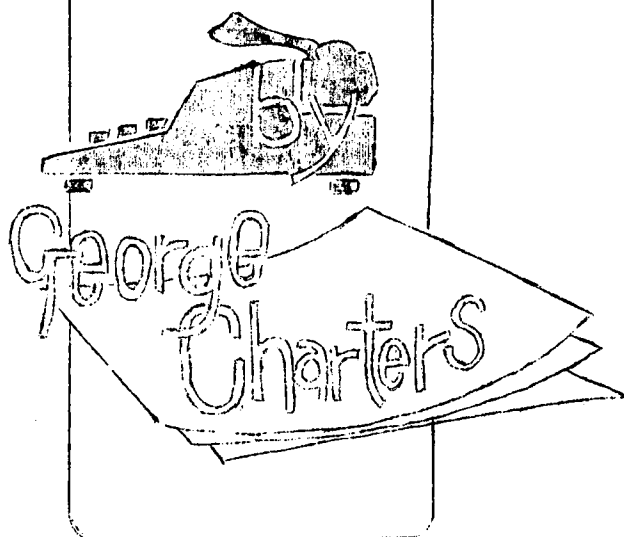
Did Schoolcraft ever complete that biography of Brand mentioned on p.53? A full life of the man is surely needed: this little book whets the appetite for one. I took it along to the Globe last Thursday to show to Arthur C Clarke, and he was duly impressed.

I can see I must get an electric typewriter (Clarke's already got one, of course). ((What kind of current does Arthur's use? AC?))

-----o-----

((And that, dear (meaning expensive) reader, is/are all the letters this time around. As I said back there on page five, if you're too bashful to write a letter a post-card will do, or an article, or a mimeoscope, or Harry Stephen Keeler's THE FACE OF THE MAN FROM SATURN, or Thorne Smith's DREAM'S END, Amanda McKittrick Ros's DELINA DELANEY, or.....))

PEEPS INTO MY DIARY



1921

June 17 Fri Alarming experience this morning. Passing some cows in the ma'sh, I was petrified to see one animal begin pawing the ground and bellowing like a bull at me. I yelled for the cow-herd as I cowered there like a coward. The cow heard & immediately charged. I ran for the river. Got there 6 ft in front & jumped down into the water just where some character had left a harrow — with the spikes up. How I missed those spikes I do not know. A harrowing experience.

1941

Jan 1 Wed Herbert Best (90) THE 25TH HOUR. It's a good start to the new year to find one of the best science fiction stories I've read for a long time.

Jan 2 Thu William K Reilly (50) RANGE WAR. I've read somewhere that WKR's real name is John Creasey.

1941

Jan 3 Fri Elliott Bailey (60) NO CRIME SO GREAT.

Jan 5 Sun Mazo de la Roche MASTER OF JALNA.

Jan 9 Thu First air-raid warning at work. Lasted 25 minutes.

Jan 11 Sat Joseph O'Neill (60) DAY OF WRATH.

Jan 13 Mon Joseph O'Neill (60) PHILIP.

Jan 16 Thu Snow.

Jan 29 Wed Joseph O'Neill (90) LAND UNDER ENGLAND. Science fiction. Descendants of Romans living underground.

Feb 19 Wed Norris Davidson (99) THE SOFT IMPEACHMENT. Do not know whether this book or LORD BABS (by Kéble Howard) is the funniest I've ever read.

Mar 13 Thu Amanda McKittrick Ros IRENE IDDESLEIGH. As far as I know there are only four books by our Amanda, and the titles give an inkling of the strangeness of them. Two are poems: FUMES OF FORMATION and POEMS OF PUNCTURE. Two are novels: DELINA DELANEY and IRENE IDDESLEIGH. Another novel may have been published after her death in 1938 HELENA HUDDLESTONE but I am not sure.

Mrs Ros, the wife of a Railway-station master in Larne, Northern Ireland, wrote her books in all seriousness, but to most people they are indescribably funny. They were appreciated for their unconscious humour by Winston Churchill, Aldous Huxley, Mark Twain, Barry Pain, Lord Ponsonby, E.V. Lucas, James Agate and hosts of others. There were even Amanda Ros Clubs (and I don't mean shillelaghs). "There was a time," said Jack Loudan, the Belfast playwright, "when a first edition of one of her books was worth something like £30."

IRENE IDDESLEIGH is typical of her work. Each chapter begins with a short homily on various topics. For example, Chapter LV begins:

When on the eve of glory, whilst brooding over the prospects of a bright and happy future, whilst meditating upon the risky right of justice, there we remain, wanderers on the cloudy surface of mental woe, disappointment and danger, inhabitants of the grim sphere of anticipated imagery, partakers of the poisonous dregs of concocted injustice. Yet such is life.

Alliteration seems to have a terrific attraction for her:

"Leave me now, deceptive demon of deluded mockery; lurk no more around the vale of vanity, like a vindictive viper; strike the lyre of living deception to the strains of dull deadness, despair and doubt; and bury on the brink of benevolence every false vow..."

Irene at one point is locked in her room by her husband. Marjory, her

servant, steals a key and goes to free her:

Proudly and much agitated did Marjory steal her way along the many winding corridors of carpeted comfort, until at last she came to the bottom of the ghost-like marble steps which let to her mistress; and swiftly running up the icy heights, until reaching the door of danger and blood-thirsty revenge, she, with the caution of a murderer, thrust with great and exceptional care the key into its much-used opening, and heroically succeeded in gaining admittance.

Keeping up the alliteration Marjory's surname is Mason. The villain is Oscar Otwell:

Did he, by his various attempts to enter the minds of the needy ever think to solicit their assistance or gain their confidence by tearing asunder the lawful bond of superficial union and right, casting it upon the sieve of shattered shelter to separate the corn of crowded comfort from the chaff of crafty want.

Frequently this craze to use words suitable or unsuitable makes sentences not merely obscure but incomprehensible. For example:

But all fetters of power were visibly broken which she wished should remain united, leaving her mother of her future premeditated movements.

[Irene had] stripped herself of the covering of coveted cost to array herself in linen of loose lore and lengthy wear, and die, it may be, on the wayside of want.

Sir John Dunfern is depicted as the essence of breeding and good manners; but he doesn't like parties, balls, etc.:

Sir John, finding it almost impossible to stare socialism in the face, seemed inclined rather to stick to the old rule of domestic enjoyment, never forgetting to share fully his cheerful conversation with his wife, when so desired, which, sorrowful to relate, was too seldom.

He thinks her manner towards him becomes cold and asks why:

"Speak! Irene! Wife! Woman! Do not sit in silence and allow the blood that now boils in my veins to ooze through the cavities of unrestrained passion and trickle down to drench me with its crimson hue!"

There is a rare touch about the poetry of Amanda Ros. (McKittrick was her real name but she added Ros to make it more aristocratic.) I'll quote two examples. Her poem on Easter begins:

Dear God, the day of eggs is here.

Her ode to Westminster Abbey begins

Holy Moses, have a look —

Flesh decayed in every nook.

Nobody, but nobody, could do better than that!

Apr 9 Wed Air-raid on Belfast last night. Big list of absentees today.

Apr 11 Fri Result of raid by 6 german bombers (probably an off-shoot of the

Clyde/Glasgow raid the same night): 13 killed, 80 injured. Shipyard hit. Aircraft factory hit: 5 fuselages slightly damaged. One squadron only of Hurricane fighters is based in N.I. & only one aircraft went up: they are not night fighters anyway. No searchlights either.

Apr 16 Wed Belfast had another blitz last night, but on this occasion it was a full-scale attack. Fires still raging: glow in sky last night could be seen from Bangor & even from further away. Attack from 2 to 5am. In Bangor most people (from what I hear) spent the night until the all-clear under stairs & tables; some went to shelters. Sue & kids are here and I assured them that the aeroplanes we heard so plainly were not German but ours. Flares turned night into day. I told them I could easily tell the difference. Actually I had no idea. To reassure them further I stood in the doorway a long time, watching flares & flames & listening to the drone of machines overhead. Went to work. Trains running late. Men who did come to work busy clearing up the mess. Floor covered with water: men getting rid of it with brushes & squeegees. After an hour or so I walked out & walked into town. No buses running. People busy everywhere salvaging furniture, &c., & clearing away rubble. Glass crunching underfoot sounds like a frosty morning, but the smell, a musty, acrid odour, is unpleasant. Buildings still burning & smouldering.

Apr 19 Sat Final figures for the raid: Killed, 745. Badly injured, 420. Slightly hurt, needing medical attention, 1100. 180 Heinkels & Junkers dropped about 200 tons of high explosives; 800 incendiary bombs (28 tons). Against this blitz there were only sixteen 3.7 Anti-aircraft guns and six 40-mm guns. HMS FURIOUS, in dock for repairs, helped with her AA guns. Bombed out: 11 churches, 2 banks, 2 schools, a nurses' home, central library, two hospitals, 37 firms. Whole streets of houses wiped out. Section of a York St mill collapsed on some houses, killing 35. Fire brigades from Drogheda, Dublin & Dundalk as well as from NI towns helped. Stories of odd happenings and acts of incredible courage heard from all sides. About 100,000 people have left Belfast for the country. Little damage in Bangor; only 1 house bombed.

May 5 Mon Another raid on Belfast last night & glow in sky seemed brighter than on previous occasions. No bombs here.

May 7 Wed Another raid on Belfast last night, but not so big.

May 10 Sat There were 200 or more bombers in Sunday night's raid. Almost 250 tons HE, & 2,700 incendiaries. Killed, 178. Fire brigades came again from over the border but hampered by many mains being burst. Tuesday only 2 bombers came, but 14 killed. Stories of courage & heartbreak.

May 17 Sat Birthday. Still only 21 years old. Celebrated by reading DAWN by Sydney Fowler Wright (90). Just my type science fiction.

May 19 Mon Agatha Christie (80) APPOINTMENT WITH DEATH. Like Agatha.

May 22 Thu Percival Christopher Wren (70) WORTH WHILE. Bit wordy.

May 23 Fri Irving Stone (70) LUST FOR LIFE. Exaggerated? Maybe.

May 30 Fri Louis Golding THE DOOMINGTON WANDERER.

May 31 Sat Odd to think that after all this slaughter if there's a rail or pit disaster in Germany we'll be sympathetic as hell. And when the Germans come again in '65 or '70 they'll have FIVE-HUNDRED-TON BOMBS FOR US.

