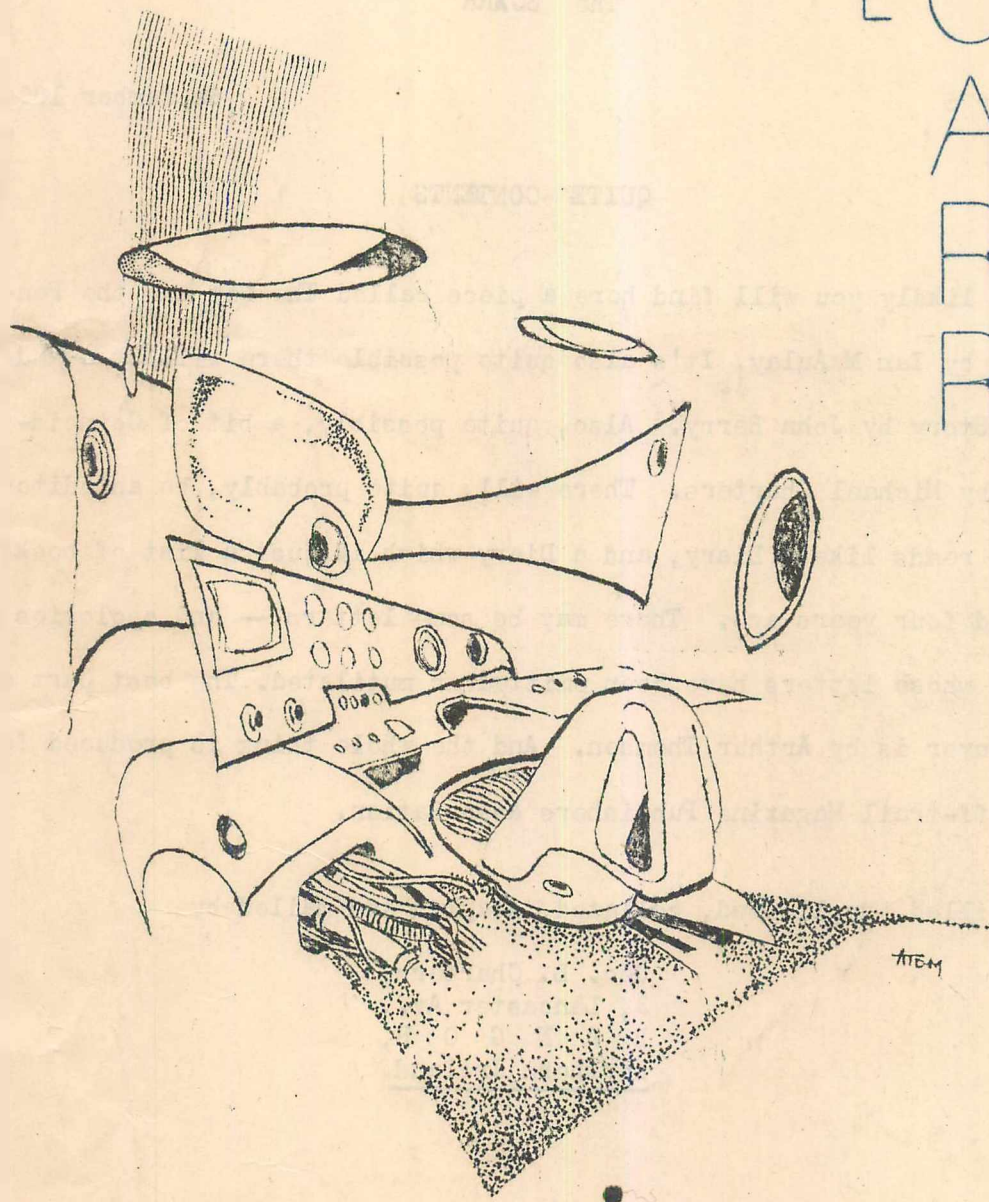


THE SCARR



SUMMER NUMMER — 1964

The SCARR

Number 5

September 1964

QUITE CONTENTS

Quite likely you will find here a piece called The Nit and the Pendulum by Ian McAulay. It's also quite possible there will be a Bedtime Story by John Berry. Also, quite possibly, a bit of Coincidence by Michael Charters. There will, quite probably, be an editorial which reads like a Diary, and a Diary which is just a list of books I read four years ago. There may be some letters — and apologies to those whose letters have been omitted or mutilated. The best part of the cover is by Arthur Thomson. And the whole thing is produced for the Off-trail Magazine Publishers Association.

Stencilled, duplicated, collated, stapled and mailed by

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

Editorial

The SCARR

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On 11th July my sister and I went for a three-week visit to the USA. We went, appropriately enough, by a chartered flight, which meant that the fare was only £61 each (or 170 dollars in civilised currency).

The Emigration Officer at ~~Liverpool~~ Kennedy set the mood of the visit where I was concerned. He examined my pass-port and observed that I had been over in 1963. "Welcome back!" he said. Perhaps he says this a dozen times a day, but I liked it.

We were met at the Airport at 8.30 Saturday morning and taken to a country cottage in Long Island, where we stayed Saturday and Sunday. Food was good, weather was good, company was good — about 20 people of all sizes and ages. And it was then that I fell in love. Her name is Barbara, a beautiful blonde. At first I just liked the way she walked and talked but when she kissed me (which she did enthusiastically) I was completely lost. Maybe she hasn't got a very good figure (after all she is only five years old) but who cares!

Billie drove us back Sunday night. Half-way she got a flat which she dealt with efficiently. When a patrol-man (one of New York's finest!) stopped to see what was the matter she told him off for not coming sooner.

Monday I spent a lot of time trying to get back numbers of science-fiction magazines. I still tend to think of the US as a land flowing with cokes and SF — but it isn't. However, with so much to see I didn't worry.

Tuesday I went to Penn Station to buy tickets to Washington, then went on to Times Square and floated around for some time before returning to Brooklyn. I only got lost on the subway once in spite of the fact that it is signposted for New Yorkers only whereas the London Underground and the Paris Metro are signposted for children and low IQs like mine. We went to the World's Fair for a few hours visit: to see everything would take weeks. It is big, impressive, fantastic. We drove around most of it in a kind of small truck, with seats for four people in front, and the driver sitting behind giving a running commentary. Buildings have been erected by some US firms such as General Motors, Royal Tires, &c., by some cities such as

New York, Berlin, &c., and by countries like Indonesia, China, Sweden, and by states: Maryland, Illinois, &c., and even by some religions. They have exhibits of their products (sometimes live exhibits), photographs, movies, shows, etc. Lines of people were waiting to get to the more interesting ones: for example, for General Motors the estimated waiting-time, shown on a board, was 1½ hours. There was no line at the Southern Ireland pavilion which must have cost nearly £1,000 to put up. On the other hand the Spanish effort cost over £2,000,000 and showed it. The PO had a machine selling stamps but it didn't sell stamps to send cards airmail. Odd.

The train to Washington next morning was comfortable but the carriage (coach?) we were in was a non-smoker, or perhaps the whole train was a non-smoker, with a couple of tiny smoking compartments. So Lottie and I hurled defiance at the Pennsylvania Railroad and lit up. The Trainman (such was the legend on his uniform) came along to exchange our fragile tickets for more durable ones and mentioned regretfully that it was a non-smoker. So to save international complications we waited until he was out of sight before lighting up again.

David (brother) and Stephen (nephew) met us in Washington and drove us around in a tour of the city, then headed for Virginia. Sun was hot — much hotter than I had felt for a year.

Spent the next 15 days lazing about the farm, in the foot-hills of the Blue Ridge mountains, driving along the magnificent road along the top for several hundred miles, visiting towns round about, shopping and watching TV. The Republican party were holding a Convention in the San Francisco Cow Palace (their first meeting, a hundred years ago, was held in a field) and a lot of TV time was given to the affair. The most interesting thing to me was not the speeches, which promised great things (though everyone was careful not to mention that the Republicans ushered in the hungry thirties), nor the noisy and often monotonous parades, but the reporting by two men, Huntley and Brinkley. Huntley is about 50-55 and Brinkley about 10 years younger. They are a good team and made even a foreigner like me interested.

But, to coin a phrase, all good things come to an end, so on July 30th we flew to Washington, then to Kennedy and back to Ireland.

If this "report" were written properly it would cover many pages, but it would probably be no whit better. Re-reading it, it doesn't sound so hot in condensed form. And so many things not even mentioned: race riots; one good sf picture on TV; stridulation of the cicadas; air-conditioning; Sunday newspapers; cook-outs; cocktail parties (and me a Pepsi-on-the-rocks man); side-walks bound with iron bands....

And so many things I didn't see: Johnny Carson (he was in Las Vegas, and Groucho Marx in his place was pathetic); the Empire State Building; dollar pieces; colour TV; confederate money; Statue of Liberty; topless dresses; the Grand Canyon; rodeos.....

So I guess I'll just have to go back again....

THE BALL-BEARING GENIUS

BY
IAN R McAULAY

I'M LUCKY ENOUGH to have one of those interesting job where, in the intervals of discussing science fiction over coffee, I can play with oscilloscopes and complicated electronic devices. Even if I wanted to try to try to build a psionic machine it would probably pass unnoticed except for the fact that I wouldn'T get a grant for the research, and nowadays if you don't get a grant you hardly ever consider doing the research. That's just one of the facts of academic life. Also, the lab where I work doesn't do any classified work, so any curious member of the general public with a certain amount of temerity can come in and see us godlike scientists actually researching away like mad. Unless we happen to be drinking coffee, reading the paper, out to lunch, away at a ~~scientific~~ scientific conference or doing any other of the thousand and one things that make basic research such a demanding occupation. As a matter of fact, there are quite a few members of the general public who do come in to see us, and you'd be surprised how many of them seem to talk like a Campbell editorial. So far this year we have had a couple of amateur Einsteins who thought they could square a circle, and a sweet little old lady who had invented a death-ray and proposed to make all our fortunes by knocking out any horse that looked like winning a race if she hadn't got any money on it. I swear I'm not making this up: all she wanted us to do was make up a pocket-sized laser that she could use from somewhere near the finish at the racetrack. We've had visitors a good deal nuttier than that and sometimes they are pretty hard to get rid of; if you criticise their ideas they get very peeved and talk about how science is blind to new ideas from

amateurs and the secrets of nature not being reserved for the professionals, and so on. Nowadays I just give them the quick smile and the handshake and tell them how interesting their ideas are even though in advance of their time and would they please work on it a bit more until it was simple enough to be understood by us plodding professionals, and they go away as pleased as anything and don't bother us again for awhile.

But when I was less experienced I used to take these characters seriously and try to explain things to them. One of the first and most persistent to come my way was The Man With The Swinging Ball; it was plastic and swung on the end of a piece of cord. This particular genius was passed on to me by my professor whom he had cornered for about half an hour. My professor, having become glassy-eyed in an attempt to explain elementary physics to The Man, apparently said something like, "Well, sir, I'm afraid your theory is a little over my head so let me pass you on to McAulay, who is our expert on balls," a dirty trick for which I have still not forgiven him. Anyway, the man arrived to me complete with plastic ball on cord and told me all about how he could locate ores and identify any hidden metal and estimate its amount even on a map. As I say, at that time I was still dewy-eyed and tolerant, so I explained to him that I thought this was most interesting though of course it did not fit in with contemporary ideas in physics. I went on to say that it was always possible that contemporary ideas were wrong and I would be most happy if he would demonstrate his remarkable invention to me.

The man practically burst with joy at this stage, presumably feeling that at long last his great discovery was about to be acclaimed by the scientific world, or at least by a junior member of it. His ball was vibrating on the end of its cord as he asked, no, demanded that I put him to any test. I went out of the room, put a lump of tin in a box, closed it and brought it back in with me and asked him to identify the metal. He held his ball over the box, observed with such grim concentration that sweat started out on his brow, and after thirty seconds or so spat out one word, "Aluminium!" When I said it was tin he refused to believe it but after several minutes deep thought announced that it must be badly contaminated with aluminium and therefore the test hadn't been fair. So out I went again with the box and loaded it with a coil of tungsten wire. When the man tried his ball over this, he watched it like a hawk for over a minute and then announced, "Copper, about an ounce of it!" with the triumphant air of someone vindicated against fearful odds. When I pointed out that there was at least four ounces of tungsten in the box he went purple in the face and indulged in a twenty-minute monologue that would not have gone amiss as an Analog editorial. Eventually he left in high dudgeon and I was able to get a somewhat belated lunch, having wasted most of the morning with the man.

Next day he was back and explained at great length that his ball had been out of adjustment for the first tests. Then and on several subsequent days I ran through all the available metals in the lab as test samples and he didn't get even one right. I didn't quite get to the stage of suggesting a suitable place for him to put his ball and cord before he came to the conclusion that it was no use fighting against the apathy of modern scientists and decided to keep his great discovery to himself until the world was ready for it. Perhaps if I had been more patient he would have been vindicated and maybe we would by now have reached the stars.

Perhaps!

LETTERS

7 Elm Road, Wembley, Middx.

Thanks for SCARR, that rarity: a legible neo-fanzine.

Thisish is preservation-worthy as a pocket anthology of McGonagall's epic poems. (Tho' I missed my favourite line: "Into her tomb the Great Queen dashes.")

All the same, I believe McGonagall's whole career originated from a simple error. He misunderstood what his inner voice was saying on that memorable day in 1877.

He tells us: "I imagined that a pen was in my hand and a voice crying 'Write! Write!'" My theory is that the voice was actually only remarking "Right, Right," to indicate that the pen was in his right hand, and therefore the hand which was free was his left. In short, it was just trying to teach him his right from his left. But he never did get the message, and took the wrong turning. He should have become a butcher. But then, of course, in a sense he did.

Bill.

70 Werrall Road, Bristol 8.

The trouble about The SCARR is that it always seems to suggest things to say about it. Even if they're only more puns on the title. The trouble is that I can't think of any more right now, so that idea will have to be discarded.

Every now and then a few lines of McGonagall drift my way, but never before have I encountered him in such bulk as here. And here's a thing. In the middle of the thing about Queen Victoria's Jubilee, suddenly something went CLICK and I found myself thinking the words to an improvised calypso-type tune. They went perfectly. Have I perchance stumbled on one of those things which it was never meant for man to know? (Mit all capital initials, like?)

There ought to be a pun or two in the entourage of the High King, but no doubt they've already been made in the Upper Newtownards area so I'll leave the subject entaraly alone. Cheers, mate.

Archie.

224 Holmes Ave., N.W., Huntsville, Alabama 35801.

The SCARR issue 4, April 1964 species, arrived after having wandered through many farflung times and spaces. We may never know what adventures took place or what dragons had to be slain to deliver the issue to these new and unfamiliar surroundings of mine, but the envelope arrived almost invisible under a mesh of forwarding addresses, stickers, official-looking stamps, and curious brown stains.

I would explain to you why, now that I have left the fan center of the Pacific Northwest, I receive so much of the Busby mail in addition to my own, but our puny lifetimes are too small to contain the time it would take. Better that we struggle on, making what we can of life and its unknowable mysteries, without pondering too long on the supernatural operation of the United States post office department.....

Speaking of words, ever since I discovered homoioteleuton I have been living for the day I can spring it in a letter of comment to a fanzine. But despite my most careful reading of fanzines that have arrived recently, I have not been able to find a place to use it. Patience and careful attention will win out in the end, however, and then I will have my chance, I am sure of it. ((But why homoioteleuton? It is quite a common word. As a matter of fact, by actual count, homoioteleuton occurs three times in this issue of The SCARR.))

26, Beechgrove Gardens, Belfast 6.

I am writing to you in my official capacity as correspondent to IRISH MOTORING because several statements in Ian MacAulay's piece in The SCARR 4 cannot go unchallenged. As I am regarded as an authority on motoring, people expect me to keep my own vehicle in perfect running order, and those cracks about my Triumph being antiquated could damage my reputation. First of all there never were any flower vases in the windows of that car — any fool could tell you that a row of tulips or roses would obstruct the driver's vision. The only vegetation I ever permitted to grow in the windows was a little moss and several varieties of fungi which grew directly onto the woodwork without recourse to window-boxes. Secondly, the Triumph did not have oil lamps — they were modern, methylated spirit-burning devices. Ian was nasty about them because I had to slap his wrist several times when I caught him trying to drink the meth.

In any case, I have since changed to a more up-to-date car, which, for your technically-minded readers, has such features as independent front suspension on all four wheels, a high-lift overhead roof, pressurized tyres, synchromesh on all ventilators, and a new system of self-cancelling turn signals in which if you forget to switch off a blinker after going round a corner the opposite blinker comes on as well, and after a pause of 13.5 seconds if you still haven't taken the appropriate action the car wrenches itself in half and disappears up two side-streets.

Regarding the rest of the issue, Archie Morcer's effort was unusual and very, very good; but Shaw's and GLC's were just sheer plagiarism. ((A plagiarism on both our houses?)) This practice, like the habit of putting insufficient postage on fanzines, should be, I tell you frankly, stamped out. I also think you invented J.D.Peebles: he is one of your fiendish anagrams, bleeps or plobes or something.

Constructive comment: I really do think that you should quote the full names of people in the letter section — the way it is now you're serving up skimmed egoboo.

Bob Shaw.

Whitelaw House, 4 Hillmorton Rd., Rugby.

I don't think "Dream's End," by Thorne Smith, was ever published. In an appendix to "Turnabout" all he has to say about it is, "'Dream's End," my first serious novel, done years ago, is considered by many my funniest. I don't speak to these people, though.' I'm sure he said somewhere else that he never got it published, but I can't find this reference. Personally, I can't imagine any book being more serious than "Did She Fall?" Although I normally think Thorne Smith's terrific, this book I found almost impossible to read. True, the idea of an entire family all converging on the same spot

ODDS

"What good has your education been to you if you can't read or write." (Len McDonald)

AND

"A gentleman's agreement is not an agreement and is between two persons, neither of whom is a gentleman, and each expects the other to be strictly bound while he himself has no intention whatever of being bound at all." (Mr Justice Vaizey. 1957)

ENDS

"Thank God I'm an atheist." (?)

"I have two square flower-beds and one more or less circular." (Overheard on a bus)

"An East wind is cold no matter what direction it comes from." (Irish saying.)

"And they just pushed her shoulder back into place without giving her an antiseptic." (Mrs Fitzpatrick)

"He admitted stealing a record player.....and the theft of a raincoat and five shillings from the gas-meter." (Local news-paper.)

"I hate mornings — they're so early." (Sam Martinez)

Last year a Mr Hoang Haw-Mai, of South Vietnam, produced a typewriter which has 5,709 Chinese characters, as well as the European alphabet and numbers. The machine is some two feet wide by a foot deep and seventeen inches high." (Daily Mirror. 1963)

"Her cigarette was dying rapidly to its tip. Holding it quivering in her mouth, she lit another from it and then let the first drop on the carpet, crushing it with her shoe." (H.E.Bates, "The Sleepless Moon.")

"I make a new will each week: I'm a fresh heir fiend."

Some words form their plural by changes in the body of the word. Examples:- Man. Woman. Mouse. Louse. Tooth. Foot. Any others?

American postal authorities are very touchy about the slogans they will approve for stamping on envelopes. Many apparently innocuous phrases have been firmly turned down because of some almost undetectable slight to a section of the sensitive public. Nonetheless the Post Office passed a new slogan this week.... It was sponsored by the Greater New York Society and read: "Help Stamp Out Human Beings; contribute to the war effort through your local tax collector." (Sunday Express. Jan. 1963)

Claustrophobia: Fear of Father Christmas.

Ilk: A baby elk.

Neurosis: Husband's wedding anniversary gift.

Anemones: Flowers in a hospital.

at the same time to murder the same person, all unbeknownst to each other, is rather funny, but it's spread out over too many pages — there's no punch line.

Your diary is interesting, but I would suggest that you extend your remarks to two or three lines of review. Even if it was twenty years ago you must remember something about the books. ((Not at my rate of 350 a year.)) Of course this wouldn't be quite what your diary said, but then I suspect very strongly that the June 17, 1921 and March 13, 1941 entries have been changed or extended. ((No changes made: excerpts printed as written.))

Peter.

10 Riverside Gardens, Belfast 11.

The mention you made of books and bad s-f brings to mind my own recent reading experiences. I can't find good s-f to read these days — except for novels which I already have as serials in my mag collection or collections of shorts which I already have in my ditto — and so the week before last, in a search for new sensations, I bought a Mickey Spillane. Then last week, to recover, I bought an Agatha Christie. The AC was called "The Pale Horse," and was a whodunnit with a witchcraft red herring running through it ((On a broomstick?)) and had a Catholic priest murdered in the first chapter. The way this was described — stricken several times on the back of the head, any single blow being severe enough to be fatal — contrasted oddly with Spillane's observations regarding the effect of a dum-dum bullet — a small hole where it went in but where it came out you could stick your head in and look around without getting blood on your ears. And I couldn't help thinking of what Mike Hammer's reaction to this brutal slaying of a priest would have been. Almost certainly the crazy music would start up inside his head and a few dozen groins would get booted, and several, at least, corpses would be strewn along his path before he cooled off enough to explain to the reader which one of them actually dunnit. As for Inspector Lejeune's reaction in "The Pale Horse," his soft brown eyes clouded briefly and his mouth looked sad. That was all! He got the murderer in the end, of course, but with no crazy music or dirty fighting or gut-shooting. He just looked sad . . . !

What bothers me about all this is that I enjoyed the Agatha Christie better than the Mickey Spillane. Do you think I'm becoming effeminate?

James.

40 Parris Wood Ave., Didsbury, Manchester 20.

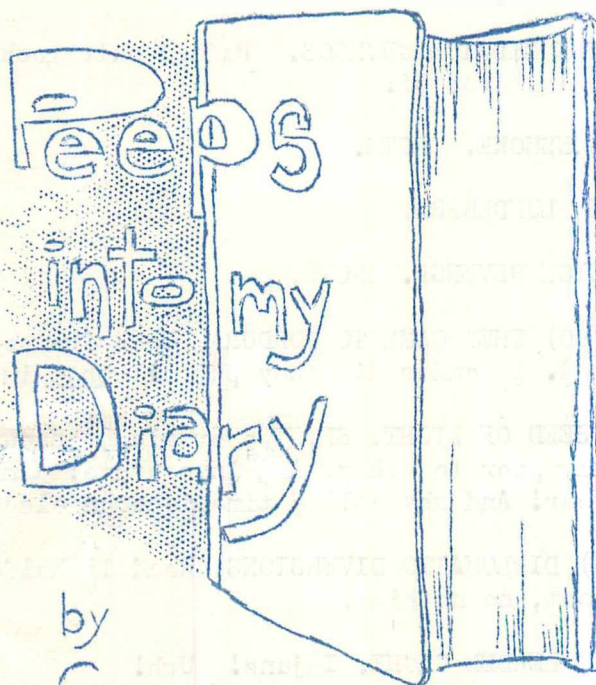
All right, you like literary puzzles. Sort this out, if you can. Doubtless you'll have heard of Dr Conor Cruise O'Brien, ex-UN Commander in the Congo, and now something or other at the University of Accra. Writes for the "New Statesman." The question is, how did he get the name "Cruise"?

Recently I was reading the book reviews in "The Countryman" for Summer 1940. A little late, but I was busy when it first appeared. Among them is a review of an Oxford U.P. book about boats, called "The Practical Man's Cruiser" by Conor O'Brien. Presto! Dr O'Brien is called "Cruise" because he wrote a book about cruising. Prove me wrong!

This is the sort of true-but-absurd fact that is guaranteed to stop any party conversation DEAD. Such as, for instance, that the well-known brand of Birdseye frozen foods were named after a gentleman named Clarence Birdseye.

Sid

000000000000000000000000



by
George
Charters

1960

Sep 9 Fri Bart Carson (70) THE LATE DEMENTED. Crime.

Sep 10 Sat Peter Dawson (70) THE MAN ON THE BUCKSKIN.

Sep 11 Sun Michael Sandys (80) CRUEL EASTER. Irish troubles, 1916. Typical I.R.A. men: Matt (stupid and "patriotic"), Bull (stupid and brutal), Sylvester (stupid and treacherous). Sex also lifts its head.

Sep 12 Mon Victor Valentine (60) CURE FOR DEATH. Rejuvenating ray gives anyone exactly 50 years of life, with no memory of previous life. Discoverer and family and retainers retire to Isle of Wight and wait to inherit world.

Sep 13 Tue John Christopher (80) THE DEATH OF GRASS. As vegetation dies and food gets scarce and society disintegrates, a family with retainers leaves London and fight their way to a secluded valley in the North. The theme is not new but is well-written, even though the climax is down-beat. The story screams for a sequel but it would take a better writer than Christopher. (Of Nordenholt's Million by JJConnington.)

Sep 14 Wed Maurice Walsh (80) THE HONEST FISHERMAN and other stories. Irish humour.

1960

Sep 15 Thu Vingie E Roe (50) LOST TRAIL. Seems a pity, since Vingie likes the word "unctuous" so much, that she can't spell it correctly.

Sep 16 Fri A A Fair (70) TOP OF THE HEAP. Fast-paced American crime. But "charters" on p. 148 has a small "c".

Sep 17 Sat John Wyndham (50) THE MIDWICH CUCKOOS. Padded outrageously with philosophical discussions. Me, I prefer sf.

Sep 18 Sun Ken Koster OUTLAW GUNSMOKE. ROTM.

Sep 19 Mon L P Holmes (70) THE PLUNDERERS.

Sep 20 Tue Jim Conroy DESTINATION REVENGE. ROTM.

Sep 21 Wed Glendon Swarthout (80) THEY CAME TO CORDURA. Book from which the film was made. Tough. Uninhibited. I wonder did they put all that in the film.

Sep 22 Thu Edmund Cooper (20) SEED OF LIGHT. SF. Two stories tenuously connected. Poor by themselves, doubly poor together. And inaccurate: a million miles is a quarter of a light-year! And why call a timepiece an electrochron?

Sep 23 Fri Roger Payrefitte (5) DIPLOMATIC DIVERSIONS. Read it half-way: no humour, no excitement, no interest, no nothing.

Sep 24 Sat Noel Loomis (40) THE LEADEN CACHE. Injuns! Ugh!

Sep 25 Sun Erskine Caldwell (70) THE SURE HAND OF GOD. Something after the style of God's Little Acre but from a different angle. Earthy — of course. Uses repetitive trick to get effects. Has he read Catcher in the Rye?

Sep 26 Mon Hamilton Craige (50) THUNDER IN THE DUST.

Sep 27 Tue O Henry (95) WHIRLIGIGS. Quote: If the Sphinx could talk she'd probably say, womanlike, "All these visitors coming and not a thing to eat except the sand which is there."

Sep 28 Wed Vaughan Wilkins (90) VALLEY BEYOND TIME. Fantasy. Another world in another continuum occasionally allows crossings. Other world has no sun, no storm, no cold, no time.

Sep 29 Thu Fred Hoyle (80) THE BLACK CLOUD. Intelligent cloud comes in contact with Earth. A little wordy.

Sep 30 Fri L P Hartley (50) FACIAL JUSTICE. Padded. Funny???

Oct 1 Sat Raymond Chandler (80) PEARLS ARE A NUISANCE. Essay & 3 shorts.

Oct 2 Sun Anthology: OUT WEST. Ed.: Jack "Shane" Schaeffer. Stories by all the big names in westerns EXCEPT Luke Short, C E Mulford, Max Brand, Zane Grey, C A Seltzer, W C McDonald, W McL Raine, &c. Blurb for each story. Quote: He wasn't greedy, he just wanted the land that adjoined his own.

BED-TIME STORY

JOHN
BERRY

I pushed the office door open, then I stood for a moment and looked at the white-painted notice on the dark glass.

THE WATCHING GUY, I read. I grinned. A subtle pun. I liked puns. In smaller letters underneath it stated INQUIRY AGENT. J.D. Bartholomew.

A pretty girl asked me to state my business. I told her it was private and I wanted to see Mr Bartholomew. She gave me a dirty look and went into the inner sanctum. She came out after a few moments, looking flushed and adjusting her hair. She nodded me in.

J.D. sat behind his desk, smoking a cigar. Every time he inhaled his eyelids dropped lower over his bleary eyes.

"To hell with it," he rasped and stubbed it out. "A client went bankrupt and for my fee I got fourteen dozen of these. Have one."

I accepted it. I'm somewhat of a connoisseur. I sniffed it, felt it between my fingers and thumb. I decided it would do to light the fire. I rammed it in my breast pocket and faced J.D.

"I've got something for you," I began.

He leaned back. "Anything," he said. "I'll do anything within the law, and if you make it worth my while, I'll do anything outside the law."

He winked. It was about as potent as a strawberry flan.

"I want you to...."

He put up a hand and stopped me.

"Like I said," he interrupted, "I'll do anything, anything, except divorce."

I raised my eyebrows.

"But I always thought enquiry agents got most of their business from divorce."

"Most of us do," he said, and grimaced. "I did divorce once." He shuddered, and pulled out the inevitable office bottle. He poured out two glasses and took the full one, beating me by a fraction of a second.

"I would have thought it to be a lucrative occupation," I said, "especially considering the low moral standards prevalent in this town."

J.D. took a guilty glance towards the outer office, and coughed.

"If you've half an hour, I'll tell you all about it."

I nodded. I kind of felt sorry for him, the way he'd tried to impress me with the cigar. I glanced round at the shoddy furnishings. I felt perhaps his story would be worth the telling. I nodded.

"It wasn't long ago," he sighed. He twitched just once, then seemed to take a mental grip of himself. "I was doing well with divorce, I had contact with all the big hotels, and sometimes I was even slipped the pass key before I opened my mouth. Like you said, it was lucrative. I made so much money that I hired an assistant. When you go out hold the door so that the sunlight shines on the glass, and you'll see that black paint covers an "S". It used to be THE WATCHING GUYS. Jeeze, he was an idiot if ever there was one."

He raised his head, closed his eyes, and almost sobbed. For a moment he seemed

in some trouble, but eventually shook his head, as though by doing so he got rid of an unpleasant memory.

"I landed this big divorce case, see. A rich man. I sort of had free access to the man's bank account. I traced his wife to a night club. Now got this. I use all modern methods in my investigating. Following a suspect car is old-fashioned. The police do it now by using several cars, and by radio control they pass the car along to each other. Naturally, I couldn't afford that, but I used the simple expedient of attaching a can of fluorescent powder to the chassis, with a little hole punched in the can, of course. I had an infra-red lamp on the front of my car, so that there was no need to follow the suspect car immediately. I could afford to have a cigarette, and let them get clean away before following. Jeeze, I'm telling you, in the darkness, with my infra-red lamp switched on, it was like following an elephant in the snow. It worked dozens of times. You'll realise that the big difficulty is in fixing the can under the suspect car. On this particular divorce case, I got my assistant to do it whilst I kept watch on the wife and her lover. When they drove away to their hotel, I sat there for a few moments, so that they wouldn't think they were being tailed. I took their route, but couldn't see any glaring trail of fluorescent powder. I castigated my assistant for not making sure the powder was coming out before leaving the undersides of the car. To cut a long story short as I can make it, after half an hour of aimless driving about I eventually hit the trail. Honest, if you could see it, it shines superbly with the infra-red....and of course no one else can see it."

He paused, and looked a bit diffidently at me.

"I finished back at the blasted night-club again. The idiot had fixed the can to the underside of my car....as I gave him his cards he explained that all cars look alike when you're crawling underneath them in the dark."

I clicked my teeth sympathetically.

"My client was pressing me. He said if I didn't get results soon he'd get another inquiry agent. As I said, I was in the money with that one, so I took the unprecedented step of actually giving his wife's maid ten pounds to tell me which hotel it was. She knew all about these assignments, see? It was at the CARLTON. I bribed the desk clerk to give them a room at the back, the room outside of which grows a large elm tree. He seemed surprised, probably realising that my technique was usually more subtle. As soon as it became dark I shinned up this tree, edged along the requisite branch and waited. My luck...it started to pour with rain, but I held on for some hours, making sure that the lens of my Nikkon didn't get wet. Eventually the erring wife and her lover came in the room. Well, I mean, I've seen these erotic love affairs dozens of times, and I can assure you that it wasn't the antics of the couple which caused me to fall off the branch. I must have screamed as I fell on their verandah. The lover rushed away for medical assistance and I understand it was only the Kiss of Life administered by that woman which saved my life. So after that I made up my mind....no more divorce cases."

He blinked a few times, and even offered a tentative smile, as if, on recollection, he saw the funny side of it.

"Now what can I do for you?" he asked, hands together in his professional role once more.

"You can accept this summons," I grinned. "You're cited as co-respondent. No wonder that desk clerk was surprised....I'd already booked the wardrobe. I don't think the judge will believe it was the Kiss of Life. But you the News of the World will have fun with that one, though."

I did glance at the glass on the outside door as the sunlight shafted across it. It was as he said.

COINCIDENCE

Abraham Lincoln was relatively unknown for a long time prior to his winning of the Presidency. He made his name known through the Lincoln-Douglas debates. John F Kennedy was also a relative unknown and he became familiar to the nation because of the Kennedy-Nixon debates.

Lincoln was elected President in 1860. Kennedy was elected in 1960. There are seven letters in Lincoln's name; Kennedy's also has seven.

Abraham Lincoln was primarily concerned with Civil Rights. Under his guidance the Emancipation Proclamation was drafted in 1862. John Kennedy also found that the major domestic problem in the nation was that of Civil rights. He all but completed and pushed through Congress the controversial Civil Rights Bill.

Abraham Lincoln and John Kennedy were both assassinated on a Friday, in the presence of their wives. They were both shot from behind and in the head. Lincoln's killer fired the fatal bullet in a theatre and ran to a warehouse. Kennedy's assassin committed the crime from a warehouse and ran to a theatre.

Lincoln's secretary, a man named Kennedy, advised him not to go to the theatre for unexpressed reasons. Kennedy's secretary, named Lincoln, advised him not to go to Dallas for equally mysterious reasons.

The name John Wilkes Booth contains fifteen letters and the name Lee Harvey Oswald also contains fifteen. Booth was born in 1839. Oswald was born in 1939. Both were killed before they reached trial.

Lincoln was followed by his Vice-President, Andrew Johnson. Kennedy was followed by his Vice-President Lyndon Johnson. Both were named as Vice-President when they were Senators. Both were from the South. Andrew Johnson was born in 1808. Lyndon Johnson was born in 1908. Both names contain thirteen letters.

Lincoln was murdered, Andrew Johnson filled out his term and then was defeated by his opponent, Ulysses S Grant. Kennedy was murdered, Lyndon Johnson has filled out his term and now will run against his opponent, who also has a name beginning with G.....

DOES HISTORY REPEAT ITSELF?

—michael l charters

