

THE SCARR



# THE SCARR

Number 110

OMPA 48

September 1966

ONCE AGAIN you are holding in your  
toil-worn hands an issue of THE SCARR,  
the fanzine. Accept no substitutes:  
always look for the initials GLC.

You will now be able to read A HAPPY  
AFTERNOON by I don't know who. It's  
a bit dated as shown by "ironmonger"  
and "a penny box of tacks." If you  
know who wrote it let me know.

You can also read Pepys into my  
Diary, and wonder with the rest of  
fankind why he reads the stuff. I  
read the good stuff, too, but others  
can review it better than I can.

Then you have another true episode  
in the History of Irish Fandom. If  
you don't believe it, don't worry.

And to top it off you have letters,  
with an occasional short, pithy re-  
ply by me. The last page is taken,  
almost in toto, from HYPHEN 16.

In this issue I did a bit of over-  
inking. So if, in your copy, there's  
an illegible page DON'T READ IT.

Slainte,

George L. Charters, 3 Lancaster Av.,  
BANGOR, Northern Ireland.

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# HAPPY AFTERNOON

THE OBLIGING YOUNG MAN in the ironmongery shop had never done anything to offend the schoolgirl of fifteen who was gazing meditatively into the shop-window. He had never seen her before.

He hopes now that he will never see her again.

She entered, looking shyly around her, took the seat to which the obliging young man waved his hand, and sighed.

"I should like," she said, "to see some corkscrews."

This brought out all the young man's best qualities. He was suave in his reply, deferential in his smile, and quick with his fingers. As he unwrapped parcels, and let loose different breeds of corkscrew, one after another, he enquired if she had a preference for any special kind.

"Yes," she said, "the corkscrews I want to see are patent corkscrews; those with a dodge, or trick, or catch, or lever, to make the cork come out easily."

"Certainly, miss. Quite so," said the young man intelligently. "I have several neat little inventions of the kind, mostly American. Surprising what a number of these things come over from America. Now this, you will observe, is simplicity itself. No pulling, no violence required. Screw into the cork so, turn the handle so, and the cork comes out. We sell a great many of these."

"I can quite understand that," said the girl, "it looks very clever. Is it very dear?"

"One and ninepence, miss. We have the same thing in a better quality at—"

"Oh, thanks," said the girl, "I think the quality of this is beautiful. May I see another one?"

"Certainly, miss," said the young man. "Now, this is a very clever little thing, on the lever principle; no pulling or violence required. You just—"

"May I try it?"



She was by no means a bad-looking girl, and, though it was stretching a point, the assistant drove an old cork into an empty bottle, and allowed her to draw it out again.

"Yes," the girl said, "that is charming. I like that much the best. What price is it?"

"This is a little dearer. Two and four. We'll say two and three as I see a very slight speck of rust on the handle, which, however, will easily clean off."

He began to wrap it up in paper briskly.

The girl looked at him with sad, wondering eyes.

"Why are you wrapping it up like that?" she asked.

"Well, miss, I supposed that you'd sooner carry it wrapped up. If you like to take it as it is, and slip it into your pocket, of course——"

"I don't think I ought to do that," said the girl. "You see, it's not my corkscrew. I don't think you ought to suggest that I should steal your employer's goods. It's not very honest, is it? Of course, I don't want to preach; I have several faults myself, but——"

Here the young man broke in, very frigidly:

"I was under the impression that you were buying that corkscrew."

"Why?" asked the girl. "I never said anything about buying. I don't want to buy any corkscrews. It's not very nice of you to pretend that I do. What does a girl of my age want with corkscrews? I don't drink. I just wanted to look at the clever mechanism, and so on, and I think you showed them off very nicely. I ought to have thanked you before. I'll do it now. Thank you."

"Here," said the young man, with the intense calm of the exasperated. "You may think it a very funny thing to come in here, turn over the stock, spoil it by handling, and waste my time; but let me tell you that people who don't come in here as customers, come in here as trespassers, and by the law——"

She did not look quite so frightened as he had hoped.

"Yes," she said. "I know all about the law, and it doesn't affect me, because, you see, I came in as a customer. It doesn't follow because I don't want to buy corkscrews, I don't want to buy anything else. You're so hasty. That is how you get wrong."

"Is there," said the young man, "anything which you want to buy? Not want to see, mind, want to buy?"

"Yes," said the girl, "there is. But must I buy it without seeing it? It doesn't seem to me to be the usual way of doing business, but I daresay you know best."

The young man sighed.

"You can see any article which you are intending to buy."

"Well, you should have said that before. You contradict yourself, you know. I want a packet of that blue-grey Silurian note-paper, with envelopes to match, and some chocolate nougat."

"You'd better get out of the shop!" said the man. "You know perfectly well that this is an ironmonger's, not a stationer's."

"You really are much too hasty," said the girl. "I'm only following your own directions, and you can't buy chocolate nougat at a stationer's. There's a card in that window which says: 'If you don't see what you want in the window, kindly step inside and ask for it.' I didn't see any Silurian notepaper in that window so I kindly stepped inside and——"

"Will you go?" said the young man, losing his self-control.

"Not immediately. If I've been misled, it's your fault for putting notices in the window which you don't mean. Why do you do it? You shouldn't. There are other things I want as well. I want a penny box of tin-tacks."

"Will you go?"

"Yes. But I think you ought to serve me first, without being impolite about it."

She turned round to the proprietor, who at that moment appeared behind the counter.

"Do you think," she said, "you could persuade this young man to sell me a penny box of tin-tacks? I want them, and I have got the penny. Whenever I ask him for them, he roars out: 'Will you go?'"

"She comes in here——" the young man began.

"Well, he can see that for himself," said the girl. "But I don't want to talk about it any more. If, in a big iron-monger's shop like this, two grown men can't sell a pennyworth of tin-tacks, I'd better try somewhere else. Good morning!"

So she spent a penny on a remote chair in the Park, where she could make strange chortling noises without attracting the attention of the curious.

the end

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MY TRIP to the United States did not start too well. I had foolishly put off getting dollars and Travellers' Cheques until the morning of July 9th, and I was leaving that night. I drove early in the morning to Belfast and entered Cook's with confidence. The confidence quickly oozed away. There was a huge queue at the Foreign Exchange counter. I hate standing in queues, so I walked out and drove back to Bangor and went to my own bank, hoping to get fixed up, but the bank was closed: they've stopped opening on Saturdays. I went straight (well, fairly straight) back to Belfast and found the line in Cook's just as big. Attached myself to it and hoped it would move quickly. It didn't. It was a warm morning (a rare thing in Ireland) and the place was hot and stuffy. I sweated



and forboded. Perspiration and forboding increased when I heard a man who had just been served remark, en passant, to a friend in the line that it had taken him an hour and twenty minutes to get his cheques. I became a bit dizzy and leaned against the wall to ease the strain. It was no use. After half an hour I knew that if I didn't sit down I would fall down, so I just sat down on the floor. In a minute a uniformed attendant came and asked me if I was all right. I said I had gotten dizzy standing so long but that I'd be OK if they would let me sit there. He went away and brought the manager who very kindly suggested that I step into his office and sit on a chair. I said I would lose my place in the queue but the manager said that that would be fixed.

With the manager holding one arm and the attendant the other I was conducted to the office, placed carefully on a chair and given a glass of water to sip. I sat there sipping — and wiping off perspiration with a sodden handkerchief. The manager asked me what I had come for and I told him, so he told me to wait and left the office, returning in a few minutes with the cheques. When he went out again to staple them in a holder a clerk came in with a cup of coffee for me. I stayed for a few minutes after getting the cheques, thanked the manager and left. Went to bed when I got home and after a couple of hours sleep I felt fine.

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In the last issue's Chophouse I gave a few word puzzles. For those who are interested (and they're mighty few) I give the solutions:

Number 1. Looking is obviously "Looking after Number One.      Your Hat means Keep it under your hat.      <sup>Man</sup> Board stands for Man overboard.      LOGIRL00000 is A girl in a million.      GIRL £100,000 represents A girl with a very nice figure.      T      I      M      E is just a way of saying Long time no see.      KEMP OFF THE GRASS stands for Sign on the dotted line.      NO L CK is No luck without you.      DLHC a backward child.      Trinouble means I'm in trouble.      And lastly, Going home means Going far from home.

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A recent survey by nationally famous internists has disclosed an alarming fact. It seems that people with low intelligence, especially extremely gross people, have iridescent livers. After citing a mass of data the physicians conclude the long report by firmly asserting that every clod has a liver shining.

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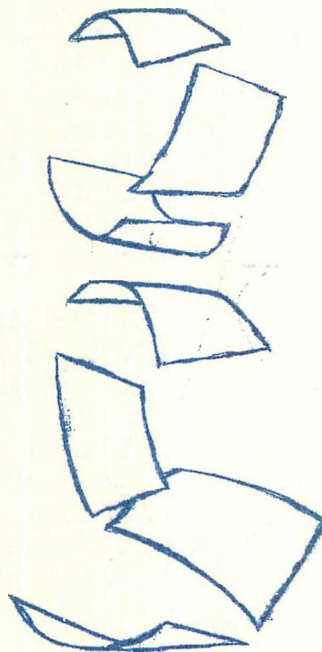
Of all the people in the Wurd family Jack was the strongest. A mountain of a man, he was known all over the countryside.

When the epidemic occurred everyone felt that Jack would be saved. However, the big fellow was not spared although the rest of his family stayed as healthy as ever.

With a shrug of his shoulders Big Jack explained this by saying, "The burly Wurd catches the germ."



# Peeps into my Diary



1966

Aug 28 Bron Fane (30) SOMEWHERE OUT THERE. Imagine B.F. (appropriate initials!) trying to write a time-travel story. And he says that Chuck Adams is one of the greatest western writers. I suspect Bron Fane is a pseudonym for Chuck Adams, Esq.

Aug 29 Arthur Conan Doyle (50) THE MARACOT DEEP and other stories. ACD does not even try to make the survival of Atlanteans believable.

Sep 1 Car behaving oddly on corners. Checked at strange garage and found that pressure was down to 10. He made it up to 26. He said, "Thank you!" as I drove away. "Not at all," I said courteously, "the pressure was mine." (I think it was Dunlop who first made that pun.)

Sep 5 Gec C Foster 50 THE CHANGE. Atom-bombs cause people to become younger, sometimes until they become babies and die of young age.

Sep 27 Jean Gaston Vandel (30) ENEMY BEYOND PLUTO. [Translated from French.] Enemy aliens try spreading diseases before taking over — though how anything used to the extreme cold "beyond Jupiter" could like the earth I don't know.

Oct 26 Robert Silverberg 40 RECALLED TO LIFE. A lifeless effort.

Oct 28 Read Analog for July 62. Volume LXLX, No 5 — whatever the hell that means. A nine-page editorial. Also a story by William Lee, JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT. Not, I think, a word-for-word copy of Wilmar Shiras' first story. It would be great if we had a science-fiction magazine without deroes, or mental telepathy, or Roman Numerals, or dianetics, or illustrations which had been soaked in dirty water for a year and which wasn't ashamed to give their circulation figures. Utopia?



Oct 30 Darrell T Langart 50 ANYTHING YOU CAN DO. There's this alien, see, and these twin brothers, see, and the weaker one is built up into a Superman, and all this mashed up and thrown at one in bits in A E van Vogt style but with none of his ability.

Nov 15 A crowd of men have now been working for more than a month on a short length of sewer in Abbey St. Appropriately enough they've a sign saying: SLOW ROAD WORKS AHEAD.

1964

Jan 9 Margaret St Clair (40) SIGN OF THE LABRYS. Future world story. People living underground. Hero, who does not know who he is, spends most of his time going from level to level for no reason that I could see except three cents a word. At the end he finds out who he is: The Devil. The hell with that for a yarn.

Jan 16 Gil North (40) SERGEANT CLUFF GOES FISHING. Could only read 50 pages. One sentence contains the word "Colonel" five times. Maybe this is a joke — a private joke.

Jan 23 Luan Ranzetta THE NIGHT OF THE DEATH RAIN. This is said on the cover to be Horror SF — a typo for Horrible SF. The weather in England has been queer for months: no rain. At an atomic station floods are feared, and glass bubbles are made so that if the waters rise too far the employes and families can float to safety. One such family is floating around when there is a T-E-R-R-R-I-F-F-F-I-C explosion. They lose consciousness and awaken to find they have landed on a satellite of Jupiter, by Jove! They have to submit to a rigidly-regimented regime. So they hope to escape and when the weather starts getting queer they hope even more. When the deluge of rain comes they hurry into the old glass sphere and soon a T-E-R-R-R-I-F-F-F-I-C explosion sends them up into the "airless atmosphere." When they regain consciousness (yes, they lost it again, the careless clots!) they are nearing this planet where they land with a bone-wracking thud. The locals tell them it is Australia. It seems a roundabout way to emigrate! By the way, the glass of which the bubbles are made is not just ordinary glass: it is specially toughened!

Jan 24 Louis Charbonneau 60 CORPUS EARTHLING. Expedition to Mars brings back two dead (?) Martians who take over two bodies and play hell with the hero's love-life.

Feb 12 Clifford D Simak (70) THEY WALKED LIKE MEN. Nasty old aliens try to take over Earth (Sky Miller won't like this idea — it's been done before) by turning themselves into money and buying everything. But the smell of skunks ruin their evil plans.

Mar 25 G McDonald Wallace 60 LEGEND OF LOST EARTH. Celtic legends survive when man drives himself out of Earth into Niflheim, a "parallel" world, full of soot — a most unsuitable home. Eventually, "believers only" return to the green hills of Earth. (Boy, can I coin a phrase!)

Apr 11 Samuel R Delany (50) THE JEWELS OF APTOR. The other half of this Ace Double is SECOND ENDING by James White. Before she married James, Peggy was a decent, respectable girl, but her character deteriorated afterwards, and soon she was making puns just like the rest of us. One day when she walked into Walter's drawing-room and saw the two-globe light she said gravely, "So that's what they call a candle bra!" On page 409 of THE JEWELS OF APTOR we find these words".....an ornate, branching candelbra....."



Apr 17 Pierre Boulle (70) MONKEY PLANET. Humans in cages and Monkeys in control. Heavy-handed satire, but I liked it.

May 7 Dornford Yates 90 WIFE APPARENT. Theme has been done before: Man loves girl, loses memory, loves girl all over again, regains memory. But DY does it in his own way -- to me a very satisfactory way. Two characters stand out: the housekeeper Florence and an elm tree which cannot quite talk. Makes me wonder why he wrote that horrible LOWER THAN VERMIN.

May 31 Wm Melvin Kelley (60) A DIFFERENT DRUMMER. Nameless state in USA where the negroes leave instead of fighting. Whites get so mad at this inhuman idea that they lynch the last negro.

June 12 Hal Clement (50) CYCLE OF FIRES. Fans say EESmith is inept in his handling of conversation but he is good compared to HC. Best conversation-writer in SFdom: Eric Frank Russell.

Sep 11 Hugh Walters (40) EXPEDITION VENUS. Copyright by Walter Hughes. Heroes go to Venus to get cure for disease which is killing off Earth people. Coming back they accelerate so much they run out of fuel and find they are going to pass Earth, so they fire the lateral rockets which puts them in an octagonal orbit so that a space tug can come and get them. Why can't Analog print stuff like this?

Dec 1 Rosalind (now aged 6) has a magic paint-book: if she dips her brush in water and brushes lightly over the surface the paint becomes visible and the black & white illustrations are coloured. Today she got tired of this system because of its slowness so she half-filled a cup with water and poured it over the page. First time I ever saw a girl pouring over a book!

Dec 26 Snow began to fall while I was driving. Funny how the snow always seems to come straight at the wind-shield. I turned off wiper to see if it would stick. It did. In a very few seconds I couldn't see through it, and just as an experiment I drove by looking in the rear-view mirror & keeping the road centred therein. But this needed concentration and I was distracted by shouts and horn-tooting from other motorists. Presumably the shouts were Christmas greetings, but as I say they distracted my attention so I cleared the wind-screen and resumed normal driving.

Jan 18 Have read two Doc Savages: THE THOUSAND-HEADED MAN and METEOR MENACE. Surely I didn't like Doc Savage back in the thirties?

Feb 9 Fredric Brown (90) WHAT MAD UNIVERSE. Second reading. Maybe I should have made that 100 instead of 90..

Feb 20 Driving through Hollywood met Princess Alexandra in her car on her way to the Ulster Folk Museum. Did not recognise her. I don't suppose she recognised me either!

Mar 8 WITH THE I.R.A. IN THE FIGHT FOR IRISH FREEDOM. Written by various guerilla leaders from 1916 to 1922. Amusing detail: the book (undated) is printed by The Kerryman, Ltd, Tralee, a firm which also publishes a newspaper called The Kerryman. On the back cover, under the title "In the Opinion of the Press," it says: "There is a glory all its own in this book."--The Kerryman. Impartial opinion!



# THE TELEKINETICIST OR SOMETHING

AS SOON AS I walked into 170 that night I knew something was wrong. That sort of sixth sense which has never failed me in times of difficulty or danger told me that something was awry — though actually I prefer Bourbon. I'd been delayed through giving a girl-hiker a lift and naturally that's the kind of thing that can't be hurried, but it meant I'd missed out on the first act of whatever-it-was.

They were all there, as they'd been many a time before — but this time there was a difference. They were sitting in a row along one wall: Walter and Madeleine, Peggy and James, Sadie and Bob. They looked unhappy.

"Why so sad, lad?" I asked Walt.

Wordlessly he pointed to the ceiling at the other side of the room. I looked — it seemed the natural thing to do. To my surprise quite a large section of plaster was missing from the ceiling. I looked back in ~~amazement~~ amazement at the gloomy Walt.

"You didn't tell me," I accused, "that you were going to carry out some walterations!"

Nobody smiled. I couldn't blame them.

"It fell down this afternoon," said Madeleine, "and we've only just finished clearing it away."

"Well, you'll just have to get it fixed," I said with forced cheerfulness. At that, I didn't have to force it very much: after all, it wasn't ~~my~~ ceiling.

"How?" Walt asked. "I've just backed fourteen losers in a row. I'm skint!"

There was a gloomy silence, broken at length by Peggy.



"I know how to fix it," she said. "Use ceiling-wax!"

There was a hushed hush. Then, to break the embarrassment, Bob began to speak hurriedly.

"There's a blonde in the office," he said, "and the other day I asked her what was the difference between an elephant and a matter-honey. When she'd ask me 'What's a matter-honey?' I would answer, 'Nothing at all, honey!' But she wouldn't play."

"Why, what did she say?" asked Sadie, who hadn't heard about the blonde.

"She asked me what was an elephant?" said Bob.

Tension was eased a bit, but Peggy refused to be mollified: she'd already changed her name once.

"Well," she said, "if you're all so clever why don't you just teleport all that plaster back into position and keep it there with a stasis field or something?"

There was another embarrassing silence until Walt answered.

"Impossible!" he said. "I've never tried anything so heavy before, and in any case I can't work a field stasis yet."

We looked at him — and looked at him.

"D-d-do you n-mean," I stuttered at last, "that you can move things?"

"Oh, yes," he admitted.

"But you never told us," two or three voices said at once.

"Nobody would believe me — everybody would say it was a trick, and in any case it's hard work — takes a lot out of me — like doing a day's work in a minute or two."

"Show us!" we chorussed.

"All right," he said, and his eyes went round the room as if looking for something. He pointed to a tiny, basket-shaped ornament across the room.

"That will do. Now, keep quiet!"

He stared — or rather glared — at the unoffensive little basket, his body became rigid, and his hands became fists where they rested on his thighs. His knuckles turned white. Our eyes shuttled from him to the basket.

Then his fists began to lift. The basket wobbled a bit, rose a couple of inches and stayed there. Walt seemed to grit his teeth, he edged forward in his chair and the basket moved up another inch or two, swaying a little.

Walter groaned, and if that sounds old-worldish I can't help it — this is a factual report.

"I can't hold it!" he whispered. The basket fell down as his hands relaxed, his body sagged and he fell face down on the carpet.

The others got to him before he (age doesn't let me move quickly) so I dashed slowly upstairs to the bathroom to get some water. The kitchen was closer, but I just didn't think. As I came out of the bathroom with a glass I heard a giggle from the bedroom opposite. I glanced in and saw young Bryan on his knees. He seemed to be pulling something up through a hole in the floor. I was puzzled for a minute, then I walked gravely downstairs.

I handed the water to Madeleine and she sprinkled a few drops on Walter's face. Me, I'd have thrown the glassful! His eyes fluttered open and he raised himself weakly to his elbows.

"Where am I?" he clichéd.

Madeleine tried a small joke to get his mind functioning again.

"You're all right, Walter," she said, "you're among friends."

"My ghod!" he said, collapsing again. "Van Diemen's Land!"

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Later, after all the others had gone, I asked a question.

"It was easy to have Bryan upstairs with a length of thread and arrange cue-words for him. But what would you have done if Peggy had not mentioned teleportation?"

"I'd have brought the conversation round to it," Walter replied. "Peggy mentioning it was a stroke of luck."

"Was it luck last week?" I asked. "You remember, when Madeleine dropped a neringue from a plate and caught it before it reached the floor, you said it must have been a booneringue. Suppose she'd missed it and it had fallen in the saucc-boat you'd have been scuppered." I was pleased with that pun.

"not at all," he said. "I'd have said it must have been a cataneringue."

"Well, all right, but suppose she'd dropped an eclair instead?"

He thought for half a second. "I'd have said that I knew it was going to fall because I'm eclairvoyant."

I gave in!

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# LETTERS

Harry Warner, Jr., 423 Summit Ave., Hagerstown, Md.

Your full-length, book-length, feature article by James White was outstanding in the new Scarr. Something seemed vaguely familiar about his account of the production of *The Gondoliers*. Almost at the end, I became aware of the source of this impression. Here, obviously, was the inspiration for *THE WATCH BELOW!* The cramped situation in which James found himself, out of sight of the majority of the surrounding humanity, the watery element that is so necessary a part of any play about gondolas, the limitations of diet that were imposed by the morsels that came his way, and the fact that the operetta is based on a small group of humans whose true origin has been forgotten by the rest of mankind — they're all common to the essay and to the novel. Just think how important this issue of *The Scarr* will be when the James White fans organize into a subfandom of their own.

Unfortunately, I've never taken part in a G & S production. My thespian career has been limited to serving as one-fourth of the jury (foreman and two subordinate jurors) in a production of a play by Ayn Rand done by the local little theater group, and my participation was limited to dress rehearsal and inspired in fact by the inability of the group to find enough jurors to stage a rehearsal. I was offered a much more important part in actual live audience performance of another play, but my working schedule forced me to turn down this juicy role, that of a corpse who is on stage during the entire first act although he was killed an hour before the curtain rose on the first act. My failure to accept the role caused a slight change in the production, because the casting committee couldn't find anyone else who looked dead enough, and as a result the person who played the corpse was forced to sit with his back to the footlights in a large chair, almost completely invisible to the audience. They would have turned the chair around for me. My favorite memory of a G & S performance is that of John Charles Thomas, a really great concert artist and opera singer, in *H.M.S. Pinafore*. He was nearing the end of his career, was as drunk as a lord, he sang magnificently, he hammed up the acting in an irresistible manner, and he suddenly decided to give a recital between acts that lasted the better part of an hour and contained the loveliest singing of serious music that I have ever heard in person.

If you ever want to write one of those novels about cellars that slowly fill with water, pay a return trip to the United States and visit me on this time across. On both sides of me are houses sitting on the watershed created by my roof. About once a year, one of the neighbours points accusingly to a hernia in the spouting or gutter around my roof and informs me that the fountain descending from this point during hard rains is causing water to get into his cellar. On one side it isn't so serious, because there are nothing but boxes and furnaces and things in that cellar. But on the other side it is more grave, since the cellar is occupied by a man and a woman and a small girl. Fortunately this summer has been extremely dry, and a hole in the cellar wall of one of these houses has been gradually expanding, obviously through the



Harry Warner (contd.)

agency of some long-forgotten prisoner attempting to gain his freedom, or some of those stone-eating termites in the Ben Hecht story.

The letter from National School puzzled me somewhat until I remembered that turf is something you burn over there in Ireland, rather than a description of the quality of the stock as it is over here.

You might be over in this country again by now, if I have understood correctly one of the references in The Chophouse. Alas, I doubt that I'll ever get across the Atlantic. My struggles to make up my mind to go during the past two or three years have percolated so thoroughly around among my friends and acquaintances that I would never be believed, if I should make the trip, and probably couldn't even convince the local travel agency to make reservations or the clerk of court to issue me a passport, because it would all be taken as a huge joke. Right there, I think, is the germ for a piece of either faan fiction or mundane fiction, if I could work it out so that none of the characters would have my characteristics, the only procedure that would save it from seeming too improbable.

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Sid Birchby, 40 Parrs Wood Avenue, Manchester 20.

Thanks for the latest issue of The SCARR, namely No. 102. What!! has it been so long since I last wrote a letter of comment, or have I miscounted? ((Accident --- which I noticed after stapling! So I started figuring and discovered that 11 in scale ten is 102 in scale three. So I let it stand, as it's the only way I'll ever catch up on YANDRO.)) If it is really the 102nd issue, then all I can think is that Nos. 11 - 101 must have been issued secretly, by night, under a waning moon, and distributed by night-blind carrier-pigeons with a bad sense of direction.

By the way I misread your signature which was written in red ink over part of your address, and thought for a moment that Famous Men were trying to communicate with me. You know the way the Archbishop of Canterbury signs himself "Geoffrey Cantuar" (or was that the one before the present one?). And then there's Fred York and for all I know Joe Lambeth and Ringo Chichester. Well, I thought it was really something when George Bangor wrote to me.

Did J.G. Ballard really write the piece which you quoted? It seems like gibberish to me; or, rather, like something churned out by a computer. Thank goodness I gave up reading Science-Fantasy years ago.

Incidentally, in case you should ever be called upon to launch a computer, the correct form has now been established by the Mayor of Birmingham, on the occasion of switching on a new computer used to produce (probably incorrect) rate demands and electricity bills.

After a good deal of thought, his pronouncement was:- "May God bless this computer and all who put facts into her."

Interesting assumptions here. In the first place, that there is a computer God. Not a digit falls but God notes its passing, etc.

Secondly, that it is a blessed thing to put facts into a computer. Stores up much credit in heaven.

Sid Birchby (contd.)

Thirdly, that computers are female. Well, that's as may be, but certainly I've heard of some mighty calculating females.

Lastly, the emphasis is on putting facts into a computer. Nothing is said about getting anything out again. Maybe that blessing should have read: "God help anyone...."

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Michael Colm Hendry, 2 Kearney's Villas, Gulladuff, N.Ireland.

It's a change to hear that few young people can afford a haircut while at the same time others insist that they have too much money. Both of these opinions are wrong. The average teenager is financially better off than his counterpart ten years ago but is not rolling in cash as some people seem to think.

No doubt you've noticed the recent rise in the price of a haircut. In some places prices have increased 100 per cent to six shillings. To explain this the barbers state that for many years it has been commonplace for people to get their hair cut every three weeks. They say that with the recent trend towards long hair, that was sparked off with the Beatles, most folk get their hair trimmed every six weeks instead. This is true, but only among teenagers like myself. I visit the barber roughly six times yearly and yet I don't think the price increase is justified. Long hair is generally worn by young folk who form a minority of the male population, and not everyone in this age group has long hair. ((I'm curious: do you wear long hair because (a) it looks better?; (b) the Beatles do it? (c) as a form of rebellion against authority? And if the Beatles and Stones shaved all their off would teenagers do likewise?))

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Mats Linder, Antunavagen 3, Rotebro, Sweden.

You know, you're quite unusual in one respect (probably several, but I won't go into that now). For example, most people when they have bought a new car boast like hell and can go on talking for hours about how good their cars are. Obviously, when you get a new car, the first thing you do is point out all its faults to everybody. Strange. Maybe you should go to a psychiatrist; or maybe that's just the way Irishmen are. Maybe you all should go to psychiatrists. Only the psychiatrists may be the same way. I don't know.

For quite a long time now I've been saying to myself that soon I'll publish another fanzine again. ((?)) But it's hard for a person as lazy as I am to get started with anything. Anyway, if I ever go publish another fanzine I think it will be a good idea to print some of your writings in it, mostly excerpts from the excerpts from your diary. Is it OK if I do? And could you also furnish me with a few details about yourself to be published with the other things? ((You are obviously a man of taste and discrimination, so here are some details: I was born in the Deep South of Ireland a long, long time ago. I was welcomed without fanfare of trumpets, without any six-gun salutes and without any flamboyant, ostentatious displays of rejoicing. I was, even at that age, conservative to a degree, and now I can safely say I am the most modest man in Ireland. Until my arrival the only distinguished member of the family was an uncle who served with a very aristocratic regiment: they always charged with fixed bayonets.

((Many people have wondered what the initial "L" in my name stands for. It is just not true that I was called Lancelot because I suffered so much



from boils in infancy, but on this sore point no inflammation is forthcoming. Some think that because I'm over six feet tall it stands for Long-fellow. Actually I'm saving it to use as an alias and the whole story will be told in my alibiography.

((As a boy I contracted no fatal diseases, but being delicate I did not go to school until I was seven. At that time I could read and write, partly through my own unaided efforts and partly because my mother taught me. Even then new things interested me. Cameras were few then and I wondered, when I saw a photograph of myself for the first time, if the camera could be cheated. To test it, the next time they took photographs I held one finger straight out from my side to see if the camera would catch it on. It did!

((At school I learned what puns were, made my first one and got away safely. But it scared me — I haven't made one since.

((I had always had a burning desire to live in the North so at the tender age of 14 I came to Northern Ireland, where I have lived ever since, only making trips now and then to the U.S.A., France and England. Here I discovered John Carter, Warlord of Barsoom, in the local library. At that time it cost a penny a year to borrow one book at a time, and, as I changed the book every day, I got good value for my money. Later on when my future brother-in-law began to call at the house I was able to take out a second ticket. I stopped borrowing there in 1948: by a strange coincidence it was in 1948 that the charge for a ticket went up to threepence.

((In Bangor there is also a branch of Woolworth's, and here, like many another fan, I discovered Amazing and Astounding. Bought blushing and carried home with the front covers well hidden beneath my coat they were for me the real beginning of sfandom. I can still remember my horror when I got home on one occasion to find that the back cover of one of these mags, exposed to the public gaze, carried an advertisement for athlete's foot, complete with large coloured photograph. Thenceforward I looked at all the back covers as well as the front. Later I discovered an even better repository for these magazines in the second-hand stores of Smithfield Market, in Belfast, a place, needless to say, that I have haunted ever since.

((At this time also occurred one of those incidents that tend to sour an otherwise sunny nature. Passing through Belfast one day in a tram I glanced through the window for a moment and then returned to my book. Three lines later I realised I'd seen the words MARTIAN HOSTEL on a building. Hurriedly I jumped up, closed my book, raced down the stairs and jumped off the tram, heedless of the fact that that I'd paid to the end of the line. With beating heart (though rarely does it stop beating) I walked back until I came to the building. It was the Samaritan Hospital!

((I left school in 1928 and worked as auctioneer's clerk, rent collector, plumber's clerk, boat-minder, billiard-hall marker, etcetera. I was no good at etcetera. Lastly I became a time-recorder at Short & Harland's aircraft factory, where I still am.

((Some years after the war, during which we had only enaciated editions of Astounding and Unknown, I found one lonely copy of Wonder and through it got in touch with Ken Slater and through him got in touch with Fantasy Review and through it got in touch with Irish Fandom. The long way home!))

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Stencilled, Gestetnered, slipsheeted, collated, stapled

by

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