

THE ZED

NO. 799 SAPS 59



THE ZED

Regrettez-vous le temps ou nos vieilles romances
Ouvraient leurs ailes d'or vers un monde enchante,
Ou tous nos monuments et toutes nos croyances
Portaient le manteau blanc de leur virginite?

"Do you regret the time when our old ballads opened their wings of gold on an enchanted world, when all our monuments and all our beliefs wore the white mantle of their virginity?" In his novel Papa Joan, Roydis quotes this quatrain and attributes it to Musset Rolla -- a name that means nothing to me. Maybe I'm laying bare my ignorance and the name is famous; on the other hand it's possible Roydis just made it up along with the verse. Anyone could be proud of those lines. I tried to translate them into verse and got absolutely nowhere.

Thoughts While Taking Trash Out of the Mailbox

Dow-Jones has decided that this country needs a weekly newspaper. Maybe it does, but I'm not sure their National Observer is it. From the looks of their pamphlet, they think it's still 1937 -- or at any rate, if not, it ought to be. Maybe they've got something there, at that . . . I'm almost tempted to subscribe to the rag, on account of the typeface in which the paper's name is printed at the top of the first page. I hadn't seen Post Old Style in years.

Excuse Me, Bees

There's a flower for which my favorite name is canasta-de-oro, Basket of Gold. Last year it wasn't very well established in its place up behind the fountain, and the long vacation during which it wasn't sufficiently watered kept it from making much of a show. It quietly spread during the rains, though, and as blooming season begins I realize there's quite a lot of it. It's an alyssum -- A. saxatile, taller and with slightly larger flowerd (but less closely set) than the more familiar A. maritimum or sweet alyssum. As a cruciferous flower, it's related to such unlikely things as cabbage, cress, and mustard, not to mention such California wildflowers as jewel flower and lace pod. I picked all that was in bloom the other day, and all the buds opened instead of uncooperatively dropping off. Today there was a great deal more in bloom and I picked that, too. Next week it should be a mass of yellow, to judge by the buds. It must be spring . . . one can't always tell around here, but everything is full of bees. One of these days I'll find I've brought in a bouquet of them.

The house-finches think it's spring, too. This week, instead of an occasional chirp or tra-la-lay, they've begun singing the full June-moon-crown-seen spoon tune. One couple has already started building in the ivy over the french doors.

Obituary note: Ubiquitous Polkadot, the Heinleins' cat, died recently after a long illness. She is survived by her daughter Shamrock O'Toole and numerous grandkittens.

Reflections in a Vorpall Glass

VG #4 is out now, and has already provoked a deal of controversy on the subject of salmon. What with an extra-long article by Hal Clement and a lettercolumn that kept growing, it runs 50 pages and would have been more if I'd stuck to the generous margins of the first three issues. The article by Betsy Curtis on dianetics and scientology, originally planned for #4 but delayed in order to run the Clement article while it was fairly fresh (it was a paper delivered before the AAAS in December) will be held back for a while yet; Betsy has asked for it back to make some alterations. Planned for #5: poems by Betsy ("The Greeks Had a God For It"), more sections from Fritz Leiber's Westercon 1961 speech.

"John can say 'orogeny' without even smiling." -- Poul

My Brother-in-law, The Geologist

As I remarked elsewhere this mailing, John Anderson saw his first sunset in four months on the day John Glenn saw four sunsets. He'd avoided the Minnesota winter by going to Antarctica -- after all, it was summer there! Among the things he brought back there was a big square box packed with aerial photographs of the Sentinel and Heritage ranges. I went through the Heritage pictures and chose two mountains to name: Koshtra Pivvarcha and Tekeli-li. The Board of Geographic Names will take some convincing, so I gave Poe rather than Lovecraft as a reference for the latter.

Another thing he had with him (as leader of his party) was a set of two rubber stamps, ink pads, and L-shaped frame for accurate registry of the two stamps. This was the special cachet for letters mailed by the four members of the University of Minnesota 1961 expedition to the Sentinel Mountains. I borrowed it to do the cover of this Zed, plus all the envelopes I had on hand. Some of the envelopes I did in green and purple instead of red and blue, using stamp pads of my own.

He'd taken something like 175 color pictures there, and got them developed while staying with us, so we borrowed Reg Bretnor's screen and projector to see them. Those mountains are awesomely beautiful.

Then, just as he was through investigating local universities as possible places to do his doctorate work, he was invited to see J. Hoover Mackin (I think that's right) whom he describes as one of the most important geologists alive. Mackin was in Seattle but would be going to the U. of Texas this fall. John re-booked his flight back to Minnesota by way of Seattle and asked Mackin when it would be convenient to call on him. "Just phone me from the airport," Mackin wired back.

If this goes through and he takes his doctorate under Mackin, it'll be wonderful. Even if it does mean he'll have to live in central Texas.

FLASH! - STOP PRESS!

BARDOT'S PLANET. APRIL 3, AD 2846-zz, (EGP): FERDINAND FEGHOOT, INTERGALACTICALLY KNOWN SPACE-TIME ADVENTURER VACATIONING HERE, ANNOUNCED TODAY THE FORTHCOMING PUBLICATION OF HIS COLLECTED ESCAPADES AND EXPERIENCES.

"THE BOOK," FEGHOOT SAID, "WILL BE TITLED 'THROUGH TIME AND SPACE WITH FERDINAND FEGHOOT, THE FIRST FORTY-FIVE FEGHOOT ADVENTURES TOGETHER WITH FIVE MORE NEVER PREVIOUSLY HEARD OF.' IT WILL OF COURSE BE EDITED BY GRENDEL BRIARTON, AND WILL HAVE ILLUSTRATIONS BY BRUCE ARISS AND A FOREWORD BY R. BRETNOR."

FEGHOOT STATED THAT THE BOOK WILL BE (IS BEING) (WAS) PUBLISHED IN JUNE (RPT- JUNE) 1962 BY THE PARADOX PRESS OF BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA AND TOKYO, JAPAN, AND HE ADDED THAT IT WAS (IS BEING) (WILL BE) ACCLAIMED AS THE MOST EXCITING PUBLISHING EVENT OF THIS TIME-TRACK, AND THAT IT WILL SELL FOR ONLY \$1.25 POSTPAID.

CONTEMPORARY READERS AND DEALERS, FEGHOOT SAID, CAN ORDER COPIES BY WRITING TO HIM IN CARE OF THE PARADOX PRESS, P.O. BOX 3051, BERKELEY 5, CALIFORNIA, (A.D. 1962). END.

The Goon Show returns! Six new episodes have just been released by the BBC and will be broadcast by KFFA (listeners' subscription station). Last night we heard "The Tale of Men's Shirts" and it will be followed on the 7th and 14th with "The Chinese Legs" and "Robin's Post."

After the news there will be a talk on early plastic knees.

Under the influence of the Goon Show, I'm accumulating material for a story to end all wacky stories. BirdSmith, "Go for Baroque," you name it -- this story will beat them all. If only I write it. I'd sure like to read it.

I used to think that I wrote stories because I wanted to read them. In most cases this is true; a perfect example is the epic fantasy for which I've been inventing details over the last two years and will probably take another five years to finish. I sure want to read that story. But last week a curious thing happened which contradicts this idea entirely.

I'd had a slight cold, and woke up about four o'clock one morning with a coughing spell. I got some hard candy to suck on (some years ago my doctor told me that was at least as effective as any cough medicine he knew of, and lots cheaper). But I didn't get back to sleep.

The idea of a sound came into my mind. I may have heard this sound at one time, in reality or in a dream; I don't know. It was like a half-voiced laugh, or like the noise some insect might make -- whether insect or human, not quite natural. Then I imagined someone walking through unfamiliar territory hearing this sound all around him. Other ideas suggested themselves: a deserted house, its windows blanked out by reflected moonlight . . . someone seen from a distance sitting on a stone, who is not there as one passes the stone but reappears afterward . . . well, about this time I decided I'd rather not go to sleep after all, because I might dream about it. I got up and read a book.

For the next couple of days I thought about this idea, and elaborated it. One evening I wrote it, and Poul said it was well written but he didn't care for horror stories.

I don't care for horror stories either.

But here was this perfectly good idea -- I had to write it! It would have been wasteful not to!

Now, I don't know why I write. That wasn't the kind of story I like to read; not because such stories upset me -- they don't, unless I dream them, which is almost never; they just don't interest me. The one kind of horror I go in for is the kind of movie Bela Lugosi used to star in, and that's probably because I'm fascinated by Lugosi.

Why on earth did I write it? It didn't pop fully-formed into my mind; I had to work it out. Why did I go to the trouble?

Because it was there? That doesn't explain a cottonpicking thing, and I know it.

Maybe it was just an excuse for not washing dishes.

I know why I wrote the following four pages, though. Not just that Harness left the job to me. It was mainly that it gave me the opportunity to get off the greatest density of puns per line ever seen. As Orval Faubus told the Grand Dragon of his pet in-group, it was the klannish thing to do.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF NOTHING!!!

CHAPTER SIX:

THE SLANNISH THING TO DO

When Karen of Sevagram unfolded her plan to the four who remained in the Fellowship after Sir Wall fell on his pratt and decamped, it covered the whole conference table. As there was a slight breeze from someone's open mind, she held the corners of the plan down with weighty arguments. They recognized the ring of authority at once.

"Authority!" The Ring that has been unknown throughout this age of the world," cried Sir Wrai-with-the-fringe-on-top.

"Unknown? You mean it's a definct fantasy?" asked Dhikeeny, the Ogre Evil.

"How else do you think she led the Great Revolt and became the only five-mailing OE in history?" Sir Tosk pointed out. "Of course she had the Ring of Authority."

Duchess Karen divided her plan into sections, one for each of the Fellowship of Nothing, and each followed his section. When they had followed the pieces of paper out of the room, the Duchess sat down by her mystic Jokkam Ball to watch the developments in Hasi Castle.

Sir Wrai's part of the plan led him to the stables, where he supervised the readying of the racing grulzaks. The regular cavalry grulzaks would not be fast enough for their plan.

"Shall I curry them?" asked a stable boy.

"I don't need any sauce from you!" snapped Sir Wrai.

Sir Blot's instructions led him to the belief that was is spelled with an izzard instead of an s.

"But why?" he asked the Belief.

"We shall thereby have the aid of the Izzard of Waz," said the Belief. "This spells our supremacy in the matter of spells."

Sir Tosk followed his assignment to the letter. This letter was engrossed on fine parchment, sealed with red wax, and tied with narrow red twill tape. Sir Tosk realized at once that it was the letter of the law.

Finally, Sir Blot, Sir Tosk, and Sir Wrai followed their instructions respectively to the tables down at Morey's, to the place where Louie dwells, and to the dear old Temple Bar we love so well. In this famous threefold shrine they reconsecrated their weapons to the liberation of Princess Nance from the evil Prince Arness. While so doing, they also poured many libations down their throats, this being a shrine of Phthalo the Blue and Beered (not Blue-beered, as the unknowing would have it -- the beer was of the usual color). Duchess Karen, as High Priestess, naturally presided over and participated in the libations.

The next morning they assembled on a terrace overlooking the parade-ground.

"This won't do!" Karen said, realizing that they must not overlook anything. They moved to another terrace from which the parade ground could be surveyed.

"Has anyone a reliable transit?" asked Sir Tosk.

"The Bay Area has A C Transit now," said Duchess Karen. "I hear they're pretty good."

Breakfast was served. Karen noticed that when the beer was poured there was no foam on top. She saw to it that this was remedied, remarking that they would need all the heads they could get.

"If we start this way, we'll have awful heads tomorrow," complained Sir Blot.

"Heads we win, tails they lose," shrugged Karen. "By the way, did I show you the new guillotine I've developed for caudec-tomies? But we must get down to business."

They began brainstorming Feghoots. It would have been impossible to decide who was the creator of a given Feghoot; they all abetted each other. As the Feghoots were created, they appeared on the parade-ground and arranged themselves in ranks and files.

"Rank is the word for most of them," said Sir Wrai, "but why file?"

"It's the fannish thing to do," said Sir Tosk. "All New York fans file suits."

"Never mind the garment-trade gossip," said Sir Blot.

"It's quite simple," said Duchess Karen as the bloc of Feghoots began marching up and down before them. "Ferds of abettors bloc to get her. This is the army with which we will rescue Princess Nance and overthrow the Art-Orcs."

The next day, Karen of Sevagram watched in her Jokkam Ball the arrival of the weeping relatives of Princess Nance and the assembly in the chapel for the Princess' forced wedding to Arness.

"Now is our moment!" she cried. "We can overcome the whole nest of Art-Orcs at once!"

The knights, the Ogril Dhikeeny, the troops of Feghoots, all leaped onto the waiting grulzaks. Duchess Karen led them through the clouds on her silver wyvern.

Bishop Bergeron was reaching the crucial part of the wedding ceremony when a sudden thought struck Prince Arness. "Stop!" he cried. "We can't continue the wedding! Something dreadful has happened!"

The Princess screamed and swooned . . .

Duchess Karen had struck Arness with the thought of the possibility of failure in carrying out his dread designs. Then she followed it with the dazing thought of the utter destruction of Hasi Castle and all that it stood for. ("Believe me," she remarked aside to Sir Tosk, "Hasi has stood for an awful lot of nonsense from its supporters.")

Before Arness had recovered from this thought, Karen and her followers crashed triumphantly through the broad ghastained-glass windows of the chapel. The Feghoots deployed to attack the Art-Orcs while Karen launched her sharpest thoughts at Arness. But her thoughts glanced harmlessly aside.

"After all," gloated Arness, "my Cult membership has given me a thick enough skin to protect me against the most cutting thoughts."

Karen flung a different thought at him. Nothing happened.

"A misfire?" Arness suggested gleefully.

"Evidently a blank thought," Karen muttered. Then, realizing that only the weightiest thoughts would be of avail, she sent a thought that crashed him against the floor.

"What thought was that?" asked Sir Wrai admiringly, as he labored to release Princess Nance from her bonds.

"Seventeen ton of bi-boominous coal," she explained.

Arness struggled to his knees and slowly raised his head. Instantly she buried him under another weighty thought.

"Eighteen ton this time," she remarked proudly. "I got a million of them."

Nothing was left now but the mopping-up. Sir Tosk, a veritable Ajax at mopping-up operations, mopped up the floor with the Art-Orcs. Princess Nance, freed and revived, was restored to the arms of her family with never a blot on the scutcheon.

"Here, now," protested Sir Blot, "I rescued her after all, didn't I?"

"I rescued her too, for that matter," said Sir Wrai.

"So did I," said Sir Tosk.

"Me too," said Dhikeeny.

"A fat lot of rescuing you were doing before I joined the Fellowship," Duchess Karen pointed out. "It took the whole Fellowship of Nothing to rescue her. So, since Nothing rescued her, she marries none of you."

"Couldn't we divide her among us?" Sir Tosk suggested hopefully.

"You should know that you can't divide by Nothing," sneered Sir Wrai. Sir Tosk hung his head.

And so they went their separate ways. Fannish or not, it was the only thing to do.

As they parted, Sir Blot said, "I'm surprised that the story didn't end with some quintessential pun."

Princess Karen, on her return to Sevagram, repeated Sir Blot's remark to Duke Poul.

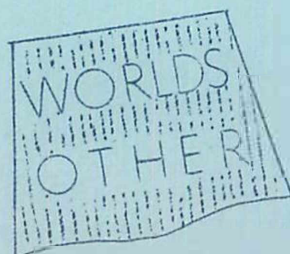
"A quintessential pun," Duke Poul objected, "would only be necessary to the Dionne family."

THE END

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