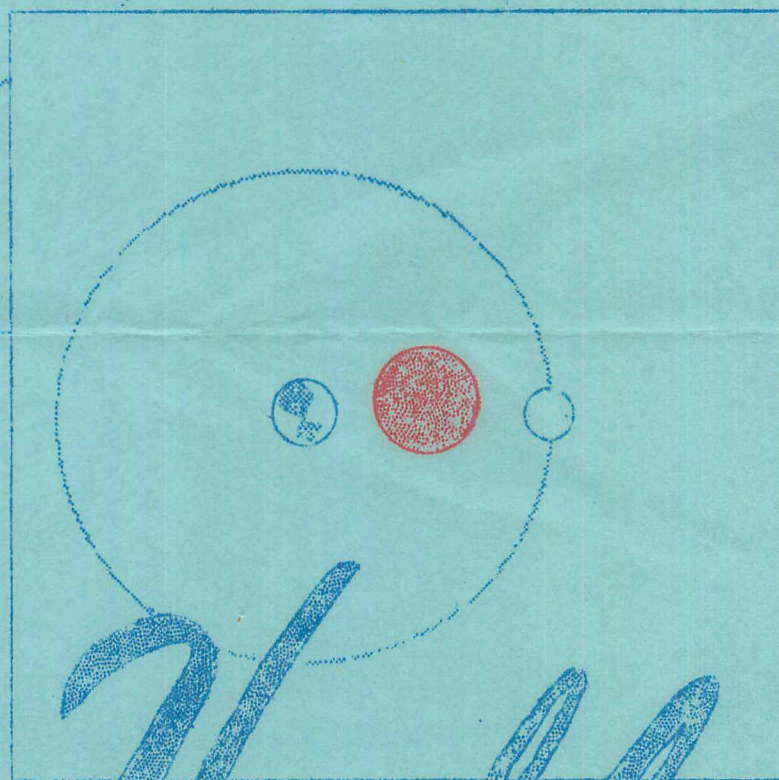


"THE
HAPPY
BEAST"

NUMBER 10
AUTUMN
1952



Furkle

HURKLE

is the informal publication issued occasionally for the Spectator Amateur Press Society by Redd Boggs. Third year of publication. This issue, volume I, number 10, is intended for the twenty-first mailing, autumn 1952. "The prettiest of the hurkle are blue." -- Theodore Sturgeon. A Gafia Press publication.

WHO IS THE CONNECTICUT YANKEE?

Hank Morgan, the man who is hurled from 1879 A. D. back to 528, also A. D., by the smash of a crowbar alongside the head, claims he was "born and reared in Hartford, in the state of Connecticut. . . a Yankee of the Yankees." But if we take his word for it, we'll have to disregard certain portions of his manuscript -- published under the title A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court -- that supply firm basis for believing instead that "Hank Morgan" was actually born in the village of Florida, and reared in the town of Hannibal, in the state of Missouri.

Of course this theory poses a new problem: who is the narrator in the frame story found in the chapters titled "A Word of Explanation" and "Final P.S. by M. T"? Let's dispose of this problem quickly by suggesting that this narrator is also a man from Hannibal. "Hank Morgan" is merely a further projection of him -- sort of a dream self (for the story is nothing more than a dream). But dream or not, "Hank Morgan" is no "Yankee of the Yankees," born in Connecticut.

Our hero claims to have followed the trades of blacksmith and horse-doctor after his father and uncle, and then to have entered the "great arms factory" at Hartford, where eventually he became head superintendent. Hartford is half a continent and a world away from Hannibal, and a career in which a young man works up to the position where he has "a couple of thousand men" under him would admit no room for a jaunt between worlds. He would have had no time for a trip round the old southwest as an itinerant printer, let us say, or down the Mississippi as a steamboat pilot. But many of this "Yankee's" allusions and expressions signify an intimate knowledge of the west.

Queen Guenever glances at Sir Launcelot in a way "that would have got him shot in Arkansas," the Connecticut Yankee reports in one place, and in another he declares that the earthy language spoken by the ladies and gentlemen of the court "would have made a Comanche blush." The colorful banners and tapestries at the tournament look like "a fight between an Upper Mississippi sunset and the aurora borealis." Hank Morgan's bomb in Merlin's tower explodes like "a steamboat explosion on the Mississippi." Clarence's journalistic style is described as "already up to the back settlement Alabama mark," and when the newspaper finally appears the Yankee decides it is "good Arkansas journalism." Though we may grant that by 1879 Arkansas had already become a common synonym for the backwoods, we must find it hard to envision a native product of genteel New England titling the newspaper he founds the Camelot Weekly Hosannah and Literary Volcano!

Of course Hank Morgan's manuscript is written in the bookish tradition of the east rather than in the oral tradition of the west. Standard literary rhetoric is the warp and woof of the book. "Presently a fair slip of a girl, about ten years old, with a cataract of golden hair streaming down over her shoulders, came along" -- such a passage might have been written by almost any New England novelist. But occasionally western plain talk creeps in, a thread here and there. The fireplace is described as "big enough to camp in"; that's good democratic vernacular. There are many such references. Then there are anomalies, strange mixtures of western

talk with a dash of New England. Hank Morgan says that Morgan le Fay is as "fresh and young as a Vassar pullet" -- an earthy similie diluted with an adjective descriptive of the flower of New England maidenhood. Similarly, when he says he "sent Merlin home on a shutter," the image is raw and western, but "shutter" is essentially a New England device and connotation.

Perhaps more significant than these random allusions are the western tall tales and hyperbole that salt Morgan's narrative. When Merlin's tower was blasted, "it rained mortar and masonry the rest of the week," and when the Boss ventures to tell a funny yarn the natives "disintegrated" on the fifteenth rendition and so he "got a broom and swept them up." When Sir Dinadin publishes a book of sick quips the Boss "couldn't stand" it and "suppressed the book and hanged the author." All such virile exaggerations are in the best western tradition.

Very typical, too, of western humor is the Yankee's use of slang that the poor natives cannot understand. "Where do they hang out?" he asks Sandy, who muses, "Of a truth the phrase hath a fair and winsome grace and is prettily worded withal. I will repeat it anon and anon in mine idlesse, whereby I may peradventure learn it."

The evidence has piled up, and sorting it out and transferring it to suitably labelled file folders, we discover two pungent indications: (1) Hank Morgan either comes from a western tradition or at least is powerfully influenced by the western tradition; and (2) this tradition has been diluted in him through his exposure to the genteel tradition of New England. This latter process of attenuation is described by Morgan himself. Speaking of the first issue of the Camelot newspaper, smacking so strongly of hinterland journalism in the 1870s, he says,

Yes it was too loud. Once I could have enjoyed it and seen nothing out of the way about it, but now its note was discordant....Indeed, there was too lightsome a tone of flippancy all through the paper. It was plain I had undergone a considerable change without noticing it. I found myself unpleasantly affected by pert little irreverencies which would have seemed but proper and airy graces of speech at any earlier period of my life.

But we must consider this as final proof that Hank Morgan was not a Connecticut Yankee, for the process of dilution would not have taken place in one born in the genteel tradition. There would have been no raw nature in the first place.

No, the Boss was not "born and reared in Hartford." He was a product of Hannibal, blood kin of Huck Finn, who was bent on "lighting out for the territory" ahead of civilization, and of Tom Sawyer, who would have blushed to hear that the Boss had established "schools everywhere" in King Arthur's realm. Nevertheless, the Boss was at least a good adopted citizen of Hartford, for his Missouri instincts had been lost now, behind a stiff shirt front. He had been captured to the soul by the civilized notions of progress and nineteenth century culture.

This book stands at the end of that imprisonment. The Boss must admit at last the failure of science and technology to improve the lot of the people. After the terrible blood bath he calls the battle of the sand-belt, in which more than 25,000 men died before his Gatling guns, he has no heart to write more: "Let the record end here." And his despair is underlined when the humiliated Merlin's magic proves very potent after all and puts the Boss to sleep for 13 centuries. Merlin himself dies on the electric fence the Boss had built. Thus the book ends bitterly. Medieval ignorance has destroyed science in that age, but science has destroyed the beliefs and persuasions, indigenous to the times, that are more essential than gunpowder and steam warships, stock markets and telephones.

This is a sample of the bedrock of bitter cynicism a famous man from Hannibal, transplanted to Hartford, developed toward the opinions and beliefs of his time. He disowned the human race in later years. And his name was not Hank Morgan; it was Samuel Langhorne Clemens.

HOUSE ADVERTISEMENT

Subscriptions are again available to Sky Hook, my regular fapazine. The summer issue contains "The Face of Facts" by Sam Moskowitz; "Lost World of Lemuria" by Phil Rasch; "David" (a poem) by Lee Hoffman; plus four regular departments. 24 pages fronted by a Hoffman cover. The autumn issue will feature an article by James Blish and the winter issue will be a 40-page fifth ann-ish. Price: 15¢ per issue.

ONCE OVER LIGHTLY

How many years has it been since the SAPS had a regular election? Spelman must have been the last elected dictator. He resigned, turning the job over to Rapp, and Rapp resigned, turning the job over to Coslet. They and Coslet (again) obtained the office without an election. We've had seven OEs in five years — including Coslet twice, who did a Grover Cleveland.

Warhoon was rather impressive, for at least the artwork was excellent. # What is this about me kicking Black out of FAPA for non-activity? I have nothing to do with such things; that's the secretary's job. # "Education of a Fan Artist" was the most revealing article of its type I've ever read, probably because most artists would hate to admit they had been so naive as to know nothing about crosshatching, stipplework, and the like. Do artists on slick magazines really receive free copies of issues containing their work? Authors don't, as far as I know. One of my poems appeared in an anthology put out by a small press three or four years ago. They sent me a copy C.O.D.; I sent it back, and though I held the wrapped book in my hand an instant, I've never seen my poem in print. Most little magazines don't give away contributors' copies, and I know of three or four other poems appearing in them that I have never seen in print. # I'd read most of the reprints, but don't recall seeing the article about A. Merritt before (though I remember McElfresh). Fans don't seem much interested in Merritt anymore. FFM has even stopped rereprinting his novels, apparently. My favorite Merritt is "The People of the Pit."

The "Selected Letters of P. H. Love" issue of Sun Shine reminds me of the Catalog of Smokedham House, a burlesque of Derleth's 1949 AH catalog, that I never got around to publishing. It advertised such titles as "The Other Side of the Spittoon," "Mr Gnashley and Other Odd Persons," "Tales from Woodstock," and "Everett False" (by Ralph Sunburn Fipps). The blurb for the latter volume went: "This is the only Flies and Skeeters title to be published in 1953-54, and it is, we imagine, one of those rare and surprising books which the general reader would be nauseated to read. It is a collection of rustynail-and-ink drawings, whose closest equivalents are to be found in public toilets throughout the country, but for the enlightened reader who can read between the ink-blobs it carries considerably more punch. Albert Cranchley has written an appreciative introduction for this collection under the title 'O-o-o-o-o-h!' For Everett False is nothing if not O-o-o-o-o-h!" I'll suppress the rest of it. Anyway, it's not very topical at this late year.

I wish I had the knack of composing on stencil as you do in Pipsqueak, Royal. To satisfy myself I must write a rough draft first, then revise as I dummy the material. Even then, I make minor corrections as I stencil. That's for informal or relatively trivial stuff like these mailing comments; for most articles I write at

least three versions before stencilling. Apparently you're not satisfied with this issue, judging from the note in the OO, but it's nothing to be ashamed of. # God, this Canadian Norman Browne climbs four notches up toward BNFship in the past year and a half and I'd never heard of him till Vanations arrived (I hadn't read Pip-squeak yet, at the time). For a Superfan I'm not very well-informed about fandom these days. # Mumbleypeg? Does anybody here know how to play "knife baseball"?

The trouble with "Redd Boggs -- Superfan" in Mraoc (pronounced as an obscene gurgle) is that I can't praise it without being accused of liking it just because it mentioned my name. That always happens. Nevertheless, I thought it was a lovely job, good enough to appear even in FAPA. Just to keep the record straight, though, I've never worn a beanie since my green freshman days and I've never had a letter published in Planet in my life (what other fan can make that claim?), probably not even as my alter ego, W. Max Keasler. But enough boasting....

The InVention Report is full of wonderful stuff, like a well-stocked wine cellar. To think that I was pessimistic about the project when Elsberry first broached the idea that April Sunday. How was I to know that Elsberry would write an inspired report like this? Except for this witty resume of the InVention the idea would have been rather ploopy. The Report won it a mention in Cy II.

What a strange thing pride is! If a person has nothing else to be proud of, he is proud that he lacks something to be proud of. Carl Sandburg is proud that Chicago lacks morality and cleanliness; Keasler is proud that he cannot spell; the blind are proud that they have no eyes; and "poetry-haters" are proud that they are unable to appreciate good poetry. # If you really hate poetry, why don't you print some real satires on poetry, such as Swinburne's parody on himself or that parody on "The Song of Hiawatha" about the mittens: "Made them with the fur side inside, Put the inside skinside outside"? The verses you've printed in Outsiders are no more of an indictment of good poetry than a monkeys' baseball game is of the big leagues. If you are going to use the "Poetry Haters' Corner" for reprinting rimes from current folklore, such as the limericks that are always making the rounds, I think you've got a fine idea. However, I could have lived without reading again the "Mr Woolworth" thing that Bergeron contributed. I've seen that oftener than "Troubles of the Tool-room Girl," which no doubt you'd also reprint, if you had the nerve.

One of my pet peeves is fanzines with numbers for titles. I can't remember numbers, not even telephone numbers. AJ-73-16 was interesting nonetheless. # I am surprised to learn that "the theory of evolution was not a blow to religion" when as a matter of fact Christianity reeled from the blow for a good 50 years. It has never been the same since. The Bible, the sole authority, seemed to be under direct attack by evolutionists, as mechanistic theories destroyed confidence in the Mosaic cosmogony. Only by reinterpreting Genesis in the light of evolutionary ideas or by rejecting a literal interpretation of the Bible did Protestants manage to reconcile faith and science. Though the Catholic church never insisted on a literal interpretation of the Bible, it too reacted against the Darwinian theory. But of course it wasn't a killing blow, and there is no longer much friction from that source.

Clark Ashton Smith is a strange case. He rarely fails to bore me either, but I'm somewhat interested in him as a phenomenon. I recently went through a number of works on contemporary poetry, trying to discover what critics have hailed him as an American Baudelaire (or whatever his biography says) but the only critical article of any importance I've read is one by James Blish in VAPA. # This reviewed Z Prime.

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The man from tomorrow is only RAP from yesterday.
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