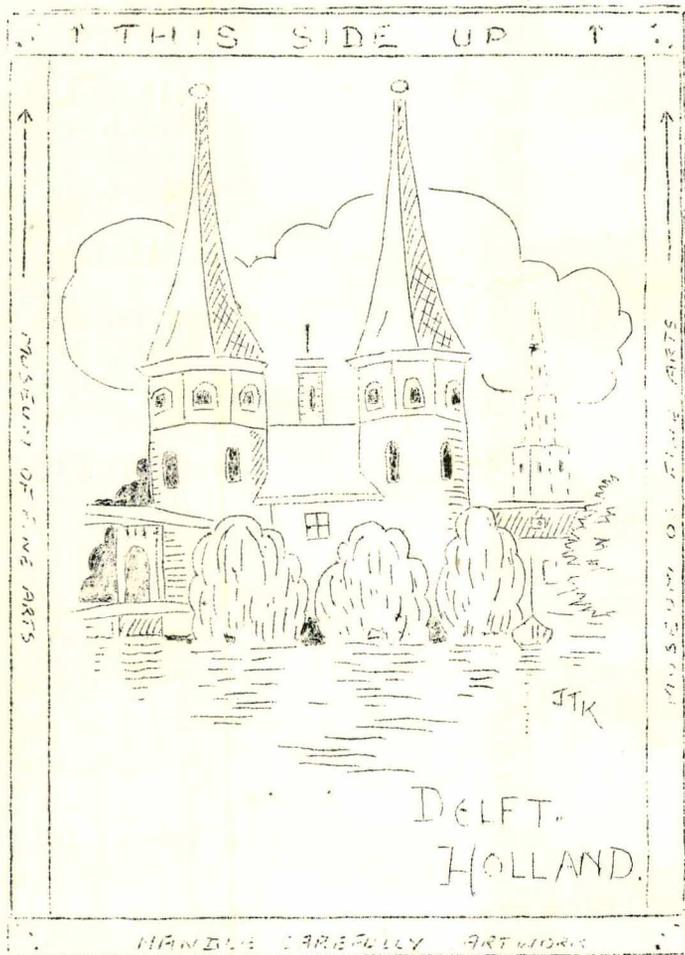
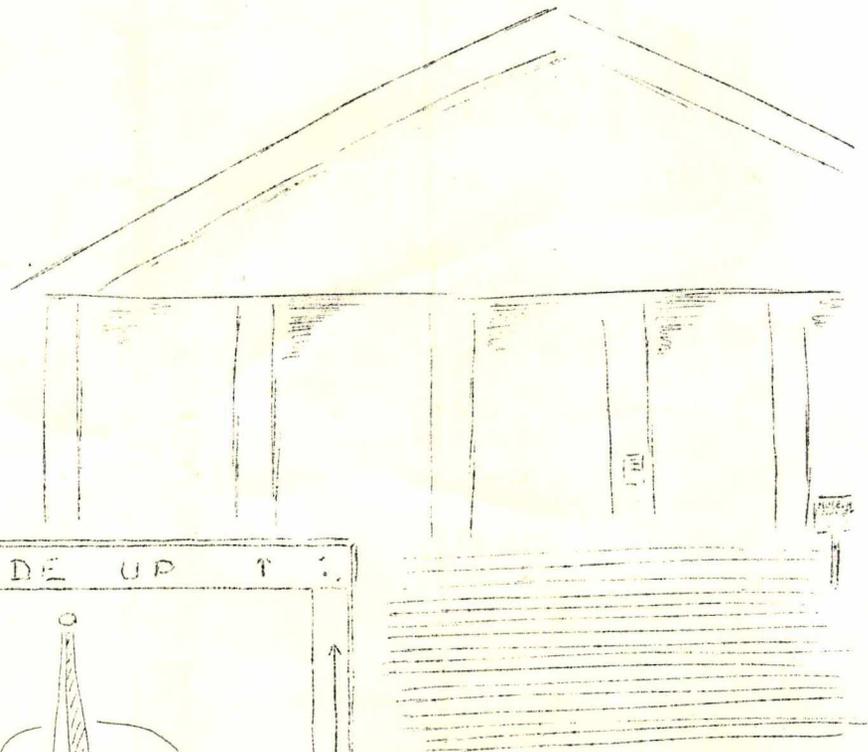




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Too many people have grumbled about wanting a contents page to further ignore their pleas. So here you are. When they want contents pages to issues as the previous one.....

Wanted: small guide book to Alphadom and spare memory banks. Offers to G.N.Carr, 5519 Ballard Ave Seattle 7 Wash. USA.

I would still like to see pocketbook editions of the two Leiber novels: Gather Darkness and Green Millennium. Any offers? Trade? Sale?

I have been asked to offer for sale or in exchange for current mags/pbs: Capt.Future Vol.I n° 3 Summer 1940  
Comet Vol.I n° 2 January 1941.

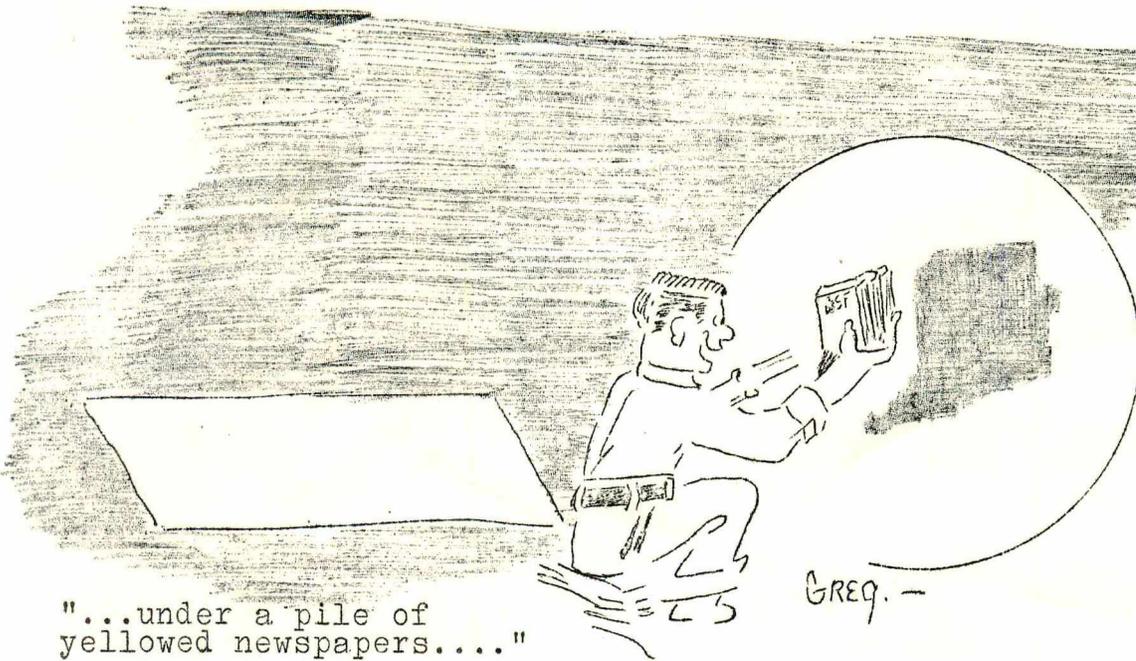
Anyone interested???

For those who read and write German - FANTUM is a new German fanzine obtainable from Ann Steul 17 Falkenstrasse, WETZLAR/Lahn. People who want to correspond in German could ask Julian Parr , 37 Rolandstrasse , Dusseldorf , W.Germany.

# THE DRUGGIST AND ME

by

G. Nicholas deGrunswald.



"...under a pile of yellowed newspapers...."

I ambled up to the newest drugstore in the neighborhood, pushed the 'pull' door in characteristic fashion, and, after being corrected by a passer-by, entered and slouched over to the magazine rack. I then began pawing through a stack of POSTs, LIFEs and LOOKs. Not having found what I was looking for, I reached across to the nearby cigar counter and pounded my fist viciously upon it several times. A fat elderly individual stumbled over, croaking, "Can I help you, sonny?"

"It just may be that you can, dad," I returned. "Howzabouta copy of Infinity?"

"That's a science fiction periodical, isn't it?" He pronounced it 'seance'.

" 'Atsright, dad."

"Sorry, sonny, but we don't carry that type of literature."

I stumbled backwards a couple of steps, gasped, and looked at him with mixed emotions. Amazement, fear, puzzlement, terror, scorn, agitation, anger, and pity were etched in my countenance.

As his face paled, his knees buckled and he groped for a nearby stool. Easing himself into it gently, he withdrew a handkerchief and, with shaking hand, wiped his perspiring brow. "Alright, sonny," he gasped, "alright, we'll get some. Anything you say. But please don't look at me again like that."

Proudly I turned and stepped over to the doorway. Looking back over my shoulder, I saw that another druggist had hurried over and was consoling his unnerved comrade. Then I commenced pulling the 'push' door.

9

It was about a week later that I again took it upon myself to enter the drugstore and inquire into the availability of current sf prozines. My friend, the druggist, turned away from the door as I entered, and flicked a thumb at one end of the magazine rack before scurrying back to the rear of the store. I nodded sedately at his retreating form, then once again began pawing through his literature.

To the rear of the rack, in a corner assailable only after climbing three tiers and crawling across six feet of dust covered boards, under a pile of yellowed newspapers, I found several current promags. Dragging them forth into the sunlight, I piled them neatly before the more

readily reached magazines, dusted off my hands on some handy copies of THE READER'S DIGEST, recited the N3F loyalty oath, and proceeded to go to work.

My plan was to follow the advice I had received from several quarters, i.e. to arrange the sf mags prominently so as to increase sales. Here was my chance. Now all I had to do was choose which 'non-sf' books had to go.

"Howzabouta bit of egoboo?" I sang, quietly, merrily, to myself as I crammed the entire stack of READER'S DIGESTS in a hole behind the rack. Quickly I replaced them with a stack of aSFs.

"Ahhh, sonny ....." I heard a soft voice in the distance. Ignoring it, I continued.

"And howzabouta bit for you?" I went on, a little louder this time. Twenty five PAGEANTS went into the hole from whence the sf books had come, and a stack of GALAXYS went into the slot from whence the PAGEANTS had come.

"Ahhhhh, please, sonny ...." That voice again.

"And we shall exchange it all day through..." My vocalization quavered delightfully on that high note. Out with Manhunt Detective; in with the MAG OF F&SF.

"Sonny, if you don't mind ...." The voice was beginning to grate on my nerves now, but I steadfastly disregarded it.

"Howzabouta bit of egoboo?" AMAZING!!! Ghod! Oh well, out Ellery Queen; in with AMAZING.

Second stanza: "And if me and you..."

"S-s-s-o-o-o-n-n-y-y-!!!!"

Prying myself out of the second tier of the comic-book stand, I pushed my cap back on my head, rearranged my clothing, and lurched over to my friend the druggist, who stood panting, peering at my handiwork. "Hey, now, what is this ...?" I began.

"S-S-S-O-O-O-N-N-Y-Y-!!!!"

Again I pried self out of comic-book rack, pushed cap back on head, rearranged clothing, and lurched over to friend, druggist, who stood peering at handicraft.

He looked up. "What are you doing to my magazines?" Was this panting, raving creature before me the quiet mild-mannered druggist who just moments before had run in fear to the back of the store at my approach? It was. And evidently I had hit his sore spot; the magazine rack.

"But, sir," I said, "all I was trying to do was display science fiction magazines in such a way as to increase sales."

"Oh?"

"Yes, sir. In this way more sf mags will be sold, which will result in more money for you, more money for the distributor, and, most of all, more money for the publishing companies."

"Oh?"

"Yes. And science fiction is the most rapidly growing field of literature today; surely you don't want to be left out of the current boom (?) and its resulting profit. I can see that you are a man of integrity -- far-sighted and intelligent."

"Ohhhh?"

"Science fiction's worth to humanity as a whole is well proven by the ease with which it transports the reader to new adventures in the past, present, and ever-mysterious future. Science fiction is young, science fiction is alive, and, most important of all, science fiction

is seething with ideas. Like a beacon it stands out from its brother fields, leading the way to tomorrow. Now tell me, will you let me finish my work? "

"No!"

Ten seconds later I pulled my pain-racked body from the side-walk outside the store and began to make my way unsteadily homeward. But through the soreness and the humiliation came the glimmerings of a plan --- glimmerings that grew into the faint outlines of a plot which, in its stark simplicity, was genius itself.

That night a shadowy figure scampered across the roof of the newest drugstore in the neighborhood. Kneeling beside the skylight, the figure examined it carefully. Most people think a skylight presents quite a difficulty, reflected the figure silently, but they couldn't be more wrong. Just needed a couple of good-sized rocks, or a hammer and then... A moment later the figure lowered itself into the store, peered around the interior cautiously, and with a snicker of glee headed for the magazine rack.

And once a month (but never on the same day of the month) since then, the fat, elderly druggist who works in the newest drugstore in the neighborhood arrives at his place of toil to find his magazine rack rearranged with the science fiction magazines in prominent positions: they sell better that way.

And the fat, elderly druggist is fast becoming thinner as the months roll by, so all things seem to be working out for the best.

It is a little hard on the skylights, but ....

G. Nicholas deGrunswald.

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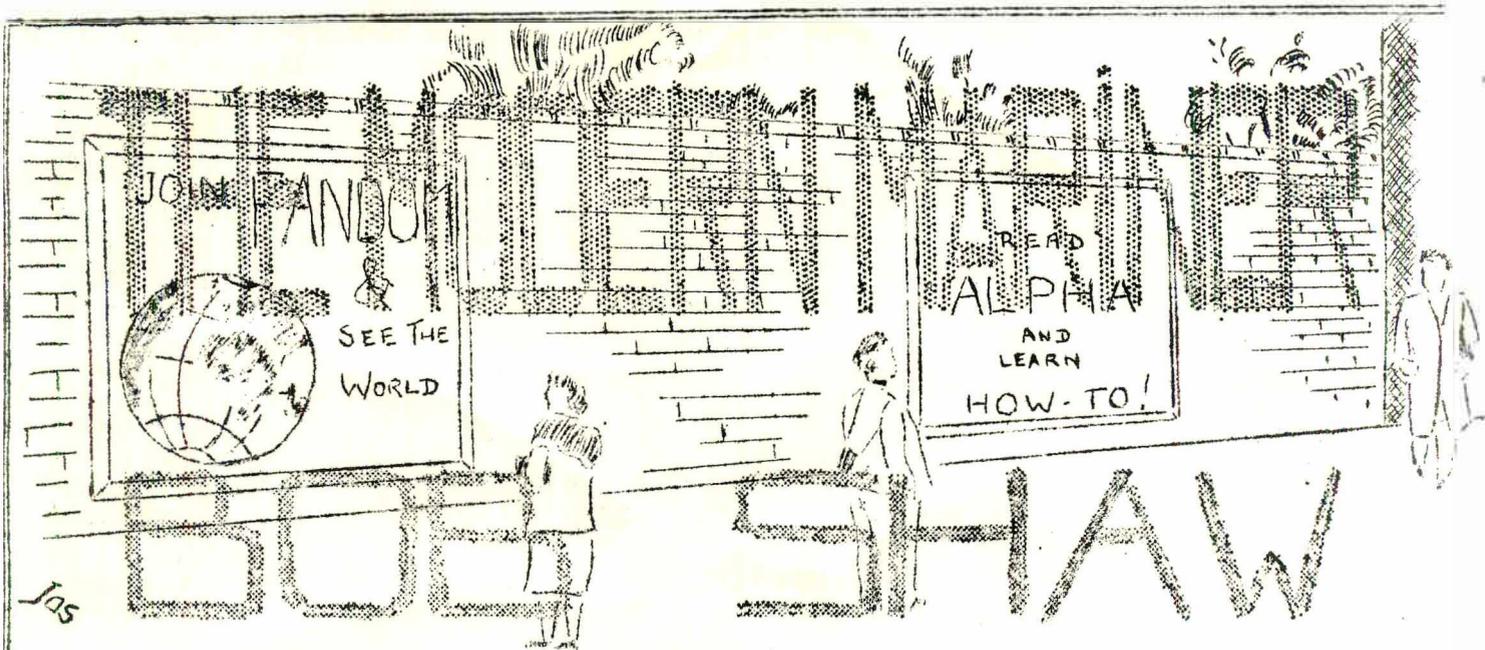
British subs at 4/- per year should be sent to

Ron Bennett, 7 Southway, Arthur's Avenue, Harrogate, Yorks.

FOR THE RECORD: following fanzines were received since the last list was published. The editors will receive Alpha in trade...

26/10/55:- Psi 5 (4 did not arrive); Eye 5; Void 4; Infinity 3; StfTrends 20 & 21 ( a bit late); Tacitum 3, 4, 5 & 6; Hark 5; Hyphen 13; YKS 3; Arcturus 1; 0 or Zero 1; Fantasy Times up to 237; Peon 36; Vagabond 2; Epitome 6; Wendigo 5 & 6; Phantasmagoria II/1; Hi 8; Abas 7; Eisfa; Belle Lettres 1; Gestalt 4; Orion ; Umbra 10; Oblique 5; Triode 5; Eisfa 12; Andromeda 2 (German); Canfan 27/28; Cellilules Grises (French); ; Orbit 7; Confab 11; Retribution 1. To date 21/1/56. No APA zines have been listed this time. Missing: Hodge Podge? Science Fiction Review 22? Lost? or stopped trading ?

Jan 5



Not so long ago I saw at one of the local cinemas one of those horrible travel talks which bore the beautifully subtle title, "Over the Seas to Belfast". It was a swindle from start to finish, not because it was about a trip to Finland but because it was about Belfast alone. There was about three shots of the city hall and the rest of the time was taken up with views of the homely faces of the royal family on their last visit. (I realise that the royal family does not merely live in a home but it would have been too much to say, "Views of the palsy faces of the royal family"). What I am getting at is that the makers of the film completely omitted the "over the seas" part. Now this is likely to give people the impression that crossing the Irish Sea is a simple affair which would be a very bad thing. Hence this article.

Before any fan lightly undertakes to nip over and see the sights of Ireland let him read this account of one crossing that I made and take precautions accordingly.

I boarded the boat at Liverpool. I won't give the name of the craft because I don't want to get sued and because it has probably sunk by this time but mostly because I can't remember it. As I usually do on these occasions I wandered up to the prow and stood gazing out across the greasy water trying to think some important thoughts concerned with quitting one country and setting out on the high seas with nothing to guide my ship but the stars and the maps and the radio and radar and half a dozen lighthouses and the line of empty beer bottles that I had left on my last crossing. Having failed to think of anything cosmic and tired rapidly of the sight of a sombre line of sooty warehouses absorbing the fine drizzle I went below. I decided to turn in early so I went up to the place where the British Railway men had dumped all the luggage. My case was not there.

I searched through all the stuff again then went and got a steward type and told him what had happened. He came back with me and he looked through all the stuff. While he was doing this I was watching a pile of cases that belonged to a group of men in ATC uniforms. One of the cases in the centre of their pile had little leather corner pieces on it just like mine had. When I asked them if they might have made a mistake they glowered up at me and shook their little bullet heads angrily. Then the steward type came up to me again - he had it all

worked out. My case must have been shoved in with the 1st class luggage. We went right through the ship to the other end and searched around for half an hour and decided it was not there either. When this became apparent the steward guessed that it must have been stolen and he disappeared. I went back up on deck in a bad temper and prowled around the luggage belonging to the ATC men.

They watched me with open hostility. After some minutes I spotted <sup>on</sup> the case that looked like mine a white sticker exactly like the one that had been put on it in London. I went over to the heap and was intercepted by three of the men who wanted to know what I wanted. "I want to examine that case," I exclaimed in a loud voice which made several people turn round curiously. I hauled the case out, set it down flat, predicted that inside it there was green pajamas, flung open the lid, displayed the pajamas to an appreciative audience, gave the ATC a dirty look, elbowed them out of the way and went down stairs to my room. I felt tough.

Just in case anybody should think that the ship was out in the middle of the Irish sea by this time I should mention that it was still sitting at the jetty. Nobody seemed to know the reason for the delay.

I found that I was sharing a room with a neat little man who from the expert way he went through washing and changing had obviously made this trip many, many times. He got into his bunk, said good-night and went to sleep immediately. I lay and read for some time waiting for the engines to start up. The boat was due to sail at nine and at about midnight we were still sitting there. I got into such a rage that I couldn't concentrate on the book so I threw it down and tried to sleep. I couldn't. I lay and watched a dirty mark on the concrete of the jetty waiting for it slip away behind us as we moved off. I watched that mark all night.

At six that morning I dressed and went up on deck to see if I could find out the trouble. I was told that the ship was fog bound. I looked around at the fog all of which if crammed into one room would not have come up to convention standards, then I cursed British Railways long and bitterly and went back to my room. I lay on top of my bunk for a while and tried to read. It was half six and the boat was due in Belfast at half seven.

At seven the neat methodical little man bounded cheerily out of his bunk and begun to shave himself. "Where are we?" he said when he noticed my bloodshot eyes peering at him from the top bunk. "Bangor? Holywood? Queens?"

"Liverpool," I replied surlily.

"Liverpool!" he gasped.

"Liverpool," I assured him. "We been sitting here the whole night!"

"Jasusker-ist!" he said strickenly. He finished shaving and went out. At half seven the engines started to throb, the dirty mark moved away from my porthole and some girls next door woke up. I lay listening to them talking for a while. The main topic of conversation was the smoothness of the crossing, ("You wouldn't have known the boat was moving.") and the advantages of being a good sailor, ("I slept like a top, but then I come from a seafaring family.") The girls dressed and then I heard their happy babbling interrupted by the door of their room opening. It was the ship's nurse-cum-stewardess.

"Doawn't bother rushin'," she said with a rich brogue. "The boawt

hasn't moawved yet. Yer in Liverpool still." There was a dead silence next door after she went out. I wandered around all day as the boat chugged slowly across the Irish Sea. The most exciting thing that happened was that we passed the Isle of Man. I looked it over but didn't even see one of the cats. At four in the afternoon we were told to go down to the canteen where we were given a plate of unclassifiable soup, a cup of strong tea and two sandwiches of dry bread and corned beef.

It was with the warmest feeling of patriotism that I have ever experienced that I saw the shores of Belfast Lough appear on each side of the ship. We steamed up the Lough for some time and then the news that Ireland was in sight got around and a crowd formed on the upper decks to observe this phenomenon. As it happened I was standing next to an elderly gentleman who regarded every new aspect of the coastline with a sort of dewy eyed, reverent wonder. After some time he noticed me watching him and explained that he had sailed away from Belfast as a boy, out into the world to seek his fortune, and he had had some rough times and seen a lot of the world but at last he had made good and was sailing back to the land of his birth for a holiday amid the almost forgotten scenes of his boyhood. All of this sounded somewhat familiar to me but it was obvious that he was in earnest so I refrained from whistling any of the pseudo-Irish songs he had just synthesised and made understanding little noises. We stood there in the gathering dusk, watching.

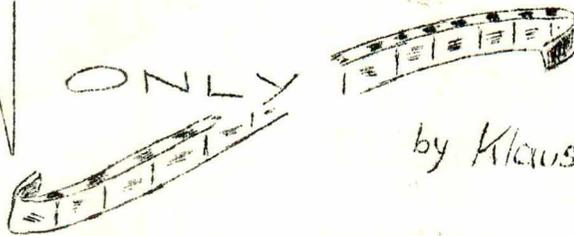
"Tell me," he said presently. "I have practically forgotten this part of the world. What is the name of that place?" He was pointing at a cluster of lights on the south coast. Now I know the Down coast pretty well from the land, but from the sea places look different. I knew that the town was either Donaghadee or Bangor but I couldn't decide which. The place he was pointing out looked far too bright and large to be Donaghadee so I told him it was Bangor, the last town before we reached Belfast itself.

He stared at it in awe. "What do you know?" he whispered fervently. "Bangor! I went there when I was only a kid. Just think of it. Bangor! This is a big moment for me. Gee, Bangor!" I too smiled out at the lights with a sort of proprietary pride, after all, I was the one who had focussed his reminiscings for him. Then the boat moved round a spur of land and I saw on the bay coastline thus revealed a really brilliant grouping of coloured lights. I was horrified. This could only be Bangor and the first place must have been Donaghadee after all. The elderly gentleman had not noticed the new place yet -- he was still staring back at Donaghadee and muttering emotionally, "Bangor! My, my! After all these years I'm looking at Bangor where I used to go as a kid. It sure does these old eyes good to see Bangor again." I tiptoed away from him but the going was slow through the crowd and he noticed the new convocation of lights before I was away.

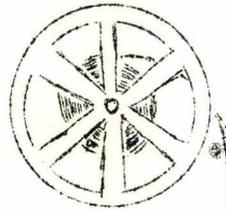
"Where's that?" he said to a man who had moved in beside him. The man told him it was Bangor. Giggling nervously I scuttled away through the crowd but the elderly gentleman managed to give me one sorrowful, reproachful look before I escaped. It was obvious that I had made a complete mess of the awakening of his joyful memories of boyhood. I had spoiled his homecoming. I felt miserable about it until the boat docked at seven -- nearly twelve hours late. I was all right then because my fiancée was there to meet me, but I shudder to think of the first impression a stranger would get of Ireland if he landed on his own after a day like that. Therefore, if any of you are thinking of making the trip to the Auld Sod make sure you have your wife, fiancée or, at least, girlfriend go on ahead by plane and wait at the dock for you. Or better still, go by plane yourself.

A FAN

ONLY



by Klaus Unbehaun



"Nein, glaube nur nicht, der grösste Fan aller Zeiten spräche zu Ihnen! Nur deshalb, weil ich so ein paar kleine Filme gedreht habe! Nein!!! Ich bin genau solch ein Fan wie Du auch! Bin genau so an SF interessiert und geben einen Haufen Geld dafür aus! "

"Moment 'mal, Herr Unbehaun, so geht das ja nun nicht, die Leute, die das hier lesen, wissen ja garnicht, worum es sich handelt!"

"Ach so, Sie sind auch noch da, hm, wieder so'n lästiger Reporter, na, ja, wie kam es also dazu? .... ich wohnte 1950 in Nürnberg. Da kam ich zum ersten Mal mit SF in Berührung. Ich sah SF-Filme, ich kaufte mir amerikanische SF-Hefte und SF-Bücher, damals interessierte ich mir zwar dafür, sammelte aber noch nicht, wenigstens nicht so wild wie heute alles, was mit SF zusammenhängt, SF-Bücher, SF-Film-Photos, SF-....."

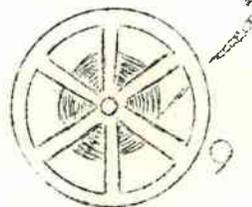
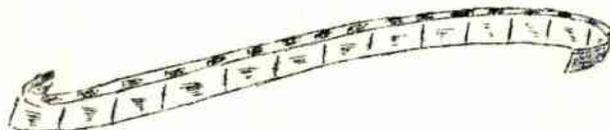
"Hören Sie bloss mit diesem SF auf, Herr Unbehaun, Sie brechen sich noch die Zunge ab!"

"Entschuldigen Sie, aber ich bin es gewöhnt, SF in jeder Form in mich aufzunehmen und von mir zu geben! Aber, Sie unterbrachen mich, ich verliere den Faden! Ach so, dort waren wir stehen geblieben.... nun ja, dann zog ich wieder in meine Heimatstadt Wuppertal um und begann, kurze Stummfilme als 8mm-Schmalfilme zu drehen, vor allem Western und ähnliches! Dann kam in Deutschland UTOPIA auf. Da war die Idee gefasst. Ich konnte mir Original-Film-Ausschnitte besorgen und drehte den ersten kurzen SF-Stummfilm von ca. 10 Minuten Laufzeit, 'Planet Emerge' in schwarzweiss. Aber, leider fing ich mit SF-Filmen erst 1955 an. So entstand danach ein kurzer Farbfilm 'Weltraum-Boten'. Es schwirrte nur so von UFO's. Beim Publikum hatte 'Planet Emerge' solch einen Erfolg, dass ich als letztes 'Rache an Emerge' drehte, in schwarzweiss wieder! Ich stellte noch zwei Dia-Serien, Lichtbild-Serien in Farbe her, mit den Titeln 'Der Mars-Dolch' und 'Venus sendet Ufo'. So, gerne möchte ich noch mehr Filme dieser Art drehen, ich selbst, und vor allem 'man', ist begeistert davon. Aber, .... es fehlt an passenden Requisiten. Wenn wir die irgendwo leihen könnten, .... na ja, wir wollen sehen! Auf jeden Fall haben Sie, Herr Reporter, mich jetzt lange genug aufgehalten! Mir fällt gerade eine neue Idee für einen SF-Film ein!"

"Ja, dann Adios bis zum nächsten Mal, Herr Unbehaun, wir sehen uns bald wieder!"

"Adios Herr Reporter, und grüssen Sie Mr. Jan Jansen von mir. Er wollte einen Artikel für sein Fan-mag von mir, aber mir fällt beim besten Willen nichts ein! Also, nochmals Adios!"

" Adios....."



# LIB'S COANE

Maurice  
DELPLACE  
T.G.

## ASTRONAUTICS WITHOUT TEARS - - - - - - TWO JUVENILES FOR GROWN-UPS!

I suppose that most of you have been, at one time or another, enthusiastic comic-readers. I was. But now you're older, grown up, and perhaps even think yourself a bit more clever, and smile with contempt when you see one of those comics. In that case, you'd better hold on, for I'm going to talk about two of them. "Objectif:Lune" and "On a marché sur la Lune" are albums about Tintin, reporter, and his dog, Milou, and were published in a collection of "Aventures de Tintin". Both text and drawings are from Hergé, who has made quite a hit with his creations.

Other than Tintin and Milou, there is Captain Haddock, a funny sailor who's drunk far too often, but a great friend of Tintin. Professor Tryphon Tournesol, builder of the first spaceship, a little deaf and often 'in the moon'. Dupont and Dupond, two twin cops with big feet are the funniest characters in the story. Further there's Mister Baxter, head of the project; Wollf, one of the villains; plus a terrific organisation of spies. The story is intended for children from seven to seventy-seven, and has perfectly reached its goal, for few people will be able to restrain their laughter as they follow the course of events.

Hergé (the author in case you'd forgotten) seems to have made a careful study of rockets, for the spaceship he offers us is a pure "chef-d'oeuvre". I agree with Igor Maslowski that many sf authors should read and study these two albums, and learn those things they seem to have forgotten in their stories. I have checked the drawings of the spaceship and believe it or not, I could find no mistakes. If I daresay, the technical side is as good as Kornbluth's 'Take-Off', tho' of course Kornbluth's book is better on story quality, where Hergé is writing for children. (The books I read to check up on Hergé are The Exploration of Space, A.C. Clarke; Conquest of Space, Bonestell and Ley; and three French books, all the same title: L'Astronautique, one by Lionel Laming, the second from Science et Vie, and the third (and best) by Alexandre Ananoff).

The story handles the first voyage to the moon. Since Hergé doesn't want to play with politic fire, he puts the launching base in a small kingdom of Europe, Syldavia. Another unnamed country tries to steal the plans, but that also must be imaginary as the scientists on the project come from various existing countries. The first book relates the building of the spaceship, the second its journey. In the first spies try to steal the plans, with the help of Wollf, but Tintin and Haddock can prevent their plans, although they do not find out about Wollf's activities. So the spaceship takes off with Tintin, Haddock, Prof. Tournesol and Wollf. Three stowaways are carried along, two of them (Dupont and Dupond) unwillingly, the third, an international spy named Jorgensen. They make a perfect landing, and recognise the surroundings, when Jorgensen tries to steal the ship after having remained hidden all this time. Of course, Tintin prevents him, and the naughty spies dies. Oxygen is short however, and only through a remorseful Wollf, who jumps into the void, can they land in safety on their return trip.

You honestly shouldn't miss these two books. Even Eric Bentcliffe

finds a vaporous blonde in the story. The price of the books is 65 Bfrs plus postage. (1.30 dollars-9/3d each). There is a Flemish and a French edition.

FIRST LENS MAN by B.D.SMITH (Boardman - London) 9/6.

This second book in the famous Lensman series, is very much superior to the first "Triplanetary". The psychology of the characters, whilst still weak, is better developed in this second novel. The people in the book are of course divided in the ever-recurring "good-ones" and "bad-ones". And the "good-ones" have some weaknesses too, at last, instead of being complete supermen. Whereas in Triplanetary the characters spend all their time in battle, they have developed a facility called thought! The descriptions of the non-human races are excellently done and make up some of the best descriptive parts of the book, beaten only by the space-battles, in which Doc Smith is the master. The one description at the end of the book should become a classic. Whilst the rest of the book is well-written, it lacks the care given the battles. Very much recommended if you like this type of science fiction.

THE BIG BALL OF WAX S.Meade (Boardman - London) 10/6

This is completely different from the one above. The worlds depicted in this book is near, terribly near. Some have compared it with 1984 and Brave New World, but both of these are not as bitter Meade's description. Reading 1984, one could still believe in a revolt against the Party; in Brave New World the rebel could find himself an island to escape the world. But in Meade's world there is no hope. People have succumbed to a way of life, and everything that might improve the situation is impossible. People no longer bother to think even, and books are forgotten. The narrator finds a person who still writes books "original" and of course stupid.

Is the book an exaggeration? No. Just the result of the trend of the "American way of life" pushed to the extremes. One laughs whilst reading this novels, for some parts are indeed funny. But if you bother to reflect on the theme, the urge to laugh passes.

With the exception of the narrator, the other characters are but flatly drawn, one of the faults of the book. As I've said, the book makes you laugh, but it is as Saint John says in the Apocalypse: Sweet in the mouth, bitter in the guts.

Recommended, without reserve.

CRISIS 2000 Ch.Eric Maine (Hodder & Stoughton) 10/6

This is the nth version of a plot as old as science fiction itself. The arrival of extra-terrestrials on earth. Mr Maine 's novel shows us some conventional characters on the scene: the pacifist senator; the colonel, with strong beliefs for strong solutions; the beautiful female scientist; the F.B.I. agent she falls in love with and the young jealous scientist, etc. As implied earlier, there isn't much new here and one can guess how everything will end for the best. Yet it is pleasantly written, and I enjoyed reading it. It's light and amusing touches, plus being wholly without pretensions, allows me to recommend it.

(The above book is a rewritten version of a story which appeared in "Spaceways" in the US, if memory serves correctly. JJ).

M.Delplace.

NEW WORLDS S.F. 44 (Feb 56) 2/- Nova Publications, London WC2

Please Mr Carnell, Sir, that contents page! Two features (leaving off the 'line-up') and three articles, against five stories... I like Fiction.... Even if I have to admit that the articles were

of interest, and might be even more so to more scientific minded readers in your audience. It's just that prefer to find science fiction in your mag. The fiction content is very good, though there have been better issues. J.T.McIntosh writes of his novelette: "...quite a lot of time is taken to say very little." How right. Science fiction here becomes but a background for a spy story set on a far-away planet, and even if it is worked out well-enough loses out against the human interest capably superimposed. But it's a good story ... James White has the best story this issue with "Question of Cruelty", humanity analysed by aliens on basis of a research rocket. Brunner, Brian Aldiss and George Longdon complete the line-up.

FICTION 27 (Feb 56) Eds OPTA Paris. 17,50 Bfrs

Still the best continental science fiction prozine on the market, FICTION continues to bring translations from MoF&SF, along with some very good original French material. The translations this issue are from authors A.E.Jones, R.Matthe son, R.B.Banks, B.Walton & W.M.Miller. Marcel Béalu has a fantasy tale "L'araignée d'eau", whilst an article on J.H.Rosny aîné, one of the earlier French sf authors, is accompanied by an extract from his book "Les Xipéhuz". Competent book reviews and a regular film-department devoted to sf & fantasy films make excellent departments. If you do read French it is worth buying for the original material.

ONE IN THREE HUNDRED J.T.McIntosh 10/6 Museum Press, London.S.W.7

This story of Earth's end, and its hasty evacuation when the sun heats up, will be familiar to most of you either from reading the three novelltte's in the Mag.of F&SF, or at least from the various reviews that have since appeared in the US. (French readers have had a chance to see it in 'Fiction'.) It's third place in the 1955 IFAward should be enough of a guarantee as to its quality.

The first part of the book relates the selection of those people who will get a chance to evacuate to Mars, to leave Earth before it is doomed in hastily assembled, barely spaceworthy ships. Only 1 in 300 can be evacuated, and Bill Easson's job of selecting the ten to take place in 'his' ship is masterly described. The middle part relates the trip from Earth to Mars of Bill and his ten selected people, done as well as the previous part, whilst the reconstruction of a new world on Mars to take care of all the survivors closes the book. This last part is longer than the others, and is not quite up to the standard of the previous, though even so it doesn't detract from the book's quality.

Hard-cover collectors will of course have this on their must-list, but I heartily recommend it to other sf readers for a place in their permanent library.

UTOPIA-SONDERBAND 1 20 Bfrs Verlag Erich Pabel - Rastatt.

This time the Pabel Verlag has really published a magazine, and for a first issue quite fair too. Print and paper are excellent, and illustrations are so frequent, with movie-stills interjected throughout the magazine. Robert Heinlein steals the show easily with a translation of his "The Long Watch". Other stories are from Fox B.Holden (Earthmen ask no quarter), Forry Ackerman with two short stories, each just over one page, and a third 'Donovan's Idea' which I hadn't encountered before. Ian Wright has a story The Long Trek, from Futuristic Science Stories, with Gallun, Carl Darlton, G.H.Smith and Ross Rocklynnæ as further supporting cast.

Articles too are plentiful, mainly on Hollywood films, including two Ackerman pieces. I wonder why Walt Ernsting didn't call this the



of humanity. In this religion there are ten basic rules of conduct, each of which can merit the violator eternal punishment, yet, in many societies these violations become virtues.

While I feel sure that Anton's proposition was written with his tongue-in-cheek it can certainly be used as a thought stimulator. Ponder upon those ten rules, presumably handed down directly to Moses by God. We could start with adultery - thou shalt not commit. Fortunately and happily we have the species -homo sapiens- divided into two sexes. This has been a very satisfactory arrangement, furnishing, if nothing else, a topic of conversation, a source of amusement and entertainment in the form of jokes and stories, a profession as old as the race, an avocation, (whose devotees often threaten the welfare and livelihood of the pros) and a game of pursuit and countersuit that nevergrows old. Moses and his God must have been old indeed and the seeds of their manhood extremely dessicated to even harbor the thought that by arbitrarily stating that, not only should one remain true to ones mate physically, but, .. not even by a side glance at ones neighbors mate, that the innate sex drive, theoretically placed there by the creator, could be channeled. If the violation of these rules condemn one to damnation, heaven must be a lonely place, for the person who has desired not, nor committed, nor coveted, is not a normal human being. The realisation of the incongruity of these rules might be the reason for the later remission of sins idea in christianity. Hell was overcrowded!

The worshipper of Satan, must, of necessity be a liar. In that case Anton is not alone in his worship of his most Satanic Majesty. Lies are stock in trade for all phases of so-called civilization. Try, as I have, to tell the truth, not only to oneself, but to others as well, for any period of time. Watch yourself closely, for truth is foreign to our modes of living! Lying is not a natural trait of man but is a result of conditioning from birth, with self deception the most vicious form. Millions of words could be written explaining the whys and where-fors but, simply stated, in the language of the SF fan, 'tis egoboo, the desire to salve ones own sense of inferiority by seeming to be a V.I.P. or B.N.F. The more inferior, the greater the desire to impress. (Could be the reason for this?) In order to establish oneself as a success, success being translated as the accumulation of assets, one must be a liar and a thief.

Thief! Ah yes, Thou Shalt not Steal. Steal, the taking of something that belongs to another. How does one establish what is ones own? What is this business of mine and thine? By what right can a person say: "This is mine and no others?" Even the body in which the ego rides can not be truthfully called a personal possession, for it is but a collection of elements assembled in a unit, to be returned to the warehouse of elements upon dissolution. Therefore the expression 'Mine' is invalid and has no meaning. Ergo - anyone using the word is automatically a thief and in the endeavor to accumulate anything is guilty of thievery.

Thou Shalt Not Kill! Kill what? Mans ego translates that as an edict against the slaying of himself. The rule doesn't say that, therefore we may be condemned for taking pennicillin, for by so doing we are slaying a creature that in the God's eyes may be as important as any other living organism. Consider for a moment the ridiculous ramifications of such a rule: the woodman cutting his tree, the householder moving the lawn, the farmer spraying his crop to control insects: all violators. All about us are hell-aimed persons! How can the custom of putting the clergy into uniform and sending them into the war area to console soldiers (murderers) for violating a prime law, be rationalized?

This sort of thing could go on and on. The field of sin and not-sin is unlimited and the seeking mind can find endless food for thought. Basically, an atheist and freethinker, a detestor of cant and hypocrisy, and a believer of man's eventual victory over himself, I can find only one evil, doing to one's fellow anything that one would not have done to oneself - a misquotation of the golden rule, The violation of this rule, whether under the misconception of self-worship, God-worship or Devil-worship, is always a returnable thing, it rebounds upon the perpetrator of the violation, automatically, and without the intervention of either angels or imps. The wise men of the ages have known this. As ye sow so shall ye reap - Live by the sword, perish by it - etc. The guilt sense of such violators lead to excesses that are in themselves punishments. So - worship what you will, if it pleases you and when it pleases you. Deceive yourself, drug your mind with fallacies and dreams, resort to non-thinking, as so many do, erect an edifice of self-worship, Do anything! BUT there is a path you must tread, that of birth to death, and it must be travelled by all living organisms. It is a natural path and not to be feared. Only man has invented artificial creeds and dogmas to bewilder and befog the mind and create issues without basis of reason or logic, that leads to hatreds, intolerance and war.

Thus, also, in man's imagination, has he created the aspects of good and evil, translating them to his own satisfaction and in his egotism and greed, condemns others for violations while secretly plotting how he can circumvent them for his own profit. It is difficult indeed to face the fact that in the cycle of life the ego must and will perish. Me, thou, and thine are equally mortal and to gain the love and respect of one's fellow man, one must love and respect them in equal measure.

Chas. Athey

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#### Beginner's Luck ....

Well, it could be, of course. But even so, I think you're quite justified in sending some cash, a shilling would do I suppose, to Peter Rigby, 131, Kensington Road, SOUTHPORT, Lancs (England), for a copy of the fanzine "ARCTURUS" he publishes together with John Ashcroft. The first issue was quite a good one...

You could hardly term either John Berry or Arthur Thomson 'beginners' but it is their first issue of a new house magazine. RETRIBUTION is the name, and either John Berry, 1 Knockenden Cres, Flush Park, Belfast, N.I. or A. Thomson, 17 Brockham House, Brockham Drive, London SW2, would certainly appreciate some dough, if only to enable them to get rid of all their copies....

or even old fogey's....

OOPSLA on the other hand has been around a long time now, and it certainly is a good magazine, with excellent material practically every page. You probably know it's Gregg Calkin's mag, but do you know his address??? And subscribed? Don't blame yourselves. I'm not sure of his address, but lastly it still was 2817-11th Str, Santa Monica, Calif. USA, and issues are 15 cents apiece. He might be out of the Marines by now, but mail will get forwarded; so blame yourselves if you don't get future issues.

Walt Willis, 170 Upper Newtownards Rd, Belfast, N.I. and  
Chuck Harris, 'Carolin', Lake Ave, Rainham, Essex. Need I name the mag?  
they're fanzines...

and they're FUN !

# A LA RECHERCHE D'ANTON D'ANTAN

S. L. BIRCHBY

I suppose there was never yet an editor not seized at some time with a goatish craving to butt out in all directions at his clientele. There they sit, he imagines, stolidly absorbing all that the postman or paper-boy brings, month after month, giving forth in return for all this scarcely a grunt, scarcely a letter, and never, never at all, anything constructive capable of being rolled or kneaded into an article for the next issue.

Of all editors, the fanzinios suffer worst. Their subscribers, in addition to being lumpish, are also quite critical. They do not very often praise; they do not often write articles; but they very often tell the editor if they think he is slipping.

So I think I can see why Jan Jansen devoted most of the last "Alpha" to a gentlemanly gurn about lack of reader-response, and why he threw in for good measure a six-page article on Satanism. I trust that his endeavour to épater les bourgeois has brought satisfactory results.

At any rate it has provoked me to writing, even though I suspect the presence of a large baited hook. Perhaps it's not too late to draw back even now. Let someone else have a go: some of that formidable array of authorities which Ragatzy quotes: Messrs Brunner or Russell, perhaps.

No. No. It irritates me when someone quotes me to bolster an argument I never intended to bolster. This is what Ragatzy has done by quoting a book review of mine --- and what is more, the book was Stapledon's: I presume to think that if he were alive, he too would be annoyed.

On consideration, I shall take our Anton to pieces.

The article gave me a number of misgivings. The more I read it, superficially so sincere in its professions, the less sure I became that Ragatzy was not trailing his coat, possibly at the editor's request. What else could I conclude from the fact that of the many big names he quoted to support his argument for Satanism, most were better witnesses against it? Either he had lost his old polemical skill, or he was arguing against his own real convictions.

Or of course, it might have been a case of the Devil quoting Scripture for his own ends.

We are told that the Devil looks after his own. We are invited to consider such of his disciples as Petrus Borel, who died scratching a meagre living out of an Algerian farm, little above the peasant level, having successively been a complete failure as an intellectual, a writer, a French Colonial official, and a farmer. Or Rimbaud, whose sole contribution to the discussion is that 'he recommended the systematic disordering of the senses' and, I believe, went mad. Or Baudelaire, a hashish-eater. Or Strindberg, who, whether mad or not, wasn't very happy about it.

Since I find it so easy to fault all those of his references that I happen to know about, I can logically assume that with a little patience I could fault the lot.

Marquis de Sade? Adolf Hitler ? The Devil looked after them? Well, yes, no doubt he did. No doubt he still does. But not in any fashion likely to attract the average man. Or fan.

Besides this sense of inept dialectic I still had a certain uneasiness about Ragatzy himself left over from the previous time he was heard of in fandom. On that occasion there were various speculations as to his real identity: it was widely felt that he might be a phoney, although some fans, and most fanzines, accepted him at face value pro tem. In the end, Second Fandom never really reached a conclusion, and in 1942 it didn't anyway seem very important to do so.

Now that he had reappeared in print, and I was about to engage with him, this old mystery ought to be solved. I ought to know my adversary: to hold a mirror to Ragatzy the Satanist might be to reflect quite a different and well-known countenance. Or none at all.

A little research soon satisfied my curiosity. What I had not foreseen was that the existence or otherwise of "Ragatzy" was, for the purpose of this reply, unimportant. Provided that I could demonstrate the article to stand on its own merits, then, for the purpose of discussion, the very distinctive personality that seemed to pervade it would not be synthetic. Pseudonym or not, the entity "Ragatzy" would be real in the sense that he would represent an existant facet of someone's personality.

The knowledge that if I could establish that Ragatzy had not been writing with his tongue in his cheek, I could then consider his arguments in their own right, was rather slow seeping in. The fact is, I was fascinated to realise that for the first time in its history, Fandom had turned up a Satanist. I'd thought I'd seen everything. Evidently not.

As far as I know, the nearest and only other approach to the subject was the Tigrina episode of 1942. Tigrina, as some fans will be aware, was a young girl introduced to Los Angeles fandom, and, through their fanzine "VOM", to British fans, by Ackerman. Her gimmick was to represent herself as a devotee of the black arts, though it is doubtful if she got any further than owning a black cat. Her age was given as thirteen.

I shall not waste time on her except to say that for several months her activities littered the pages of VOM. At one stage, her remarks brought forth a long letter from a very well-known fan and author in which he speculated on what, if anything, she really knew about being a witch. He then proceeded to tell her what Satanism actually was. "In my work," he explained, "I've had occasion to run up against this sort of thing occasionally."

If I quote from his letter, I may be accused of selective bias. I have therefore given Jan the full text in the hope that he will be able to reprint it. I would suggest that the reader studies it with Ragatzy's article at his side, and then decides whether or not the two views of Satanism are complementary. If he feels that they are, he will then have to assess the significance of Ragatzy's beliefs being on a par with those ascribed to American Satanists. He may conclude that one of three things is possible.

- (a) that both parties independently hypothesized such tenets as a Satanist philosophy would require: "steam-engines are invented at steam-engine time", as it were.
- (b) that Ragatzy read VOM and can now convincingly pose as a Satanist without being one.

(c) that his article isn't all that similar, even if he did read VOM. It shows enough signs of independent research to suggest a partisan interest in the subject.

While he is doing this, let me fill in the background on Ragatzy.

First, the facts : Anton Ragatzy was associated with the Stoke-on-Trent S.F.Club, which existed from June 1939 to February 1942. Although he did not consider himself a fan; he corresponded with Douglas Webster who in late 1940 began to edit "The Gentlest Art", a letterzine. Some of the letters, upon such subjects as intelligence, education and propaganda, were printed. He revealed few personal details, except that he was billeted in Stoke. Later, Douglas claimed to have gained the impression that he was working there as a civilian. Because of his name, he had presumably come from Poland in 1939.

From 1940 until mid-1941, when G.A. folded, extracts from the correspondence appeared regularly. Thereafter he was heard of no more, except for a single letter in Harry Turner's "ZENITH" for April 1942, adversely criticising the artwork, and a letter dated 1941 but printed in Douglas' "CTHULHU" in 1942.

He wrote to at least one other fan, namely George Medhurst, who suspected him to be D.R.Smith. Other people had other ideas.

Next I shall try to help the reader decide whether Ragatzy is serious in his beliefs by a little synoptic quotation. The theory behind this is that if someone expresses opinions in 1955 which are materially the same as those he held in 1942, it's rather unlikely that he is pulling a hoax.

A s evidence of continuity of character, is the attitude of standing alloo ffrom fandom. See letter to "CTHULHU" for June 1942, and the phrase "you S.F.fans" used in 1955.

Continuity of purpose: March 1941, writing about psychic research, he said: "I shall myself some day carry out a research into similar subjects." 1955: the article itself shows that he has done, or claims to have done, research into "similar subjects".

Continuity of opinion: May 1941 G.A. writing on politics, he suggests that there is no need to "waste time" persuading the masses to take an interest in politics. Cthulhu, June 1942, writing in 1941: that only "politically capable" people should be allowed to vote. 1955: he quotes with approval Harry Lime's flip remark to the effect that the only achievement of the Swiss after hundreds of years of democracy and peace has been the cuckoo clock.

Again, in the Jan 1941 G.A. he quotes, also approvingly, a psychologist's cynically-stated dictum that the goal of the individual is to "tower above others". 1955: "Satan asks nothing more of you than self-expression and self-fulfilment...we can all achieve greatness acc to our own standards, as Hitler did...and bear in mind that Satan's priests have certain advantages over mere fellow-travellers."

Incidentally, it is an example of Ragatzy's poor choice of authorities that he should try to put over that remark about the Swiss almost in the same paragraph as he quotes Jung. It's just as well he didn't mention Schweitzer or Honegger, of whom surely Graham Greene, if not Harry Lime or Anton Ragatzy, must have heard? Because if he had, I guess he would have weakened his own argument further. Schweitzer, with a name like that, has to be Swiss. Honegger was Swiss by birth, though his musical inspiration is Germanic.

These resemblances may be imaginary. They may no more reflect the real persona of the Ragatzy of 1941 and 1955 than some of my letters of similar dates reflect mine. Yet I doubt if one should totally dis-

count them, especially in view of the Kuttner article. Furthermore, unless I'm wrong, both his past and present writings display an air of intellectual superciliousness which although never quite put into so many words is patiently in his mind: this attitude is peculiarly relevant to the case.

It is not an uncommon outlook, of course. Professional men often display it when they discuss their own speciality with laymen. Some dons are prone to it. Among economists it is endemic. I have also been accused of it. But am I quite wrong in detecting it in Anton in a malignant form? Is it for example only by chance that I cannot find one instance in which he shows any love, respect or even tolerance for his fellow-men? His attitude, whenever forced to consider them, is one of contempt. They are "the masses" who revel in bloodshed and brawling. Their virtues are tainted with self-interest. They are not fit to vote. Men of enlightenment would do well to rough-shod over them, if the need arises. Self-fulfilment is all.

No doubt a mild paranoid state is to be expected in any thorough-going approach to Satanism. Presumably, if the Christian orders his life in the belief that God is Love, then the Satanist does so believing that Satan is hate. A way of life governed by hate can at best, I suppose, be expressed as a struggle to rise to power over the prostrate forms of one's fellows. Such a philosophy might bring impressive results for a time, but it would carry the seeds of disaster for its disciples. Indeed, it has done so, and I give at random the names of the Borgias (those Borgias whose achievements on behalf of the Renaissance are approved by Ragatzy) and of Hitler, or Huey Long or Macarthy. The catch in the creed of hate is that no matter how fast may be the growth of a man's hate for a repressive environment, or his success in rising above it, his hatred of opposition grows faster. Few successful men like advice, but if they are wise, they learn to tolerate it. Not so the successful man motivated by hate. He tolerates it less and less, rejecting adverse criticism and even bad news, until he is faced with either a palace revolution or the equivalent of a bunker in Berlin.

From the point of view of conventional society, it's a good thing there is such a built-in correcting mechanism. Something had to stop Macarthy.

The paranoid syndrome is not, of course, restricted to Satanists. Many of the militant Christians of the past exhibited all its symptoms: antipathy to all "heathen" who would not accept the God of Love followed, as the disorder developed, by a narrowing circle of acceptability, wherein the victim rejected kinship first with the other Christian sects and then with his own, going off with a few followers to found a new order, and occasionally retreating even from them to become a hermit, which is as near as any Christian can approach to total rejection of the world.

Even yet there are many Christians with paranoia. I have met certain evangelicals who interpreted the command to fight the Devil so broadly that virtually every aspect of modern life was under their attack.

But I am straying from the subject. I would like to emphasize that whether or not I am correct in sensing a trace of mental aberration in Ragatzy's writings, I do not regard it as necessarily due to an organic disorder. Supposing that "Ragatzy" is a pseudonym, I could explain what I observe as symptoms of an aspect of some "real"

person's character which is normally concealed. "Ragatzy" might, for example, be the paranoid facet of a devout Christian.

There would be nothing shameful in this. Everyone has paranoid tendencies to a greater or less degree. I have myself. I believe that in my case, as in most people's, they are not at present unduly dangerous, either to myself or to others, but they could easily become so in suitable circumstances --- if for instance I began to hold certain beliefs so strongly as to dislike all non-believers. This I believe to be the danger in Ragatzy's cozenings, especially in his advocacy of self-fulfilment through Satanism. It is unlikely that any readers whom he converts will become dictators, but it is quite possible they may think they are: the wards are full of Napoleons.

The uncommitted reader would do well to embrace Christianity, even if it should entail serving in Heaven. For let no Satanist imagine that he will ever reign in Hell. Like Heaven, Hell is a dictatorship.

S. L. BIRCHBY

OPEN LETTER RE TIGRINA FROM HENRY KUTTNER.

(Reprinted from "Voice of the Imagination" for June 1942.)

"It is apparent that Tigrina is interested in demonolatry, though I cannot feel that her expressed motives are in accord with the tenets of Satanism, which today is a somewhat theosophical and cabalistical philosophy stemming partly from the Chaldees and partly from the sects of Asia Minor. Feudal devil worship was of course a degraded cult chiefly serving the purpose of freeing the peasant libido from the social pressure of the day. It was not Satanism though it is often mistaken for such.

"In my work I've had occasion to run up against this sort of thing occasionally, and I'm wondering therefore, to what books and credos Tigrina has reference. It seems to me probable that she may have mistaken the sensational, hokumy, fictional devil-worship for the genuine article. I can't say, of course, but her letter seems to lead to that conclusion, especially in its remark about weakening the will through dissipation, and her statement about the needlessness of going to extremes.

"Indeed, 'going to extremes' is a basic tenet of true Satanism, though it certainly does not involve such absurd matters as smoking and drinking, which are physiological matters and not psychic. Since Satanism involves sharpening the senses, grasping and understanding broader vistas, and a slow but complete re-orientation of the id - you can well imagine the difficulties in the path of the student. Satanism is not a religion, except to the feudal peasant and the uneducated masses of past days who required symbols. The conventional pulp fictional handling of Satanism is obviously untrue and much distorted.

"The philosophy requires very many years of specialised training for any sort of understanding of its practical application. Tigrina speaks of the powers of performing spells, reciting incantations, etc., and that in order to do so one requires a strong will. I fear I must differ with her. One does, however, require determination and ability to work hard in order to devote one's self to Satanism in toto. There are many dilettantes, but one cannot call these Satanists --- they are either unstable emotionally or mentally, require psychological compensation, or are looking for the sensational side of the matter. In view of Tigrina's letter, I judge that she is sincere, but I also judge that she has not been able to get in touch with any Satanist blocs.

That's fairly obvious, for she speaks of Devil-worship and black magic in the same sentence, though Satanism completely disavows black magic, calling it, indeed, a fake. Again, this business of performing spells. It is in a class with om mani padme hum, simply an auxiliary means of focussing and sharpening the mind. Tigrina must not expect that Satanism will enable her to perform spells. There are no miracles involved. I cannot repeat too often that Satanism is a philosophy, pure and simple, to be classed with any of the other great philosophies. It is certainly not the degenerate, criminal cultus of such men as Alastair Crowley, nor is it a group of magicians, black or white.

"I have not followed the critics Tigrina mentions, but I assume that they, too, misunderstand the basic nature of Satanism. I'm sure they would not cavil should they realise that Devil-worship is, in its purest form, not harmful, gives no powers of magic, and actually improves mind and body through a series of vigorous mental and physical exercises. It is a health-cult of sorts, coupled with a fundamental psychological readjustment which goes on over a period of years. The same end is reached by certain other methods which are looked upon with more favour by the public, but these have not the complete mysticism of Satanism, though this is coupled with a soundly sane material attitude toward material things.

"I merely mention all this because I do feel that Tigrina is sincere, and also that she has rather got off on the wrong foot, so to speak. Also I'm a little dubious about her expressed motives --- revenge and power and so on. I have no personal criticism to make, but I feel it advisable to say that if these are Tigrina's chief and only motives, she should consider carefully before investigating the real Satanism. Such motives as she expresses are, as of course she knows, compensatory for psychological difficulties, which are encountered by most people who, at an early age, are sufficiently 'different' to become interested in fantasy and science-fiction. You know that, Forry, and so do I; we all do. And it is natural enough. Moreover, over a period of years, readjustment takes place, and the psychological handicaps are overcome, though I'm glad to say that in most cases the liking for fantasy remains.

"But in view of Tigrina's letter, I thought it advisable to write her through Madge, in view of the always possible danger of an amateur student being victimised by fake cults. And, too, I was slightly annoyed, as I always am, by the confusion of Satanism with black magic, spells, and such silly legerdemain. Still I realise that Tigrina erred through ignorance rather than intent --- so I have taken time from a rather arduous programme of writing to tip her off to the real dope. Hope it'll be of some assistance to her should she continue her professed plan of embracing Satanism. "

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LEOPOLD MASSIERA who has another short story elsewhere in this issue informs us of the forthcoming publication of his novels:  
DU SANG SOUS LE CHAPITEAU 5 (Collection Le Glaive; Eds Jacquier)  
L'ARRET DU DESTIN ( Mon Roman Policier ; Eds Ferenczi )  
both under his own name, with another entitled  
SPAGHETTI A LA SAUCE A MERICAIN 5 (Collection La Loupe; Eds Jacquier)  
under his pseudonym "Bill Blondy".  
All the above are to be classed as "romans policiers", but Massiera informs us he is working on another series of sf stories.

# AMBROSIA

F.B.

Last issue of the old Alpha was mailed out about the middle of November...there'd been conferences and meetings, meaning we had a chat over a cup of tea, and the present policy was decided upon. Due to the lack of material we really could let go and blast away. And I must say that though there was not a hundred % response, at least varied 'fringe-fans' got hold of pen and/or typer and got cracking. However, where it concerns acceptable contributions, the return was lower than I had hoped for. And where I might have revelled on a heap of manuscripts forming a backlog for a year or two, I've had to smile wistfully at the material that arrived before or just after Alpha was mailed out. Amongst which Bob Shaw's and Leopold Massiéra's contributions must be mentioned.

I wonder, is it once again a case of everybody saying: oh well, he'll get so many articles he won't need mine????

Why worry, though? I'm quite sure there'll be something in the next issue.

It isn't always Archie Mercer that gets his letter of comment here first. No, he's been beaten by one mailing-delivery once, and tied with Eric Needham this time. So you won't be surprised if Archie gets (and deserves) first place here, will you?

ARCHIE MERCER: ...who the hell's Anton Ragatzy? Where's he from, to start with - is he a German, an American, or an expatriate Armenian of Indonesian extraction living in Afghanistan? Anyway, one turns the cover, and - bang, splash, straight into it for 5 pages. 5 most excellent pages, I may add, takes honours for the issue most definitely. Highly stimulating. The sort of thing that breeds replies - you should now begin getting full-length appraisals and rebuttals, besides paragraphs and paragraphs of meaty matter in ordinary letters.

On general conclusions, I'm not with him. Personally, I have no desire to worship in either direction. And far from being fascinated by stories of devil-worship and the like, they tend to disgust me if anything. Lesser demons and angels make excellent material for light fantasy, and I lap it up, but anything involving the Big White (or Black) Chief makes me feel a trifle uneasy. Not because I subconsciously believe in them, or am afraid of them or anything, but because both concepts tend to repel me. Anyway, the idea that evil (a word I don't like, incidentally - because it sounds - well, EVIL, if you see what I mean!) can ultimately triumph over good is as fundamentally absurd as the opposite notion. If there was no good to compare it to, evil would automatically cease to be evil, would become merely indifferent. Different faces of that indifference would thereupon take on the aspects of good and evil - and off we'd go again. And the same of course with the converse. Relativity comes into it somewhere I think.

I'm not altogether with him in detail, either. Take this Third Man business for example - in my opinion, Harry Lime was NOT a real character. He was overdrawn. The most "real" character in the film I thought was the Military Police sergeant, who was far nicer than any MP sergeant has any right to be. But anyway, as I said, the article was highly stimulating, and deserves to draw equally worthy material by way of reply. Maybe you'll become the Nieuwe Toekomst yet!

22 Why Pat Gripes? Is Dave expanding or something? Then Ambrosia - look

here, just because you can't get enough material for a 30-page zine doesn't mean the lettercol has to be cut to match, you know. Increased if anything. What you have here is of high interest-value, but not enough, not nearly enough. Besides, you need something to counter-balance all this morbid preoccupation with the goings-on in Ancient Rome and the Modern East. None of these books Mike the Horse refers to I've read, neither do I want to. I like to read for PLEASURE. If people get pleasure out of reading about those sort of things, they're welcome. By the way, I fail to see what difference whose side a ...soldier was fighting on makes to whether a thing's obscene or not.

Ragatzy has always struck me as being an Hungarian name, though I am not permitted to reveal the gentleman's (?) address. Sorry, folks. But for the benefit of some poor deluded souls, no, I am not Anton. Though it boosts the ego to be considered such a capable writer, huh!... Well, Dave is getting on in age, and I suppose he wants to warn you people he's beginning to show it around the middle... And extremely sorry for the dots in your letter, Archie, but they say: once bitten, twice shy.... Yes, I did receive an excellent article as a result of Anton's handiwork, but I've also received a few letters I'm a bit worried about. I'll touch upon them later. Now I'd better clear some space for your competitor,

ERIC NEEDHAM : Fancy that old croaker coming to life again...and what tripe he writes - not a single idea of his own: just endless quotations of other authorities possibly as fatuous as the statements attributed to them sound outside their context. Now if our Anton had defined EVIL as anything at all - a concept - a belief - a theory or even something less than abstract, I might take notice of the article. What irritates me in an article of this nature is that he does not even bother to explain the hypothetical benefits theoretically to be derived from the adoption of the principle of Evil. Slush. Tell him to get hep, or dry his neck...

Before I wrote to Anton to pass on your comments, I had already received Sid's article. Therein, or rather appended thereto, you'll find a statement of those benefits. Which doesn't mean that I believe in them.

Comments were slow in coming, and though the letters were always in the letter-box, they weren't Food for the Gods. Until a letter dropped in from the USA, where Dean Grennell had awoken after a certain period of - well, I'd call it hibernation, if it wasn't the summer - and not having seen Anton's article, provides us with an essay on the English language.

DEAN GRENNELL : Had you ever considered what a screwy language this English is that we speak? Admittedly, it seems tailor-made for punsters, but as a means of transmitting thoughts and ideas with clear and undistorted accuracy it leaves much to be desired. I often have occasion to ruefully reflect upon this when I write something in Grue and it is horridly apparent from the comments that come back that the readers have found a different meaning and taken it to be the meaning I meant....

For one thing there's the wide difference between spoken English and written English...a matter of word-stress that can completely change the meaning of a sentence. I have a bunch of negatives that Gregg Calkins took at the Chicon and I recently asked Lee Hoffman if she wanted any prints from these. At first she wanted to borrow all of them for printing but I pointed out that she'd printed some of them in an old Quandry. She replied, "I must have all of Calkins'

pictures..." which I, at first, interpreted to mean "I must have all.." ---less grammatically but also less ambiguously, that might be expressed "I have got to have all..." But then, after reading the sentence over in context a couple of times I decided, that if she'd been talking she'd have stressed the "have" instead, thus: "I must have all of..." This re-phrased, means something like "It would seem that I now possess..." So there's an example of one word (must) which can reverse the meaning of a whole sentence without even being used in a different meaning.

Then there are a whole scad of words that are spelled and pronounced just alike but have different meanings and only by examining the context can you hope to decide which it is and sometimes you can't even then. Take a phrase from an old story in F&SF: something about "drove the tireless tractor." Now some tractors have steel wheels with lugs on them and some have rubber tires but does the guy mean that the tractor is tireless - i.e., does not get tired as a horse might...or does he mean that there are no tires on the wheels? I never did decide. The British can feel smug here because they differentiate the rubber tire as "tyre".

Tell someone, verbally, to print the word RĪT (the dash over indicates the long I sound as in eye). They are stumped. You can't tell from hearing if the word is right, write, wright or rite...or an even faintly mispronounced riot! To add to the confusion, "right" subdivides into two or three adjectives a verb and a noun: right as in right-hand, right as in correct and - a very subtle shading here - as in right now or immediately. Then there's the right (verb) as in "right a wrong" and the noun as in "Might Makes Right," Bill of Rights, etc.

I have very little interest in baseball and seldom listen to ball-games on the radio but a recurring phrase that I kept hearing bothered me. The announcer would say, of a man coming up to bat, "He's oh for two." Now, considering that the "oh" could be either oh, owe, o (zero) and maybe a couple other words if you stretched it, and the "for" could be either for, four or fore and the "to" could be either to, too, two or (for all one knew) an abbreviation for Tuesday...considering all this you have at least 27 possible meanings that you could get from a three-word phrase! Lest you suffer from curiosity, I eventually found out that it meant that the batter had been up to bat twice in the game and had not got a hit either time (He's 0 for two or, more grammatically, "His hits stand at zero for his first two times at bat in this ball-game.")

I could go on and on. Golly, a person could fill a large book with these things but this will give you some idea. Tell me, Jan - is your language as crazy and mixed-up as this one is? (Dean Grennell)

Thanks for that bit about language, Dean. I am sure that most of our continental readers will appreciate reading that it isn't only them having difficulties with a language... There are similar difficulties in Flemish, and I expect in practically any language, but if one teeny-weeny language lesson can evoke the wrath of fandom and accusations of trying to Flemicise fanzines, what would happen if I wrote page long articles about the language? Even now, the few words that do occur in the mag makes people like

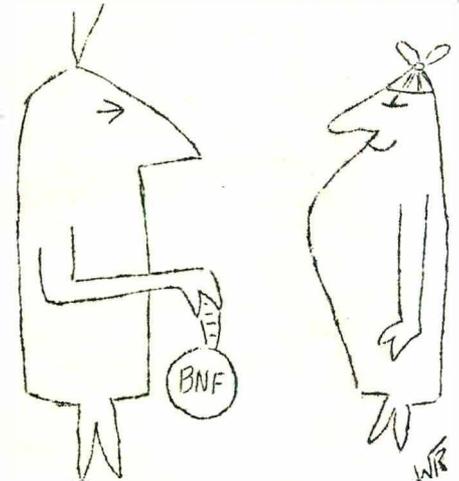


**RAT SCOTT ask** :..... I love that word "tijdschrift" . It reminds me of a story of Mark Twain's 'Italian without a Master' I think it is, describing the glamor lent by words one doesn't know when translating a foreign language. Now "tijdschrift" undoubtedly has a dull, prosaic,

everyday sort of meaning, but being entirely unaware of it I can imagine all sorts of delightfully nasty and unusual things instead. You had better tell me what it does mean..... Pat Scott

Undoubtedly a long and thoughtful study of envelope, as well as the magazine itself will inform you as to the meaning of "tijdschrift" and I for one wouldn't like to disillusion you. Why not be happy from now on imagining all these things rather than to face the real world. For it is a cruel thing indeed.

It actually is, even in fandom sometimes. There are the letters that carry loads and loads of egoboo, almost to breaking-point (perhaps that is the reason some people never seem to write - they have reached that point!) yet always there are some that for one or the other reason feel slighted. Actually these letters are as welcome as are others, especially so where they carry hints and advice towards possible improvement. An occasional one though strikes hard like the mythical thunderbolt, and last issue provoked amongst others:



..... (name withheld by editor): Mr Jansen, Fortunately I opened my son's mail one day, as he is now out of town and I send on to him anything of importance (with his consent of course). Your quarterly "ALPHA" is horrible! Do not in future send anything to ..... signed Mrs ..... PS Anything you send will be destroyed!

The above is a faithful reproduction of the letter, not one word has been changed. The issue was, if one is inclined to narrow-mindedness, rather sordid perhaps, but it is doubtful that anyone could have foreseen this. However, as even an apology would be destroyed, what am I supposed to do? However (again) should a certain fan ever read this issue, sorry for any trouble I may have caused.

It was to be expected that some people would react violently to Anton's article. To the 'message' he propounds. And almost by the same post another letter arrived, which I'll have to print again without mention of sender.

..... Alpha is to hand, but I fear I won't subscribe. I couldn't square it with my conscience to subscribe to any magazine which could print anything as disgustingly silly as "Hold a candle to the Devil". Unless you printed this article as a joke, I think it is too ridiculously silly for comment. I won't mention its blasphemy -- non-Christians, who don't worship God, can't be guilty of the sin of blasphemy, since it is obviously impossible to blaspheme <sup>what</sup> one doesn't believe. But I consider the article (a) silly, (b) in very poor taste, (c) absolutely, definitely false. I refuse to go into this any further at present except to say that I want absolutely nothing to do with any magazine which subscribes to such ideas. (If you subscribe to them, I won't subscribe to you.)

I probably know as much about Satanism as any non-professional theologian living, having been a student of comparative religions from pre-history to the present. Which means I'm not merely a narrow-minded bigot shocked by a new idea, but that I've been through the whole mass of data, have made my decision, and decided where I stand.

Thanks for the thought in sending me the copy, even although its immediate destination is the incinerator, and even although I suspect you of atheism, I'll still wish you a Merry Christmas. ....

This may rather sound out of place here. Unfortunately, I passed the stencil for page 25 over to the office and forgot to keep a copy. I know what letters I have quoted, but do not recall whether or not I added any comments. You see inbetween that stencil and this one, I took a couple of days leave and went over to Wetzlar in Germany to attend a science fiction convention. I hope that will do for an excuse. I shan't bring anything about Wetzlar here, as from what I heard at the con half a dozen people will be writing a couple of dozen conreports for various magazines, and why add another? But I couldn't resist using it as an excuse for a possible mix-up. Cons have been used as excuses for various things anyway....

And so I'll rush straight on into the next letter, selected as it is the exact opposite to some of those previously quoted.

NIGEL LINDSAY sizes it up as: Thanks a lot for Alpha 12. It may have been smaller, but Anton Ragatzy's piece more than made up for it. It is the best article I've read this year, and you deserve a pat on the back for printing it....

Thanks, Nigel. After all the book-burning that has been going on I needed that bit of egoboo very, very badly. All the same, it does raise a couple of points anent publication of material. Should I refuse a good article because it doesn't stroke with my own ideology and may even shock some of my readers into antagonistic activities? As far as I am concerned, given that the article is well presented and well written, it will be published. Whether or not it agrees with my point of view. A controversial article will draw in a reply that will stroke with my opinion, and I have always been a promoter of looking at things from both sides of the fence.

If there are readers who are thus easily shocked I apologise this time. Not next time, they have been warned. I just hope they apply their narrow-minded reading policies to all their reading activities.

Sorry for the jumping of the lines, but something seems to have gone wrong with the typer. I hope it won't interfere with

ARCHIE MERCER's explanation:

Well, it was like this, see? There's this brave communal cowguard..

WHAT'S HE GOT TO BE BRAVE ABOUT?

Dunno - probably had to guard the communal bull as well. Anyway, he saw on this flowery herb a little calf.

I THOUGHT LITTLE WAS PETIT?

It is. So what?

WELL, THIS BLOKE JKEEPS SPELLING IT WITHOUT THE FIRST E.

H'm. Never thought of that. Looks like the same thing, anyway.

Perhaps he's a French-Canadian or something. Anyway, this little calf..

WHY NOT THIS LITTLE CALF - WOULDN'T THAT BE A MORE IDIOMATIC REN-DITION?

Come to think of it, it probably would. This little calf, then, commenced to big.

To WHAT ?

To big!

I DON'T GET IT.

Nor do I, but that's what it says. It commenced to big. Perhaps it means it began to grow or something. Or it may have been a girl-calf, and it hadn't been guarded carefully enough. Anyway, it bigged and - er - er - here, I don't like the look of that next word, better skip it. And it did it on a tender herb.

IT DID WHAT ON THE TENDER HERB ?

I just told you - bigged and everything. It began to big, it bigged that this made pleasure.

WHAT MADE PLEASURE ?

What it says of course. Bigging, presumably. It bigged that this - - -

IF BIG IS A VERB, DIDN'T THE PAST TENSE OUGHT TO BE BUG ?

Search me - if you like then. It bug that this made pleasure.

Meuh!

WHAT ?

You 'eard.

SOUNDED LIKE A MAKE OF BEER.

Yes, it does, doesn't it? Anyway, that's the first verse. Now for the second one - hey, where are you going ?

MEUH.

Meuhcatorially as ever,

Archie MERCER

How's that for a quick change of subject? One would have thought that outside of Anton's article, there wouldn't be enough meat to the mag to offer further controversy. Yet, again by purest coincidence, I received two widely divergent views on one of those statements I' make in between reader's letters. (Sorry, but I seem to have fixed that typewriter up the wrong way. Shall I send it over to you Phyllis? Perhaps you can manage!) But to return to the letters...

EDDIE ROBINSON : As much as I like ALPHA, I must take exception to a remark you made in the Oct.55 issue: "Of course we here know that TEXAS is big, sorry BIG!! We see pictures now and then. It's also empty...which seems to be mirrored in the heads of the natives..."

Now I'll admit that Hall's letter was exaggerated, and silly, (it's people like <sup>him</sup> that give Texas a bad name) but he wrote it in fun. I'm not sure whether your remarks about Texas' heads and lands being empty were in fun or not. I lived in Texas for 15 years and loved every minute of it. For your information, Texas, comparatively speaking, is no emptier than any other of the 48 states, or for that matter, than the rest of the world. As for empty heads --- that's debatable.

The main reason for this letter is to stop you from becoming contaminated like the rest of the world about Texas. It's as pretty a place as you'll find anywhere, Belgium included. One other thing: is it our fault it's so big?? Just because some people blab about it (in fun, mind you) gives no-one the right to pick on it. Lord knows, 99% of the residents of Texas are soft-spoken, drawling, quiet people just like you and me. You can't judge a person by 1% of the company he keeps....  
Eddie Robinson.

There is one difficulty about letters which is far more pronounced than I had thought. Especially US fans seem to take everything I say or rather write, as if I never made a joke or had a good laugh in my whole life. Question of semantics I understand? As Dean has been quoted earlier in this department, sentences can be so constructed that two divergent meanings come forth. As if that wasn't enough, it is often rather hard to distinguish whether a statement is meant seriously, or should be taken in fun. In this case, the tonal inflection of the spoken word would have been sufficient indication, as it was, pure black on white...well, you can choose. Unfortunately, in a couple of instances of more importance than this one, fans have taken it in the wrong spirit, without even bothering to wonder whether there couldn't be a second, far less innocuous meaning to their misinterpretation. I would blame myself, if it wasn't for quite a few letters from other fans, that I could interpret in more than one way.

Should I follow his example? (For my original argument, with its

seeing in. could then consider his arguments in their own right, was rather slow that Ratzky had not been writing with his tongue in his cheek, I thought to a stranger task: "The knowledge that if I could establish quite. But after this flash of common-sense he applies much zealous otherwise of Ratzky was, for the purpose of this reply, unimportant." "portant", eventually, however, he decides that "the existence or a supposed problem which even "in 1942... didn't anyway seem very im- antagonist) to Kutner, while he himself tackles "the entity", Ratzky ted the argument, preferring to delegate it (and in fact his prime must have gained. I was most disturbed however, by the way he neglect almost cowed by the awful proportions of his museum of fanatical faces part of his recherche to rummaging among the ancient rubble of Second Antion RAGATZY: I was flattered to have S.L. Birchby devote the major

reply to get here. This morning as a matter of fact.... ten-day leave from stenciling, and of course that allowed Anton's and it became so bad that I just couldn't go on any further. Hence a in this issue grumbled about the erratic spacing of the typewriter, That last note was typed nearly a fortnight ago... I have elsewhere

on time. him. So you may find more letters here yet, if he doesn't get here Anton wakes up and begins to reply to some of the letters I sent be feasible. I am however keeping this last page or so open in case I'm not yet in a financial position where a hundred page Alpha would There were a few more letters I wanted to quote, but unfortunately

and that I'm serious about this one, etc. after each and every statement, saying that this was written in fun, Though perhaps I'd better follow your example, and write notes that Peary was one of those "Sutheners" (that how to write it?). ing either a/ that Chicago is practically at the North Pole, or b/ Excuse me saying so, but you're pretty good yourself, Bob. Imply-

North as any Yankee ever got.... Bob Farnham Spawned and grown up in Chicago, Illinois which is about as far thing about GEORGIA. He can't get too rough on it and hurt MY feelings any as I am one of THEM THAR DAMNED YANKIES he was yelling about! plain fun... and Mr Hall is asked to take them so. Let him say some- ded to actually offend but are meant and written in the spirit of MY remarks here re-TEXAS as they might affect Mr. Hall are NOT inten-

Texas may have Tall Story Tellers, but GEORGIA has the Biggest!!! five million dollar all-round hike in State Taxes.... after he was in office he saddled the people of Georgia with a sixty Governor promised: "No more taxes whatsoever..." and three weeks Story Teller running the state. In his pre-election campaign, our can no longer lay claim. GEORGIA now has the World's Biggest Tall

sted of having the world's champion Tall Story Tellers. To this they ts... Big Size, Big Men and Plenty of Hot Air. TEXAS has long boa- Claude Hall, and in my opinion, your comment was far too mild. TEXAS BOB FARNHAM : ...I did get a healthy kick out of the letter by However, here's a reader who wants to make claims of his own:

you'll like Texas as depicted in this book. Wilson (Ballantine 117). Whether or not you like the Texas as is, Lightful book a couple of weeks ago: The girls from Planet 5 by R. Favorable meaning?? Oh well....to get back to TEXAS, I read a de- Perhaps it is because I am optimistic that I always take the most

"inept dialectic", disappointed this Ragatzy fan). Before considering Kuttner's opinions in their own right, should I first establish whether his tongue was in his cheek when he took time off "from a rather arduous programme of writing" to tip that child Tigrina off to "the real dope" and thus assist her in "embracing Satanism"? Thank you, no. After all, Kuttner's "Open Letter" is unsolicited but welcome support for my viewpoint. As he says, genuine Satanism is a great philosophy, involving sharpening the senses, grasping and understanding broader vistas, and a slow but complete orientation of the id, requiring determination and ability but eventually improving mind and body. In the interests of accuracy I must refute S.L.'s hint that I might have read and remembered the Kuttner article. I was unfortunate enough to miss it.

To return to S.L. Birchby's own discourse: after some appropriately "synoptic quotation" he decides (if I interpret him correctly) that his original conclusion was after all correct: this "very distinctive personality," Ragatzy, is not synthetic but real - although there is a chance that it is merely a paranoid 'Hyde' in a quasi-schizo personality. And since Mr. Birchby himself confesses to paranoid tendencies, which he says everyone has, I have no cause for complaint.

Having cleared up this important point, let's get down to business. Of course I quoted religious witnesses to support my argument. I wished to show that the inherent logic and realism of my standpoint forces itself onto thinkers of all kinds, who must reluctantly concede step after step of the argument - but who bale out in terror with some saving phrase or revelation before reaching my conclusions. Stapledon is a case in point, and I cannot understand the objection to my quoting him as an example. Evil exists, God's powers are limited, and Stapledon denies that good will eventually triumph over evil. The next step requires courage and determination to face the evidence about us, which shows that evil is triumphing over good. My own suggestion is that one should recognise this reality and use it as a foundation for one's mode of thinking and living. To be a Satanist one need not necessarily personify evil - although "I have never understood why people who can swallow the enormous improbability of a personal God boggle at a personal Devil" (Graham Greene - if I am allowed to quote the Scriptures for my own ends!)

Those of you who are saints, I have no wish to corrupt! Even the do-gooders among you, ineffective as they must be, deserve some respect as personalities. But, to repeat my T.S. Eliot quote, "it is better to do evil than to do nothing" -- and that, after all, is the fate of the vast majority: to do nothing and to be nothing more than an insignificant and expendable part of the anonymous mass who haunt the factories, stadia and cinemas of this world and whose featureless souls will - they hope (or do they?) - will join the teeming myriads which infest the next.

Anton Ragatzy.

And that's that. If you guys want to sling it around, it's OK with me, as long as I deem the interest maintained, but for myself, quoting from another letter on another subject (everybody else is using quotes!) : "I'll play Pontius Pilatus and wash my hands..."

This ends Ambrosia for this issue, with a regretful look to some interesting letters I passed by. Sorry folks, but I should imagine eight pages will satisfy most of you???? no?

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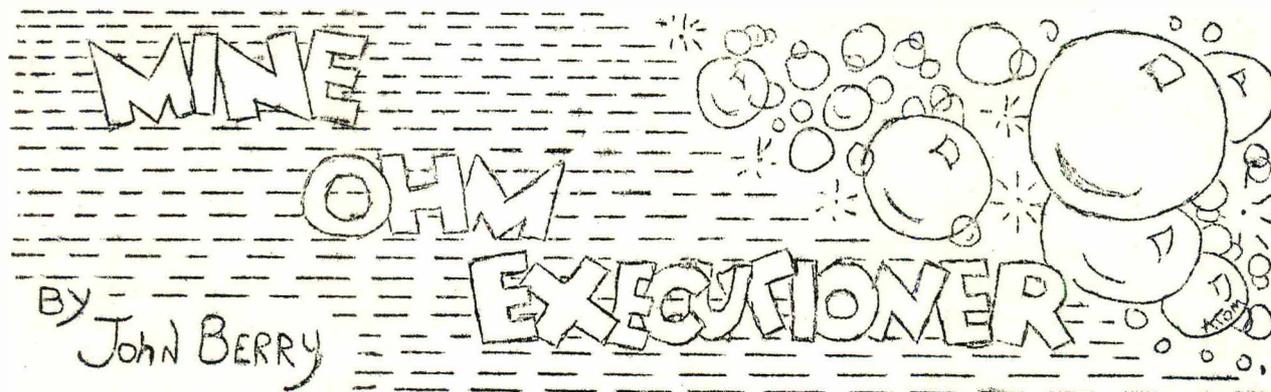


Yet another BERRY FACTUAL STORY !

Every conceivable hazard is at this moment confronting me in this effort to describe for posterity the harrowing events of yesterday evening. It is not that I am draped only in a blanket in front of the fire. It isn't so much the fact that I have a water bottle tied over my moustache. The fact that my hair turned white overnight is purely coincidental....I like to think it makes me look rather more distinguished.No. Merely that for a person with such a delicate upbringing as myself,the shock of coming into contact with a depraved person such as James White on a festive occasion like Christmas is really too much. Add this to the fact that I was supposed to be guest at The White House.....

Mind you, it also hurt me to think that the rest of them aided and abetted that debauched vile pro in his terrible experiment.

Dear reader, do not expect this to be a narrative charged with brilliant humour and pungent wit, such as I usually do. What you are about to read is a gripping epic, full of red-blooded drama, sombre and sordid conflicts and heart rending situations. This.....this is pure pathos .... shocking in its elemental brutality.



We were seated round the dining room of The White House, the country seat of vile pro James White. Peggy, his charming wife, was in the dining room, clearing away the debris after a frontal attack by a ravenous Bob Shaw. George Charters, The Aged Fan, was supping his gruel happily in the corner of the room, his few remaining hairs waving eerily in the humid atmosphere of the room, where logs cackled merrily, Walt Willis stood with his back to the fire, reminding me very much of a dirty-postcard purveyor at Port Said, attired as he was in a fez-shaped paper hat, brown shirt, volumous ghoddmin-ton trousers and sandals. Gerard Quinn, Sadie Shaw and myself completed the party, held on 26th December, a date branded on my brain forever.

Slowly, the lights of the room dimmed, and, at the same time, the strains of a long playing record of Dragnet oozed into the atmosphere with subtle inflection.

' Deeeeeeeeeeeeeee de de deeeeeeeeeeeeeee.'

James slunk into the centre of the room, and gazed at us meaningly. Gerard Quinn sidled up beside him. The room grew still as this malevolent pair gyrated with obvious evil intent.

"I want to try out my new secret weapon," gloated James, his arms arched downwards, long finger nails flinching claw-like.

"It's lethal," screamed Gerard, a look of rapture creasing his handsome face, disturbing his black wavy locks.



# LA FORÊT AUX VAMPIRES

Une nouvelle de science -fiction par L. MASSIÈRA

Walter Lockhart prit sa tête entre ses mains, pour ne plus ouïr le bruit des coups de marteau sur les poutres. Comme dans un horrible cauchemar se déroulant dans une époque moyennageuse, il entendait, et le bruit avait résonné de plus en plus fort à ses oreilles, l'ultime préparation de son gibet. Dans un moment, il allait être pendu pour un crime qu'il était persuadé, bien qu'il en doutât parfois, de n'avoir pas commis. Il avait assisté à l'événement peut-être le plus fantastique depuis les temps biblique et personne n'avait voulu y croire.

L'ouvrier qui s'affairait, dans la menuiserie de la prison de Nottingham, à figoler un meuble rustique ne se doutait pas que le condamné prêtait un autre sens au bruit de son travail.

Depuis ce jour funeste où il était allé chasser dans une forêt du comté, Walter Lockhart n'avait plus connu le repos aussi bien physique que moral. Souvent, dans les longues heures passées dans une cellule noire, seul avec ses pensées, il avait évoqué "son" effarante histoire, en se demandant s'il n'avait pas rêvé tout cela et s'il n'était pas réellement le "vampire" dépeint par les hommes qui l'avaient jugé.

Alors qu'il était à l'affût depuis un certain <sup>temps</sup> derrière un épais fourré, il avait entendu un effroyable cri qui avait fait taire tous les bruits familiers de la forêt. Cet appel incessant n'avait eu presque rien d'humain et, quelques secondes après, il avait résonné de nouveau, le glaçant d'horreur et de peur. Quelque part dans les alentours, une femme était victime de quelque chose d'horrible. Walter Lockhart, domptant son émoi; avait couru, le fusil à la main, au secours de cette femme inconnue. Ses appels incessants et toujours aussi horrifiants l'avaient guidé. Il se souvenait de cette course folle au milieu des orties et des buissons épineux, scandée par les obsédantes plaintes de la femme. Haletant et éperdu, il avait enfin atteint la clairière où "elle" se tenait et alors...

Chaque fois qu'il revoyait cet instant, sa raison chancelait. C'était impossible! Il avait dû être l'objet d'un mirage, d'une hallucination et pourtant ...

Son arrivée avait été signalée par le froissement des branches et le piétinement rapide d'un sol sec jonché de feuilles mortes et de brindilles. Aussitôt, il avait aperçu la femme. Elle était étendue, exsangue et inanimée, sur la mousse verte d'une petite clairière. Sa face était livide et ses yeux, tournés vers un coin de ciel que l'on apercevait à travers de vertes ramures, paraissaient fixes. L'attention de Walter, à ce moment là, avait été attirée brusquement par un éclat insolite. Au près de la femme, un rayon de soleil jouait sur une carcasse métallique et ronde d'un diamètre d'environ un mètre et haute d'une vingtaine de centimètres. Quelque chose d'innommable ressemblant à une horde grouillante et compacte d'insectes inconnus glissa du corps sans vie et se faufila dans cette sorte de grosse et courte marmite en métal. Walter n'avait pas réalisé, tout de suite, et était resté appuyé sur le tronc vermoulu d'un arbre mort à contempler cette scène affolante et incompréhensible.

Soudain, dans un vrombissement doux, la masse métallique avait quitté le sol et après être restée quelques secondes en suspension à un mètre du sol s'était envolée à une vitesse quasi surnaturelle et avait disparu de la vue du chasseur, comme happée par la voûte azurée. Après son départ, deux mots s'étaient présentés à l'esprit troublé de Walter Lockhart: "soucoupe volante". Il avait vu un de ces engins mystérieux qui sillonnent depuis quelques années (et certains disent

depuis des centaines d'années) le ciel de notre planète. Chose bouleversante et incroyable, l'équipage de cet appareil "d'un autre monde" n'était pas à notre apparence. Dans un éclair, le chasseur se rappela certaines thèses audacieuses émises sur ses fameuses soucoupes et, notamment celle qui prétendait qu'elles étaient habités par des insectes doués d'intelligence. Il concevait brutalement, que la vie pour un organisme comme la nôtre n'était pas possible dans les autres planètes de notre système et que d'autres formes, répondant à des conditions d'existence différentes, avaient été données aux habitants de ces mondes lointains.

Il avait songé alors à s'occuper de la femme mais elle était déjà morte. Ensuite, il avait erré durant des heures, en proie à une fièvre ardente, à travers les fourrés, à la recherche d'un sentier ou d'une habitation. L'attorney général n'avait pu comprendre qu'en plein vingtième siècle, dans un pays civilisé, un homme puisse encore s'égarer. Finalement, il avait échoué près de la demeure d'un garde-chasse.

Péniblement, ensuite, il avait retrouvé, en sa compagnie, le lieu où s'était déroulé le drame inconcevable. Le cadavre de la jeune femme avait été ramené dans la maison du garde et un docteur avait constaté la mort par perte de presque tout le "liquide rouge". En effet, la femme était littéralement vidée de son sang.

Personne n'avait voulu croire à l'histoire extraordinaire rapportée par Walter Lockhart. Cette histoire même causa son malheur car la grande presse le traita de menteur et laissa supposer qu'il était un dangereux sadique, pire même: un vampire. Des traces de sang furent découvertes sur ses vêtements. Elles avaient été produites par les égratignures et écorchures provoquées par sa course à travers les fourrés épineux. D'autre part, les policiers supposèrent que ses blessures légères avaient été produites par les ongles de la victime en essayant de se défendre contre son agresseur. Seul, le Docteur qui, le premier, avait examiné le cadavre de la jeune femme avait conclu qu'il était impossible à un homme de boire tout le sang contenu dans un organisme humain et fait remarquer qu'aucune trace de sang n'avait été décelée sur les lieux du crime. De plus, la ne portait pas, ainsi que cela se produit en pareil cas, une seule blessure sur l'artère du cou mais des centaines de petites plaies disposées sur toutes les veines et les artères de son corps.

L'attorney général avait répliqué que l'assassin avait pu torturer et assouvir son écoeurante passion ailleurs que sur le lieu où le cadavre avait été découvert. Examinés par des psychiatres éminents, Walter Lockhart avait été reconnu "responsable de ses actes". A part quelques rêveurs et amateurs d'histoires surnaturelles, le grand public n'admit pas le récit fait par le prévenu pour sa défense.

Soudain, Walter Lockhart s'arrêta de penser et tressaillit. Les coups venaient de cesser; le gibet devait être fin prêt à le recevoir. Comme un enfant épouvanté, il se redressa et se rua sur la porte de sa cellule, en proférant d'horribles blasphèmes et en pleurant.

- o - o -

Le jour même, il emportait dans la tombe son secret. Jusqu'au bout, il jura et affirma n'avoir pas tué la jeune femme de la forêt.

Avec rage, il s'obstina à prétendre avoir eu l'incroyable révélation de l'existence réelle des "soucoupes volantes" et surtout de leurs minuscules habitants: les "insectes vampires".

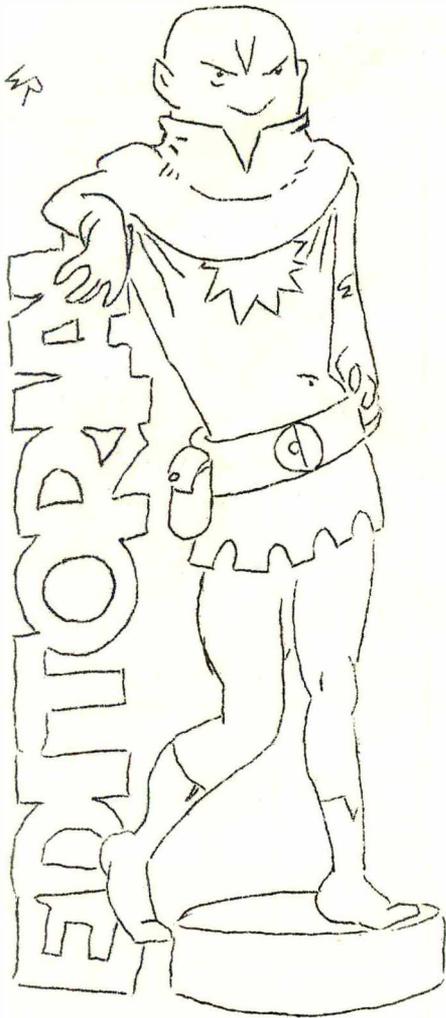
Léopold Nassiéra.

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All good things come to an end.... And as Alpha is herewith (this part anyway) at that end, I'll just hope most of you think it was good too.

Varied things have delayed this issue again and again, starting as far back as December when illness had me down in bed, a German fanzine to run off for Ann Steul, expecting a good twenty pages and being faced with forty, a pleasant trip to Germany mid-January and when things finally began to look up, and I could almost breath a sigh of relief, the damn typer broke down completely, and had to be sent away for repairs.

So instead of it being January, it's a whole week later, and some may indeed get the issue only when March has come around. Poor fellows, having to live without their ambrosia that long.

In the course of all the delays, my part of Alpha has undergone about twenty or more changes from the original plans. In the first place, it was never intended that it'd run to this many pages. However, I'm having quite a lot on hand the next two months, and with a visit to England running off with most of the money I might have put in the April Alpha, I'll have to shorten that one. Hence double rations.

What has struck me as strange, is that so many magazines seem to have been delayed. Round-about Xmas time one is usually smothered with them, mags piling in too fast to be read, let

alone comment on them. And I wonder if that is a possible reason behind the lack of 'special' Xmas issues. Besides which, it is hard to do justice to some of the larger-size mags that come around, and indeed wonder what reception this Alpha will get with its overblown reading matter. I guess I'll soon find out...

One thing that astounded me more than the lack of fanzines, was the absence of definite information on the Easter Convention in England. This morning that info finally arrived, and lest there be any readers who haven't received the bulletin: The time: Friday thru' Monday, the Easter weekend. The Place: The George Hotel, Kettering, same as last year. The tentative programme: Friday - howdido everybody; Saturday: Official discussions, talks, play, etc. Sunday will mainly be devoted to an 'ironing out' of plans for the Worldcon 1957 which is hoped to be held in London, whilst Monday's duties consist only of tear-stained goodbyes.

Membership for the convention is 10/- per head. No preliminary fees as in previous years. The cost of bed & breakfast, per head and per night, is 21/-. Both membership fees and booking of your rooms must be sent to the convention secretary

Joy CLARKE, 7 Inchmery Rd, Catford, LONDON S.E.6

DO NOT WRITE TO THE HOTEL. Both bookings & con-fee to Joy Clarke!!!!

I'll leave some space in between these lines. Don't want the Marines down on me. You know how it is? Here I am typing up these last two pages, after having worried all week just how I could possibly cram everything I wanted to say onto that limited space, and now that the

stencil is in the machine, well, it just isn't important, and....eeh what's this? That page next door is all upside down! Oh my ghod! I knew Dave would do some blooming silly thing like that when left alone. Oh well, I'm sure he'll learn. Though how you guys gonna read all that stuff is beyond me....

and.... yes, now what was I supposed to put there instead of those dots? Oh well, I suppose it must have been important, really important.

I'm way behind in correspondance. I usually get behind a bit when typing up the stencils for Alpha, catching up as soon as it is mailed out. Only this time I am a far sight worse behind than I ever was. Mainly due to the identical reasons this Alpha was delayed, and I guess that some correspondants will get this issue before I have had a chance to reply to their last letter. Apologies, please forgive me, sorry, and such... it's a thing I hate to see happen, but as it has happened, don't let that stop you from commenting on Alpha. You may be the first person I reply too after the mailing out, or you may be the last, seeing I just take out a file and bash out answers in the order the letters have been mixed. And if you should wait, it might mean that I'd be stuck without anything for Ambrosia... or I'd have to wait and wait until some letters came in, and I'd be late again.

Not that being late is at all uncommon in the field, but the poor workers at Antwerp are known to be punctual and ever so conscientious, so imagine our feelings at the delay. Pity us!

Just to keep the record straight - fanzines that have thudded in since I noted them down a fortnight ago: Umbra ll , Yandra (new name for EISFA) ,Grue 26, Magnitude, ISFA, Fantasy Times 238/239 (starting Gardner's short but excellent 1955 mag reviews) and the Swedish Komet n° 1. (Has anyone a dictionary for that language handy?)

And that folks is all for this issue. Next Alpha is due for mailing out in April. It depends partly on you to get material and comments in before that time, we'll try and publish it.

*Jan.*

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and having our representative on the other convention's committee ~ ~

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