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EDITORIAL
&
FAPA REVIEW

webster on british politics

brown on fantasy books

fall fapa 1945

" B R O W S I N G "

New Series, No. I

An Amateur Magazine dealing with and devoted to Fantasy Fiction. Distributed thru the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, and to others who indicate their interest. It is the private responsibility of J. Michael Rosenblum, 4 Grange Terrace, Leeds, 7, England, but the real work is done by E.E.Evans and Walter J. Daugherty, in the city of Los Angeles, California.

AND SO we start BROWSING off again. And the first thing to do is to offer heartfelt and sincere thanks to the American friends who came so nobly to the rescue when conditions here finally stopped your editor in his career of fan publishing. For a while, at least, I'll have to go very carefully in what I do; even apart from the mere detail that what time I used to have available for fan matters has been further compressed and were it not for continual struggle might be entirely annihilated. So had not the valiant "Triple E" come dashing to our aid BROWSING would probably have dropped to minimum size, to retain membership of FAPA; a privilege which I enjoy immensely, by the by.

Policy, remains very much as it was before. Anything connected with fantasy is liable to creep in, but the heavy accent will remain on books and bookish topics. The combination of a possible expansion of B., with the regrettable but enforced demise of FUTURIAN WAR DIGEST may result in the transference to this organ of some contributions of the type published in "FIDO".

The first fruits are already visible, with the publication in this issue of former FIDO columns -- Jack Banks' "Delvings Into The Weird and Imaginative", & R. G. Medhurst's "Offhand and Without Preparation". This latter phrase, by the by, was what I said to George Medhurst when I asked him for the umptenth time to contribute a book column and he promptly adopted it as a title, to my consternation. A new column by Douglas Webster of Aberdeen has also come along. Contributions, particularly from British Fantasts, will be very welcome and I especially invite book reviews suitable for "Book-a-Page" inclusion.

This particular issue is being prepared somewhat hurriedly from material on hand and what can be thunk up on the spur of the moment, so that, the fates and the American friends being willing, the next mailing--Fall, 1945--can be made. It may be possible to devote a little further effort to future issues which brings up the problem Langley Searles has to face--whether to make his publication appeal more generally and not dated, or whether to make it primarily a FAPA pub dealing quite frequently with current FAPA topics. The best solution is the one that Langley has adopted--FAPA material dealt with in a separate sheet. For this voyage, at least, I've included some FAPA thoughts, however, but we'll have to see what the future holds before making any promises.

Right here we go on to the April mailing. Not at all bad; I spent quite a few pleasant moments looking it over. Main feature striking your scribe is the furore over the Shaw-Lowndes desertion, and attempted sabotage. This appears a very Bad Show indeed; remin-

iniscient of the absolute irresponsibility which at one time threatened the existence of fandom. Shaw Iw ouldn't know anything about, but Dr. Lowndes surprises me. If this is the behavior of a cultivated, mature human being, let's go back to the apes. My own reaction is to say that such creatures are better out -- well out -- of fandom and the less to do with them, the better. Frankly, I'm just about fed up with the New York poseurs, who preach so lustily, propogand so industriously, throw their weight around so furiously, and are nothing but a damp squib at the end of it all.

Though of course this ort of carry on is more natural to an American than a Britisher. There is a distinct cultural difference there -- the Yank is surface-emotional, and overemphasizes; whereas the Englishman is more stolid, hides his emotion, and consistently understates. And that is why poor Joe Fortier can't find "guts" in my publications, for which fact I duly offer thanks. No true FAPA spirit, quoth he. All my eye and Betty Martin, for you'll find more of what I consider the true FAPA spirit in such publications as HORIZONS, FANTASY COMMENTATOR, THE READER AND COLLECTOR, YHOS and their ilk, than all the rip-roaring, tub thumping, chest boating sheets of unreticent adolescents who needs must mask their feeling of inadequacy beneath a thick -- a very thick -- skin of toughness.

THE TIME-BINDER is a welcome and valued addition to the FAPA fold and I was extremely pleased to read the letter from Mrs. David Newton therein contained. Not one word of disagreement with it, though it does not cover my full philosophy on the subject. Someday, maybe, I'll let myself go on the matter in FAPA but for the nince will hold my peace. Almost; for a minor facet I feel quite strongly about is the de-citizenization of the members of the British armed forces. The US does treat its conscripts as men; but Britain turns them into numbers with duties and responsibilities but no rights. No participation in political matters, no appeal to parliament and so on. Another national matter (for I do not know enough about US equivalents) is the peculiar fact that the British Cabinet to fight Fascism in Germany, contains a large proportion of people I would hold guilty of helping and encouraging Fascism, both at home and abroad, which gives me furiously to think: Hence I more than agree that the "democratic countries" -- (Brazil and Argentine -- democratic!) -- will be nearer Fascism apres la guerre! than before. Anyrate I like THE TIME-BINDER and congratulate Everett on its appearance.

I also like WALT'S WRAMBLINGS. I like its humor and I like its book news. But there is a gripe. Walter, Walter, do please check on your book titles before listing them as fantasy; all that glistens is not gold, you know, and we've more than enough extremely dubious titles in various booklets. A good example of this was in the current issue. "TAKE THREE TENSES" is presumably "A FUGUE IN TIME" published here by Michael Joseph at 8/6, and just by good luck I read a review of it this week. Apart from the reviewer's phrase "it would be difficult to describe in moderate terms the book's abandoned sentimentality", the theme is merely a family saga in a London house from early 19th century to early twentieth, which I fail to see makes it fantasy.

Appreciated deeply were YHOS, FANTODS, FANTASY COMMENTATOR (a very fine issue), PHANNY and Horizons. Was pleased to see Youd back again with FANTASTS FOLLY. As there are two other Britishers next on the waiting list, let's hope there will be more contributions from Britain appearing in near-future mailings. - - -

"BOOK-A-PAGE" is gradually coming into acceptance and now collaborators are Julius Unger and Willie Watson. There are two more reviews included in this issue of BROWSINGS, and I hope to keep up that average at least. Would like to see a few more pages appearing in FAPA mailings in particular. It will soon be time to start listing the books which have been dealt with, but for the nonce the field is sufficiently untouched to make almost any review welcome. A note to British readers in particular -- I would like lots and lots of reviews to flow in steadily now and can pass the surplus of my requirements on to American publishers for their use. A supply of "blanks" is available if you want them, but meanwhile here is a reprint of the final decision as to format, as written out by Langley Searles.

Author's name in upper left-hand corner; surname first (capitalized) followed by first (given) names in full. Follow by "pseud" if this is a non-de-plume, with the true name given afterward parenthesized.

A brief description of the book's type in upper right corner.

Title of book, underlined, next. Capitalize all first letters of major words in title proper; those in subtitle -- if any -- should appear in lower case. Preserve punctuation of book's title-page.

City of publication; publisher, year of first edition, number of pages. Size of book (i.e., height in centimeters). Publishers price. Note illustrations and maps, etc., that may be present. Repeat this data in the same fashion for each subsequent edition of the volume, devoting a line to each one. If the book is of recent publication, leave a few lines for later listings if possible reprintings should materialize.

Further information: Under this heading include data on previous magazine and/or newspaper publication, if any. Note abridgements and additions to text, if any. If a volume of short stories, list them here completely. In short, cite any material relevant to insertion which does not lend itself readily to inclusion under other headings. If there's nothing like this to list, omit the heading.

Synopsis: Tell what the book is about--brief resume of its contents.

Review: Give, simply, a critical commentary of the book. And follow this with your own name, so that your review may be judged by the reader.... This heading may be combined with the one just previous under the title "synoptic review" -- but the features of both headings should be maintained... And make your review at least one page long, but less than two.

NOTE BY EEE. -- Due to the slowness of mails, to my leaving Battle Creek for California, and the subsequent hurry to get my own mags out in time for FAPA, I doubt if I will be able to stencil and mimeo all of the material Mike sent me. However, I am going to do as much of it as possible, and what I do not get done will appear in the next mailing. My sincere apologies both to Mike and to you readers, for this delay and sloppiness, but when I first volunteered for the job, I did not realize that it would come at a time when other things would conflict as they did. If Mike will trust me further, I assure you that the next issues will be more prompt and better done. Thanks. -- EEE.

MY SELECTION OF THE BEST TWELVE BOOK FANTASIES.

F. C. Brown.

1. Abraham Merritt "The Moon Pool".

Merritt has always been my favorite writer of fantasies. I am equally enthusiastic about all of his books, and would find it difficult to place them in any particular order. "The Moon Pool", with its tremendous background of weird lands, strange creatures and thrilling adventures is certainly one of Merritt's best stories, if not the best.

2. Abraham Merritt "The Ship Of Ishtar".

Though it has not the sweep and grandeur of "The Moon Pool", this book is quite as fantastic and quite as gripping as the latter. Gazing one day at a beautiful model of an old time ship, our hero, by some strange means, is drawn through time and space to the deck of the actual ship as it ploughs its way through the seas. His desperate adventures aboard this vessel, not forgetting the strange power which throws him back, in moments of stress, to his own world, grip one's interest to the end.

3. Abraham Merritt "The Face In The Abyss"

The book copy combines the two magazine stories "Face In The Abyss" and "The Snake Mother" under the former title. As in others of his books, the author introduces his readers to strange lost lands, in this case guarded by a beautiful creature, half woman and half serpent, whose age is lost in antiquity, and whose powers are far in advance of any known in the modern world. Merritt's mixture of hidden cities, strange creatures, thrilling adventures, and heart throbbing romance, coupled with his ability to make his characters LIVE, in my opinion makes him the number one fantastic writer of all time.

4. Edgar Rice Burroughs The "Martian" series.

Possibly it might be considered unfair to take a series of books and debate their standing in the fantastic book world. But these books cannot and should not be passed over just because the author was more prolific than his fellow writers. Were these titles brought together in an omnibus volume, the result would certainly merit my selection of these books as being worthy of inclusion in the best twelve fantasies. For adventure, fantasy, and romance in other worlds, these books are second to none. While, in his Venusian, Tarzan and Inner World stories, ERB's power wanes at times, in the Martian series he "goes at a gallop" throughout.

5. C. S. Lewis "Out Of The Silent Planet".

Principally, I liked this for its description of the strange other world creatures. But, in addition, it is one of the finest "interplanetaries" so far published, far superior, in my opinion, to its sequel "Perelandra".

6. E. Balmer and P. Wylie "When Worlds Collide" and "After Worlds Collide".

Whether you regard this world catastrophe story as one book or as

too, it is an epic of human courage and endeavor. Though many stories have been written on this theme, this particular contribution stands high above the others for sheer realism.

7. W. H. Hodgson "The House On The Borderland".

I regard this story as the most fantastic I have ever read. This may sound a little forthright, but I can recall no other book, not even "The Nightland" by the same author, which impresses me as did this. A description of it is almost impossible, especially the part wherein the writer passes through centuries of time to the end of the world. The greater part of the book is devoted to the writer's life in the House, and his fights with the weird swine things that come from the pit beneath the House.

8. S. Fowler Wright "The World Below".

Thrown into the far distant future, the time traveller encounters a civilization far different from his wildest dreams. But for the kindly "Amphibian", a non-sexed creature who communicates by telepathy, his days would have been numbered. An enthralling story, this!

9. Donald Wandrei "The Eye And The Finger".

Few people will quarrel over this as being the best collection of short stories ever brought together.

10. H. P. Lovecraft "The Outsider"

And few others will quarrel about this collection of weirds by the great master of the weird, unless it is to argue on the respective merits of its companion volume "Beyond The Wall Of Sleep".

11. H. G. Wells "Complete Short Stories".

Surely as worthy of attention as Lovecraft's and Wandrei's collections. I'm not at all sure that I shouldn't have listed Well's "Scientific Romances" which contains most of his best "long" stories.

12. A. Conan Doyle "The Lost World".

One of the old invincibles! A grand story, comparable to Haggard's "She". Verne's "20,000 Leagues Under The Sea", etc. Worthy of a place, if only to remind you readers of Astoundings, F.F.M.'s, Amazings, etc., that some of the early fantasies are still the best.

EDITOR'S NOTE -- this eternal question of which are the best fantasy books cropped up again recently in the "Bibliophiles Chainletters" of the British Fantasy Society. This is the viewpoint of one of the participants; other people have different ideas and we hope to give you their lists, too, with appropriate discussion, in subsequent issues.

GREAT BRITAIN OUTSIDE FANDOM

By DOUGLAS WEBSTER

It seems that some time ago I offered to write a regular column for BROWSING, and then more or less forgot about it. Reminded recently, I showed extreme vagueness -- playing for time -- and I've now received a typical JMR postcard, written on $1\frac{1}{2}$ sides. "June umpteenth. Not so darling Doug, ... You sort of felt an urge to write about books (non fantasy) fans ought to read for the good of their souls. At least that was my idea of your idea..." This is quite impracticable. First, I have no desire to tell other people what they ought to read, for whatever purpose. Again, why talk exclusively of English books? (Despite attempts in BROWSING, FANTASY COMMENTATOR, and elsewhere.) Most of them you can't get, which only makes it more irritating.

So I wish to write, discursively, on the current temper and opinion about all sorts of things over here. And to begin with I'd like to make it clear that I take no side in the "fantasy-only vs. what-you-will" argument, which at one time raged in FAPA. I have never been a member of FAPA, in spite of many invitations to join in the last few years, and I don't want to shove in my oar unasked. But any literary magazine is bound to contain much material depending from the hub of literature itself as the spokes of a bicycle wheel radiate and criss-cross out from the inner hub; to name only three of the spokes, politics, philosophy and psychology (the latest issue of our pukka literary mag HORIZON contains advice on Election voting!); and within the outer rim I hope to find plenty of interest.

Right now, a lot of people in this country, especially women, are most concerned not about Elections or the Japanese war, but about "demobbing". This is understandable: it has been a long war for us. The system used differs from yours, and can be explained briefly. For the great bulk of men involved, you calculate a total of points on the scale of each year of age counts one point, and so do each two months of service, these being the only factors considered: you add these two totals together, and if the result is somewhere about 80 at this period of the war, you are in one of the first groups for demobbing; if it's about 20 (i.e., you're young, and newly enlisted), you will be in about group 60 or higher, and won't be released for years, war or no goddam war. (There are a few 'priority' exceptions to this, mostly at present men for rebuilding purposes, a very serious problem here, and later, it's presumed, men for teaching and other priorities. But that is another question, and they have rulings of their own.) This "unwinding", as Bevin has called it, is taking place more quickly than most people had expected a year ago -- although of course it can never be quick enough to please everybody.

Meanwhile, most of us just lie rotting in the slavery we've been in for too long (5 years in my case, which is fairly typical), with bad food, wretched jobs, and no freedom. And now the fighting in Europe is over (?), our commanders will become less and less popular as the hitches in the administration grow. You probably heard some of the jokes about (e.g.) Montgomery about the time of D-day. Eisenhower was asked to tea one day with the King, who asked him how he got along with Montgomery. "Oh, very well. Nice chap. Only -- I sometimes get the impression he is after my job." "Do you have that feeling, too?" says the King. "I always have the feeling he's after mine." Excessive

popularity is bound to backfire.

I don't know what they'll do when the next war rolls along. There are two scissors tendencies at work. One, people are at last getting a little civilized: they welcomed this war much less enthusiastically than the last. Two, they are becoming both more nationalistic, and more used to the idea of periodic wars, expecting another within 20 years. Of the two, the second seems to be the stronger.

All which, plus whispers of Armageddon among the more thoughtful (but I think the human species is too tough), becomes more interesting when you consider our population is on the point of declining rapidly. Everybody except the Registrar General knows it. He, poor man, produces figures to prove the population will be very nearly the same in 1970 as it is now, but this fools nobody, least of all independent experts. But the science of demography is in a bad way over here, due to lack of almost all vital statistics or publication of population censuses. As a result, population study is almost at a standstill, and public ignorance is impenetrable. The subject is so complicated it can hardly be dealt with except through the universities. True, in 1938 there was started a Readership in Demography (now suspended) at the University of London; there is the Galton chair of Eugenics there too, and one or two departments of Social Biology or whatnot throughout the country, but nothing more.

To Americans this must sound like living in the Dark Ages. It is. Articles on population constantly appear in the papers, nearly all misleading -- for instance, the net reproduction rate, one gathers, has never been heard of, let alone understood or used. Politically, the Right from time to time exhorts us to do something about changing the downward trend, while at the same time obstructing any hard-won measures towards social security and the feeling of personal safety. They say we must keep up our numbers lest we are not able to defend ourselves (notice implication that "we" are always right) in the future. To some this seems rather a back-handed inducement. The Left, consciously or not, evade the issue, or else, implicitly or explicitly, favour the idea of a smaller population, on the quaint idea that less of quantity automatically means higher quality. But this ignores the question of a declining population, which would be disastrous economically.

It's just as well it never became an Election issue. There had to be a General Election, of course. The late unlamented Parliament lasted only three years less (November 1935 to May 1945) than the infamous Long Parliament dissolved by Cromwell in 1653, and it constantly had to be passing Acts to prolong its own life, an uneasy procedure in a democracy. In the interim the USA have had three Presidential Elections, and Congress takes in new blood incessantly; which is at it should be.

I can't report that we have risen to the occasion nobly. Politicians and journalists have regressed psychologically to childhood and economically by anything from 30 to 300 years. The reasoned Election one might have expected got the old one-two in the first few days. The Right, as one of these endless electioneering devices, decided never to refer to the Labour Party as anything but the Socialist Party, and attack socialism all-out. (This is a variation of the old-time "Red scare", but one cannot attack communism too openly just now, since the

Russians are on our side.) This developed into an entirely artificial fight between "private enterprise" and "socialism". (The Labour Party is a very mildly socialistic organization. So, the Labour people were forced to attack private enterprise: which is ridiculous. And the Conservatives were forced to attack all State control: equally ridiculous.

Obviously, if we are to get out of our present rut, we need more, much more, private enterprise -- in the right place -- and more State control -- also in the right place. So the empty fight rages over our heads, and the puzzled electorate retires into its shell, or, more topically, fox-hole. The country, along with other democratic states, is moving slowly but surely Left, but as the Left are divided into as many sects as there were Greek gods, it's the Right which will keep in power. I expect another Election within the maximum five years.

I wish I had the time and the organization to analyze all of the crooked and misleading devices being used. But Mass-Observation and similar polls will be doing it, and I may report later. I took Johnny Millard and Edwin MacDonald to a political meeting the other day, and Johnny's comment was: "Well, I thought politics were dirty back home, but boy -- you've got plenty to teach us!" I think this is misleading. We don't have the really crooked political machines that America can boast of, but there has been a surprising amount of personal abuse, and no logical reasoning.

One device, new to the general public, might interest you. This is the Intellectuals Are Easy Scapegoats racket.

"Left-wing Intellectuals" has long been a handy term of abuse whenever the supply of Jews, anarchists, or other chimeras to blame ("fascist tendencies" has been popular lately) ran low. But this never affected the man in the street. Students of pathopolitics might have guessed it was coming back into vogue when Churchill used the term "stay-at-home intellectuals" to discount the many critics of the Govt's policy in Greece (ranging from THE TIMES and THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN to virtually every left-wing paper in the country). Since the Britisher's contempt for intelligence is supreme, this sort of thing was bound to break out again at an Election.

Sure enough, Atlee (Labour Party leader), in the second Election broadcast -- an otherwise very sound speech -- had a sneering reference to the "Austrian professor, Friedrich August von Hayek, who is so much in favor with the Conservative Party these days." Hayek (understandably he prefers to call himself F. A. Hayek, and why not?) has much endeared himself to the Tories by recent writings, notably the redoubtable THE ROAD TO SERFDOM, which was received here, where his views are known, with interest, and was very popular in the States.

But this gonad-blow was very cheap, especially from an "internationally-minded" Party. Hayek, incidentally, is a very sound man, and has been Professor of Statistical Economics at the London School of Economics since 1931, and a British citizen since 1938.

The next step was baffling. It grew out of Churchill's invitation to Atlee to accompany him to the next Three-Power conference.)A generous and public-spirited gesture, since the main Parties disagree much less on foreign than internal policy and it may yet be pos-

sible, in spite of difficulties, to keep foreign-policy an all-party matter.) At this Harold J. Laski) also a Professor at the London School of Economics, and Chairman of the Labour Party Executive) suggested that Atlee should give no agreement to any decisions made as if committing the Labour Party to them officially. This is quite reasonable: large sections of Labour dissented from the Govt line in Italy, Greece, Spain, Belgium, not to mention older issues, and if Labour came into power there would certainly be some changes in British foreign policy. But from this simple event Laski's name became a household word overnight, and Conservatives have gleefully trotted out the wildest versions of the story coupling Laski (emphasis on the Professor) with every plot imaginable, from back-room intrigue to Gestapo methods, Nazism, and communism. This from a Party which recently condoned the trial of a handful of anarchists for sedition and dossier-making by a political police from the identity-cards of visitors to the trial. (Yes, it happened in England.) It's a funny world!

The political pamphleteering of the last few years has been one of the few interesting aspects of literature. It's been entirely negative, each party discovering, to its delight, that the other guy was to blame for all the ills of the past. Probably the Left got the best of it -- certainly they made the Right flaming mad -- and such is the genius of such tracts as GUILTY MEN and THE TRIAL OF MUSSOLINI that they probably deserve it. The Right, perhaps through sheer Bovinity, adopted the policy of not shooting till you see the whites of their eyes. Their tracts have only come out (with the exception of the superb WHO ARE 'THE PEOPLE'?) in the month or so before the Election, probably too late to do much good. The Right's reliance on simplicity -- "Vote for Churchill" -- makes them superfluous anyway. Of course the country will vote for Churchill. What will it get? Well, there's the story of the three men who had lunch together but couldn't decide who would pay the bill. "Let me pay", said the first. "I'm paying ten shillings in the pound income tax, and it will only cost me half the price." "No, I'll pay," said the second: "I'm paying a colossal E.P.T. so it really won't cost me anything." "Boys, boys, don't be ridiculous," said the third. "Don't you know I'm paying super-tax? If I pay the bill I am making a profit out of it." (It doesn't stand logical scrutiny, but it's a very wicked story.)

Literature by and large (although scholarship has flourished) is not in a very healthy state. Novelists except for a chosen few are unreadable. And although the sickening flood of 'reportage' has ebbed away a little, I don't think the short-story market is any better. I wouldn't know. I so tired of it earlier in the war that I stopped reading any literary or short-story magazines, with the exception of HORIZON, NOW, and occasionally one or two others -- thus almost cutting off my experience of new writers -- and if I want to read short stories, I read anthologies (mostly American) or collections by this writer or that which appear from time to time. Only the anarchists have rebelled consciously against authority and for the most part they lack the talent. Those with talent have fallen in, as most sensible people must, with the war effort, and taken to producing artistically-modulated platitudes or whimpers of despair. We'd have needed a few years of Occupation to jerk them out of it; so we have the English Channel to blame for that.

Of music I am not competent to speak: for one thing I am so plac-

ed out of reach of radio and concert-hall that I rarely hear what is going on. But we can boast of the first new opera -- Britten's PETER GRIMES -- of any European capital. This at Sadler's Wells, which has been producing only ballet through the war. (The two ate separate companies, really.) Through the war we've only had the touring companies to sustain us, and they've done it nobly: The Royal Carl Rosa company doing classical opera, and the D'Oyly Carte with Gilbert & Sullivan operettas. Now, however, Boosey & Hawkes, the music publishers, have leased Covent Garden in a most public-spirited way, rather than allow it to fall into cultural disuse, and it's hoped soon to have regular seasons of opera and ballet as in the past.

CEMA (Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts - music apparently not being an art) and in its wider sphere the British Council have been one of the wartime features we can really boast of. They have helped along with public money all sorts of excellent shows with real artistic merit, exhibitions, ballet, concerts, everything which, lacking a name, might never have come to anything otherwise. (I have seen a really first-class marionette show which, but for Cema help, might have been reduced to touring the halls - with inevitable drop in its standards.) Then too, they have gone a long way in bringing repertory or touring theatrical shows to outlying districts which before the war had never known them. (Johnny Millard, with whom I often discuss these things, has been pleasantly surprised to find so many repertory and other local theatres in Britain, often in comparatively small towns, in contrast with the States, where I understand this is uncommon. I should guess it is almost entirely a question of distances involved.) Anyrate, we are all very pleased Cema is to continue after the war, the only hitch being its new name, The Arts Council of Great Britain, which can't well be jargonized.

Theatre is another sore point with me. I have been seeing, on an average, say two plays every three weeks as far back as I can remember. And I must say I'd have been much better off not to have seen most of the wartime crop. The war, it seems, stopped with a jerk all our budding playwrights, and they haven't got over it yet. Virtually the only ones producing real plays are Priestly, Bridie and Rattigan. (I make no mention of the occasional -- very occasional -- worthwhile play that drifts over from the States.) Maugham and Shaw, it seems, have stopped writing plays, Maugham for good (v. THE SUMMING UP), though Shaw, I'll bet, will bring us up with a jolt one of these days. Coward produced three new plays of his about the beginning of the war, which were very good indeed, as were his own direction and acting; no doubt he will break loose again sometime.

Apart from these, we have literally dozens of new playwrights, of a uniform mediocrity, revivals of old musical comedies, which are unbearable to the younger generation, and new productions of older plays (e.g. Donald Wolfit's excellent Shakespearean company), which, however, rarely reaches the provinces. (The only productions above the common level have all, curiously enough, been by professional actors. The acting profession, I may say, has acquitted itself much better than the playwrighting.) In all this, of course, I am not referring to London, where, to judge by the papers and critics' reports, the other extreme in theatre -- the good one, for quality and quantity -- is reached.

So I find I've been very much longer and more political than I'd

interded. I'll change that next time. For I do think it's important that you Americans should have some idea of what's going on inside of Britain. American servicemen, alas, are moving out again: of over two million who were here, less than a quarter of a million remain. Gus Willmorth writes from Casablanca; Malcolm Ferguson (known to readers of FIDO) from Normandy; and maybe the irruption will never start again which would be a pity, and maybe it will follow Milty Rothman, who passed through Scotland and England and wrote from Paris before I know he'd left the States. Still, I for one am always glad to see any U.S. servicemen who happen to be in the country. You can get the address and phone number from Michael -- I won't give it here, for I'm rarely at home except by appointment. Fraternization urgently needed.

Aberdeen, 1:7:45.

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MICHAEL: The cover is the work of our esteemed friend and the former editor of FANTASIA -- Lou Goldstone, who gladly accepted the job when I told him it was for you.

DELVINGS INTO THE WEIRD AND IMAGINATIVE

By J. BANKS

Propaganda for fantasy?

Is it possible to propagandise for fantasy? In a mild way, I think it is, and perhaps some recent efforts on my part will be of interest to others. I had two opportunities during the past weeks, both in the august sanctum of the Workers Educational Association. (Yes, "august" is quite applicable, in my home district anyway).

I introduced the literature tutor to Lovecraft and Quinn in particular, by lending her various stories, seized the opportunity during discussion to draw attention to imaginative literature, and appeared to be so obsessed with the weird, that the said tutor solemnly warned of the perils of dabbling in witchcraft. (see below).

The other chance came during the class on Public Speaking, when members of the class were asked to make a speech on any subject they chose. I gave a very short talk on "Fantasy", with a quotation from Chesterton; drew attention to themes culled from fantasy fiction (for example, "the universe as a dream in the mind of a super-entity") and in general made a "plea for more fantasy". The idea was politely received, and supported verbally by the tutor and one member of the class, later. I chose the subject purely as an experiment; there were other more "practical" issues of politics, etc., I might have dealt with, but on the whole, this momentary "escapism" was well justified.

"Black Magic alive!"

Following on the above, come even more interesting revelations. At the class in Comparative Religions, I asked a question concerning Black Magic, which later led the tutor to affirm that he knew that such rites were being performed in the district, "not far from here". As mentioned above, I had brought the matter of fantasy generally to the attention of the class on Modern Literature, which also led the tutor, a Catholic, incidentally, to assert that Black Magic was being practised in the district. One or two members reminded her that Dr.-----, had also spoken in the same manner, which confirmation did not greatly surprise her. Perhaps my constant proselyting for fantasy, that included an explanation of some of Lovecraft's work, led her to suspect that I might be a devotee of the black arts, for it was in the salubrious atmosphere of the station refreshment room that she said, "It's a serious thing, Black Magic".

That is all I can tell on this matter at the moment, but it is an intriguing subject for future investigation.

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