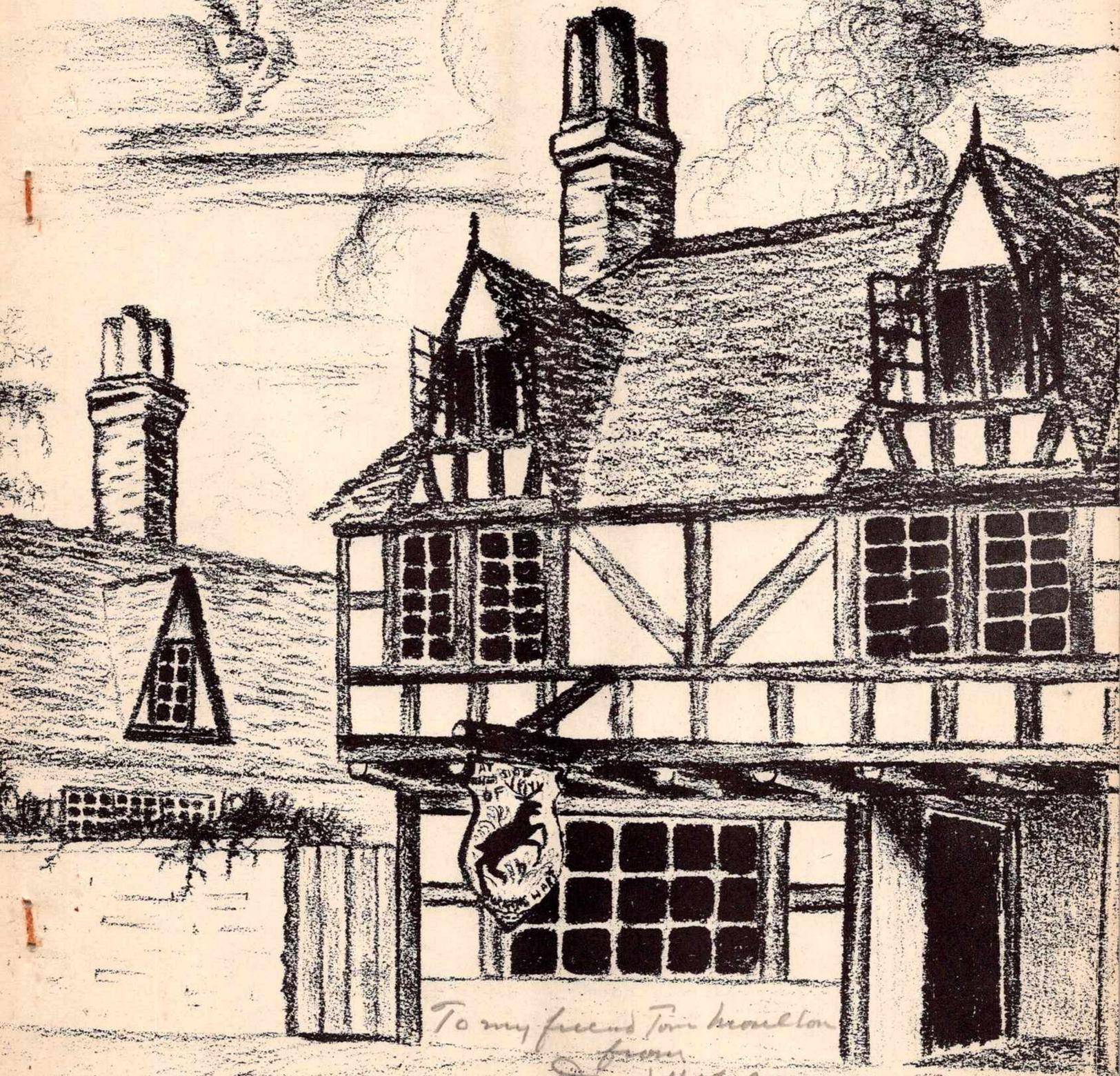


FANOMENA



*To my friend Tom Kroulton
from
David H. Keller*

MARCH

1948

R.S.

MEMORANDUM



FANOMENA

1948

MARCH

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The cover this time is the work of Russell Swanson, talented young artist of Haddam, Connecticut, more of whose illustrations you will see on forthcoming professional volumes. The scene is from Keller's "THE SIGN OF THE BURNING HART"

This amateur, non-profit publication is issued usually to FAPA members, but this issue, dedicated to David H. Keller, M. D., and featuring some of his work will be distributed in a larger edition. Let's have comments, please!
FANOMENA is edited and published for the Fantasy Amateur Press

Association by
Andy Lyon

200 Williamsboro Street

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THE ULTIMATE VICTORY

DAVID H. KELLER

John Kelly, as an adolescent, gave promise of an interesting maturity as an expert-stenographer. At the age of twenty-one he was recognized as the best Court reporter in New York City. The death of a distant relative provided him with an assured income of one hundred dollars a month. This bequest changed his entire life.

Immediately the first symptoms of an incurable disease manifested themselves in his behavior. He bought an abandoned farm, moved to the country and started life in the desolate house. From a second hand store in town he secured an old table, an old chair and an army cot. Paper, carbon paper, typewriter ribbons were purchased at a stationery store. Anxious to have sufficient paper, his first purchase was five thousand sheets and one hundred manilla mailing envelopes. Then he sat down on the rickety chair and started to write his first science fiction story.

From that hour he lived only to write. Eating, sleeping, dressing were merely time-consuming incidents in a life devoted to an esoteric art. Obviously it was necessary to continue living, as dead he could write no consternating stories.

He realized that he would need vitamins to maintain health, calories to supply energy to type many hours a day and thus give to the world all his beautiful, eerie and scientific tales. He was disturbed by the thought of time wasted cooking meals, distressed at the cost of the necessary food, money which could be so much better spent for paper and postage. Fortunately he learned that the neighboring farmers were growing cabbages and carrots for the New York market. Touched by his extreme poverty and proud of having a real author in their community they promised to keep him supplied with unsalable carrots and cabbage culls which hitherto they had fed to the pigs.

Kelly did some rapid calculating. One hundred grams (3 1/3 ounces) of cabbage would supply him with 27 calories of energy. One hundred grams of carrot would provide 47 calories and the much needed vitamins. If he ate 23 pounds of cabbage and 6 1/2 pounds of carrots every day he would be amply nourished. These vegetables could be eaten raw. He determined to have a bushel basket of cabbages and carrots on the floor by the rickety chair and eat as he wrote. Thus there would be no interruption in the flow of stories.

A few weeks of this diet convinced him that it was not only time saving and nourishing but also stimulating to his mental processes. He found that several famous Chinese philosophers, especially the noted Wing Loo and Sam King, had produced their finest essays while living exclusively on such a diet. As he typed he realized that he was following a very ancient cultural pattern. Gradually he began to feel like a Chinaman. As his hair grew and his pigmentation became more sallow he began to look like one.

At times he roof leaked; then he moved the table to escape the dripping. He had no time to repair the roof; besides he knew that when the rain ended and the sun shone the roof would cease leaking. The only important thing was to sit somewhere in the house where the table would be dry. When he found that the constant moving of the table took time from his writing he fastened a huge beach umbrella over the table.

Though he lived happily in an atmosphere of creative literature, he finally developed some insight and realized that he was a sick man. In a moment of desperation he visited a noted diagnostician, who, after taking a long history, making X-ray pictures of the skull and studying the basal metabolism, gave his learned opinion:

"You are suffering, Mr. Kelly, from an incurable disease called GRAPHOMANIA. This is deadly in its advanced stages. Had I seen you at the age of five, I might have done something for you. At least I might have done a little to enable you to live a fairly normal life; but when you tell me that you have written seven novels, one hundred and twenty stories, two hundred and ten poems, fifteen essays and one play, I consider you hopeless. All I can do is to advise you to lead an isolated life, avoid all social contacts and never, never marry. For this disease

is not only contagious but also hereditary. You must not convey it to a normal woman nor transmit it to an innocent baby. Be as happy as you can in your solitude. Perhaps in your old age you may show some slight improvement."

Kelly, on his way back to the farm, stopped at the post-office to buy more stamps and at a stationery store to buy more paper and envelopes. Leaving the store he accidentally met a charming young lady who gave him a delightful smile.

Nancy Brown, as she looked at the disheveled, soiled man from eager lovely eyes recognized here was a fit subject, divinely sent, on whom she might exert her heart's desire for the uplifting of humanity. Both by inheritance (her father was a noted missionary) and by education she was well equipped for the profession of Social Service.

Impelled by an irresistible impulse she placed her dainty hand on the shoulder of the animated scarecrow of a man, detaining him. In the patient pleading voice of the trained reformer, she urged him to get his hair cut, his clothes cleaned and pressed, take a bath and trim his long fingernails. All this, she assured him, would not only improve his appearance but revitalize him spiritually.

Self-defence prompted him to a detailed explanation of his metamorphosis from a once dapper and proud young man into the unkempt and apparently distraught man who stood before her. He explained to her that he had so many stories to write, of which he only knew the plots, and for these stories an eager world of readers was thirsting so that personal sanitation was inconsequential.

For some time they talked, each unyielding.

"Consider what I have told you and pray for the directing light," Nancy counselled as they exchanged names and addresses and parted.

Nancy wrote to John, fervidly urging him to a new, cleaner and better life. John, grudging the time spent, wrote to Nancy, repeating his explanations and was adamant in his refusal to accept her advice. After two weeks of ineffectual debate, they again met, this time by appointment.

They realized that they were in love!

Kelly was happy. The more he learned of Nancy and her plans for his future the more convinced he was that in her he would find a cure for his disease. She was a good cook, an excellent home-maker and had never even thought of writing a story. He dreamed of a clean home, regular and well-cooked meals, a roof that did not leak and a life devoted to growing cabbages and carrots instead of eating them.

Nancy promised him that she would not interrupt or interfere with his writing; she would cut his hair while he typed, mend and press his clothes while he slept and even spoon feed him his meals so he could continue his literary work. When she told him that the only short stories she had ever read were written by Henry James he was more than ever confident that in her he had found his true soul mate!

But on the third day of their marriage, moved by some fiendish compulsion, Nancy read one of John's manuscripts.

"This is a good story," she said. "In fact, a very excellent story; but your plot would be improved by leaving out the love feature and concentrating on the science fiction. Also you have too many 'anus', 'in facts' and 'therefores'. You should have used more periods. Your sentence construction is poor and you split infinitives three times."

He looked at her dazed, stunned and infuriated.

As a complicated picture is thrown on the screen, details sensed but not clearly envisioned, John saw his career tossed into the discard by this superior woman, his wife who knew nothing about the writing of science fiction stories, of which art he was the Master. She was telling him what to write and how to write it! Now he knew that for the rest of his life she would attempt to control his literary work! As this terrible thought flashed, lightning fast, through his mind, he determined to assert his rightful masculine, intellectual supremacy.

"If you think you can write a better story, why don't you do it?" he cried in a stentorian voice.

She rushed from the house without replying. In a few hours she returned with a typewriter and a delapidated chair. Rapidly filling a bushel basket with cabbages

and carrots, she sat down on the other side of the wobbly table and started to write a tale of adventure in space.

In his wild infatuation, his fantastic day dreams, Kelly had forgotten the Doctor's advice, "Never, never marry!" His bride had contracted the disease. Now the two sat on rickety chairs on opposite sides of the old table; there were two typewriters clicking instead of one; two baskets filled with cabbages and carrots. Nancy no longer worried about the leaking roof, ceased to plan nutritious meals, became oblivious of the dusty and broken down furniture. All she was interested in was the writing of wonderful stories!

Her disease progressed rapidly. Soon she was producing more stories than her husband. Food was unimportant, sleep an irritating necessity. Daily Kelly carried a dozen stories down to the RFD mail box and daily he brought back a dozen rejected stories. Time passed rapidly. For hours the loving couple remained in a silence broken only by the sounds of the clicking typewriters and the gnawing of raw cabbages and carrots. Neither read the other's stories and thus there was no time lost in the discussion of plots or criticism of style or sentence construction.

Again and again John and Nancy tried to reform; but, like the confirmed alcoholic, the incurable opium eater, they returned to their typewriters. Realizing the deteriorating effect of the disease, they were unable to break the chains holding them to their obsession.

At last a child was born. Kelly remembered the warning of the Doctor, but kept his fears a secret. Perhaps the child would be normal.

The house was now beginning to overflow with thousands of Science Fiction magazines and enough unprinted stories to fill other thousands of magazines. Lacking money to buy a cradle, the parents built one out of old copies of Science Magazine. Diapers being financially unobtainable, the little innocent was clad in pages torn from old numbers of Space Magazine. Sunlight filtered through curtains made of flour sack showing the words,

"Eventually, why not now?"

This became their inspirational battlecry. Someday they would sell a story!

At two years of age, little Warpage, for so the child had been christened, began eating Science Stories. When she was four her father found her telling fantasy stories while she was supposed to be sleeping. At six she wrote her first story. When she reached her eighth birthday, there were three rickety chairs around the unsteady table, three typewriters on the table, three baskets of cabbages and carrots, on the floor near the chairs.

The barn had now become a storehouse for magazines and manuscripts. There was less money for clothing and none for food. Almost all their little income was spent for paper and stamps. But neither hunger, cold nor more leaks in the roof could stay the continuous flow of new tales.

The little family of three lived in a world of dreams; dreams which came slithering from dust packed corners of dingy rooms, from drops of rain on the umbrella beating a tattoo of semantics; legions of weirdly shaped creatures trooped from the depths of the subconscious and placed themselves in colorful or ulcerous plots, doing ill contrived things in incredible ways, speaking in unknown tongues. On rare occasions a sturdy sunbeam, forcing its way through begrimed windows brought a change in the story composition, and filled them with songs and flowers, beautiful thoughts of kindly people who performed deeds of valor. This did not happen often.

One ambition, and one only, dominated these three as their fingers flew over the keyboards of the three machines; to imprison these dreams on sheets of clean white paper. At times their inspiration was so forceful, their perception so keen that they could not sleep till the tale was finished. Kelly wrote a fifty thousand word short novel, in thirty hours, and then completely exhausted, slept six hours, at the end of which time he was again back at work.

The three baskets were continually refilled with cabbages and carrots. Occasionally, for dessert they each ate a head of wilted lettuce. Their excited breathing, the crunching of raw vegetables and the clicking of the typewriters mingled with the dripping of water on the umbrella to form a symphony of literary grandeur.

Now, with three adults writing Science Fiction stories it was no longer possible to carry the manuscripts to the RFD mail box and the rejected manuscripts back to the house. Kelly bought a wheelbarrow and daily filled it with beautiful Weird-Science-Space stories. When the snow was deep he used a sled.

Warpage Kelly grew to be a beautiful woman but had neither time nor inclination for masculine society. She was blissfully married to her typewriter. Beautiful stories of space and time were the issue of that union. On rare occasions John and Nancy read a story their child had written and were amazed at the beauty of style, the marvelous plot, the perfect continuity and development. But each parent realized that they could write far better stories than their daughter would ever be able to produce.

Everyone who lives long enough grows old.

John Kelly finally reached his ninety-first birthday. On that occasion he ceased to write and his faithful wife, with mingled fear and relief, felt that the end was near. She sat by his side while Warpage, a woman of sixty-three, loaded the daily stories on the wheelbarrow and took them to the RFD letter box. She returned with the usual load of rejections.

But this time there was a letter!

Space Tales had accepted a Kelly story!!

To be paid for on publication!!!

The old man listened as his wife read the letter. The blood flowed into his wasted cheeks; the fire returned to his shrunken eyes. With a cry of joy he sprang from the bed and tottered to the wobbly table. He sat down on a rickety chair and stuck a carrot in his mouth.

With trembling fingers he inserted the carbon between the first and second sheets of paper and then rolled them into the typewriter. At the top of the page he wrote, "SPACEHOUNDS OF HELL!"

The old man knew that this would be his masterpiece. It would be a super-story, a magnificent creation with an absolutely unique plot. As he started to write it, he cried in exultation,

"If I can sell one story, I can sell two! This is the ultimate victory!!!"

"THE WORM" RE-TURNS

I am using Dr. Keller's fine story, "The Worm" in my anthology, "STRANGE PORTS OF CALL: TWENTY MASTERPIECES OF SCIENCE-FICTION because it seems to me a little masterpiece in its own right. It is one of the best examples I know of the man vs. nature gambit, involving mutation as a theme also, and Dr. Keller has handled it with singular skill, having held to the pattern of simple, straightforward narrative throughout, and thus making for the maximum in effectiveness. There are some stories which demand expanded and stylistic treatment; there are others which demand starkness and simplicity. "The Worm" is one of the latter; it could have been spoiled so easily in less competent hands, but it has not been spoiled, for Dr. Keller has set it in just the right length, just the right frame, without unnecessary verbiage or needless sentimentality. In my search for stories with distinct literary value as well as story worth, I was delighted to come upon "The Worm" for my collection.

Cordially,
August Derleth

August Derleth, fantasy writer, anthologist and Director of Arkham House at Sauk City informs me that STRANGE PORTS OF CALL: TWENTY MASTERPIECES OF SCIENCE-FICTION is coming in the Spring from Pellegrini & Cudahy. Included in the volume with the Keller story will be tales by Bradbury, Heinlein, Simak, Kuttner, Sturgeon, Bond, Lovecraft, Lieber, Wandrei and other famous authors. &c

GENERAL RECOGNITION OF KELLER AS AN IMPORTANT CONTEMPORARY AUTHOR IS THE AIM OF
AVALON COMPANY'S VOLUME
by Sam Moskowitz

The Avalon Company is without question the most unique and altruistic of the book publishing companies formed by science-fiction fans. The Avalon Company has no plans beyond its first volume, "Life Everlasting and Other Tales of Science, Fantasy and Horror" by David H. Keller, M. D. The company was organized by Sam Moskowitz and Will Sykora for the sole purpose of gaining David H. Keller, M. D. the recognition we felt he deserved. To further this aim the Avalon Company has helped David H. Keller M. D. negotiate contracts with The New Collectors Group, The National Fantasy Fan Federation and Robert A. Madle and Associates. Full coordination exists between these groups and each book is planned to emphasize separate facets of David H. Keller's diverse writing ability.

To facilitate this, "Life Everlasting and Other Tales of Science, Fantasy and Horror" has been designed as a key volume to properly introduce Keller. Stories representing all phases of his writing have been selected for inclusion in this bulky first volume. As a science-fiction novel we chose "Life Everlasting", acclaimed as a great classic of science-fiction when it originally appeared in magazine form. We chose three science-fiction shorts but each was immensely diverse in theme. "The Boneless Horror", a novellette is a tale pre-dating Atlantis with the emphasis on beautiful writing. This story also provided an idea which inspired an important longevity discovery. "Unto Us a Child Is Born" delineates the tragedy of a too-regimented future world. "No More Tomorrows" is a powerful O Henry type story with an unusual psychological twist.

Under another heading of "Weird-Horror" we chose the internationally famous "The Thing in the Cellar" and the increasingly popular "Dead Woman". These are two of the most horrifying stories ever written utilizing a great deal of Dr. Keller's background as a psychiatrist. Of the same variety, but never hitherto published professionally are "Heredity" and "The Face in the Mirror".

In the realm of the scientific detective Dr. Keller was noted for his unique character "Taine of San Francisco". The best of these Taine stories, a novellette "The Cerebral Library" was chosen for inclusion.

Another series that Dr. Keller was noted for, The Cornwall Series is represented by "The Thirty and One". Beauty of style is highnoted in this short story which is a straight fantasy.

In the "off-trail" category David H. Keller wrote many tales, but one which may yet become a standard American classic is "The Piece of Linoleum" which is as effective told aloud as read.

A long introduction of over 5000 words has been written carefully analyzing all facets of Keller's writing, giving biographical background and tracing the most obvious influences in his writing back to their source. The psychiatrist is virtually psychoanalyzed!

Added as a premium will be a cross-indexed bibliography of all of Keller's published fiction and articles of fantasy interest.

The volume is in every sense aimed to make the general reader as well as the literary critic receptive to the challenge of giving Keller a fair sampling and deciding for themselves whether they agree with the editors' opinion that David H. Keller is an important author not only in the fantasy field but in the general American field of literature.

1000 copies of this first book will be run off and the plates will be melted after completion. It will eventually prove an item of utmost collector's rarity. It cannot be sold at dealers' discount and will have to sell out the entire edition at \$3.00 (\$3.50 after publication). The Avalon Company is situated at P. O. Box 8052 Clinton Hill Station, Newark 8, New Jersey.

It is strongly to the interest of every science-fiction fan to support this project whose chief motive is to advance science-fiction as a literature.

THE ART OF WRITING

DAVID H. KELLER

If a young man asked me for advice concerning writing as a career, I would answer him in a very few words,

"DON'T allow yourself to start writing!"

That would be very good advice, and might save him many weary hours of work in the remaining years of his life. If he does not start, he will not continue; it is like refusing to take the first dose of opium, drink the first glass of brandy. For writing, once begun can become a habit and the writer simply becomes an addict, slave to the typewriter, a vagabond hunting continually the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

However, if the young man refuses to take my advice, then it might be worth while for him to learn somewhat of the pathway he should follow to make even a moderate success as a writer.

First he should acquire an excellent vocabulary and a working knowledge of grammar. He cannot secure these from a dictionary and a text book on sentence construction. The best source is reading the masterpieces of literature, and of these, he should select those which have stood the test of time. Not all good books are old books, but if a book was first written a hundred, three hundred, sixty hundred years ago and is still being printed in new editions and still read with interest, then that book has the essence of immortality which permeates only fine literature, and is worth study.

Having read extensively, it is next necessary to learn the art of expression. It seems that this can only be obtained by long hours of practice. Take some single, very simple idea, such as:

"The cat sits patiently by the mouse hole knowing that by waiting long enough she will obtain a meal."

Blow that idea up to five hundred words; then write and rewrite it, taking out all unnecessary words, substituting short words for long words, substituting periods for words like "and" and "but". After being satisfied with the final results, read it out loud. If it does not read smoothly, connectedly, with the singing of poetry in it, then rewrite it. Finally there remains one story about a cat.

Now the beginner has learned to write one paragraph.

A story, a novel, is simply a number of connected paragraphs; and if the beginner has learned to write a perfect paragraph he can, perhaps, learn to write a perfect story.

The next problem is to develop an individual style. The fault with schools of literature is that they try to train the student to imitate the style of great writers. If the student copies style he simply becomes a fifth rate O. Henry or a ludicrous de Maupassant. His only salvation is to gain a medium of expression which will mark his writing and make it highly personalized. How this is accomplished is difficult to put into words, but it is an objective that simply has to be attained if the beginning writer ever hopes to gain even a modicum of fame.

Now comes the NEW IDEA for a story or novel.

To find such a new idea is one of the most difficult tasks of writing. Some writers only have one idea in their entire career. Horatio Alger had one: THE POOR BOY COMES TO THE CITY AND BECOMES RICH. He wrote for over thirty years and never found another plot. Some science fiction writers show the same lack of ideas, and use the same plot over and over with very little change.

Eventually, in some mysterious manner, a writer finds a new idea. Now comes the problem of how to tell it. Often a careful analysis will show that the story can be written in five or six different ways. Take the cat and mouse sentence and make a story out of it. Here are some of the different modes of telling it:

1. Told by cat in first person.

2. Cat main character, told in third person.
3. Told by mouse in first person.
4. Mouse main character, told in third person.
5. Story about cat and mouse as biological characters.
6. Contest between cat and mouse as allegorical of human conflict.
7. Story as fantasy, folklore, comedy, tragedy, science fiction.
8. Finally a sermon could be written about this idea.

Having decided on the mode of narrative there are four important details that should be considered before a single line or even a word of the story is written.

1. The NAME of the story. The tale must be boiled down to a word or a very few words, and these must give the main idea of the story and arouse sufficient interest to cause the person reading it to wish to continue the story. Sometimes this is not as easy as it sounds.

2. The BEGINNING sentence or paragraph. This is very important; it must hold the attention and excite the curiosity of the reader. The beginning of THE GOLDEN TOUCH is an excellent example; "Last night," she said, "I had a dream---" and the reader at once wants to know what that dream was and its connection with the title.

3. The ENDING. This should be positively determined during the first thinking out of the story. Many writers come to the end but do not know how to finish and therefore ramble on and on till they come to the final period leaving the reader exhausted and irritated.

4. The MIDDLE. This is the body of the story. The important is NOT to include any material that does not have a DIRECT bearing on the main idea of the story. Many of the great authors have made this mistake. Tolstoi, Zola, Dickens, France. They insert thousands of words into a novel which add pages and detract from the force of the narrative.

Now the story is ready to be written. The creator has the entire tale in his mind; all he has to do is to type it. In doing this he must keep in mind the following desiderata:

1. Use simple language, short sentences, well known words.
2. Avoid lengthy descriptions, no matter how beautiful they may be.
3. Avoid complicated situations. The audience is reading for pleasure and not for intellectual gymnastics.
4. Secure increasing suspense leading up to the final paragraph or even sentence.
5. If back tracking is done it must be used very skillfully or it becomes irritating, as is often the case in moving pictures.
6. Write the story as rapidly as possible. Half finished and then allowed to grow cold, it often loses its charm and value.
7. Write the story only when you feel you positively HAVE TO.

Now the story is written. Put it away without reading it and after a few months take it out of the file and read it. Ask yourself if it is satisfactory in every way to yourself; for after all that is the only thing that really matters. There may be some changes required; perhaps the entire story will have to be rewritten; or in rare instances the first writing is the only one needed.

This question of personal satisfaction is most important. Only recently I have reread one of my unpublished novels, THE FIGHTING WOMAN, with the idea of rewriting it. I wrote this story twenty years ago and read it last fifteen years ago. It was with a certain pleasure that I found it exactly as I wanted it to be. The 256 pages may never be printed---but if they are, it will be with practically no changes.

Now finally we have a story that pleases the writer. The next steps to sell it. Perhaps not the most important part, but if writing is to be a vocation instead of an avocation, a very necessary one. A new person comes on the stage--the editor. He is influenced in his decision somewhat by whether he likes the story; but far more important to him is the question as to whether the average reader of his magazine will like it. He is editing the magazine for only one

reason, to make money for the owners; if he fails to do this he will soon lose his position. Most magazines print stories of one type and it is very difficult to induce the editors to buy off-trail stories, no matter how fine they are.

The writer has spent valuable time writing the story; now he has to decide how much money he can spend on express and stamps. He has a definite investment of time and cash in the story; if it is a novel and he has paid a professional typist to prepare the final copy he has a manuscript that easily has cost him \$100. Each time he sends this out and has a rejection he invests at least \$2.50 more. The time always comes when the writer has to arrive at a decision whether to keep on investing in a story or simply stop.

If he likes his story, if the editor likes it and buys it, there still remains the problem of the reader. The public remains an unsolved mystery; it seems that they either like an author or they do not like him, and if they detest him they have no hesitancy in saying that ALL of his work is utterly poor. It seems best for the writer to ignore, at least not be influenced by, the reader. Once he writes only for their approval he becomes simply a pimp, prostituting his art for financial returns.

The question arises as to the value of a literary agent. Personally I have small confidence in them. If a story is pure gold it will sell without their help; if it is dross, then they will be as unable to sell it as the writer is.

It would appear that there is no easy road to success in the field of writing. It is simply hard, time-consuming work filled with periods of discouragement and disillusion. During such times only a supreme determination and a profound faith in personal ability make it possible to continue writing. Fortunately the occasional success of a story acts with the efficiency of a stimulating hypodermic.

I would advise anyone wishing to become a writer to cleanse himself of all ambition and become a plumber or a carpenter. By doing so he will always be assured of a satisfactory income, and if he HAS TO WRITE, he can do so on Sundays and holidays. Of course, if the obsession of authorship is too strong, he simply will write irrespective of any advice, even if he has to live in a garret and exist on crusts and bones.

A word should be given to the amateur publications popularly known as fanzines. It seems that there is a disease manifested by the desire to publish a magazine, and this is as deadly as the mania for writing. I admit that in the past I have contributed largely to these amateur editors, and I wish all writers would do the same. Send them your best stories, and NOT the worst. I am rather proud of the fact that tales like THE GOLDEN BOUGH, THE DEAD WOMAN, HEREDITY, and BINDINGS DE LUX first appeared in amateur publications.

This article is written from the personal experiences of fifty years of writing. There is no doubt that the disease, the utter folly of trying to become an author has become chronic. Again and again I have promised myself that I will write no more; always I have returned to the typewriter as the addict does to his cocaine or opium. Realizing the incurability of the disease there is only one word of advice I can give:

DON'T START WRITING!

A MESSAGE FROM KELLER

January 7, 1948

To all my Friends:

I wish to take this opportunity of thanking Andy Lyon and all other contributors to this issue of FANOMENA. I appreciate the courtesy shown by Andy in devoting an entire number of his magazine to such a purpose, and trust that it will serve to allow me to become better acquainted with those who have, for twenty years, received some measure of pleasure from reading my stories.

Very sincerely,
David H. Keller

Harper Star Route
Kerrville, Texas
1/29/48

Dear Andy:

I recently had the pleasure of meeting Dr. David H. Keller and his wife, from whom I learned that you are planning an all-Keller issue of FANOMENA. I thought that perhaps you might be interested in my impressions of him, since I have known him but a short time--as contrasted with those fortunate individuals who have known him longer than myself.

I was busy with finals at the University of Texas when I found a note from Dr. Keller in the mail and learned that he was but thirty odd miles from my home in Kerrville. I couldn't have been more astounded if Ernest Hemingway had walked into my rooms and said, "I hear you're Chad Oliver, and I want to talk to you."

We made arrangements to meet at my home between semesters, and on the appointed day I was unavoidably late. I had wired my parents, but, as we live way out in the hills, the telegram had not reached them. They had no idea who or what Dr. Keller might be, nor had the couple with them at the time.

I walked into the house, three hours late, and there they were. Dr. Keller and his wife were firmly entrenched. I met them both and settled back to listen.

Dr. Keller fascinated my father, also a doctor. He charmed my mother. He swapped stories with Mr. Hartshorn, a good friend of ours, old-time Westerner, and no mean story-teller himself. I listened.

Dr. Keller can tell a story like nobody else in this world. His deep voice captivates and enchants, and his eyes are bright under heavy brows. I think he hypnotized us all unintentionally.

I had never read much of Keller before; he was before my time. I read the few items I had--"The Literary Corkscrew", "The Boneless Horror", "The Ivy War". I went to see him and spent the day with him and his wife.

I listened and read and talked a little. I got to know Dr. Keller and his wife pretty well, and the more I learned the more I admired--about both of them. For you cannot forget Mrs. Celia Keller, once you have met her. She is a remarkable woman, and was by no means eclipsed by the colonel--who is not exactly an unobtrusive personality.

Dr. Keller read to me from "The Sign of the Burning Hart", and I read in manuscript a chapter from "The Back Door", a study of his work with the insane. I listened to him talk about great writing, about his life, and what he tried to say in his work.

Tonight I read "The Golden Bough", and I could hear that deep voice, see those eyes. Not a word too much, nothing superfluous. Great.

Ladies and gentlemen and Andy, the extent to which Dr. David H. Keller is a great writer depends on how much of himself is in the stories he writes. For Dr. Keller is something that doesn't come along very often--a spiritually great man.

This is a long letter, and perhaps of little or no use. But Dr. Keller is not a man to be condensed into a paragraph. He himself might be able to do it, with his keen understanding of this odd thing we call homo sapiens. It is quite beyond me.

I have not done justice to Keller as a writer, as a man, or as a friend. But we can all feel proud that we know him--and consider ourselves damned lucky people!

Most sincerely,



Chad Oliver

"INDEPENDENCE"

DAVID H. KELLER

"Every man," said Jones to a few of us gathered around the fire-place, "has a right to the free exercise of his own desires." We all laughed at him.

"No one can do as he wishes," replied Smithson, the lawyer, in a pompous manner. "It would result in anarchy. We are all bound by convention, law, taboos. Our conduct is predicated by our heredity, surroundings, education. No one is a free agent." He said it in such a way that no one could doubt him.

Jones laughed.

"I seem to have but few supporters. Nevertheless I am sure that I am right, and recently have acted on a matter which nicely illustrates my idea. I am, as you know about forty years old. For years I have wanted to write a book and illustrate it. I had definite ideas as to the material of the book and the kind of illustrations. Not being either an author or an artist it all was very difficult. In addition I had the urge of my ancestors toward a purity of life and thought that I am sure now was more prudery than purity. In other words, the book and its illustrations were to be of a character not approved of by my ancestors.

"Of course my ancestors were all dead but parts of them lived anew in me. Had I only had some Pagan blood in me, the entire task would have been less difficult, but my forebears were ministers, moral lawyers and college professors. Their blood in me rebelled at such an undertaking as I had planned. Yet I started in a small way. First a book had to be written and I had never written one of any kind. It was necessary to learn the mechanics, the technique of writing. It took me some years--you understand?--of correspondence courses and painful plodding, and while I was doing that, learning to write, it became the custom to prepare manuscripts on the typewriter and because I was sure I could not entrust my material to the average stenographer, I learned to use a Corona.

"Of course there were interruptions. I had to live and ultimately support my family. At times a year or more would pass without having time to even think about the book. Then too, the very fact of the wife and children bothered me. It was a question whether I, as a supposedly moral man with a family, should entertain such ideas, and still worse, to put them into actual existence.

"In those early years I wrote chapter after chapter of the book only to burn them after they were written. I would write a chapter and feel perfectly satisfied with it and then my conscience would bother me and into the fire it would go. It took me twenty years to complete my first book and even that was burned. Finally the book was finished. A suitable title at once presented itself. No other name suited it as well as the one I first thought of, 'The Passionate Lover'. So slowly, carefully I copied it all on the Corona--just one copy--destroyed in this very fireplace the written manuscript, and finally had everything ready for the binder. I could not have it bound in town; I could not be sure that the bookbinder could be trusted not to read it, so I took it to New York and had it bound by an Italian who did beautiful work but could not read English.

"I had it bound in two volumes. Between every two pages of manuscript, was a blank page for my illustrations. You see, up to the present time I had no pictures, it being necessary first to have the text to illustrate. Ultimately the two volumes were in my house, securely locked in a secret drawer of the old desk over there in the corner. The first part of my desire had been accomplished after some twenty years of endeavor."

"In other words," slowly spoke our minister, "after reaching the age of maturity, when youth gave you no excuse, you finally wrote an immoral book." All of us moved restlessly in our chairs. Jones seemed less disturbed than the rest of us as he continued.

"Exactly true. After twenty years of effort I had finally written an immoral book. It was wrong but beautiful, and certain pages were worthy of being classed

with other similar books like Boccaccio's DECAMERON and the Bible."

At that the minister arose and in a silence, broken only by the crackling of the fire, left the house.

"I am sorry he misunderstood me," said Jones. "All the ministry object to having certain things said about the greatest book in the world and then, too, that word, immoral, is capable of so many shades of meaning. Well, to go on with my story. The next thing was the illustrations. These had to be purchased. They had to be artistic, of a size to fit the book, and above all to accurately illustrate the text. They were hard to find, and when found, could not be sent to me by mail. I was too poor to go to Paris and Vienna and hunt for them, so many, in fact most of them were purchased by mail. This frequently was the cause of much duplication and constant dissatisfaction, and it also made it all very expensive." He paused, seemingly waiting for comment. No one spoke, so he continued.

"Slowly the illustrating of the two volumes progressed to completion. Six months ago it was finished. I say finished, though of course changes will be made from time to time in the illustrations as I find pictures more suitable to the text than those I have. To all purposes, however the work is completed-- begun twenty years ago."

The lawyer slowly arose from his chair, saying equally slowly, "I have lived in this village all my life and while I have observed such things in the degenerate and feeble-minded this is the first time such a thing has developed in an apparently normal citizen who has always been outwardly respectable," and turning on his heel he left us.

The others, somewhat awkwardly, with distinct confusion, left at once, leaving Jones still standing before the fire. I sat still half buried in one of his luxuriant leather wing chairs. Jones frowned. "There is something in this that I cannot understand. I thought they would be very interested in my story; to me it is interesting on account of the revolt from the bondage of modern culture, the effort to attain independence. Evidently they did not approve of the tale."

"Evidently not," I echoed. "They have families, social position. They hold offices of trust--in the Rotary--in the Church. To approve of such a book would jeopardize their future social standing."

After some more discussion along these lines I left him, still standing before the fireplace. I confess to some curiosity--even a desire to ask him to permit me to look over the books in question. He did not suggest it and naturally it was an impossibility to propose and inspection under the circumstances. So I left.

It was a few days before rumor did its work in our small town, but when once started, no time was lost in taking appropriate action. The church led, and a committee of elders headed by the pastor called on Jones. No one knows definitely what took place--that is no one except those present and they were rather loath to give details but it seems that Jones was given the choice between burning the books or leaving the church and he promptly handed his resignation to the pastor.

After that a bridge club ceased to invite him. He was a fair card player and always paid his losses but the women refused to meet him socially, and were equally determined that their husbands should not. In fact, the Woman's Club considered the passing of resolutions asking for his resignation from the School Board. Their idea was that a man who not only owned but created such vicious books could not be trusted with the morals of the young. Some of this acrimonious discussion crept into the local newspaper and immediately was copied in the yellow press of the great cities. Double paged illustrated articles appeared in the Sunday supplements. These articles contained about 5% fact and the rest simply reportorial fancy. The picture of the District Attorney appeared as the champion of purity. Not knowing just what illustrations there were in the book, different papers reproduced examples of pornographic art so their readers could in the future identify such pictures and avoid them.

Through all this discussion Jones kept quiet. The district Judge seized the opportunity and solemnly charged the Grand Jury to investigate the "morals of certain of our supposedly eminently proper citizens." They knew very well what was needed and urged on by desire for fame they summoned Jones to appear before them.

I was present at that investigation. Jones was as usual quiet and self-composed. This could not be said of any of the Grand Jury. Most of them did not have the vocabulary necessary to question Jones about his alleged immorality, and Jones was not disposed to help them. He told them in no uncertain language that it was none of their business; he even went so far as to say that the entire investigation was solely due to their purient curiosity. Assisted by the District Attorney, they dug up an old blue law and found a true bill against him. He was arrested and furnished his own bond.

By this time the matter was arousing the interest of the nation. Several times while Jones was addressing the Grand Jury he had used the word "Independence" and this caught the fancy of many prominent personages who made their living as Senators and Lawyers talking about it. He was heralded as the Champion of Liberty; strangers came by the dozen to see him and offer him help. As usual, however, he preserved a dignified silence--so much so that on the morning of the preliminary hearing he was found dead in bed.

His will, found on the bedside table, made me his executor. In the course of settling the estate I came across the two volumes which had caused such a furor in our corner of the world. They were bound in half morocco with the title on both--"The Passionate Lover" by James Jones, Volumes I and II.

About that time a noted divine had announced his views concerning the Virgin Birth and so occupied was everyone in the discussion that no one had time to be interested in a dead man and his fancies.

At first I thought of calling in some of the neighbors, the Judge, the Pastor and the District Attorney. It would, perhaps interest them to actually see the books. The more I considered it, the more repugnant it was to me. Jones was my friend and he was dead.

There should be no audience so I sat down and opened the books slowly and thoughtfully for here was the secret of the sin that had caused the early death of Jones, that had made his name a savory morsel in the mouths of our Puritans. There may have been a sin, but if it was a sin it was of imagination only, for as I came to the end of the second volume I realized that every page was blank--pure white, unsoiled by drop of ink or single picture.

No wonder Jones smiled at times.

ANTHOLOGY OF NEW KELLER TALES

Printing costs and delays when I am forced to depend upon someone else to do the work have prompted me to purchase my own equipment and locate in Denver, Colorado. There I will be able to do one book per month, all in the fantasy line.

I am extremely fond of the work of Keller, for I am not a fan in the ordinary sense. My passions are the great classics and in them I find many of the qualities which occur in Keller's work, fragile beauty, delicate simplicity and accurate reaction. This last is important. It is quite a feat for someone to set up a cast of characters, place them in one simultaneous situation, and then have them act accurately. This is literary craftsmanship, and Doc. K. has it.

In regard to Dr. Keller's book which I shall do in the Spring. The full title is "The Eternal Conflict and other Weird Tales". It contains, in addition to the full-length novel, eight short stories. None of the contents are re-prints. The edition will be limited to 1000 numbered copies.

Paul Dennis O'Connor

Watch for the permanent address in Denver of New Collector's Group.

KELLER AND THE AVON FANTASY READER

I have always regarded such questions as "Who is your favorite writer?" and "What's your favorite story?" as essentially thoughtless and pointless questions--- and as questions no one in his right mind can expect to answer accurately. There are dozens of different styles, moods, approaches and speeds. Each may be perfect in itself and it is a sign only of literary myopia to try to claim one as better than others. Dr. Keller cannot be said to be the best writer in fantasy or in anything else, but in his way, for his style, and with his approach, there are few who match him. I like Keller for different reasons than I enjoy Edgar Rice Burroughs, A. Merritt, Lovecraft or John Taine, but you may say that I like him contemporaneously with these and a host of other top-notch authors.

"The Thing in the Cellar" is a point in question. It is a good example of Dr. Keller's simple, straight-forward, unadorned but essentially honest and human prose. The style fits the idea---which is a basic one. But it couldn't be adjusted to the plot of "The Moon Pool" or "Scarlet Dream" for instance. When Keller hits on an idea that is suited to his style, and himself meets the mood, he can turn out a veritable gem of a tale. And perhaps the greatest fault of Doc Keller is that he often wrote when he was not fully in the mood or when the plot just wasn't fit for it. He wrote, I fear, too much in the wrong vein and too little in the right vein. Blanket praise of an author's total output is as silly as blanket condemnation.

From time to time it is the intent of the AVON FANTASY READER to present such stories of Dr. Keller's as seem to stand out for literary excellence and mood. Stories in the FANTASY READER are not selected merely for the writer or for the story itself but are picked with regard to the rest of the material in the book. Each story must occupy a special place not only for itself but in relation to the moods and styles of every other story in the collection. "The Thing in the Cellar" will appear in the sixth number, in conjunction with stories by Jack Williamson, H. P. Lovecraft, A. Merritt, Thorp McClusky and others, stories as fine in their way as the Keller tale but in no sense competing with it; each in a different fantasy setting, making altogether a harmonious whole. That's the pattern of the AVON FANTASY READERS, a pattern in which Keller's unique tales often find an appreciative setting.

--- Donald A. Wollheim

PERSPECTIVE

by Paul Spencer

Perspective is a funny thing--fine for making mountains out of molehills, or vice versa. I have a theory that fandom sees David H. Keller from a false viewpoint, hence derives a false evaluation of his work. In fact I had the same trouble myself, until I read "The Sign of the Burning Hart".

Oh, I read a lot of "Kelleryarns" in the old Amazing and Wonder, and I liked them--"The Human Termites", "Stenographer's Hands" and the rest. I agreed with the general opinion that Keller was one of the better pulp-writers. Which, after all, isn't saying a great deal. Then I read "The Sign of the Burning Hart" (in the rare paper-bound edition published in France", and my whole viewpoint on Keller changed. For here is a story that spurns pulp (and "slick") cliches; and more than that, it has meat to it, the red meat of real life. In this novel Keller takes life and by some literary magic distills it into a story of thirty-five or forty thousand words. Every word counts, every sentence packs a punch, every scene is gripping and startling. And though fashioned from the stuff of life, it has the strangeness and charm of fantasy. Stylistically, the story has the spell of masters like Dunsany and Cabell-- yet its technique remains uniquely Keller's.

"The Sign of the Burning Hart" awoke in me a new interest in Keller's work-- and by itself it proved to me that Keller is not essentially a pulp writer at all,

but a genuine literary artist. His shortcomings are obvious--but in a work like the "Hart" the power of narrative and beauty of style dominate all else.

And, by the way, my view of Keller as an author of real distinction has been strongly reinforced by my reading "The Devil and the Doctor" (Simon & Schuster, 1940) and several Keller novels as yet unpublished. On the basis of these and "The Sign of the Burning Hart", I feel sure that Keller will not only soon regain his prewar fame, but will win new esteem, as publication of his major works gives his readers proper perspective on his writings.

Paul Spencer is the Chairman of the Book Publishing Committee of the National Fantasy Fan Federation. It is the aim of this organization to publish in limited editions books of special interest in the fantasy field, the first to be Dr. Keller's "The Sign of the Burning Hart". This off-trail story, never before published in English editions, will be printed in a very small edition with each copy autographed by Dr. Keller. The book is a non-profit project and will sell out almost entirely on advance orders. The price is \$2.00 to non-members with special discount to NFFF members. Send your order to K. Martin Carlson, Secretary-Treasurer, 1028 Third Avenue South, Moorhead, Minnesota, or write for more details.

FAMOUS SERIES

I intend to publish Dr. Keller's "Tales from Cornwall" in the not too distant future, also his "Taine of San Francisco". I believe that these two titles will sell well and it is quite possible that I shall publish others of his stories, depending on the response to the first two.

I feel that there are many of the present authors of Fantasy and Science Fiction who could write other types of material that would sell fairly well on the open market; for example: van Vogt, Hubbard, Keller, Heinlein, Leiber, Long. I have in my possession a ms of Dr. Keller's which I believe to be the best story he has written--but as yet I don't know what to do with it.

Thomas P. Hadley
Hadley Publishing Company

TORCON SOCIETY

The Sixth World Science Fiction Convention will be held in Toronto, Canada July 3-4-5, 1948. The Torcon Society is already in operation, but they need all the members they can get, so if you haven't joined the Society yet, send in just a dollar to pay for your dues, and let the boys that are doing the dirty work this year know you're right behind them.

In return you will receive a numbered membership card, Torque, the official organ of the Torcon Society and any other ballyhoo before and after the event. Torque covers such items of interest as convention site, hotels, transportation, advertising, radio coverage, border regulations etc. Try to attend, but whether you think you can or not, send that dollar in right away to the Chairman,

Ned McKeown

1398 Mount Pleasant Road

Toronto, Ontario

"EN GARDE, DAVID KELLER"

by Andy Lyon

During his visit here last December, David H. Keller issued the challenge to me to write an article concerning him and his works. As the challenged party, my choice of weapons will be that most deadly of all barbs, truth. I accepted the challenge with some trepidation, realizing that to portray accurately and impersonally the character of David Keller, with all its amazing complexities, constitutes a large undertaking. To capture him on paper parallels attempting to imprison a moonbeam in a jar. How successful is the attempt will be revealed in the response to this piece. Have at you, Doc!

David Keller has led a life which is very little less colorful than that of some of the characters in his most fantastic creations. At the beginning of his career he served a small village in Pennsylvania as its country doctor, and served in the army in the first world war. After this, he went into psychiatric practice, and served as superintendent of several mental hospitals over a period of many years, gaining much insight into human nature during this period. In the second world war, he served as medical professor of the Army Chaplain's School at Harvard, and retired as a lieutenant-colonel. During all these phases of his life, Dr. Keller has remained a writer first and last.

Dr. Keller is by nature a somber person. Mrs. Keller has referred from time to time to "the Colonel's melancholy nature", and this description fits; An air of utmost gravity hangs around him, and each word he speaks is uttered with a deadly earnestness. That Keller is sincere in what he believes, right or wrong, cannot be doubted by anyone that has had more than a passing acquaintance with him. He gazes solemnly at a person he is addressing and fixes them with his eyes. In spite of this, when he laughs at something really comical, it is a wholesome, hearty sound.

The Colonel prides himself on being a good judge of human nature, and certainly he is proficient in this respect, being aided invaluablely by his work with people and their eccentricities. When he asks a question of a person, he impales them with his eyes, and keeps driving away until a final definite, unconditional answer is extracted. Oddly enough, I have found that many of my queries about various subjects are vaguely treated by him and receive very qualified answers. At such times, Mrs. Keller is valuable, for she, realizing, I suppose, that this is one of the Doctor's weaknesses, will tactfully steer him back to the subject. Hah! A flaw in the armor.

I am afraid that many people would regard Col. Keller as an egotist, but close examination will show that the people that have had a chance to really know him, do not think this. What appears to be conceit at first, on careful observation will be revealed as a glorious self-confidence which he possesses and likes for other people to possess. A strong-willed, aggressive individual, he likes for his acquaintances to be the same, regardless of whether or not they agree with him. This live-and-let-live attitude does much to disprove the egotist theory which may spring to mind at casual acquaintance.

It gives the Colonel great pleasure to have his stories read by people he knows, but he is surprisingly disappointed when he discovers that a person has missed certain of his stories; in fact, he almost seems to regard it as an affront if one of his better known stories has not been read, and pityies the poor individual who has missed the soul-filling awe of some particularly beautiful passage. Thrust. Dr. Keller has spent many years writing just for the pure pleasure of it rather than for financial gain, and such an attitude approaches altruism of the highest order. Parry.

No article about David Keller would be complete without mentioning his wife,

Celia; the two are inseparable. Of the two, I am inclined to think that she is the more practical; intelligent, engaging, quick witted, aggressive--these adjectives seem inadequate to describe her, although her idea of aggressiveness and mine may differ. I do not subscribe to her belief that an argumentative nature denotes aggressiveness. Mrs. Keller is a delightful conversationalist and never seems to grow tired of discussing anything. She is perfectly at home in a fan gab, and keeps well abreast of the news in fandom; she likes nothing better than reading and discussing fanzines. Her address book includes almost all of the well-known fans as well as dozens she has personally ferreted out of their hiding places. She enjoys reading all science fiction and fantasy, and is familiar with almost all the works of the better writers. Woe to the author that leaves a loose thread somewhere in his story; her quick eye will catch it. Mrs. K. has an uncanny aptness in detecting flaws in a tale, but sometimes exhibits a lack of this same talent regarding David's work that is almost phenomenal.

The works of David H. Keller offer almost as many paradoxes as the man himself. In his stories, one may find the brilliance of a genius at creating masterworks, and also (sometimes in the same story) unspeakable crudities that detract a great deal from the general quality of a story. However, before going any farther, it may be well to point out that the people who become Keller fans consistently remain Keller fans throughout the years. One must read many of his stories to begin to appreciate the huge scope of the whole scheme, the care with which each part is made to fit into the whole; this is particularly true of his stories which were written as parts of a series.

The characterization which Dr. Keller uses in his tales is one of the hardest phases of his work to classify and describe. Many of his most ardent fans say that the part which they like most about Keller's stories is the fact that he writes about people, humans with understandable weaknesses that makes them seem like old friends. This is correct, yet one fan also spoke truthfully when he remarked, "His characters never act quite normally"; this person, incidentally was a long-standing reader of Keller's works. That is one of the outstanding things about Keller's fans; they see his faults all too clearly, yet their enjoyment of his works is lessened not a bit by this. There you have an idea of Keller's characterization; his characters do things it is highly improbable normal people would do under similar circumstances, yet all his fans insist that the human element in a Keller story is one of its most valuable assets. A paradox if there ever were one!

A word to those who perhaps have read little or none of Keller's stories: if you like your glorified space-opera, action in the raw, weird monsters, or blasting ray-guns, DON'T try to read any of David Keller's works. Keller's stories are as down-to-earth as today's newspaper, yet the best of them can hold one spell-bound for a number of hours, and bear constant re-reading. It might be well for those people who might consider some of Dr. Keller's work hackneyed or dull to realize that he was writing when many of today's writers didn't know what science fiction meant, and that many of today's time-worn plots were original with him and others of the old school.

Many of the characters in Col. Keller's stories are people he has known, and in almost all of them, David H. Keller, M. D. is present in the background with his vast knowledge of the medical and psychiatric profession. Even if it were not known that he was a physician, it could be guessed by the numerous references and details inserted in his stories that only an experienced doctor could know. These added bits do much to give Keller stories an air of individuality and uniqueness.

As with every author, there are bound to be points for criticism in the works of David Keller. The most noticeable of these, I believe, is a tendency to over-color the events in his stories; at times the human interest, which some of his admirers acclaim so loudly, is overplayed almost to the point

of becoming ludicrous. Many of his stories which even he would classify as mediocre would really rate with his classics, were it not for the fact that an excellent plot was overburdened with melodrama, and starved for a few straight, logical sequences. The worst thing which can be laid at the doctor's door, therefore, is a flair for melodrama which, incidentally, is missing from his best stories. Touche, Doc.

A lesser point to take issue with is his optimistic viewpoint toward his fellow-humans. One editor once said of him: "He is a great believer in mankind." In almost all of his stories, homo sapiens, although battered and buffeted about, triumphs gloriously in the end, sometimes at the expense of a logical conclusion. Pessimist though the author may be, very little of it penetrates to his fiction. This air of sunny optimism combined with a saccharine atmosphere of sweetness-and-light may prove irksome to the case-hardened science fiction and fantasy reader.

If I were asked to name the most outstanding thing about the stories of Col. Keller, I think that the thing which I would consider as his most valuable asset would be his unquestionable genius for creating original plots. Find any author whose total output comes near that of Keller's that has employed as few "stock" situations. Finding a plot in a Keller tale that could be called hackneyed is a hard job. He can take almost any everyday occurrence and from it spin a marvelous web of unbelievable originality. Although no author's merit can be judged by the titles of his stories, still it cannot be denied that Keller can hang a name on a tale with a twist to it that makes one want to read it and find out more. Mark up one victorious thrust by Keller as a creator of unique situations.

It is not entirely fair to classify the stories of Keller as science fiction, for they are not all concerned with science, nor do any of them rely solely on pseudo-scientific hodge-podge to hold them together. Neither should they be considered as pure fantasy, for they are not completely "fantastic". The category in which they more nearly fit is "off-trail" fiction. One thing to remember is that David Keller is a writer first and a fantasy author afterward. I truly believe that he could try his hand at almost any kind of fiction or writing with more than moderate success. This is largely due to the intensive writing training which he has given himself during all these years.

David Keller is a gregarious person; he enjoys knowing and meeting people, especially those interested in fantasy or science fiction, and his wife is equally sociable. The Kellers are sincerely interested in fandom; they like nothing better than getting in a circle of fans and just conversing. Instead of adopting the casually tolerant or outright arrogant attitude of many professional authors toward fandom, Col. Keller wants to associate with them and be one of them. He has stated that he is willing to contribute to fanzines, and that he hopes that other authors will be similarly inclined. Can fandom afford to ignore this friendly attitude of cooperation? I think not.

David H. Keller has achieved a large measure of well-deserved fame in the past for services rendered, but I doubt that his day is yet over. In view of the fact that many of his works will be seeing print again soon, some of it newmaterial, I predict that the Colonel has not received his full share of fame. It still lies in the future. Dr. Keller has had many honors heaped upon him, has been highly praised, idolized and exalted by his admirers, but I can think of no greater tribute to David and Celia Keller than to say that they are, in the truest sense of the word, genuine fans.

This draws to an end this answer to a challenge which, if time and space permitted, could be prolonged indefinitely with perhaps interesting consequences. However, practicality forces me to cease, so how now, Doctor, do you yield?

NONE SO BLIND

DAVID H. KELLER

The dog growled.

John Wright spoke quietly but firmly to her and she looked up at him, licked his hand and then sat down at his feet.

"You must not mind her, Mother," explained the man. "You see, for nearly five months she has felt that I am her special property, something alive that belongs to no one but her, and I suppose she is a little jealous of you. I noticed it when we were on the ship. She did not want anyone to take her place in any way; but when she learns to understand that you are blind also I think her attitude will change. They explained it all to me at the school.

"These dogs are rather wonderful that way. It takes some months to develop the harmony between the blind man and seeing dog, but once the dog understands that the man belongs to her and that she has to take care of him, the relation between them becomes something rather wonderful. The dog feels absolutely responsible for the man; and not only that, but it seems that she learns to love him. She becomes positively sick if she is separated from him. And there was one dog who simply died when the man recovered his sight and did not need her any longer."

The mother laughed nervously. "It all seems so strange to me," she replied. "For years I have been trying to induce you to come and live with me; and for years you had some reason for not doing so. Even when your father died, you refused to come. You would not let me help you financially or in any other way. Of course you were kind to me and wrote regularly, but your visits were short and sometimes years apart. Then I wrote to you that I was blind and needed you. Perhaps it was wrong for me to tell you. The result was an immediate answer that you would come and stay with me just as soon as you could arrange your affairs in New York. The days passed and the weeks and months and I thought you never would come, but today you came. And you are blind also, and tell about some hunting accident with your beautiful blue eyes out and a black silk bandage so people will not see the horror of it. And a dog to take care of you, when for years I wanted to, just like I did when you were a baby.

"You were a pretty baby, and I loved you more than you will ever know. But you grew hard. I tried to make you understand about your father and his neglect of me and my need for you, but you simply went further away from me. And I needed you. There were years when we could have been so much to each other, but you simply would not understand my love and need of you. I had money enough for both of us but you felt you had to be independent of me. The more I offered you help, the more you refused that help. Your father died and all you did was to write that you were sorry, but you would not come back to me. And then when I had the letter written to you that I was hopelessly blind, you came---and you were blind also. A few years ago I could have taken care of you, been your eyes. Now you have a dog, and when I take you in my arms and kiss you, the dog growls. Jealous of me; what a pity! A mother waiting for years for a son to return to her love, and then a dog comes between them."

The man leaned over and patted the dog on her head. "She will understand in a few days, Mother, and till then you will have to be patient. I will talk to her, try to explain that you are blind also. I never heard it before but perhaps we can arrange life so Freda will want to take care of both of us. Of course she will never love you the way that she loves me because I am her special property, but she will learn to be kind to you because you are going to be a very important part of my life just as she is. Perhaps in a few months the three of us will be great pals. You be kind and gentle to her, and allow her to adjust herself to her new home. Everything will be all right. She really is a wonderful dog; almost human in her keen understanding of life and its problems. But tell me about yourself and your companion and your home. It must be very beautiful. I can hear the waves break on the rocks, and I can smell the roses here in the garden."

The woman laughed, a musical laugh, but with metallic tones rather than the soft resonance of fluted clarinets or the vibrations of stringed violins. "You know I bought the place years ago when your father and I separated. It is an old house on a cliff above the ocean. I had insomnia, worrying about you and the ceaseless waves lulled me to sleep, so I bought the place and planted roses. Constant waves breaking against the rocks a thousand feet below us, and thousands of roses all around us. When your father was dying he asked to be cremated and the ashes thrown over the rocks into the ocean, but---I will tell you about that later on. And then two years ago Veronica came to live with me; a nice child, convent educated. She has a background and a pleasing voice, and she loves roses. She is really very beautiful."

"I know. She must be very fine. Her voice pleases me. We who are blind learn to judge personalities by the sound, the tone of the voice, almost more than by the words."

Just then, the young woman joined them. There was a casual question or two about mail to be answered, food to be ordered and then the mother asked to be taken to the house. "And when you come back," she requested, "talk to my son. You will see a lot of him in the months to come, and I want you to become good friends."

The two women left the rose garden while the man and the dog waited. He stroked her head and gently pulled her ears as he listened to the waves beating on the rocks far below. He could bear their monotone music, feel the warmth of the sunshine, smell the flowers. He could feel the presence of the dog.

"I am glad I have you Freda," he said softly, and it seemed as though the dog understood. When Veronica joined them, the dog did not growl.

"Freda likes you," said the man.

"I am glad," replied the young woman. "I think all animals like me; animals and children, they seem so easy to understand if you just let them warm up to you and do not try to force them. I am glad you are here, Mr. Wright. You see your mother really needs you. She has been so lonely. Your letters were so important in her life and she worried so when she learned you had the trouble with your eyes. It must have been hard to enter a world of darkness."

The man laughed softly. "Can you keep a secret?" he asked.

"I hope so."

"Then I will make you a confession. Perhaps you will understand. I have told Freda about it, but she is not very sympathetic. You may be. You will understand better than a dog; perhaps you will not be so jealous, because Freda loves me. It all goes back years ago. Mother loved me; I thought she loved me too much, but perhaps I could not judge her properly, never having had any children of my own. Anyway she wanted me with her all the time and I thought that was where Father should be. At least I tried to bring them closer together by staying away from them. And after Father died, and I found out that his last request had not been granted, I grew hard, and I just would not come back to her.

"I suppose I did not understand them; and I am sure that I did what was best; at least I thought so. They did not understand each other. Perhaps they did not try. Father always loved the ocean and Mother always loved her roses. The result was that Mother was jealous of the ocean and Father was jealous of the rose garden and they both fought for my love, so I stayed away. Then Father died. This is hard to tell you, and you must not say anything about it because Mother thinks I do not know it, and I want her to keep on thinking so, because I do not want to do anything to hurt her, now that she is blind. But Father's one desire was to be cremated and have his ashes cast on the ocean so much. And Mother won out in the end. She took those ashes and dug them in around her rose bushes, the last place in the world Father would have selected as a final resting place even for what was left of him. It seemed to me a cruel thing for any woman to do. So I became hard. Of course I wrote to her, but I guess there was not much love in the letters and when I visited her every year or so it was almost a short, official business trip, rather than a visit from a loving son.

"And then she became blind, and wrote me that now she needed me in her darkness. I tried to imagine what life would mean to her, never seeing the beauty of the world she loved so much, and her lovely roses. I could not sympathise with her, because I could see. Then it suddenly occurred to me that I could understand if I were blind also. So I had a letter written to her about a hunting accident and started to wear this bandage over my eyes. I had it specially constructed so I could not see anything and then I learned to live the life of a blind person. Of course it was hard, but all the time I kept telling myself that it was just as hard for Mother, and that it was the only way I could really understand what she was going through. Then I went to New Jersey and bought the dog. I had trouble there; they love their dogs there and they thought that if the dog ever found out that I could see, that it would kill her. I finally convinced them that I was in deadly earnest about it, and that I was going to keep on making Freda believe I was dependent on her, and she is very happy now taking care of me. And the interesting part is that I have played the game so completely and so honestly that everyone I have met really thinks I am blind. I act like a blind man; in fact I have been a blind man for over six months.

"When I first started it was hard. When the moon was full I tried to tell myself that it would not harm anyone to slip off the bandage and see the world mellowed by the golden moonbeams but it would not be sporting. Mother could not do it, and so I did not yield to the temptation. And I have been happy. I know Mother is happy even though she must be sad about my fancied trouble. But it makes a bond of sympathy and understanding between us. And Freda is happy; of course she growls at Mother, but perhaps she is jealous. Peculiar that she is not jealous of you."

"No. She likes me," answered the young woman. "Animals and little children always have liked me."

"And I am neither," laughed the man.

"I am not so sure of that," was the somber reply. "It is a very unusual story you have told me; a story that I have never heard before; a story that I thought I never would hear of. But it was kind of you to tell me. I think I understand. And thanks for your confidence. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Nothing, except to help Mother and Freda to understand each other. Nothing must happen to hurt either of them, and these police dogs are difficult at times. I do not want Freda to keep on growling at Mother. She might hurt her some day, and I do not see why she feels that way. She never has before unless she thought the person was trying to hurt me."

A week passed. John Wright sent for a very heavy chain. When he was not holding the dog he used the chain. There was no increase in the animal's reactions to the mother, but there was a definite increase in the man's fear that something would happen. The dog ceased to growl but the hair always raised on her back when the woman came near her son or even spoke to him. The man could not understand it and simply hoped that time and familiarity would aid in a better understanding on the part of Freda. With Veronica there was a deep, warm friendship; when she was with the man the dog seemed very happy and contented.

Summer came rapidly on the heels of a tardy spring. One morning John Wright sought a secluded spot he had located among the dense rose bushes, tied the dog to a marble shaft surmounted by an ancient bust of Satyr and lay down in the warm sunshine to sleep and perhaps dream of colors, and flowers and radiant sunsets. Freda curled near him, her head cuddled against an arm. The two were but a few feet from the edge of the cliff and in complete concealment. On the other side of the roses was a marble bench, and to this bench came Mrs. Wright and Veronica. The man knew they were coming before he heard their footsteps or their voices. He could feel the dog stiffen beside him, the hair bristling back of the collar. He kept the dog quiet by patting him and then he listened, not because he wanted to but because he could not help it.

"I simply have to leave you, Mrs. Wright," said the girl. "I wish I could stay but it is not possible under the circumstances. There is nothing else to do."

"I wish you would be perfectly frank with me," begged the older woman, "and tell me just what is worrying you. Ever since my son came here I have noticed a definite nervousness and I have tried to find a reason for it. Now he is a rather fine man,

a very charming gentleman in spite of his blindness, and if anything in regard to him makes you feel you should leave, perhaps it can be settled in a happy way. I love you as a daughter and if you feel---has he intimated anything to you or have you felt that your staying here might lead to something serious?"

"Not that! Though any woman would be proud to love him. But it is not that. I hate to say it, because you have been so good to me, but he really is not blind. Someone must tell you; he is not blind at all. He is just pretending to be blind because he thinks you are and that if he is blind, and you think he is, you will be happier. Oh, I should not tell you but it was a terrible thing you did to him. You wanted him to come back to you. Everything you tried failed. And then you lied to him. You wrote that you were blind. You asked for his sympathy; perhaps you thought that once he came back to you, you could explain, make a final effort to win his love. I never knew you wrote the letter. If I had I would have done everything possible to make you destroy it; even would have tried to rob the mailbox."

"You are going too far!" cried the mother.

"Not far enough. Do you realize what he did when he received that letter? He wanted to sympathise with you; wanted to have a complete understanding of your blindness. So he put a bandage over his eyes; for six months he has worn it. His eyes were perfect but for six months he never allowed himself to see the moonlight. All the beautiful things in life he deprived himself of, because he wanted to share your blindness with you. Do you understand what he has done for you? And what you have done to him? You lied to him to bring him back. You thought that was love. But he went into the darkness because of his love for you and that was real love. Freda understnads it; she hates you. And I hate you and just how John would feel I cannot tell but I am afraid to be where you are and he is when he learns the real truth. So I have to go---before he finds out---for if I stay here another day I will have to tell him. I cannot let him keep on with an useless sacrifice just to help you be happy."

"You mean," asked the woman slowly, "that there is nothing wrong with him? Nothing wrong with his eyes?"

"That is what I am trying to tell you. He is not anymore blind than you are; but you know and know what you have done to him and I think the dog knows and I have to leave before he knows."

"I will tell him myself," said the woman proudly. "What he has done shows me that he loves me, and he will forgive and forget and keep on loving me."

"You do not have to tell me, Mother," cried the man from the other side of the rose bushes. "I am sorry but I heard it all. I am sorry Veronica told you. Sorry she had to tell you. But now I would have only one reason for wearing the bandage and that is to make Freda happy." He tore the black band off his face. The two women saw him standing there a few feet from the edge of the cliff. Freda was pulling at the chain, moaning, and suddenly the man cried out.

"My God! I cannot see anything. They told me that might happen and it did. I'm blind; made that way by my own mother. And this is what they call Mother Love. I guess I had better take Freda and go back to America."

"Don't say that, John," cried the woman. "Let me explain everything. It was just because I loved you so and needed you so," and she started to run toward him.

"Keep your hands off me," warned the blind man. "Let me get to my dog before she kills you!"

But turning, he stepped in the wrong direction, toward the cliff instead of away from it. For a moment he swayed, and in that moment his mother caught him, soon enough to hold him, late enough to fall with him over the cliff to the wave-tortured rocks a thousand feet below. Veronica ran toward the dog who was barking and straining at the chain holding her fast.

She threw her arms around her neck. "OH, Freda, Freda!" she cried, "What shall I do?" But she knew the answer before she asked the question. Trembling, she hugged the quivering dog and slowly, with shaking hands loosened the chain, and then fell face downward on the grass. Bumblebees and butterflies sipped nectar from the roses drenched with sunshine. The dog howled once and hurled herself over the cliff.

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