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for June, 1944

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a discussion, with illustrative examples of the page-per-book bibliography scheme advanced by J. Michael Rosenblum; a few comments on this project will be most appreciated. May I hear from you?.....

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"The small, neat mantle of Saki has apparently been handed down to a young Englishman named John Collier." ---Clifton Fadiman, The New Yorker. But I cannot be as complimentary as Mr. Fadiman to Mr. Wise and Mrs. Cerf, two anthologists who should know better.....

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personal opinions of the editor concerning those items included in the March, 1944 mailing. Read them and see why he didn't like your magazine.....

---oOo---

This is volume one, number two of Fantasy Commentator, bearing the date of June, 1944. The editor and publisher is A. Langley Searles, whose address is 19 East 235th Street, New York 66, N. Y. All material herein, unless otherwise credited, may be blamed on him. Worthwhile articles concerning expository phases of fantasy in books or magazines, as well as historical material on various phases of fandom, are solicited from all able writers; no editing is done without express permission. Although Fantasy Commentator is distributed free of charge to all F.A.P.A. members, it may be obtained by anyone else interested who has fifteen cents to squander thereon.

This-'n'-That

My thanks are gratefully extended to all F.A.P.A. and non-F.A.P.A. readers for their kind comments on Fantasy Commentator #1. I am especially indebted to those tolerant souls who overlooked some errors in spelling and grammar which inadvertantly slipped by your editor's none-too-eagle eyes (20/400 and 20/600, chums; that's why I'm 4F). (Speer, who behaved differently, gets his in the neck elsewhere in this number.) I hope that this issue will be a slight bit better than the last, however, especially from the literary standpoint...

Errata and addenda department: I forgot to mention in the long article in the December number that one of Benson's short stories, "The Witch-Ball", although not included in his four major collections, is nevertheless available to fans through its American publication in Weird Tales magazine (vol. xiv, no. 4, p. 502---the October, 1929 number). Also, contrary to my former statement, "The Room in the Tower" has been anthologized, appearing in Dorothy Sayers' Second Omnibus of Crime (1931). And the full name of the author mentioned in the Benson article should, of course, be "Charlotte Perkins Gilman"; the story referred to is her beautiful little gem "The Yellow Wall Paper."

In "Rendezvous with Triplets" I omitted mention of an earlier British collection of short stories The Devil and All (123pp, 1934, The Nonesuch Press); this book was never published in this country, and was limited to one thousand copies, each signed by the author. Collier fans need not feel they are missing something, however---the three tales therein were included in Presenting Moonshine, the author's later and enlarged collection...

Fantasy fans are reaping an abundant harvest of new books this Spring-Summer season. At the risk of duplicating Liebscher here and there, I'll mention a few titles---Dana Chambers' Last Secret (Dial Press, 1944) deals with foreign agents, spies, and atomic power...for "authentic black magic" you could do worse than try Canapé-Vert (Farrar & Rinehart, 1944), Pierre and Philippe Thoby-Marcelin's novel of the Haiti tourists seldom see...are you a Norman Corwin fan? If you are, you'll be pleased to learn that a second volume of that gentleman's plays has been published; More by Corwin (Henry, Holt & Co., 1944) is yours for three dollars. This sequel to Thirteen by Corwin contains sixteen dramas, several of them fantasy...at the opposite end of the scale is Bundle of Troubles and other Tarheel Tales (Duke University Press, 1944), edited by W. C. Hendricks; of the thirty-seven examples of North Carolina folklore here included, a good share will prove acceptable reading to most fantasy fans, for ghosts, "hants," witches and the like appear frequently in a dress of native dialect...John Smith, Emperor (Guild Press, 1944) is a political fantasia of the future; S. G. Gallego is the author...Edgar Rice Burroughs' first science-fiction novel in four years recently put in its appearance; Land of Terror (Burroughs, 1944) is the book version of three previously-published Ziff-Davis stories...another play has earned the dignity of hard covers! One Touch of Venus (Little, Brown & Co., 1944), by S. J. Perelman and Ogden Nash, tells about Venus and her fabulous experiences in modern America...

Don't stop now, for there's more to cover: Michael Young, in The Trial of Adolf Hitler, sugar-coats and propagandizes post-1928 history and ends up by doing a bit of prophesying; and for those who wish to check up on this fictional forecaster, note the date of November 9, 1944: this fixes the time of victory over Germany...George Gamow, that twentieth century Lewis Carroll, follows up an initial success (Mr. Tompkins in Wonderland) with an equally entertaining sequel Mr. Tompkins Explores the Atom (Macmillan Co., 1944); and it's well worth buying, be assured...while still on the subject of science, mention of Willy Ley's Rockets (Viking Press, 1944) is not amiss. This is the third American-published volume on rocketry to appear, and seems about the most definitive of the trio...Return of the Traveller (J. B. Lippincott Co., 1944) shows Rex Warner wedding

philosophy to fantasy in his description of the return to a future Unknown Soldier's tomb of the spirit of a killed World War II soldier. The title of the British edition, by the way, is Why Was I Killed?...and published in Britain only is Alfred M. Burrage's Seeker to the Dead (Swan, 1943); it deals with black magic and the occult...of recent English publication also is True Ghost Stories, (Stockwell, 1943), by Stanbury Thompson, which, sad to say, is temporarily out-of-print at this writing...can anyone furnish me information on a recent British fantasy volume, The Nineteenth Hole of Europe? 'Tis a play---but beyond that I know nothing about the title...C. S. Lewis' two interplanetaries are available, now, in this country; as most of you know, Macmillan printed Out of the Silent Planet last Fall, and followed it recently with the sequel Perelandra. The former novel originally appeared six years ago in England, and is already in a cheap (5/-) edition there; the second book was published abroad last year. Canadian fans will be interested to know that their local distributor has copies of the British editions on hand for two and two and a half dollars respectively----just address Thos. Nelson and Sons, 91 Wellington St., W., Toronto 2 Ontario...On the Way to Electro-War (John Gifford, 1943), by Kurt Doberer, another British-published book and a translation from the German, offers a history and forecast of all types of electricity applications...

Other books that have appeared on the far side of the Atlantic follow...three after-the-war novels lead the list: Shaw Desmond's Black Dawn (Hutchinson, 1944), The Lights Were Going Out (Quality Press, 1944) by Arthur Guirdham and Bruce Graeme's Calling Lord Blackshirt (Hutchinson, 1943)...definitely science-fiction is Ruthven Todd's Lost Traveller (Grey Walls Press, 1943), wherein travelling to an otherworldly dimension occurs.... a utopian interplanetary yarn is Erono (Biddles, 1943); the author, E. W. Chalmers Kearney, takes his readers to far Uranus to toll his tale...lovers of pure fantasy (attention Liebscher! I mean you!) may revel in Lord Dunsany's newest effort, Guerrilla (Heinemann, '44) as well as in Miss Shumway Waves a Wand (Jarrolds, 1944) by J. Hadley Chase...if excursions into the unreal are your forte, you have a round-trip ticket in The Devil in Crystal (Faber, 1944), Louis Marlow's latest effort...and we finish the list with The Trial of Mussolini (Gollancz, 1943) by a pseudonymous "Cassius"--and this title speaks amply for itself. This latter book, along with the previously-mentioned Calling Lord Blackshirt, is available to those on this continent through another Canadian distributor, the Ryerson Press; the address is as follows: 299 Queen St., W., Toronto 2, Ontario. Prices are one dollar and two-fifths respectively...

Meanwhile, fans on both sides of the Atlantic await with eagerness The Eye and the Finger, Arkham House's 1944 opus, this being, as you of course know, a collection of Donald Wandrei's short fantastic stories---and also Pilgrims of Space and Time, in which J. O. Bailey gives an historic treatment of science-fiction. Movie-goers likewise have many fantastic films awaiting them; a recent issue of Fantasy Fiction Field newsweekly mentioned many forthcoming titles, so I shall content myself with appending a couple that were somehow omitted: The Canterville Ghost, an MGM production based on the novelette of the same name by Oscar Wilde, and the David Selznick release, Portrait of Jennie, which will star Jennifer Jones (of The Song of Bernadette fame). For the latter picture Robert Nathan's novel will have to be rewritten, it is said; let us hope that the spirit of the work survives the process...

And those who follow the airwaves for their leisure-time entertainment should try Norman Corwin's Tuesday evening radio show; the hour is ten, the network is CBS. "Suspense," sad to say, continues its deplorable downtrend, though now and then something adult and good is aired. "Inner Sanctum" presents worthwhile material but infrequently, most of its programs being both non-fantasy and juvenile---is there a worse combination possible? "Mystery Theater" has redone

(continued on page 26)

For Bibliophiles Only...

In Michael Rosenblum's Browsing #3 (December mailing) a page was devoted to the discussion of an elaborate page-per-book bibliography project, an idea which appears to call not only for general comment from all interested parties, but for some serious thought and careful work as well. Michael sent me an advance notice of the matter, and while it was my intention to speak of it in my Fantasy Commentator #1, circumstances prevented my doing so. I was quite interested, however, reading in the March mailing the various comments on the project submitted by other members.

On the whole, while not wildly enthusiastic, most of those interested in books and allied topics have shown a favorable reaction. The main objections voiced appear to be (1) that the project is too elaborate, and (2) that it isn't actually needed. My own opinion is that if the work is doled out thinly throughout fandom the actual number of man-hours each participant receives would not be great, so that the first objection (which is based, actually, on the time involved) is no longer valid. Concerning the second point, it strikes me as being highly desirable that a permanent file exist on the subject---one to which anyone interested can go if information on any fantasy book is desired; my own bibliography (distributed through Fantasy Fiction Field) has (and has always had) as its purpose merely to list individual titles and give a rough description of each as to type and publication data---it was never intended to fulfill a more complex function. The necessity of the existence of some reference-work to cover a larger scope seems obvious; and if it is to exist at all, why not use the means of duplication and distribution available to F.A.P.A. members to provide a copy for everyone who is interested in owning one?

Who first thought of the idea I do not know, but suspect that it antedates this decade considerably. Though Michael was the first actually to get the thing down in writing for fan consumption, I imagine it has been ticking away in his mind for some time previously. I have had the idea for some time myself, and mentioned it around 1941 or so to Julie Unger as the ideal type of bibliography; his comment was to the effect that the whole idea was impractical, and I agreed---for I thought of it then as a one-man job, never visualizing the possibility of enough interested parties to make it a successful cooperative project.

That the page-per-book bibliography would necessarily be a cooperative proposition seems obvious. Michael's remarks covered the mechanics of the process fairly well, I think, so I shall content myself with elaborating a bit on the standard format suggested. Anyone who prints a review in this standard format in his magazine should run off some extra copies (at least a hundred, or, if you can't spare that much paper, save the stencil for later use) with the magazine heading eliminated and his name and place of magazine appearance added at the bottom, and reproduced on side of the paper only---an advantage, since cheap and easily available 16# paper can then be used. These sheets may then be distributed to interested parties and kept in a loose-leaf notebook, to be combined alphabetically with later-appearing ones.

As for the handling, distribution, and financing of the matter, let the following (tentative) procedure be adopted. Each F.A.P.A. member (this being more or less confined to F.A.P.A. at present, at least on this side of the Atlantic) can stand the expense involved in his own work; and let any member who is interested in receiving such extra sheets as I have described announce that fact, either by a postal to the producing members, or by a blanket statement to all in his contribution to the mailing. Then those fans who are producing extra bibliography sheets can send them themselves, charging for cost or postage or not, just as they please. Speaking for myself, I'm asking for postage---simply a 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ¢ stamp, or a stamped envelope, and you'll get any and all sheets I issue...

Of course, if the membership feels that a majority is interested, nat-

urally, I would advocate a distribution to all via the mailings. But I doubt if there are forty F.A.P.A. fans sympathetic to such a plan, and unless there obviously are, I don't advocate what would simply amount to a waste of much good paper. Some, I know (Chandler Davis and Jack Speer for examples) aren't interested in book reviews...

So much for American distribution. As for the British end of it, why not have each producer of sheets send a dozen or so to Michael, either personally, or via the mailings. If he's willing, he could act as intermediary for English distributing. (Comments, please, Michael...)

To return to Browsing #6, and the sample review therein, I believe the synopsis given is far too brief. But on reading the review section, I find that it is not a review at all, but merely an extension of the synopsis. In a review (call it a critical commentary if you like, as does Russell) one should find the reviewer coming to some definite conclusion as to the book's worth; Gibson gives no critical opinion at all as regards the quality of A Trip to Venus. This seems to me a major flaw in this typical presentation. At any rate, I'm outlining the format variation I favor below, and following it are illustrative examples.

Author's name (surname first, capitalized). Follow by "pseud," if a nom-de-plume, with the true name in parentheses. Decimal classification here.

Title of book. Capitalize all major words in title proper; minor ones, and all in subtitle (if any) appear in lower case. Preserve punctuation on titlepage.

City of publication: publisher, year of first edition, number of pages. Size of book. Publisher's price. Note illustrations, maps, etc., if present. Repeat this data for later editions of book, if any have appeared.

Furthur information: Under this heading include data on previous magazine and/or newspaper publication, if any. Note any abridgements or additions which may cause successive editions to differ from one another. If the book has been reviewed in a professional fantasy magazine, give issue of this review. If a book of short stories is treated, list contents here completely. Cite miscellaneous data on foreign editions here. If a play is reviewed, note date of first production. In short, use any material relevant to insertion, but which does not lend itself readily to inclusion under other headings.

Synopsis: Tell what the book is about, including prologues, epilogues, preface and introductory material whenever present. If an anthology is treated, do not, of course, do more than generalize upon the type of the contents, concentrating upon introductory material instead. Omit this heading entirely in the event that both of these possibilities prove valueless. In all synopses, however, be clear, complete and accurate.

Review: What goes here, if it can be called a critical commentary, is completely up to the reviewer. Be fair, of course, but don't hold back from extreme opinions if they're justified. Suggestions: General impression? Was it well integrated? How does the book rate (a) with books of this particular theme (b) with fantasies generally (c) with non-fantasy material? Quote the context to illustrate; quote titles of other comparable books; quote other criticisms that have been given. Note and evaluate characterization, plot, development, etc., if this seems pertinent to a general rating. Most important of all, include at the end of your review your own credit line, so that your work may be judged by any reader and evaluated on the basis of your own experience in the field.

WALKER, John Bernard

America Fallen! a sequel to the European war

New York: Dodd, Mead, 1915, vi-203pp. 20cm. 75¢. five maps. Second edition in the same year.

Furthur information: In a preface to the second edition the author gives his purpose in writing the book as emphasizing frequent warnings from the Secretaries of War and the Navy to the effect that the United States' naval and military forces are insufficient "to resist attack by a first class power"; he hopes that embodying such facts in "a dramatic fictional narrative" will bring home to the public and Congress "the urgent peril of present conditions." Mr. Walker furthur remarks that since the publication of the first edition of America Fallen!, it has received strong endorsement from such top-ranking Navy and Army men as Matthew Hanna and George Dewey, both of whose letters to him are quoted. No foreign editions of this book have appeared.

Synopsis: World War I is imagined to have ended with the Treaty of Geneva, on March 1, 1916. Weight in allied numbers and superiority of equipment have succeeded in forcing the Germans out of France and Belgium to the Rhine, where they marshal forces for a defensive campaign; however, a declaration of war late in 1915 by Holland permits the allied reserves to turn the German right flank. All of that country's war industries being thus captured, there is no alternative in sight but to sue for peace. Aside from boundary readjustments, Germany agrees to an indemnity of fifteen billion dollars, an amount considered by the allied powers to be financially crippling.

But secret German plans involve obtaining the money by means of invading the United States and holding its major cities for ransom; if the latter is not paid complete destruction will be threatened. The first step in the realization of this plan is Germany's purchase from Denmark of the latter's West Indian island of St. Thomas; while the United States is formulating action against this violation of the Monroe Doctrine, Germany declares war and, simultaneously, attacks. Submarines destroy New York Harbor's naval installations and completely wreck the Gatun locks of the Panama Canal, isolating the major portion of the American navy in the Pacific; at the same time surface units support the coastal landing of troops at Boston, New York, Norfolk, Charlestown, Key West and Pensacola, neutralizing land batteries in these surprise early-morning assaults. Subsequently these cities, together with Washington, are captured, and the desired indemnity is forthcoming after feeble resistance. Shortly after the initial invasion the American Atlantic fleet is cut to pieces by a numerically superior German force; and within a week supporting troops land and defeat the smaller U. S. army in the only important land campaign of the war. The country surrenders, acquiescing to the terms of German withdrawal---a twelve-billion-dollar indemnity payment and the abandonment of the Monroe Doctrine.

Review: Though short, as a novel America Fallen! is well-integrated, compact, and interest-sustaining throughout. Granting its major premise it shows logical development from start to finish, and is uniformly well-written. The superiority of Mr. Walker's volume over most novels based on the same theme---e. g., Thomas Dixon's Fall of a Nation or The Conquest of America of Cleveland Moffett---easily is discernible; for a work of its period, moreover, America Fallen! is singularly free from the undesirable melodramatic coincidences and unlikely endings so frequently and regrettably encountered in books of its type.

---A. Langley Searles, in Fantasy Commentator #2.

STERN, Philip Van Doren, editor

The Moonlight Traveller: great tales of fantasy and imagination

Garden City: Doubleday, Doran, 1943, xx-487pp. 20cm. \$3.00.

Further information: Contents are as follows: "The Celestial Omnibus," by E. M. Forster; "Desire," by James Stephens; "Enoch Soames," by Max Beerholm; "The Man Who Could Work Miracles," by H. G. Wells; "The Bottle Imp," by Robert Louis Stevenson; "Adam and Eve and Pinch Me," by A. M. Coppard; "Lord Mountdrago," by W. Somerset Maugham; "All Hallows," by Walter de la Mare; "Our Distant Cousins," by Lord Dunsany; "Cobbler, Cobbler, Mend my Shoe," by Jan Struther; "The Man Who Missed the Bus," by Stella Benson; "Sam Small's Better Half," by Eric Knight; "Mr. Arcularis," by Conrad Aiken; "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz," by F. Scott Fitzgerald; "William Wilson," by Edgar Allan Poe; "The Curfew Tolls," by Stephen Vincent Benét; "The Most Maddening Story in the World," by Ralph Straus; "Phantas," by Oliver Onions; "Roads of Destiny," by O. Henry; "'Wireless'" by Rudyard Kipling; "The Music on the Hill," by "Saki."

Synopsis: In his interesting critical and explanatory introduction Mr. Stern points out an apt truth: the "realist" school, perhaps because it never actually mirrored realism in life, is clearly on the down-grade, while fantasy, "carrying on in a tradition that has run unbroken from the earliest time," has lasted and is certainly more than ever still with us. "Whereas thousands of realistic stories have been quickly forgotten, imaginative tales have shown an amazing ability to survive"; and Mr. Stern supports this statement with many examples of excursions into the fanciful. The reason for their lingering indelibly in memory, he feels, is that they are eminently suited for retelling with little loss, or no loss, of effect; but writing on other themes will not stand this acid test---too often it is work which "depends too much upon personal qualities to be presented in any form except that in which the author wrote it. But most tales of fantasy turn round a clever central idea or a trick in plotting which even an amateur story teller can repeat effectively to his friends." But the best in fantasy is more than merely clever---to be literature, naturally, it must be, and Mr. Stern readily admits the point. In commenting in general upon his own selections, it is noted by the editor that all tales of fantasy have an assumption, naturally, that no sane person will grant; yet

Since the stories in this book make no pretense of being true, they should not tax the credulity; since they were written only to furnish entertainment, they can be read simply for pleasure...

Review: Mr. Stern's introduction is both thorough and unbiased, though his tendency to discount current efforts in this field---"the wretched things found between the gaudy covers of pulp magazines"---reveals a single prejudiced viewpoint not quite in keeping with tolerant open-mindedness. Otherwise his critical commentary seems sensibly just; however, in the last analysis, it is necessary to admit to a considerably higher percentage of inferior material in the "pulp" sources than would be convenient. Save for one or two stories, the majority included in this volume are satisfactory, both from the standpoint of the subject and literary quality; most of them have been infrequently anthologized--or else never published at all in earlier collections. The Moonlight Traveller is undoubtedly an addition to be recommended for any growing fantasy collection.

---A. Langley Searles, in Fantasy Commentator #2.

HODGSON, William Hope

Carnacki the Ghost-Finder

London: Everleigh Nash, 1913, 288pp. 20cm. 6/-.

London: Everleigh Nash, 1914, 288pp. 20cm. 2/-.

London: Holden & Hardingham, 1920, 248pp. 19cm. 2/6.

Further information: The contents consists of six short stories: "The Thing Invisible," "The Gateway of the Monster," "The House Among the Laurels," "The Whistling Room," "The Searcher of the End House" and "The Horse of the Invisible." A brief synopsis of each of these tales appears in the volume Carnacki the Ghost-Finder and a Poem (1910), published in this country. H. P. Lovecraft, in his essay "Supernatural Horror in Literature" (The Outsider and Others, p. 542) says that this collection "...consists of several longish short stories published many years before in magazines." Pending appearance of explicit data to support it, this statement should be considered questionably accurate. No direct evidential confirmation of it has yet been found. "The Whistling Room" was reprinted in A Century of Horror (1935) edited by Dennis Wheatley; "The House among the Laurels" is shortly to appear in Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine.

Synopsis: All the stories are incidents in which Carnacki, the central character, investigates supposedly supernatural occurrences of various types. Some of these turn out to be hoaxes; two of them ("The Searcher of the End House," "The Horse of the Invisible") are partly explainable thus; and a second pair, consisting of "The Gateway of the Monster" and "The Whistling Room," is avowedly connected with the supernatural.

Review: H. P. Lovecraft, loc. cit., goes on to say of Carnacki the Ghost-Finder ---"In quality it falls conspicuously below the level of the other books. We here find a more or less conventional stock figure of the 'infallible detective' type ...moving through scenes and events badly marred by an atmosphere of professional 'occultism.' A few of the episodes, however, are of undeniable power, and afford glimpses of the peculiar genius characteristic of the author." With all due consideration of Lovecraft's abilities, it must be said that in this case his judgement is not to be relied upon. It must be remembered that he criticized a work on the basis of its supernatural horror, not its content of horror alone. And thus when the splendid atmosphere of horror that Hodgson builds up may turn out to have a material explanation Lovecraft's tendency is to belittle. True, Lovecraft is consistent within his defined boundaries; but so is Hodgson, who never presents Carnacki as an investigator of any conditions except those which appear to be supernatural. To label him as a "conventional stock detective" is certainly both unjust and incorrect... Hodgson's ability to delineate the weird is nothing short of remarkable, a characteristic accounted for by his admirable choice of descriptive detail and a talent for the use of effective onomatopoeia that is truly extraordinary. It is surprising that to date no critic has remarked on this unique feature of the author's prose. Apart from this, Carnacki's ability to apply modern scientific methods and discoveries to the unriddling and counteracting of the supernatural forces he faces show Hodgson to be a forerunner of the modern school of fantasy which produced such works as "The Mathematics of Magic" and The Incomplete Enchanter. Indeed, the basic similarity between Carnacki's methods and those employed in the latter recent works is startlingly close. And it may be said, all criticism to the contrary, that Hodgson's short stories are not only equal in quality to his novels, but are, in many respects, superior to them.

---A. Langley Searles, in Fantasy Commentator #2.

Book Reviews

THE TOUCH OF NUTMEG and More Unlikely Stories by John Collier. viii-247pp. New York: The Press of the Readers Club, 1944. \$2.00.

The sparkling reputation of John Collier has lately penetrated into the far reaches of interstellar niceness and to such an extent, in fact, that a Readers Club editorial committee---Sinclair Lewis, Clifton Fadiman and Carl Van Doren---has seen fit to present to its followers this new sampling of Mr. Collier's tales. And to say that it is a representative sampling of them is enough for any Collier fan.

Of course if you're not a Collier fan your reviewer can merely remind you that opportunity is once more knocking at the door; this time you should really open it wide, too. Such advice applies especially to those who missed Presenting Moonshine, for of the twenty-six gems in The Touch of Nutmeg sixteen are borrowed from the previous volume. They are undoubtedly sixteen of the finest, too. Moreover, Clifton Fadiman, himself long since a Collier addict, provides admirable guidance for the newcomer in his introduction, from which it might be well to quote a few brief passages:

Today the literary world, in addition to its overwhelming preponderance of mediocre minds, comprises great minds, sensitive minds, powerful minds, persuasive minds; but in it is rarely to be found the genuinely odd mind. By odd I do not mean unbalanced; I mean what our ancestors used to call "an original." Laurence Sterne was a great original; John Collier is a small original; but both minds find their center in eccentricity...

So much for the man. As for his work, let Mr. Fadiman summarize once more:

These stories are not profound or beautiful or even memorable; but they are refreshingly odd, aromatic and spicy: like the nutmeg that gives this book its title. John Collier does not set up to be a thinker or a close observer of humankind. He works in a narrow groove, but there he works well.

How well, the reader may judge for himself. This collection provides repeat performances of such gems as "Rope Enough," "The Devil, George, and Rosie," "Half Way to Hell" and "The Right Side"---as well as "The Chaser," that too brief tale in whose satiric final sentence lies its entire point. Of the ten new additions, don't miss Collier's murder stories, for they are different in every sense of that often misused word. The title story, "Wet Saturday" and "Midnight-Blue" are three of these; also in this category falls "De Mortuis...", whose unusual plot-twist involves a murder which hasn't happened---yet. "Little Momento" has a chilling aura of horror all its own, and "Back for Christmas" (which has been twice dramatized for the radio) is annoyingly memorable.

"After the Ball" relates how one Tazreel, a fiend so stupid that his fellows refused to allow him to take part in their football games, came to earth to locate a new ball. Their last one, "a battered Pope of the fourteenth century," was, it appears, "horribly burst asunder at the seams." How Tazreel succeeded in his quest is told in the usual flippant Collier fashion; it is a fantasy that no one should miss.

Most interesting in the lot of newcomers is the rollickingly moralistic "Hell Hath No Fury." This story is a beautiful example of the author's ability to blend careless diabolism, an acid flipness and a dash of pure insouciance into a unique stylistic tone that is more reminiscent of negligent genius than

anything else. The yarn so obviously begs resume that the best thing that can be done is to quote its initial sentence---

As soon as Einstein had declared that space was finite, the price of building sites, both in Heaven and Hell, soared outrageously...

Your reviewer will maintain to his last breath such a beginning could be written by no other author except John Collier. Gentlemen, the defense rests...

GREAT TALES OF TERROR AND THE SUPERNATURAL, edited by Herbert A. Wise and Phyllis Fraser (Mrs. Bennett Cerf). xix-108Opp. New York: Random House. \$2.95.

Norman Matson, in reviewing this volume in the New York Times of May 28th, says of its editors' chosen contents: "At least half of their tales are familiar, but how could it be otherwise?" By this remark, Mr. Matson shows himself to be as unfit to review the book as are Mrs. Cerf and Mr. Wise to edit it. The truth of the matter is that over 90% of the tales included are---or certainly should be---thoroughly familiar to anyone who has even a fair knowledge of the field. Mr. Matson, since he takes it upon himself to judge the book, surely should possess such knowledge; and Mrs. Cerf and Mr. Wise are likewise culpable for their failure to have more than a nodding acquaintance with the subject at hand. According to a statement on the anthology's dust-jacket, the latter individual's hobby "has long been the collection of macabre tales." One can conclude from such a remark only the fact that Mr. Wise has been too pressed by vocational duties to devote more than a few scant moments each month to the pursuit of his chosen hobby.

Not only virtually all selections met with are already familiar to the readers of this fictional field, but over 70% of them have been met with in other collections. "The famous stand-bys are still all here, but in addition there are a score of others that will be completely new to the average addict," is the legend on the jacket; "The editors have combed old libraries and little known collections to find them for you." Your reviewer rises to remark that the comb in question must have had several teeth missing if these stories represent the best efforts of the combees.

Great Tales of Terror and the Supernatural cannot possibly be considered a definitive anthology, for it omits many stories that should, if we grant such a premise, be included; and if it is labelled a "representative" anthology the sole thing it represents is the limited knowledge of its progenitors. As a typical example of editorial ignorance, a portion of "Introduction to the Notes" may be cited: "...such masterpieces as 'Sir Edmund Orme,' 'The Rats in the Walls,' 'The Great God Pan,' 'They,' 'Ancient Sorceries,' and...'Oh, Whistle and I'll Come to you, My Lad'...which have never to our knowledge found their way into an anthology before." No one can deny that these stories are indeed high in quality---which is why, all twaddle to the contrary, the Blackwood story was included in Dennis Wheatley's excellent collection A Century of Horror, as well as in Mr. Blackwood's own two books of selective works, Strange Stories (1929), and Tales (1938). It might be worth the editors' time to consult these volumes before engaging in further compilations of their own. And "The Great God Pan," likewise, has seen print in The House of Souls (1906, reprinted 1922) as well as in the Wheatley anthology mentioned above. Though your reviewer believes that a volume in Christine Thomson's "Not at Night" series of supernatural anthologies included Lovecraft's "Rats in the Walls," it would ill beseem him to quarrel because of the latter tale's use. Lovecraft deserves fully any and all attention

that negligent and incompetent reviewers tender him. However, there is absolutely no excuse for editorial inaccuracies as typified by the statement quoted previously.

To continue the citation of specific faults, one notes an appalling series of omissions of worthwhile material that might have been used. The inclusion of the little-known James story, "Sir Edmund Orme," is laudable, and so is that of H. P. Lovecraft's comparatively unrecognized writings. But why stop there? The best of J. D. Beresford's, William Fryer Harvey's and John Metcalfe's psychological (and supernatural) works have never been adequately represented---some of their stories, in fact, have never appeared outside of the original published volumes. The majority of the late A. Merritt's shorter works are not to be seen outside magazines, to furnish another example. And what of the powerful work of William Hope Hodgson, almost unknown to the non-fantasy reader even as late as 1942? One or two of Robert Hugh Benson's novellas have appeared of late, but both The Mirror of Shalott and The Light Invisible contain still-unused material far surpassing in quality several of Mr. Wise and Mrs. Cerf's selections in their compilation. And the shorter works of Arthur C. Benson have been likewise overlooked. Have the editors never read Irvin S. Cobb's "Fishhead," or his "Gallowsmith"? And are they unfamiliar with M. P. Shiel's "Xelucha"? One supposes that they are, and that such versatile writers of the supernatural as H.R. Wakefield, Barry Pain, Robert W. Chambers, Violet Hunt and A. M. Burrage never have crossed their paths. And the more elevated and refined horror in the work of Hugh Walpole, Vernon Lee and Wilbur Daniel Steele has still to be seen regularly in current anthologies...

One cannot understand, either, why Mr. Wise and Mrs. Cerf insist upon presenting such a diffuse and obtuse Machen tale as "The Great God Pan" when one could as easily have chosen the better-integrated "White People" or the powerful "Novel of the White Powder" or "Novel of the Black Seal". Similarly, the story "Afterward", anthologized so many times that your reviewer has lost count of the exact number, could be expeditiously replaced with Edith Wharton's "All Souls," or her "Bottle of Perrier," both far less threadbare and equally effective. And the superiority of F. Marion Crawford's "Upper Berth" over the editorial choice, "The Screaming Skull," is so obvious as to require no argumentative support. Nor does one need to have a library equal to Montague Summers' in order to find less familiar Le Fanu selections than "Green Tea." This tale may be new to our editors, but it is known almost by heart to the average reader of weird tales. And so, unfortunately, are most of the remaining contents in this volume.

Their scant and superficial introductions add little to the editors' questionable reputations, moreover. In any event, Great Tales of Terror and the Supernatural does have quite an attractive two-color binding, and is printed on good-quality paper. As an anthology, it may be useful to those who have never read the macabre regularly, but in no sense can it be even hesitantly recommended to dyed-in-the-wool followers of the outré. Better collections for their use have appeared in the past, and more, it is to be hoped, will be forthcoming.

Your reviewer has found, however, that the Wise-Cerf volume makes a n ideal paperweight---although equally servicable ones might admittedly be obtained for less than three dollars, to be sure. Other suggested uses include the frightening of recalcitrant children, pressing flowers, and perhaps as a weapon for assaulting a book-borrower---unless, indeed, he borrows this one, in which case he has troubles enough of his own. One author known to your reviewer uses his copy as a doorstop, and claims to have found it very effective; another informed me that it was the damndest argument against printing he'd ever seen. But at any rate, prospective purchasers may comfort themselves by remembering that they don't have to read it.

the oft-dramatized "Monkey's Paw"; but on this program the supernatural is the exception rather than the rule. A few months ago Nelson Ormsted ended a daily series of fifteen-minute readings, in which such fantasy items as two Bierce items, Gautier's "Lummy's Foot," "Escape" by Paul Ernst, and Robert Cochran's renowned "Foot of the Giant" were aired.

Obituary department: A. Merritt, Mark Channing, Arthur Quiller-Couch, W. W. Jacobs, C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne, Stephen Vincent Benet...all of these authors wrote wholly or in part of the fantastic. The list is too lengthy for comfort.

The next issue of Fantasy Commentator will, I hope, feature Sam Moskowitz' promised longish article on forgotten magazine classics of yesteryear--- and to accompany it your editor has located some new material (hitherto unpublished, that is) on the great English writer William Hope Hodgson, which he is integrating into what he hopes will be an interesting review article. There are pictures to go with it, too---which will be, if they appear, the first time any of Hodgson have appeared in fan material. The rest of the number will be balanced out by problematical amounts of the two regular features, "Devil Take the Hindmost---" and "This-'n'-That"...

Did you notice the page-numbering in this magazine? It will be consecutive throughout a given volume, just in case anyone besides myself wants to bind his copies. Your editor would like to see all fan magazines adopt this numbering system; what comments can you offer?

Looking still further into Fantasy Commentator's future, an article I plan on writing soon is seen: the subject is unusual---supernatural fiction by a group of Catholic priests. Judging their tales from an agnostic standpoint, it must be admitted that the group includes some of the most effective examples of weird fiction that your editor has ever read. The authors---Robert H. Benson, Cecily Halleck, C. W. Leadbeater, Roger Pater and Arthur C. Benson---are a group unknown to most readers of the weird in fandom, and equally unknown, it appears, to those "experts" who have been so busy editing supernatural anthologies of late. Montague Summers is familiar with at least three of them, judging by his writings, and now and then a story of Robert Hugh Benson appears. In any case, I hope by this projected write-up to acquaint lovers of the outré with the writings of all five...

In general, as has doubtless been realized by now, Fantasy Commentator is directed mainly to those who like their reading to be more than the juvenile froth which comprises 90% of most fan publications. There is enough of the latter extant without my adding to it, and I shall stick to this policy even if it means---as doubtless it will---an infrequent schedule of appearance. While fantasy-reading and -collecting is but a hobby with me, and no more than that, I nevertheless feel that I owe it serious consideration and treatment---else, to my mind, it degenerates from a hobby to a farce.

A few miscellaneous items, and I leave you. In a recent issue of the English fan magazine Fido there appeared a note the effect that henceforth the shipping to England of magazines was forbidden by new postal regulations. This is not true. I have been sending magazines across the Atlantic regularly for a couple of years, and have never experienced any difficulty. On inquiring at my local postoffice, I was told that if shipped rolled magazines are accepted at a rate of twelve cents per pound up to a maximum of five pounds two ounces per item shipped. If sent flat, the weight-limit is four pounds, and the rate is as usual, viz., fourteen cents a pound...

I hope no one who has admired the astronomical covers presented, in the past, by Astounding Science-Fiction, will neglect to obtain the May 29 1944 issue of Life magazine. Here are presented some of the finest examples of this type of art-work, in full color, that your editor has ever seen. No less than six views of Saturn from its various moons---some over half a page large!

Devil Take the Hindmost---
being comments on the March 1944 mailing

Sardonyx: The beautiful mimeographing still fascinates me. Concerning "Papafile" I deny being in any way connected with the Navy: I am a chemist by profession, and by avocations a dabbler in fantasy-reading and collecting, amateur publishing, chess-playing and have a deep love for classical music... Anent my criticism of Trudy's handling of the racial question, I will say that since I do not consider F.A.P.A. mailings suitable media for the discussion of religious or of racial matters, I refuse to become involved in them. Moreover, such digressions on these matters that I have hitherto come upon in F.A.P.A. magazines show their authors either (a) incapable of using any but an emotional approach or (b) displaying a lack of familiarity with the facts of the situations that makes their "intellectual" approach simply laughable. And I never take the trouble to argue with a person whose opinions I do not respect.

Guteto: I wish all other dull and inferior items in the mailings were as short as this one: saving one's time is important these days...

Fantasy Amateur: I fully agree with the warning concerning the using of pungent four-letter Anglo-Saxon words; I believe they are employed in the main by those too lazy to exert the necessary mental prodding that would avoid them. I am not familiar with Twain's description of "The Book of Mormon," but gather that criticaster Speer's intention was to label Fantasy Commentator #1 as dull; I don't think this could be said of "Rendezvous with Triplets," but might well be of "A Few Uncomfortable Moments," especially if the reader weren't interested in the subject at hand---which was true of Phanny's editor, and probably also in Jack Speer's case. But the sentence he quotes seems perfectly clear to me; perhaps a bit more practice in reading complex sentences is necessary before Speer can comprehend the context of complex rhetoric on the first reading...

Fan-Tods: "Yesterday's 10,000 Years" remains the item of paramount interest here.

Sappho: The cover is striking and well-executed. And I would like to execute the authors of the contents...

Sustaining Program: More characteristic Speer criticastry is to be found at the bottom of page five: "Take note, all ye thousands who have been mistakenly using the form "a la" (you too, Langley Searles): The masculine form is au, pronounced o, as in au fait..." I did not quote that sentence to point out the grammatical errors it contains, but rather to advise its writer that a few days' work in the French Branch of the Lend-Lease Administration hardly makes him an authority on French language. If Speer will take the trouble to consult a dictionary he will discover that my use of a la is perfectly correct. When employed in English, it becomes a phrase which may be followed by a noun of any gender desired; one retains the grave accent mark above the first a, however, a fact of which friend Speer appears also unaware... Your crack about grammatical errors in my Fantasy Commentator is laughable considering the fact your two contributions, along with those of Degler/Rogers, contain more grammatical errors than any others appearing in the mailings...

Xenon: Format and cover are attractive; fiction dull, however. Rouze should not take the latter remark amiss, for 99% of fan fiction is not worth printing. The Thompson article was interesting... How about a contents-page?

A Tale of the 'Evans: Dull.

Beyond: Even duller.

The Phantagraph, II, 2 and 3: Both quite interesting, despite their brevity. A short while ago I consulted Webster's unabridged dictionary anent the verb to hiss, one meaning given was 'to utter with a hiss'---so if the word with is defined loosely, I don't think Koenig's position is very secure. But I must admit that I still enjoy the hissing campaign, albeit we've not seen much of it lately ... The quotation you give is borrowed (perhaps unconsciously) from the earlier Doyle version, which runs like this:

"I would call your attention to the curious incident of the dog in the night-time."

"The dog did nothing in the night-time."

"That was the curious incident."

Father Ronald Knox has christened this bit of witty repartee "Sherlockismus."

The F.A.P.A. Fan: Needed clarification. The S-F Democrat: Amusing.

Light: I agree that recording fantasy plays from the airways would be excellent, but suspect that it would involve legal trouble, even if the program were a "sustaining" one, should any sort of distribution be attempted...anent the obscene matter herein, see the remarks under Fantastical Domination.

Phanny: The single Collier yarn the average fan appears familiar with is "Green Thoughts"---which is not in the least typical of the author's usual fantasy, Warner, Widner, et al., take note... Your view that I look upon all non-professional fantasy as undesirable per se is mistaken; I hope I have not given such a general impression.

YHOS: I lament the annoying "simplified" spelling and Ackermanese throughout---the use of these is simply an indication that the particular fan is too lazy to write correct English, mentally unable to, or enjoys sporting such childishness to attract attention. Which category is yours, Art?

Walt's Wramblings: I like book reviews, but I wish Walt would include the date of publication, or the publisher (or both) so that search for data on particular titles would be facilitated. I wonder how many of the books you list you have actually read, and in which cases you quote newspaper reviews, or paraphrase.... It seems to me there should be some differentiation of the two on your part.

Fleeting Moments, whatever its insignificant literary merit, has no place in any F.A.P.A. mailings... It is painfully obvious throughout (with the possible exception of "Dream of Light") that Farsaci has never mastered the poetic medium.. His constant attempts to wed the romantic and the plebian, the colloquial and the literary, coupled with his unfailing ability to be anti-climactic---all of these things constantly grate on the eye of the reader. If Edwin Markham, R. P. Tristram Coffin and Robert Frost gave Farsaci's work their personal attention and praise, it is merely an additional proof of why they are today remembered as poets and not as critics.

The Nucleus: The usual combination of dull fiction, shallow reasoning and messy mimeographing.

Browsing: Always interesting, as usual. If only Michael had time to make his contribution lengthier---! Both numbers were enjoyed immensely.

The Futurian statement: I don't like the air of "high authority" that makes it so reminiscent of the "official statements" issued by Ackerman whenever a question arose in fan circles... While Unger cannot disassociate himself from the Comic Circle confusion it is incorrect to assume that his distribution of its initial bulletin denoted a tacit upholding of its ideals, since it was presented to readers as "the product of a genius or a lunatic."

Blitherings: Aptly named. Some day, perhaps, Davis, along with Ackerman and even Widner, will learn to write the English language correctly.

En Garde: Cover below standard, but still acceptable. The remarks on the "Michigan" were appreciated.

Fantasticonglomeration: The clipped-out cartoon is excellent. The remainder of the issue is simply the usual bilge that one comes to associate with Ackerman's publications as a matter of course. Anent the nudes here, and in Light, (attention, Crutch!) I think it's about time they were eliminated from F.A.P.A. contributions. Action, rather than words, is demanded; to that end, therefore, I hereby announce that if I see any pornography, pictorial or otherwise, in mailings subsequent to that in which this number appears I shall promptly send the offending publications, with the proper information, to the Postmaster General. And chums, I'm not joking! I'm not setting myself up as an authority, but merely passing along questionable material to someone who obviously is. So the issue of a clean F.A.P.A. or a possibly suspended F.A.P.A. is now squarely up to you members and officers...

Agonbite of Inwit: I agree with you on the Furtwängler-directed Tschaiakowsky 6" being superior to the other interpretations extant, but still prefer the Ormandy-Philadelphia Orchestra version (DM828) to the Columbia recording of his fifth. By the way, are you familiar with Malinnikov's first symphony? This beautiful--and, sad to say, neglected---work is on Victor disks (DM827) and something not to be missed. The recording and reproduction (on my set, at least) are both excellent, and Fabien Sevitsky's interpretation is faithfully accurate; the orchestra is the Indianapolis Symphony. You'll revel in the vigorous Russian flavor that predominates throughout...

Fan-Dango: I prefer the more refined language of the Acolyte Laney to the often-obnoxious slang terms employed here. The statement to Ackerman and Crutch applies here too, you know... I am in favor of your suggested amendment to step up yearly activity requirements 100%; too many deadheads, like Cunningham, Ludowitz, et al., are being supported by hard-working members' production. Let's put it to a vote...

Horizons: The review of A Book of Miracles was good, and on the whole eminently fair, I think---though I can't agree its stories are definitely of the pulp type at all... As a matter of fact, the attempt to present Rienzi in halves on successive evenings met with distinct disapproval from its Dresden audience---with the result that the original policy of giving it in entirety at one sitting was resumed. 'Twas quite a long sitting, I remember reading: over six hours...

Degler material: Whenever one thinks that Newcastle has put out the sloppiest, most kindergarten-like bit of fan-publishing extant, Degler surpasses his efforts by hitting an even more dismal nadir in the next mailing. But even so, I doubt very much if he could show any lack of improvement on this collection. It is positively the bottom!

The Organization of Fandom: It's stuff like this that makes that Knanve satire about Daugherty stick. There is absolutely no need for a national fan organization, and never has been. Talk about excavating skeletons---! This revival of the N.F.F.F. tops 'em all...

Celephais: Thanks for supporting my stand anent fantasy in F.N.P.A. mailings-- it seems obvious to me that the common ground on which the organization rests is a predilection for the fantastic by all concerned. Hence those whose magazines are devoted in the main to fantasy are sure of interesting all our members in varying degrees; those who utilize the mailings to propagandize Esperanto, or politics, or Comic Circles are all slanting their publications to cliques within the membership, which is hardly fair to the majority. I don't object to some part of one's production being slanted to groups, but I definitely do think it unfair for all of a magazine to be. Or even half of it, for that matter. I'll admit, of course, that it takes a bit more time and mental effort to say something of general interest about fantasy than is required to translate a few second-grade school readers into Esperanto or tell why you believe Russia has the greatest "democratic" government, or laud the C.I.O. as a wonderful union (pardon me; I guess that last word should be union)...

Matters of Opinion: Your decimal system, while it appears to be basically okay, still leaves much to be wished for. In the first place, I cannot understand why you consider it essential to involve your three-dimensional time in classifying fantastic fiction. I can see no advantage whatsoever in so doing---in fact, it seems to me to be evocative of considerable confusion. It is more complex theoretically than is Russell's system, and in composing such a system it seems advisable to avoid the complicating details as much as possible in basic fabrication---you'll run into enough of those in later branchings-out! I don't see any provision for stories which were future when they were written, but which are now past---no provision for indicating the original futurity, that is. White's Earthquake, for instance... Other holes to plug up---so far you have made no provision for short stories or plays---i. e., no provision for distinguishing them from novels; a couple of extra auxiliary symbols would cover this, however. And do you intend to use a suffixed lower case a to indicate a translated work, as in the Dewey system? As for the weird, I do not entirely agree with your placement of it in the "40's." "Stories impossible by contemporary science" does not include all yarns defined as "weird." You mentioned the latter word's dictionary sense in Mopsy #15, so I assume you are familiar with the accepted definition 'concerned with the unnatural'; possibly the solution lies in using this classification only after all others have been found unsuitable---but I rather suspect a new term will have to be employed here, as with the word fantasy. Trouble is, of course, that fans nowadays persist in considering that 'supernatural' is the only definition for the word weird; it isn't, of course. I maintain that horror and/or terror stories are weird as well. And the amount of sub-classification under "weird" will be tremendous---you have sorcery, voodoo, divination, satanism, witchcraft, goety, apparitions, diabolism, necromancy, lycanthropy, grimoires, spirits---oh, what a mess! And stories of the insane, the merely macabre, the grotesque---these must go there too if the terror or horror element is at all definite. I wonder what you're going to do with stories that start out as supernatural, and end up by frittering away into imposture? So many Gothic novels are guilty of such development. I suppose, if the horror motif is plain they'll have to be included... The connection between three dimensional time and all this stuff seems rather tenuous to me. I would, however, favor the use of some symbol to differentiate between volumes having only a minor motif of the fantastic and those in which it predominated---though of course drawing the line between the two is not always an easy matter...