

# HYPHEN

No. 4

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## THE PREACON

A REPORT BY JAMES WHITE

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This issue has been edited and published by me, Walt Willis, of 170 Upper Newtownards Rd, Belfast, N. Ireland, in an attempt to encourage fandom to face the grim fact that I'm not dead and to try out an idea for using vertical interlineations in page format. In the continued absence of SLANT, due partly to an illness in the spring and partly to the reluctance of this typer to cut a good enough stencil, some SLANT subbers are receiving the compliment of being sent this less formal rag in the hope they will appreciate its inerrable beauty. If not please return it undesecrated for restoration of sub credit.

The better part of this issue is, like its author, devoted to Bea Mahaffey; or at least to her epic-making trip round Ireland. At about 6.30pm, Eastern Standard Time, on Wednesday the 13th May she boarded a TWA Constellation at New York Airport for the 3000 mile flight to Shannon, on the West Coast of Ireland. Almost a whole day earlier Madeleine and I had left Belfast in an sfp car to meet her. We drove on round the West, North and Eastern coasts of Ireland, picking up James White in Donegal town, and spending a couple of days in Belfast before sailing for England and the Convention.

While Bea was still in Europe... steaming up the Rhine instead of James' glasses... I asked him to make a few notes of anything he remembered about the trip in case we might write a report about it. But when he brought up the notes, all 14000 words of them, I realised he had put his heart into the work. There was nothing for me to add, all my internal organs being spoken for, or at least nothing to justify adding myname to his. All I have to do is publish the Work, hoping you'll enjoy for its own sake this roving chronicle of the Ascent of Errigal, the Weird Shadow Over Portballintrae etc. And to write a prologue to this fan-log.

# The BEACON

by

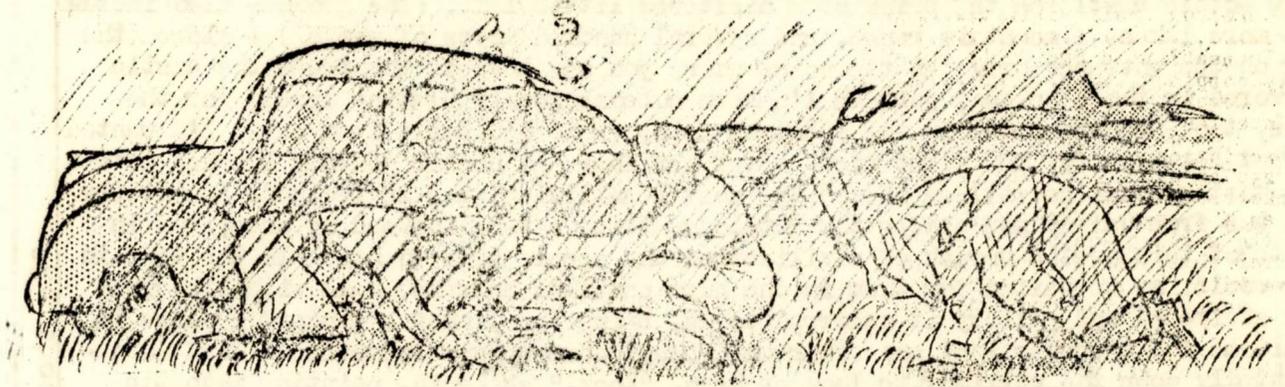
JAMES WHITE

introduced by WALT WILLIS

Stopping only for the usual reasons, and to send a postcard to Robert Bloch from Birr, Co. Offaly, reading simply "It's cold", Madeleine and I arrived in Limerick by nightfall. Next morning, having bought some postcards for Bea to send to her Limerick collecting friends, we set out for the airport.

We were a little late because I'd had trouble manoeuvring the car safely out of the hotel garage--- I'd only just learned to drive and the car belonged to my father-in-law who knows the history of every tiny scratch on the paintwork and keens over them individually every night---but we arrived in time. Only to find that my baleful influence over all forms of American public transport extends to their transatlantic airlines---Bea's plane would be two hours late. I went back to park the car properly in case one of the big ones ran over it, and we hung about hoping desperately that the weather would clear so that Bea would have a good first view of Ireland and that we'd be able to see her plane coming in. At about one o'clock, as we were scanning the sky keenly towards the West, a fitful sun came out and an aircraft landed from the direction of Constantinople. On the distant tarmac an apparently endless stream of people got out of the Constellation, as from a taxi in an early Mack Sennett comedy, but none of them looked like Bea though we waved at everyone just in case. Even when she came into the arrival lounge I didn't recognise her. She had changed. She was wearing a blue costume instead of the black dress she'd worn in Chicago. Also she had put her hair up and was wearing glasses. Furthermore she had an American accent I'm sure she didn't have the last time I was talking to her. But it was Bea all right---I recognised the little mannerism she has of extending her left hand daintily in front of her palm upwards as if she were patting a very large dog or gently repulsing the advances of a very small fan.

## OR THROUGH DARKEST IRELAND CARRYING A TORCH FOR BEA MAHAFFEY



Over coffee we talked nervously in the atmosphere of tension that pervades airports and railway stations--people feel they are missing something all the time--and then we led the way to the car, warning Bea not to trip over it. I drove assuredly along the broad concrete road and past a notice marked ALL VEHICLES TURN LEFT AND STOP. Unaccustomed to being a vehicle or to obeying notices for which there seemed no obvious reason I kept right and went straight on. There was a frenzied wail and a Customs policeman dashed out of his hut like a sabre-toothed tiger out of its cave. I stopped the car, switched off the engine, and listened miserably to his stern reproaches. Useless, I thought to myself, to explain to Bea that this little corner of easygoing Ireland must have been contaminated by foreign efficiency seeping from the airport--she must be terribly disappointed. However as we drove off again Bea, always the soul of tact, said happily, "He was MUCH nicer than a Chicago policeman."

Things hadn't gone very well so far, but the sun came out as we neared Ennis, Co. Clare, and we thought we might have a picnic. We bought a couple of pounds of steak in Ennis and stopped at the entrance to the grounds of Loughcultra Castle a few miles further on. I got out the primus stove and started to light it. Ten minutes and twenty matches later I declared that the resources of modern science had been defeated, and began to gather wood. I had a nice fire going and the tender promise of steak was beginning to pervade the air, when it started to rain. Almost immediately afterwards it began to pour. The fire was obviously losing ground. We put everything back in the car except the fire and the steak, donned raincoats, and sallied forth again to fight for our existence like primaeval man. Madeleine cooked, I prowled about looking for dry fuel, and Bea crouched gallantly on the grass holding an umbrella over the fire. Well, I thought ruefully, at least it must be a change from New York.

However she seemed to enjoy the experience nearly as much as the steak, and we set off again. It was really raining now, with a determination worthy of a better cause. Nothing was to be seen but an occasional picturesque ruin by the side of the road. With vague memories of a hastily leafed-through guidebook, we authoritatively identified as gazebos all the ones that weren't big enough to be monasteries or castles, until Bea was tactless enough to ask what a gazebo was. After that we merely pointed them out as picturesque ruined Things.

From Galway we took the road into the wilds of Connemara, through Oughterard and Meam Cross, and at Recess branched off on the mountain road by Lough Inagh to Kylemore. It was not a good road, even by Irish standards, though sometimes we hit up to 20mph. Many of the most scenic roads in Ireland are like this, and I suspect it's a deliberate policy of the Irish Tourist Board's. Ireland is a small country, and they

"A steak in the country"

have to spin it out.

The clouds were lifting now, and we could see the lower slopes of the mountains towering dramatically into the mist. About nine o'clock we reached Kylemore, a fairy-like Gothic castle on the brink of a sheltered little lake. (The grounds also include two more lakes, a mountain range, and several hundred acres of woods.) I slowed the car on the entrance drive at the point where you see between the trees the castle mirrored in the lake and, just as I'd been subconsciously blaming myself for the rain, took as much pride in the fabulous thing as if I'd built it myself. I'd wanted to get Bea here for the first night after her long and hectic journey because it's the most restful as well as one of the most beautiful places in Ireland. Admittedly the bus from Galway now passes the gatelodge twice a week instead of once, but in spite of this hectic onrush of civilisation the people seem to have all the time in the world. As we waited for them in the huge panelled entrance hall with its great oak staircase and gallery it occurred to us, being fans, what a wonderful place it would be for a convention; and after we'd been shown to our rooms Bea called us delightedly down the corridor to look at hers. "Look," she said, pointing into the enormous interior, "Four beds!" It was the clincher. We decided to start a campaign for Kylemore in '54 and next morning sent postcards to Tucker and Bloch pointing out among other things that they hadn't really lived until they'd dropped bags of hot water from a battlement.

But I'd better get on if you're to meet James on page 5. Actually nothing much happened during the next two days except that we had a lot of fun and saw a lot of scenery. We toured through Leenane, Westport, Cattlebar, Ballina, Sligo (with a detour to Lough Gill to show Bea the Lake Isle of Innisfree), Bundoran and Ballyshannon, and at noon on Sunday we were parked in the market square of Donegal Town looking out for James' bus.

While we're waiting for him maybe I'd better explain a couple of the allusions in his report.

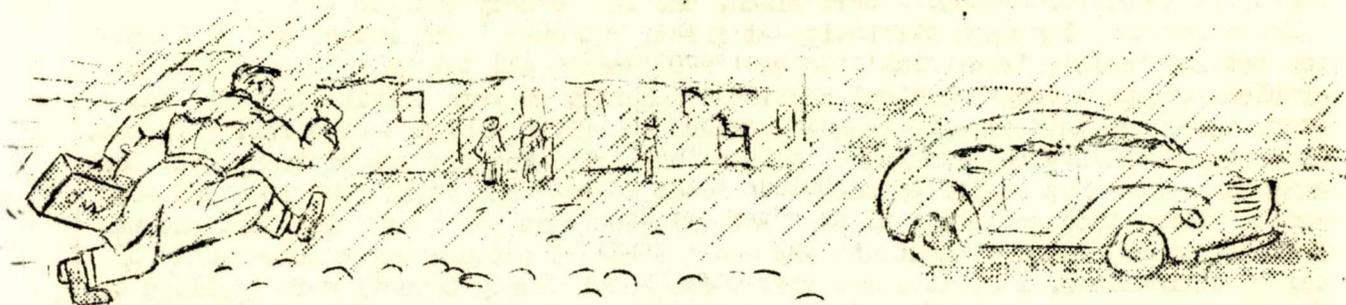
First, all this talk about people trying to poison him doesn't mean that he's got a persecution complex. The fact is that many years ago in an over enthusiastic endeavour to emulate H.G. Wells he acquired a mild form of diabetes. The result is that sugar doesn't agree with him. As Bob explained it once, soon after James takes sugar his temperature drops and he gets stiff all over. This is known as rigor mortis.

Then there's the reference to the 'guilty secret' under the bonnet of our car. I should explain that the designers of the Morris Minor Car have in their infinite wisdom provided a space among the intricacies of the engine just large enough to accommodate a tea-kettle. However surprisingly people know what this space is for. This ignorance of the finer points of automobile design extends to the garage attendant in Collooney, Co. Sligo, where we stopped for oil. The youth opened the bonnet and stood for a moment transfixed with astonishment. You could see him reviewing in his mind all his knowledge of the various types of internal combustion engine and associated machinery. This apparatus did not seem to be connected to anything, but he thought he knew what it was. Coming to a decision he sidled round to my window and dropped his voice confidentially. "Do you know," he asked tactfully, "that you have a Kettle underneath your carburettor?"

"Yes," I admitted with marly frankness, "I do"; and drove off amid giggles and a flood of jokes about mavericks, stray kettle, and steering.

But here is James now....

"He thought it was a Model Tea Ford."



Unlike some people, busses don't break down under me, so I arrived in Donegal Town exactly on time. It was raining heavily, which wasn't surprising as according to the bus conductor it always rains in Donegal Town. I alighted with a splash and looked around quickly for a maroon Morris Minor No. MZ5975 before the rain ruined the refractive properties of my glasses. I saw one. Madeleine was standing beside it, holding the door open with one hand and an umbrella up with the other and urging me to get in quick before she drowned. I didn't want to drown either, so I sprinted towards the car, slung my stuff in ahead of me, and dived neatly after it. Doors slammed, engines revved, horns tooted, and we started off with a jerk. (I resent that last word, whether it refers to me or my driving. —WAW)

After the two of us in the back seat untangled ourselves I took a look at Miss Mahaffey. I saw dark hair framing a rather blurred face with three or four nice dark brown eyes. She was rubbing gently at the ankle on which I had landed with my chin. I held out a hand and said "Pleased to meet you." She did likewise and said "Likewise." Her voice reminded me of the Boston Symphony working over the Overture to Romeo and Juliet—and remember, the car hadn't got a radio.

Some time later, after she had managed to pull her hand free and counted her fingers, I thought maybe it would be a good idea if I wiped my glasses. I did, and took another look at Miss Mahaffey.

Wow!

Just then Walter, who was up front with Madeleine, introduced us formally. He said, with typical old-world courtesy, "James, this is Bea. Bea, That's James," adding by way of helping to break the ice that OTHER WORLDS was now paying 3p a word. I reeled my tongue in and told him we'd already met but that I didn't mind shaking hands again. Then I enquired politely about the journey from Shannon Airport. As I remember, the way I phrased it was, "Why aren't you all lying dead in a ditch?"

I gathered that the fair face of Ireland had been wringing wet most of the way from Shannon and that the only thing that had kept Bea from catching the first plane homewards was the prospect of meeting me. It seems he had told her I could control the weather—apparently reasoning that if I could sell one of my stories to ASF I could do anything—and that there was bound to be sunshine when I joined the party. He wanted me to start working on it rightaway.

First I tried the sunshine of my smile but this, Bea informed me, was not quite what she had had in mind. She wanted to photograph a thatched cottage, and for that she required a sun, a blue sky, and a few alto-cumulous arranged artistically for effect. A girl of simple tastes I thought, little knowing what was to follow, and I directed my attention to the weather.

The rain stopped and the sun dried the water off the road. It got so warm that Walter had to open the windows. There was some cirro-stratus among the alto-cumulous in the sky, but I don't think anyone noticed it. After making sure the sunshine

\*"The Scavengers", ASF Oct '53

"In this country, vice pros ride in the back seats."

would stay put, I lay back in my seat and just enjoyed the beautiful scenery, talking to it about word-rates, Robert Bloch, and the scenery outside the car.

There was some language difficulty at first, but once I understood the distinction between 'cute', 'real cute', 'George' and 'George all the way' it ceased to be a problem. It was a very beautiful section of country we were driving through, and every lake, mountain or wave-lashed headland was given a high George rating by Bea. There was a blurb three paragraphs long by the Irish Tourist Association about Donegal Bay which she neatly condensed to 'real George' and still made it sound worth coming three thousand miles to see. But somehow I got the impression that she was a little disappointed—I couldn't produce a thatched cottage which measured up to her specifications. I pointed out that the Donegal County Council were inclined to frown on thatched cottages nowadays, birds nested in them and they were in constant need of repair . . . so they were busy replacing the thatch with horribly modernistic roof tiles. I tried very hard to sell her on the new look in cottages, but as far as she was concerned, tiled cottages just weren't George. She was very nice about it though, she told me not to worry and she wasn't blaming me personally, and she patted me on the head.

Just about then somebody began to sing—me, I think—and we all joined in. The song was 'I Want To BFA Near You' and nobody knew all the words except Walter, and he only knew the French version, so it was a rather interesting choral arrangement. Bea kept watching Walter with a sort of horrible fascination—it was the first time she'd heard a song sung in French with an Irish accent. The noise was monstrous, and lasted until we pulled into some town or other for lunch.

There were no fans in that town, at least nobody noticed the s-f mags propped up in the car's windows. During lunch I taught Bea a smattering of Gaelic and Russian. Mostly the words for 'yes' and 'no'. She already knew these words in English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish, having learned them for her trip around Europe, but de Camp hadn't told her how to deal with Irishmen or Russian spies. (Bea by this time knew all about the incident in the London Underground during which Evelyn Smith was accused of being a foreign agent.) Before the meal was finished Miss Maharifay had said 'No!' to me three times in German, once in Spanish, and seven times in Gaelic.

All I wanted was a lock of her hair.

Of course I hadn't got scissors with me, but I could easily have pulled some out if she'd only have let me. I'm stronger than I look. I think she was just playing hard to get.

Half an hour out of town Walter discovered that his tanks were almost empty. We all lifted our incredulous eyebrows at each other and said 'Hah!' But he was serious and began consulting maps. In an aside to Bea he told her that he was looking for a 'Filling Station' to get some 'Gasoline'. (Walter has been to America). Bea, in an aside to me, said, "He's looking for a 'Garage' to get some more 'Petrol.'" (Bea goes to a lot of trouble to learn the language of the natives). I told Madeleine that the vehicle required a further supply of reaction mass in order to continue its journey. (I am a member of the British Interplanetary Society). Madeleine relayed this to Walter, and Walter said, "Luh-h-h???"

After we'd found a garage, and somehow kept the attendant from uncovering our guilty secret concealed under the bonnet while we were being refueled, Walter consulted a few more maps and told us he was taking us towards a breath-taking vista on the north west coast of Donegal. Off we went again.

We were travelling through wild, rugged country now. The scenery was real George, but the surface of the roads wasn't even cute, and they climbed and twisted all over the place. We were going fairly fast, and every time we turned a corner, Bea

"I wish this car had a gear for sideways."

and I would be plastered against one of the inner walls. Walter seemed to take a fiendish delight in throwing us together at all the sharp corners. I was delighted, too. Once I was flung violently into Bea's side of the car when we were on a perfectly straight section of roadway, and I had to talk about Newton's Third Law for about ten minutes to convince her that I was a perfect gentleman. After that we murdered 'Frankie and Johnny' until the neighbourhood of the breath-taking vista was reached.

This vista, we were informed by Walter, could only be seen properly from the top of the small mountain ahead of us which overlooked the sea. There was a sort of fishing village built on the lower slopes of this mountain, and we parked the car here. After piling rocks against the back of it to keep it from sliding into the sea, we started climbing.

It was a fairly easy climb—there were stretches when the precipices were several degrees from the vertical—but Bea was handicapped somewhat by high heels and a pencil skirt. I had to help her over the difficult spots. . . There were difficult stretches of cliff. It was great fun—a person hasn't really lived until he's helped Bea Mahaffey climb a mountain.

When we reached the top, the vista was everything that Walter had said it would be, and more. It was George all the way. Its breath-taking qualities were helped considerably by an invigorating breeze which blew in from the sea. Occasionally this breeze would die down to a mere forty-miles-per-hour zephyr, and when one of these lulls occurred, we took shelter in a nearby hollow to try to take our breaths back off the vista. The hollow was carpeted with a rare form of white heather, which costs a fortune back in civilization, and was as comfortable as any fakir's bed. We lay for a while just soaking in the sunlight and listening to the wind howling by above our heads, and talking mostly about Robert Bloch, but not for publication. After a while I said a few appropriate words to Bea and presented her with a bouquet of wildflowers, with instructions to stick them in her hair and save one for her mouth to give it a sort of exotic touch as I wanted to take a photograph. I then climbed out of the hollow and took two photographs. While I was doing this Bea took one of me standing on top of a rock taking her. She later explained that she'd hoped to get an action shot of me being blown into the bay by the gale, and that that would have been even better than a thatched cottage. But I didn't get blown more than a few yards, so I fooled her. A few minutes later we tore ourselves and our clothes away from the heather-covered mountaintop and headed back towards the car.

A person hasn't really lived until he's helped Bea Mahaffey down off a mountain.

Later, in the car, Walter told us that we hadn't seen nor done nuthin' yet. That that mole-hill back there was merely an appetizer for the REAL job. He was, he announced with an imaginary flourish of trumpets, taking us to Mount Errigal! The second (by a few yards) highest mountain in Ireland. As we were all expected to climb it, Walter and I began talking shop.

Experienced mountain-climbers that we are, we realised that Bea might be in need of some helpful advice and encouragement, so we discussed the many ways used to negotiate a glacier, as well as first aid measures and how to keep the rope from jiggling when somebody fell off. We also touched upon the egoboo which would accrue to the person who got herself a nice romantic unmarked grave in some foreign strand. But Bea seemed strangely unmoved by the thought of an unmarked grave, and as Errigal loomed ever higher and closer above us, she became actively disinterested. I even offered to carry her oxygen tanks, but she declined politely, saying that she'd letters to write and that she'd stay in the car. When we started coaxing her to come, she said, "No!"

"It's not a grim mountain---it's highly conical."

I should say that the climbing of Errigal would make an epic in itself, but E.E. Smith has said the same thing about the taking of Onlo, so I won't. I will merely say that Madeleine, Walter, and myself climbed it, said some corny but very sincere things about the view from the top, and came down again. I broke away from the others and got back to the car first—I wanted FOOD. Besides, I wanted to break the sad news to Bea that I'd left my camera somewhere on the upper slopes of the mountain—I'd left some of the skin off my shin up there, too—and that it had contained the two pictures which I'd taken of her earlier. To soften the blow, however, I told her about the fannish slogan I'd written on a flat stone at the top, which may be read only by true fans willing to make the pilgrimage to Errigal for the recovery of my two exposures of Bea Mahaffey.

She took this tragic news well, like a true fan. She even forced herself to laugh at it for about ten minutes. I was so relieved that I went and got a freshly-dug lump of peat and presented it to her as a memento of this great occasion. The bit of peat weighed about eight pounds, and was fresh and brown and nice and sticky, but it wouldn't fit in her handbag so she was forced to refuse this gift. I could see that she was profoundly moved, though. For a long time she was speechless.

Walter and Madeleine returned and we began building a turf fire for a picnic. The sun picked that moment to go down behind Errigal, and so the usual sunset gale started trying to blow both us and the fire into a nearby river. But the cooking was finished by this time so the grub was carried into the car and polished off there. While the wind rocked the car they all sat snugly inside feasting on an interesting mixture of fried sausages, soda bread, and sweet biscuits (Oops, sorry, I mean COOKIES). Several times Bea tried to poison me.

When we'd driven out from the shadow of Mount Errigal the wind dropped again, and we discovered that the sunset wasn't for two more hours yet. Walter said he was taking us to Dunfanaghy to stay the night with some people he knew there. Madeleine who was navigating, began telling him how to get there, and Bea and I started talking about leprechauns, word rates, and Robert Bloch. Bea had wanted to see some Little People and Walter explained that I was the biggest of the Little People in the whole of Ireland. Bea didn't believe this at first. She wanted proof. She asked for a green sunset.

Green sunsets are difficult. They require time to prepare, and the mix has to be just so. Besides, the sun was almost touching the horizon when she made her request. I pointed all this out to her, and added that I was tired from holding the rain off all day, but she looked reproachful and just said, "Oh, well, if you're too tired to show me a green sunset . . ." I started working on it.

I was still working on it when we passed through Dunfanaghy on the way to the people Walter knew. Bea kept watching me expectant-like and muttering little words of encouragement. "Have you gone to sleep?" and "It's still orangestriped, are you colour blind?" But finally I did it. There was a lot of blue mixed in with the green, of course, but it was a decidedly green sunset. I lay back and received my egoboo.

The people Walter knew were remodelling their house, so they couldn't take us in. We found this out just as night was falling, so we retraced our steps across a mile or so of hills, bogs, and low stone walls to where we'd left the car. By arrangement with Arthur C. Clarke there was a beautiful crescent moon, and somewhere along the way nightingales or something began singing. Bea and I tried a duet with "Listen to the Mockingbird" but I don't think anyone could do justice to a song while walking in their sleep. We were all rather tired by this time, and I seem to remember someone asking whether we should go back to some ordinary old hotel in Dunfanaghy or just fall into a fannish type haystack in the next field.

"They have a moon in America too, you know."

Breakfast next morning lasted two hours. We just sat around sending postcards to people—and one to harris as well—until the waitresses began rattling dishes discreetly, then we left.

It was a fine morning, though I say so myself. The sun shone from a cloudless sky and everything was in glorious technicolour. It was real George. The car seemed to spend its time crawling around the steep sides of mountains, with Walter pointing out breath-taking vistas to us—split seconds before the vistas vanished behind the stone walls lining the road. Once all us passengers had to leave the car while Walt took it across a bridge that was under repair. When the car didn't go crashing into the bay, we followed it across. Walter looks rather distinguished with white hair.

Bea kept complimenting me on the weather; she was very pleased with me, she said. She patted me on the arm, and my glasses fogged up. But this unrelieved joy didn't last. I spent an anxious ten minutes while she toyed with the idea of asking for a small rainstorm so that there'd be a rainbow and she could get the pot of gold at the end of it.

I was inexpressibly shocked. A True Fan like Bea Mahaffey shouldn't think about things like that. I wondered if perhaps she hadn't become tainted with vile professionalism. Her work does bring her into contact with such people. I changed the subject and we stopped on the shore of Mulroy Bay for another picnic.

The meteorological conditions then obtaining were eminently suitable for the holding of picnics. While the womenfolk unpacked the grub Walter started the fire and I went to look for more fuel. When I came back I told him I had made a dogged search and had found some pieces of bark. He said, "Ah well, every little yelps," and threw it on the fire. When it had assumed the aspect of a conflagration we went down to the shore and threw stones at empty tin cans. Ah, the fannish way of life. When we got back, Bea pointed to a corner of the rug and told me to fall down. It was probably an accident that this corner was laid over a heap of flinty rocks, so I didn't say anything. We lay around the fire, the second one..the first one, which had got out of control, was some distance away..juggling plates and ripping fannish reputations to shreds, while birds sang in the trees, butterflies flitted in the bushes, and a local farmer went by with a load of old seaweed. Twice Bea Mahaffey tried to poison me.

A person hasn't really lived until Bea Mahaffey has tried to poison him.

When all the plates had been licked clean, and the others were nerving themselves to the effort of getting to their feet, I was overcome by a sudden urge to climb a tree. I mentioned it aloud. Madeleine looked incredulous, Walter asked if I was going to open a branch office of OTHER WORLDS, and Bea went for her camera. (I found out later she wanted to take a photograph to give to harris.) I gave a few Weissmuller yodels to warm up, then sprang into the lower branches.

The tree fell down.

It was quite a big tree, but the trunk had been rotten. The effect was rather spectacular. While the others were standing around making cracks about my fine white frame, I dashed the couple of hundred yards to the shore, snatched a couple of hard-shell sea organisms off a rock, and ran back to proffer them to Bea, asking if she'd like to feel my mussels. Bea looked faintly ill, Walter held his nose, and Madeleine groaned. Altogether it was a most satisfactory reaction. It pays, I think, to put a little extra effort into one's puns. After this we drove off again. Nobody would talk to me for a long time.

Things went smoothly for a while—too smoothly, I wasn't thrown to Bea's side of the car once—until we approached the frontier. About half a mile from the Eire Customs Post, Walter pulled up behind some trees and told everyone to hide their contraband. At the customs post he left the car to get a signature on something

called a triptyque, and a man in a blue uniform came out to talk to us. He glared at Madeleine and roared in a soft brogue "Anything to declare?" Madeleine shook her head. He continued, "Any cigarettes, nylons, foodstuffs, jewelry, ornaments...." He went on for a long time. Madeleine looked as if she'd never heard of any of these things. At last, apparently satisfied, he turned to Bea. Madeleine heaved a sigh of relief and the cellophane round her three pairs of nylons crackled loudly, but the man didn't hear it. He looked at Bea and said: "Anything to...to...er, n'nm."

Now Bea had concealed in various recesses of the car about two thousand American cigarettes as well as other odd bits of contraband. But when the customs officer asked her the question, she looked at him wide-eyed and innocent and said, "Why, no!"

The man wasn't used to the Mahaffey wide-eyed innocent look. He couldn't take it. He hadn't any spectacles to get steamed up, but as he backed away, aqueous vapour spurted gently from his nostrils. An impressionable type, I thought. He staggered back to his post and after a few minutes Walter came out and we drove away. The man hadn't even seen me apparently.

The next stop was at a signpost which said H.M. CUSTOMS INSPECTION POST, HALT!! We did what the notice screamed, Walter got out with his triptyque and we went through it all again.

The second man was in civilian clothes—probably he was an M.I.5 Special Agent, or some relative relieving the regular man while he went for a smoke. This one didn't even look at Madeleine and Bea—no appreciation of the finer things in life, I suppose—but concentrated on poor little me. He kept asking was I concealing alcohol. Me! Alcohol! Then he went to the boot and we heard Walter and him arguing for a few minutes, then Walter climbed in and we were off again. Half a mile down the road we slowed to sixty and everybody averted their eyes while Madeleine fished for her three pairs of nylons. We had arrived in the Province of Northern Ireland.

For the next fifty miles or so I lay back and talked to Bea about such subjects as the prison sentences given to smugglers, word rates, and Bea Mahaffey. I made the discovery that she much prefers volcanoes to snakes—we have neither in Ireland, thanks to St Patrick—and that, given the choice, Bea would much rather be run over by a car than by a railway train, because the wheels of a locomotive are sharper. This shows a firm grasp of the fundamentals of life, and it's little things like this which makes Bea different from ordinary women. How many others have ever really given thought to this vital problem? Very few, I'll warrant.

The next time we stopped there were long Atlantic rollers breaking on one side of the road and tall, beetling crags on the other side and we were hungry again. There was some trouble finding water for the tea, but eventually the picnic was held in the back garden of a deserted bungalow overhung by cliffs. We sat and ate and watched the sea-gulls carefully. When Bea asked us why, we told her that when all the sea-gulls flew off the cliff at once, it meant that an avalanche had started and we would all be killed. She seemed sorry she asked. Later on Madeleine and Bea both tried to poison me, but Bea's attempt was an accident, I think, because I hadn't tried to make a pun for more than ten minutes, and she let me light her cigarette afterwards.

As we were going back to the car she gave me a whole book of matches to use on later occasions. Sometimes it's worth getting nearly poisoned. A person hasn't really lived until he's lighted one of Bea Mahaffey's cigarettes.

When the journey had been resumed I noticed that Bea was looking thoughtfully at the horizon. I wondered how many cents I should offer for her thoughts, but she spoke first. "Tonight I'd like," she said, smiling sweetly, "A polka-dotted sunset."

"I put her knee into third gear."

She paused, then, so's there'd be no semantic confusion about this request, she amplified, "Purple with pink polka-dots."

For a while I toyed with the idea of giving back the book of matches and breaking off diplomatic relations. I mean to say, a polka-dotted sunset. I'd be run out of the union for sure. Still, being the Custodian of the Mahaffey Matches was worth something, too. I went to work. I was still muttering incantations, or something, when Walter stopped the car at a granite parapet. We had arrived at Dunluce Castle.

Dunluce Castle is a fairly well preserved Norman castle on the northeast coast— you can read about the Normans in Russell's "Dreadful Sanctuary"(Plug)---

and is set on top of a sheer mountain which becomes an island at high tide. We climbed around the battlements and walked about on the grassy courtyard where the Knights used to joust. A couple of sheep had got in and they kept going "Maaaa" at us, and once Bea dropped the trapdoor on me while I was exploring a dungeon. It was very damp inside, but the spiders were the worst. Walter came along later and let me out.

A person hasn't really caught pneumonia until he's been thrown into a dungeon by Bea Mahaffey.

It was about this time that people began to notice the sunset. I yelled and pointed a few times and soon everybody noticed it. The sky was turning a deep purple, and there were lots of tiny clouds

in it. The clouds weren't all pink, and they didn't look like polka-dots because the colours had sort of run, but the effect was terrific. It looked just like the cover for SLANT 6, except that there were three coal boats steaming dramatically across the horizon instead of a blue fountain pen hanging at three thousand feet. Madeline said, "Oh!" Walter said, in a voice charged with emotion, "James, you have surpassed yourself." Bea patted me on the head and said huskily, "Youse is a good kid." She pulled out a cigarette and waited for me to light it. The sheep said "Maaaa." They must have been faaaans.

Back in the car I lay back and just basked in the warmth of Bea's cigarette smoke and regard. We all admired my sunset and spoke in hushed tones about my sensitive fannish soul. After a decent interval of time had elapsed Walter announced that he planned to stop at the next town or village, dump our bags, and just walk around until bedtime admiring the scenery and looking for birdbaths. I don't care much about birdbaths, but I like walking and admiring Bea Mahaffey. And so, in the still of a beautiful evening in early summer, singing and laughing and talking about Robert Bloch and Bob Tucker we drove all unknowing into that hotbed of alien intrigue, that roaring, wide-open seaport, that BRE Babylon, Portballintrae!

We left our luggage at the Bay Hotel and came right out again. It was a lovely evening. The sunset was so proud of itself that it wanted to hang around all night, which was all right by us. We wandered down to the little harbour and along the sea wall. It was one of those periods of idyllic calm before the holocaust, and it lasted until we felt hungry again and went back to the hotel.

It was then we began to notice that this was no ordinary hotel. The entrance



"Do the sheep look after the ramparts?"

hall was festooned with various implements of destruction, ranging from assegais right up to flintlocks. In a clearing among the potted plants there was a glass show case containing a shapeless hunk of metal, billed as part of a shell fired at the heroic hotel by a German submarine in 1916—a shock from which the residents had obviously never fully recovered. There were also a television set, a radiogram, and two radios. None of them was working. Perhaps at some time in the past some rash soul craving for new sensations had impulsively switched one of them on, only to find to his horror that it made a noise. Since then they had remained as mute as the residents, all of whom had obviously been switched off long ago.

There were two lounges, one of them marked "Adults Only." We tiptoed in and sat down. It was at once obvious that the term "Adult" has a very special meaning in Portballintrae. It is not used to describe any young thing of less than eighty, however long his beard. The lounge was inhabited . . . or at least occupied . . . by six of the elder Things, all either reading copies of the Financial Times or decomposing quietly behind them. So much of their skulls as was visible through their paper shrouds had the brown patina of great age and their clutching fingers were the delicate hue of old bones seen through cellophane. They did not move: neither, Bea asserted later, did they breathe. We wondered to ourselves whether they were stored in some vault at night or merely draped in dust-sheets.

The silence was sepulchral, at least. As it dragged on, Walter produced a pin and dropped it solemnly on the carpet. At the earsplitting crash Madeleine covered her ears, Bea winced elaborately, and I, tripping over the threshold of audibility, muttered "Shhhh!" But They had heard. There was a low rumbling sound like the sound of distant thunder as They cleared their throats, a frigid alien wind blew momentarily from outer darkness, making us shiver with the sense of impending doom . . . and then it happened. One of them lowered its Financial Times by several centimetres, and rustled it at me.

We all ran out into the porch.

There we survivors discussed our soul-searing experience, speculating on Yog Soggoth and the Elder Gods and whether the Financial Times should not be outlawed as a weapon too terrible to be used. Walter was just urging Bea that it was her duty as an American to cow them by going right back in there and rustling some cattle at them, when the waiter announced that our supper was ready. We followed him into the dining room and discovered that there were more of Them in there—no doubt enjoying a cheerful nightcap of embalming fluid.

It was murder. Every time somebody tried to eat something, somebody else would whisper something and the person trying to eat would either have to choke to death or spew bread-crumbs over a twenty foot radius—they daren't laugh, not out loud. After a while we gave up hope of ever being able to eat in that place. Bea gripped the sides of her chair and stared at the ceiling, Madeleine covered her eyes, Walter put the corner of his scarf in his mouth and chewed at it, and I stuck two fingers in my mouth and bit. But it was no good. The pressure kept building up inside us. It was actually painful, to me anyway. We staggered away from our table and reeled out into the into the night to laugh before we exploded and messed up the Bay Hotel's dining room floor.

When we got back we found that the Arisians had gone from the "Adults" lounge and we had the place to ourselves. Bea kept urging me to get up early next morning so's I could go for a swim, but not too early because she hadn't any flash-bulbs. She'd been very keen for me to go swimming ever since I'd told her that I'd made an error during my hasty packing for this trip and brought a black beret instead of my black bathing trunks. She's always trying to get photographs for harris—maybe she's sorry for it or something. I like swimming, but I had to decline. Even though Walter offered me the loan of his beret to make a two-piece. After all, as a vile pro, I have certain standards of dignity to maintain, and bathing in black berets just isn't

"The whole area may still be radio-active."

done—even by Tucker. A few minutes later I told her that she could pat my forehead and steam up my glasses all she wanted to, but I still wouldn't do it. Somehow I think my voice lacked conviction.

Walter saved the situation by saying that I could swim all I wanted to tomorrow morning, after I'd helped him wash the car, so that was that. We started talking about the inhabitants again. Every now and then someone would whisper some outrageous speculation and we would stick our heads in the cushions and make muffled snorkling sounds.

A person hasn't really lived until he's heard Bea Mahaffey make muffled snorkling sounds in a cushion.

A little after midnight a porter came into the room, and I inferred he thought it was time we went to bed. In Fortballintrae the porters don't switch the lights off and on. They do not even cough discreetly. A discreet cough, in that place, would rouse the neighbourhood for miles around. Instead, their method is to tiptoe in, stand quietly, and raise their eyebrows. The faint rustling sound their eyebrows make in that awful, ever-present silence attracts the attention immediately. Then they switch on a pained expression and the crestfallen wrongdoers retire discomfited. We went up to bed.

Now, the next thing that happened is one of those events which people will distort. Already Walter has begun to garble it in his oral versions, and I'm terrified at what Bloch will make of it if Bea tells him. When people start relating it at second hand..... As the person most concerned in the incident, I will state briefly the facts.

Shortly before one o'clock in the morning of May 16th, 1953, while I was lying face downwards on the corridor floor passing a note under Bea Mahaffey's bedroom door, a chambermaid walked on me.

After I got the footprint off the back of my jacket I went to bed.

{Editor's note; The text of the note is understood to have been as follows: "Remember, don't snore!"}

Next morning the sky was overcast and there was a gale blowing up. Walter and I finished washing the car in rain and we went in for breakfast. Bea was late in coming down so I went upstairs to rout her out. I slammed my door, which was opposite hers, a few times, and then pounded on her door with my fist shouting "Is Tucker there?" This had been quite effective the previous morning in Dunfanaghy, and it worked here too. She came out on the run. On the way down to breakfast I told her about the incident the previous night, lest she would overhear some of the servants talking and misunderstand, and begged her not to breathe a word about it to Walter.

Hah!

Madeleine said "What!" and Walter's eyes gleamed and he began pressing for details, fishing out a postcard and addressing it to harris. I tried to cover my confusion by dropping one of Bea's cigarette stubs into the coffee dregs from an altitude of six feet. It hissed nicely and made an interesting black mess, but three waiters and a porter rustled their eyebrows. I looked reproachfully at Bea. She said "Quien sabe" which was completely uncalled for no matter what it means, and patted me on the shoulder. My glasses didn't steam up as much as usual; I was terribly, terribly disappointed in her. After all, it was supposed to be our secret.

After breakfast we ransomed ourselves from the hotel and drove off. The weather was awful. High wind, lashing rain, and great grey waves battered at the seawall we had been sitting on last night. As we left Portballintrae we all turned round and shouted 'Boo' at it to relieve our feelings, and then Walter asked his Navigator for directions to the Giant's Causeway.

But the weather was unsuitable for inspecting rock formations, so we merely gave

"I didn't trip the chambermaid—she walked on me."

Bea a vivid word picture of what she would have seen ('a lot of funnyshaped rocks') and drove on through Bushmills, Dunseverick, Portbraddon and Ballintoy. Bea mentioned the weather a few times, but I don't think she really expected me to change it. Port ballintrae and the polkadot sunset had shot my finely-co-ordinated nervous system to pieces. But I felt better after Bea had smoked a few more cigarettes and we blundered through 'Storry Weather' a couple of times. Madeleine and Walter kept talking in low voices and occasionally scraps of dialogue like "Flat on the floor..." and "Can the maid sue?" would drift back to us. Bea would comfort me by saying I had done nothing at which I should be ashamed even if nobody would believe it and I would smile bravely and wipe the steam off my glasses.

The weather still wasn't suitable for climbing around on rocks, but we left the car at Carrick-a-Rede and went down the steep cliff path to the famous rope bridge. This bridge connects the mainland to a high rocky island which can't be reached by any other way but parachute. It is about 500 feet above the sea at both ends, if a good deal less in the middle, and it sways in the slightest breeze. That day there was a gale blowing which Bea judged to be about three times as invigorating as the one that nearly blew us off Errigal.

Madeleine went out on it first, a brave glorious stupid thing to do. I began to console the imminent widower, but she came back without falling off. I went next, feeling gloriously stupid too. A merciful blank covers the memory. When I got back, Bea pleaded her high heels and Walter made some lame excuse about being completely lacking in moral and physical courage. The rain suddenly became heavy and we decided to go up the cliff by a short cut instead of the more circuitous path, and we started climbing again.

As I said, I wasn't feeling so good. A lot of things had been happening to me. I was in a bad way. This time I didn't help Bea up a mountain.

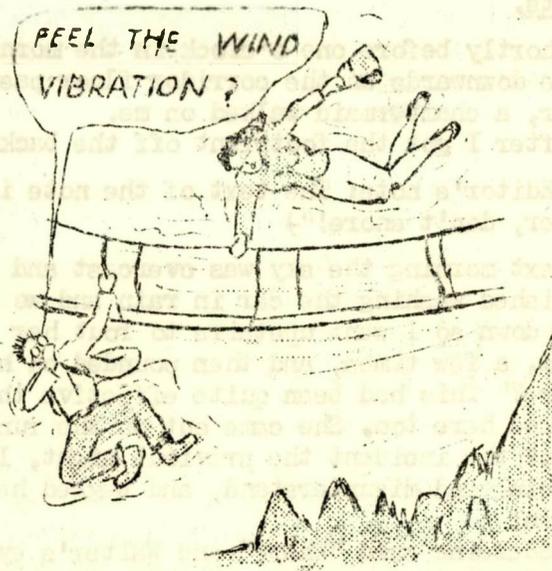
A person hasn't really lived until Bea Mahaffey has helped him up a mountain.

Eventually we poured ourselves back into the car and took off again for Ballycastle, Cushendall and the Antrim Coast Road. When the coast road was reached, spray as well as rain began to run down the windows. Walt pointed out where Scotland would be seen if it weren't for that row of tidal waves. We talked to Bea about the cars that got washed into the sea here every month and the ones that escaped that fate by being pinned down by landslides from the cliffs. Bea just lay back nonchalantly and smoked five cigarettes in a row.

At Ballygally Castle where we stopped for lunch, Walter tried for twentyfive minutes to phone Bob Shaw to let him know we were nearly home again. But he couldn't get through. The lines were down, or at least some telegraph poles had fallen into the sea. Madeleine and Walter were inclined to worry a little about what had happened to the road alongside the poles, but not Bea or I---we can swim.

Bea began to talk about artificial respiration and lifesaving methods generally. We had a most interesting discussion. Bea favoured holding their heads under until they calmed down before towing them ashore, while I plumped for the rabbit punch. Madeleine and Walter didn't say anything.

In Belfast I said a tearful farewell to Bea and went home to tell my mother look who was back. Two hours later, in Oblique House, while Walter and I were trying to



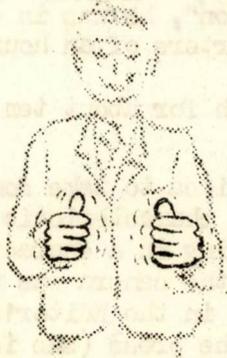
"I'm Tensing with tears in my eyes."

fix the flashbulb attachment on Bea's camera, Bob Shaw came in. It is a measure of Miss Mahaffey's multilingual proficiency that she understood the very first words he uttered. They were, "Welcome to Ireland."

I felt like kicking myself, or him. Walter felt the same way, for the one thing we had forgotten to do was to welcome Bea officially to Ireland. Her sensitive famish soul must have been hurt at this even though she complained not, and there must have been times when she may even have felt....not wanted? Many a time and oft, as she clung by her fingernails to some cliff in a howling gale, she must have thought she should have stood at home—all because we had forgotten this simple ritual. I was a cad. However to try and make it up to her we conducted her around the SLANT press-room. We showed her the printing press, the waterpistol used in the white-harris encounter of '52, Walter's Honorary Swamp-Critter Certificate, the waterpistol used on harris this year, the duper, and the waterpistols to be used on harris next year. Then we all went downstairs again and began to tell Bob about Portballintrae, with actions.

When Madeleine wheeled in the food a couple of hours later, however, Bob and I were talking about 'High Noon.'

'High Noon' is a wonderful subject for discussion. That film had something. It was tense. At that time Bob and I were the only people who had seen it but though the others begged us not to trouble ourselves, we didn't mind explaining about it. Especially that bit where the guy rides over the hill... that picture was—tense.



'... WAS TENSE !'

there would be room for Bob beside Walter. But strangely enough, Bob didn't want to sit beside Walter. After Bea got in there was quite a bit of jostling for position, but it was finally agreed that if Bob gave me three new plots and let me keep the rear view mirror trained on him all the time, then he could sit beside Bea. We blasted off.

Just outside town it was discovered that the car horn had lost its voice. It is a punishable offence here to drive without apparatus to give audible warning of one's approach but Bob, Bea and myself solved the difficulty until we reached a garage by leaning out of the windows and yelling "Honk" at anyone that got in the way. After the horn was fixed we headed for the Mourne Mountains but seeing when we got near then that they were covered in cloud we turned off to Downpatrick to show Bea St. Patrick's grave. Even there walt and Bob continued the ceaseless barrage of puns and jokes that had started when Bea commented as we left Belfast on how clean it was and Bob explained it was because the 'Mountains of Mourne sweep Down to the sea'. During one sequence about snakes as Bea was as usual alternately saying she should go home



'...RIDES OVER THE HILL...'

we got so good at talking about it that we could do it in sign language. That meant that Bob and I could talk about our latest masterpiece, wordrates, and how nice it was to have a pro editor partaking of our hospitality—and still be able to talk about 'High Noon.'

A person hasn't really lived until he's seen Bea Mahaffey talk about 'High Noon' in sign language.

When I went up again next day the weather had changed again. It was the hottest day yet and Walter planned on driving us around County Down. Madeleine wasn't coming this time so

"Of course it's a maze road--there's a white lion running down the middle."

and that she should have brought her tape recorder, Bob remarked that is was indeed something to write home about. How is it one can never remember any of the good jokes made on these occasions. I should have noted them down as I said then.

We made a stop once at a little bridge on a byroad and sat in the sun playing a game we have invented called 'Moon Base.' (In this you prop up a cigarette butt in the middle of the road and throw pebbles at it.) But we had to hurry back because after tea there was going to be a full scale convention. As well as the present company of vile pros and fans, a pro artist on "New Worlds" would be coming, and that legendary figure, George L. Charters, the Bangor bibliophile who had gotten his name in HARD COVERS and who likes to talk about it the way normal people talk about "High Noon," would also appear. We got back just in time to keep them from welcoming us instead of the other way around.

The next thing which happened will live in my memory till my dying day--and probably haunt me for centuries after that. It was, sort of, a pun. We were all going in to tea, with Bob several lengths in front and moving fast, when he suddenly stopped, turned round and said to Bea, "Bea, you look good enough to eat." A harmless enough remark of the sort that hungry wolves say to Miss Mahaffey as a matter of course. As Bea sat down she said, sort of off-hand, "I do---three times a day." Bob said, "Glumph."

It had happened at last, we thought. Shaw caught without a come-back. History had been made. But no.

All during tea he gazed abstractedly at Bea---she must be used to this, too---and he didn't speak at all except for a few monosyllables like "More tea," "More bread," and "More salad." While the rest of us demonstrated the proper way to rustle a paper, and waved our hands through the opening sequences of "High Noon", he was in some horrible world of his own. Finally, after approximately three quarters of an hours silence, he spoke.

He said, "What other newspapers do you take?" and began to laugh for about ten minutes. He really appreciates his puns.

When we had recovered somewhat, Bea thought it would be a good idea to take some pictures of the SLANT pressroom with the staff draped about it in characteristic positions. She took a picture of Walter, Bob, George, and self standing in a characteristic pose, then sitting in one. After this, by a majority vote, the camera was taken away from Miss Mahaffey and we photographed her---once sitting in the Editor's Chair, twice sort of lounging against the duper, once operating the press (she isn't really a negress), and once standing on the Art Ed's Chair---a sort of Statue of Liberty shot, but with a more scientifically accurate stratospheric beanie.

After we'd used up all her film we let her have the camera back again. Bob was still acting up. Every few minutes he would guffaw and shout out, "What other papers so you take? Papers, Times, "Financial Times," three"Times"a day---Hee-hee-hee---Get it? Times." We did, but there should be a law. At nine o'clock he left, still loudly deriving amusement from its subtleties.

Shortly after midnight Madeleine made more tea. Another downpour had started and I'd a four mile walk home ahead of me, so she wanted to give me one for the road. Both Walter and Madeleine had been urging me to stay the night, but I'd declined with thanks. I think all they wanted was to get flashlight pictures of me pushing notes under bedroom doors.

We dawdled a little over tea, mostly because Walter, Madeleine, and I had decided that "Other Worlds" should bring out an anthology. We told her what stories, other than "Dear Devil," to use, what authors to approach for new stuff, what stories to reprint from SLANT, what author we'd all like to see in the book and how good I was. We were all very helpful. With the anthology disposed off, we made other suggestions.

"Let's try a weird shot--a sort of Edgar Allan pose."

"We could publish a BRE of ALPHENTIC?"

One of which was that "Other Worlds" publish a BRE from an office in Belfast, and to make sure that the venture would succeed, one of the editors would run this office in person. We discussed at some length the qualifications this editor would need to have. It was a straight, one-cornered fight. Bea got the job. We went on to tell her how the / staff could assist her by writing stories around spaceship covers, paint spaceship covers around stories, and do spaceship interior illos. Walter could advise her on which of my stories to print first, and conduct the fan departments. We didn't know what Bob could do, though a lot of rather bizarre suggestions were put forward. Things were getting really interesting when suddenly I noticed it was three o'clock in the morning. We had dawdled, but good.

Regretfully, I had to tear myself away. I'd a long distance to walk and my mother might be annoyed if I was late for breakfast.

I awoke bright and very late next morning and after checking my symptoms to make sure I still hadn't caught pneumonia, sashayed off to / House. It was a disorganised sort of day. We were due to sail to Liverpool that night, and many and varied were the preparations that had to be made. Every few minutes the brilliant fannish discourse would be interrupted by someone dashing off to pack something she'd forgotten, or somebody else deciding that they'd some last-minute shopping to do— Walter and Madeleine turned up later with a pound of sugar and a television set— or me wanting to run some more tests on the water-pistols. Mostly we talked about "High Noon" and read the weather reports. When Walter and Madeleine left on their shopping spree they requested that the remaining fannish population keep their eyes on the garden and baby sit.

It was a warm day, and Carol Willis and a horde of her six year old insurgents were holding a convention in the front garden. There was heavy traffic on the road outside—mostly buses and trucks—and we were supposed to keep them from overturning any of it. We did, too, though there was one bad moment when they all suddenly disappeared from sight. But they returned a few minutes later sucking lollipops. Between intensive bouts of packing, Bea talked about Portballintrae (I don't particularly like talking about Portballintrae), gave invaluable technical advice on baby-sitting (She's an aunt yet), and made with the entente cordiale.

This last, which is a French word, consisted of her looking regal and gracious and exchanging polite diplomacies while Carol Willis presented each of her friends to Bea in turn. Carol had been telling them about the legendary figure visiting / House, and they wanted to see. (Who could blame them?) Carol performed the introductions, and one by one they came forward and shuffled their feet, said "Hello," or said nothing, according to age and temperment. Bea put them at their ease at once. Such charm, such tact, such delightful informality. When Ninth Fandom emerges, it's going to be solidly behind Bea (Call Me Madam) Mahaffey. What an ambassador she is.

A person hasn't really lived until he's seen Bea Mahaffey deal tactfully with an offer of a very sticky, half-eaten lollipop which a young and earnest admirer is waving in her face.

After that incident I remembered that I'd packing to do, too, so I hurried home. We had arranged to meet at the quayside at seven-thirty. Madeleine's father was going to take Bea, Madeleine, and Walter Himself down to the boat in the car while I was supposed to proceed independently on my dogs. About ten minutes to eight I began to worry. At five to I was running my half-eaten fingers through my beautiful silvery hair. At eight o'clock I was standing at the gangplank sort of staring down a stevedore who thought he was going to cast it off. At five past they arrived dramatically in a cloud of dust and scorched rubber fumes. Bob Shaw had kept them late saying goodbye and talking about "High Noon."

To all who have read Mr. Willis's Con reports, the operation of—and the various items of equipment carried by—ships on the Belfast-Liverpool run is old stuff, but

as this was Bea's first trip we had to tell her what the different things were for and why the chimney was tilted and the front end sharp and so on. There was also a slight mix-up with the berths we'd booked which made it necessary for Walter to pose as Bob Shaw (who'd found at the last moment he wouldn't be able to come) and for Bea to masquerade as Walter A. Willis. (What an actress that girl is, but I still think it was lousy casting.)

This was the third time we'd watched the cranes and anchored ships and the South Antrim mountains slide past us as we headed towards another Convention, but I think we get a bigger kick out of it every time. There's something about starting off for a Convention, with the same old sun setting behind Cave Hill, and the lights of Bangor and Donaghadee still shining away as if they'd never been turned off from last time, that makes one wonder if there really are such things as time warps and wish one could only keep on doing this for the rest of one's life.

When night began to fall and the sea roughened up a bit, I showed Bea how to get into a lifejacket so that her head would stay above water even after she'd died from exposure. But it was getting chilly—my glasses hadn't steamed up for more than five minutes—so we went below.

The cabin which was supposed to belong to Mr and Mrs Willis held four people uncomfortably. There was just enough room for their heads to rattle against the walls and ceiling when the boat lurched. But to fans who'd lived through Portballintrae and Carrick-a-Rede this was nothing. Besides we were happy. The environment was suitable for close harmony and we sang several songs, frequently simultaneously. After a while someone croaked that they were dying for a cup of tea. Walter organised the operation from a commanding position near the ventilator and finally I was able to get the door open.

The floor of the corridor was beginning to fill up with prostrate Air Force men. They hadn't booked berths, and the spray was making the deck upstairs uninhabitable, so they had seeped down here to sleep. Trying to avoid stepping on anyone's face, I waded across the yielding mass to the restaurant. Soon I was back with four steaming half-cups of tea—the sea was roughening up—and the party continued.

I never realised until then that Walter and Madeleine knew so many seditious and revolutionary Irish songs. When Bea had eagerly learned the words there was a marked increase in volume and I began to worry about the regiment of Englishmen camped out in the corridor. We moved on to more peaceful songs, trampling soulfully on The Rose of Tralee.

Just as I was winding up for my beautiful top note two teacups fell into the washbasin and Walter suggested there might be some people on the ship, or maybe another one close by, who wanted to go to sleep. We decided we'd turn in before we were turned out, but first we'd go up on deck for some air. The corridors were by now covered with a fitted carpet of airmen, and it was interesting to watch Bea and Madeleine negotiating them with spike-heeled shoes. The men who were deeply unconscious muttered querulously in their sleep, sighed, and dropped off again. Those who'd been merely dozing said 'Aaaargh!' and came fully awake, and those who were awake already said... (How does one spell a long low whistle?) The stairs were heaped with men too, and when we got outside we realised why. The wind had grown to invigorating proportions. This did not stop me however—science must be served. I had seen a musical once in which two dancers waltzed round the deck of a ship in a gale and I hadn't believed it was possible. In the interests of science and with her help, I told Bea, I hoped to prove it was impossible. We found a relatively sheltered spot on 'Assembly Deck B' (how fitting!), Walter and Madeleine hung onto a sort of ladder and screamed 'Till I Waltz Again With You' above the howling of the gale.

Dancing on the deck of a storm-lashed ship is impossible. Still, it was quite an experience. A person hasn't really lived until he's waltzed down a heaving and shuddering deck, tripped over a life-raft, and come to a skidding halt against a ventilator with Bea Mahaffey.

"Is anybody here Gene Keilly?"

After this I think we all retired, but I can't remember. Concussion plays funny tricks sometimes.

The gale must have got behind the boat and pushed most of the way because Liverpool was reached about an hour ahead of schedule. It was an unbelievable sight. It looked completely alien. It wasn't just the Coronation decorations or the bright green trams (we'd never known before what colour they were supposed to be) or the cleaned-up buildings. These were extraordinary enough, but on top of all that the sun was shining. It just shows what these English fans are capable of when they want to impress someone. Previously we'd been welcomed with the normal rain, fog and soot, but this time we had a distinguished visitor with us and they laid on sunshine. They must have been saving it up for years. I went down to tell Bea about it.

The corridor looked unfamiliar with the floor visible. I beat on the cabin door as usual and yelled for Tucker. The steward who was picking odd socks, playing cards and empty bottles off the floor looked askance at me, but I ignored him and shouted again for Tucker. The door opened, a face covered in shaving soap looked out. "Go away," it said soapily, "He isn't here." Walt said "She must have brought Shower with her," but it turned out to be just the wrong cabin. When I took a good look round I found I wasn't even in the right corridor.

We went up on deck again to wait for the girls and leaned over the side marvelling at the Liverpool sunshine. Shortly it occurred to us that it was still very early and the English fans who were to meet us wouldn't have arrived yet. We got off the ship and waited at the end of the gangway. Shortly Bea and Madeleine, looking fresh and pretty in the Spring morning, came walking down it.

"Welcome to England," we said.

#### PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION STORIES, THIRD SERIES, Bleiler & Dikty. Published by Grayson and Grayson at 9/6. 16 stories, 256 pages. To the avid reader most of the stories in this anthology are at the awkward age—not quite old enough to be re-read and too old to be instantly recognisable. But they do provide a pleasant hour or so of reading and skipping and an investment for some rainy day a year or so hence. The most notable are: Kubilius' THE OTHER SIDE, a grim after-alien-conquest story marred only by a lily-gilding last line; Bester's neat timetravel twist OF TIME AND THIRD AVENUE, Kornbluth's provocative MARCHING MORONS, based on the proposition that the general standard of intelligence is declining because the stupid breed more rapidly than the clever (a problem for which SLANT once suggested the remedy was to distribute free pornography to the intelligentsia); Tucker's TOURIST TRADE, a tour de force; Temple's philosophical thriller TWO SHADOWS; Idris Seabright's poignant BRIGHTNESS FALLS FROM THE AIR, whose title was the subject of a competition in F&SF; Peter Phillip's AT NO EXTRA COST; and Leiber's unusual APPOINTMENT IN TOMORROW. Altogether an excellent collection with not a single bad or even poor story in the lot.

AUTHENTIC No. 37, Hamilton & Co., 1&2 Melville Court, Goldhawk Rd., London W.12. 1/6 or 25¢ per issue. With this issue AUTHENTIC emerges from another of the bewildering series of vicissitudes which has characterised the history of this magazine: the practice of printing or reprinting stories by American authors so much criticised by fans is now formally abandoned and we are more or less promised original stories by British authors. Just to teach us a lesson, one of them is Jon J. Deegan. However the principal one in this issue, Bryan Berry's THE ADAPTABLE MAN, is quite a good thriller in the SLAN! tradition. Best among the shorts is one by C.E. Maine which improbably succeeds in breathing some suspense into a matter-duplicator plot every element of which is familiar. The less said about the other stories probably the better. Redd Boggs got review copies of this magazine month after month until one day he was rash enough to review it.

"Boys and girls come out to play."

# THE CORONCON

## OR THROUGH DARKEST ENGLAND BURNING THE CANDLE AT BOTH ENDS

Walt Willis

Halfway to the dock gate we were met by Dave Gardner who had been up since six and lost no more time in celebrating Bea's arrival by presenting her with a complimentary copy of the Liverpool group's newly published symposium SEX AND SADISM. Bea gracefully accepted this bouquet of neuroses, opened it casually at one of the lewdest illustrations ever published in the fan press, and quickly closed it again. Shortly an enormous black car loomed up driven, appropriately enough, by vile huckster Frank Milne of SFService. We found later, however, that it hadn't been bought with the money bled from us poor fans but had merely been hired to take half the population of Liverpool to the Convention. We all got in and strolled about the interior, avoiding the dangerous overhanging slopes of SEX AND SADISM, until we arrived at a sleazy cafeteria which was all Liverpool had to offer at this hour of the morning. Breakfast was over and the waitress was polishing the table with a dirty rag and a black lock, when Eric Frank Russell made his entrance. He stepped immediately into his natural niche as life and soul of the party, greeting Bea with the remark that while in his writing career he had often said what he would like to do to pro editors, he'd never imagined it could be a pleasure: and proceeded thus outrageously to skate on the thin ice on the brink of bad taste without once putting his foot in it. Larger than life and a great deal more interesting, he manages to set the standards in any company in which he finds himself. But at one point he took time off from goodhumouredly insulting everyone present and warning Bea against the Londoners to tell the plot of an as yet unpublished story. It was one of those warmly human short stories of his which show Russell, beneath his bluff exterior, to be one of the most sensitive writers in the sf field and he told it so well that we all felt we only needed to have learned shorthand to be sure of a GALAXY cheque. Even the people at an adjoining table stopped talking to listen and when he had finished there was the moment of silence which is the supreme tribute to an artist.

After breakfast EFR drove us to Chester, passing through about ten feet of Wales just so Bea could say she'd 'done' it, then back to his house for a magnificent lunch, and then down to the station where we said goodbye to the hospitable Liverpoolians. It was a relief train and we had a carriage to ourselves for the whole of that golden journey to London. We talked and laughed and sang the whole way, except when we were reminiscing nostalgically (already) about the trip round Ireland. James found the key of his room at Portballintrae which he'd forgotten to hand in, and carried out an investiture of Bea with the number-plate as with the Legion of Honour not forgetting the most trivial detail of punctilio, and, carried away, proposed to her several more times. Next time she'll know to bring a suitcase of rejection slips.

Shortly before the train got into Euston, where 'harris' was to meet us, James filled his waterpistol and began to hum 'High Noon'; but when we got out Chuck was nowhere to be found. James suspected an ambush and began to talk wildly of erecting barricades, but I finally ran Chuck to earth at the wrong platform. He had a girl with him whom we took to be his sister; however it later turned out to be Rita Krohne whom as a friend of our idol Robert Bloch we'd been ready to welcome with open arms. In the taxi we proceeded to let our old friend Chuck in on all the fannish

"Can the enginedriver marry people?"

nonsense we'd had so much fun with in the trip round Ireland, until Rita pointed out that the expression 'George' which poor Bea had taught us was actually quite passé. In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where they are evidently right up to the minute on these matters, George went out over a year ago and had been superseded by other expressions which we can't remember now, possibly because we couldn't feel the same affection for them as we had for the now discredited George. Mourning the dear departed, we finished the journey to the Bonnington in sober silence; then on to the White Horse where our spirits were lifted by the warmth of the London Circle welcome.

The Convention next morning was due to start at 11am, and we took care and a taxi to arrive shortly afterwards so that in the event of its actually starting on time we should be on hand to carry out those who had fainted from the shock. But all was well—at 11.30 Ron Buckmaster was still asking everyone if they had seen the microphone. Evidently someone, probably a Northerner, had taken the mike out of the Convention already. Someone suggested he should call for its return over the PA system. While the Committee were mulling over this we all milled around to the strain of Stan Kenton records.

At 11.43 precisely Chairman Fred Brown apologised for the delay. He offered no explanation, and nobody expected one. He also announced the last minute cancellation of the showing of 'Destination Moon', due to the London County Council's unexpected objection to the showing of inflammable 35mm film in unlicensed theatres. Evidently the Government had sneaked through the Cinematograph Act of 1909\* without informing the Convention Committee.

He also read a postcard from Peter Hamilton regretting that he might not be able to be present. Since Peter was actually standing just under the Chairman's nose, it looked as if he had delivered the postcard himself to save postage. Fred also announced the cancellation of the Junior Fanatics play, adding rather tactlessly that something better would be substituted.

This, incidentally, was the first Convention I've been at where there was a special item listed in the official programme as "announcements of unavoidable changes". A wise precaution, and one which I hope portends a new era of more realistic programme booklets. Perhaps we shall one day have a really accurate printed programme scheduling such normal features of the average Convention as 'unavoidable delay', 'breakdown of PA system', 'confusion', 'collapse of Chairman', 'utter chaos' and 'Committee blind drunk'.

After all this excitement we adjourned for a nice restful lunch interval, during which we watched James and Chuck trying to trap one another in a wildly revolving door, James and Chuck having a running gunfight with waterpistols in Southhampton Row, and a film company shooting a crime melodrama in a side street. James and Chuck were much the best, we thought. Then back to the Bonnington for the introduction of notables. The London Chairman was much gentler than Korshak, Bea and I agreed; all he threatened to do was 'run over us quickly', and he hadn't even got a bicycle on his nose to do it with. There was warm applause for Bea, and also for Chuck Harris attending his first convention.

William F. Temple then led off the pro authors panel. He began by saying he was supposed to speak about the future of science fiction, but he never read the stuff himself and he didn't believe it had any future whatsoever. Instead he would talk about the friends he had made through sf. He had a list here of 23 of them, 20 crossed out and the remainder trying to live down the film of 'The Foursided Triangle.' One of them was Honest John Carnell, the man who had made more undeclared money out of sf than anyone since H.G. Wells. We shouldn't hold NEW WORLDS against Ted—he took the job as a mistake, being under the impression that it was paid. Ted had come a long way since then and he, Temple, hoped he was going a long way. The second was G. Ken Chapman. Fantasy was still Ken's first love, apart from beer, his favourite story

When't you waiting in the bus station?

being Algernon Blackwood's 'The Tree That The Dogs Loved.' Referring to Ken's appearance, he said he was very much of a middle-man, having beaten most of his contemporaries to the punch. He always thought of Ken when he heard Cabal in 'Things To Come' calling war 'an ugly spectacle of waist.' Finally there was Arthur C. Clarke, the 'C' in whose name stood of course for 'corn', the same corn we had stood for so long. Arthur was one of those people who know everything, including the fact that they know everything; though even Arthur had his moments of self doubt and could be sometimes heard saying to himself "I wonder if I'm really as good as I know I am." Of course we all knew his books---'The Exploitation of Space', 'The Man Who Sold the Moon' and so on. He had recently found some excuse to go to America again and was now underwater fishing in Florida, engaged in submersive activities. After his experience of editors and agents he should be quite capable of dealing with sharks. In fact Temple was sorry for the sharks.

The main defect of Temple as a Convention speaker, in fact come to think of it the only defect, is that he doesn't like speaking (extraordinary in one who does it so well) and insists on being put on early, with the result that everything else is something of an anticlimax. However Tubb kept the standard high, cynically advancing the theory that the reason for the bookshops being loaded with sf was that nobody would buy the stuff, and disposing competently of an inane interruption about flying saucers from a character called Burgess, who resembles nothing so much as Hal Shapiro's conception of Ken Beale. (Other parallels which occurred to Bea and me were Bill Temple=Robert Bloch, Peter Phillips=GOSmith, and Dave Cohen=Henry Burwell. America doesn't seem to have any equivalent to Norman Wansborough.)

Other pros who spoke were John Brunner ("I predict a rosy future for sf--I have some more stories in my drawer"), Vince Clarke ("as half author of two books"), C.S. Youd ("No time to read sf"), and Frank Edward Arnold ("Haven't read anything new for 12 years"). Apparently nobody in the London Circle reads anything but their own stories. Carnell then invited questions and inevitably Spillane was brought up, as indeed he must be by anyone with a sensitive stomach. Frank Milne took his opportunity and rose up from the body of the Hall to flog a copy of SEX AND SADISM to Carnell, who had been talking about it for ten minutes without having read it. Someone in the audience who had heard of semantics asked for a clear definition of 'bad'---a subject which might have kept everyone talking until well into the Supermancon had not George Hay got up and disclosed that different people had different ideas as to what good and bad were. Youd said It Wasn't As Simple As That. It was a difficult point, but he knew what it was when he saw it. Helen Winnick said coyly that she hadn't read the Spillane story in question because none of her men friends would lend it to her. An unidentified voice from the audience, who sounded like Howelock Ellis, said that all forms of literature were substitute activities for sex. However science fiction being more constructive was, he stated astonishingly, more likely to produce an orgasm. Goaded by the Mystery Voice, Youd said sarcastically that it must get a different thrill out of sf than he did, and for no apparent reason then went recklessly on record with the opinion that Bester's 'The Demolished Man' was "just Spillane on a lower level". Fred Brown said he thought the Spillane story in FANTASTIC was 'jolly good' and he'd pay 35¢ for it any day, adding equally gratuitously that he wouldn't give tuppence for a Youd story. Someone in the audience whom we only knew as Sidgwick and Jackson then said something inaudible in a refined accent and Carnell asked him to speak up. Sidgwick and Jackson, in a near shout, then announced that their sex life was satisfactory (I almost left the Convention Hall to send a cablegram to Francis Towner Laney) and resented the charge that sf was a substitute activity. George Hay, obviously determined to go one better than anybody, declared that sex itself was a substitute activity. So, he added sweepingly, was science. Proceeding into even higher realms of thought he said profoundly that it was a matter of opinion what was essential and what was not essent-

"I have no intention of living until 2000 A.D.... I like to catch authors in inaccuracies." —Sidgwick & Jackson!

ial. The human being selects his effective field. He wondered if he had made his point clear.

Obviously perturbed lest the Convention spend the next few days worrying itself into a nervous breakdown over what sex could be a substitute for, Carnell hastily closed the discussion and made a belated introduction of another visitor from America, a Mrs Sollieback of Seattle, Wash. (In fairness to Mr Hay, though, I think I should say that in my opinion he was actually working towards a very sound theory first propounded by another Deep Thinker, name of me, when in last year's conreport I accused Ken Bulmer of sublimating his fan instincts with a woman.) Mrs Sollieback from Seattle was, Carnell revealed, a member of N3F. Suitably impressed, we applauded warmly. However I am sorry to say that Mrs Sollieback seems to have detected a note of insincerity in our tribute, for in a letter published since in GMCarr's GEMONES she reports that "the N3F is not popular among the fans here." Presumably we should have bowed our heads and stood in silent tribute to the noble organisation, firing the British representative over its grave.

Carnell then made the first public mention of the Fund that had been started by an American fan group to bring a certain English fan to the Philcon. The fan in question had been unable to go after all and Don Ford and the Cincinnati group had generously thrown the offer open to any other British fan we chose who could risk having to pay most of the cost himself. Carnell didn't disclose the English fan's name but I see no harm in saying it was Norman Ashfield, who hasn't been active in fandom for quite a while but who has evidently kept up his correspondence with his friend Don Ford. (For more about the Fund please see inside bacover.)

After this came the play by the Junior Fanatics, the Committee evidently having been unable to get something better after all. The production suffered somewhat from under-rehearsal, the hero living in Lancaster and the heroine in Bournemouth and neither having very strong voices, and it rather lacked the polish and brilliance we have all come to associate with Seventh Fandom. There were also some slight difficulties at first due to them having forgotten their own lines, but with a fine spirit of co-operation they soon overcame this by reading each other's. The heroine was a new fan called Shirley Marriott who looks like a brunette BRE of Lee Hoffman. She has the same first name too, but I'm afraid I never found how much further the resemblance went; these younger fans keep very much together and don't mix with us old has-BNFs.

Dave Cohen followed with an address on what was wrong with the London Circle and was so convincing that Chuck Harris changed his London Circle badge to a Belfast one before he had even finished. One of Cohen's accusations was that the Londoners didn't support the last Mancon and in his speech of rebuttal Brown promptly put his foot in it right up to the neck by saying he didn't know about the Mancon. Since the last London Convention had been virtually knee-deep in Mancon propaganda, this was an unfortunate defence. Bentcliffe asked with deceptive politeness whether Brown hadn't seen the notices. Brown pulled the ground in on top of him by saying, too craftily, that he hadn't been up to the White Horse much during that period. Bentcliffe patiently pointed out that the notices in question had been in the Convention Hall and that Northern speakers there had publicly asked for support and been given to understand they would get it. Angry murmurings from Northerners in the audience confirmed this. At this point Bert Campbell came in and poured oil on the burning waters. He apologised for being late, he said disarmingly, but he had been up until four in the morning discussing sex with some visitors from the United States. The Northerners, he went on, couldn't expect celebrities to come to their Convention ("Well, I'm a celebrity, aren't I?") unless they made it attractive and publicised it properly. He further endeared himself to Northern fandom by pointing out how well the Londoners publicised their conventions. (I remembered the time Alan Hunter wrote to me in Belfast four days before the '52 Con to ask did I know whether it was still on and did

"We're only running half an hour over in the first hour and a half."

200

I know where it was.) You couldn't go wrong, said Campbell blithely, if you followed the London Circle. They didn't just stick something on the wall in the hope someone would notice it. Fred Brown rubbed salt into the wounds by saying that the London Circle didn't have to pay anything at all for their publicity. (One wondered whether this meant the Mancon Committee could also expect free advertising in NEW WORLDS, SCIENCE FANTASY and AUTHENTIC.) As illustrations of their ingenuity he instanced the fact that they wrote to Eagle Comics (apparently without result) and designed a poster for a showing of WAR OF THE WORLDS (which was not accepted). One felt his examples could have been better chosen.

During the tea interval which followed copies were handed out of the Harris/Slater 'Looniecon' oneshot, a supremely fannish production. I seem to have spent the rest of the Convention explaining regretfully that I had nothing whatsoever to do with it and that it came as a complete surprise to me.

(TO BE CONTINUED, PROBABLY)

"The trouble with Howard Browne is that he just doesn't like science fiction."

## NEWS

SCIENCE FANTASY NEWS will cease publication with the coming issue. In its place Ving Clarke will take over responsibility for part of HYPHEN.

The RHODOMAGNETIC DIGEST has suspended publication.

Fred L. Smith of 613 Gt. Western Rd., Glasgow #2 announces a new printed fannag to be called HAEMOGLOBIN (presumably from the Scots song "Roamin' haemoglobin, on the bonnie banks o' Clyde"). They propose to pay for material at the rate of £1 per thousand words. I thought Smith wasn't a Scottish name.

One of the projected items on the Supermancon program is that Bert Campbell should be put on trial for his 'bloody provincials' remark and other capital charges. Bert is said to have agreed. Ted Tubb will defend. Eric Bentcliffe has resigned from the Supermancon Committee. Dave Cohen is the new Secretary. Harry Turner (9 Willow Bank, Church Lane, Moston, Manchester 9) is o/c publicity.

Colin Michael Parsons, 31 Benwood Court, Sutton, Surrey, announces a new multilith fannag called (provisionally) AMAZINE. Photolith cover "not unlike the non-colour pictures by Bonestell in 'Conquest of Space.'" Uh-huh.

THE QUATERMASS EXPERIMENT, the BBC's outstanding tv sf serial, is to be rebroadcast some time this Winter as a complete play.

PERI is folding. Pete Taylor will publish a London Circle fannag.

Two more nominations have been received since the article opposite was written—both for Ken Slater. Financial report on the Func next issue.

Bob Shaw has made his first sale, to NEBULA.

Lee Hoffman is producing a Third Anniversary Issue of QUANDRY.

Rogers has had a cover rejected by John W. Campbell.

Sam Merwin is the new Assistant Editor of GALAXY.

FLASH! Denness Morton is not a 70year old spinster.

In response to humorous requests Oblique House Publications announce a startling innovation for their winter publishing schedule. Watch out for the special SCIENCE FICTION ISSUE of 'Hyphen'. Every article in this revolutionary issue will be devoted to science fiction! Among the features will be a scholarly review of the October ASF by noted bibliophile Charles R. Harris entitled THE DECLINE OF ASTOUNDING. A single sentence from this monograph will suffice to show its high standard of literary criticism... "James White! unspeakable foulness festering on the fringes of fandom!"

Also scheduled for publication this winter are Rich Elsberry's Philcon report and Bea Mahaffey's impressions of English fandom, and Shawillis's THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR.

All previous issues of HYPHEN and SLANT are out of print.

Acknowledgements for the name 'Beacon' are due to Shelby Vick

"It's now settled that '54's convention won't go to Frisco" —C.L.Bek

The Reprint Magazine

ISSUED AS A SUPPLEMENT TO  
HYPHEN #4 BY WALT WILLIS,  
170 UPPER NEWTONARDS RD.  
BELFAST NORTHERN IRELAND.

LOST AND FOUND LEFT.  
(Extracted from  
Forrest J. Ad-  
eman's column  
in 'Shangri-L'  
Affaires' April  
1945)

She stood out from all the other  
passengers on the street car. Young  
blonde and beautiful. Dressed in a  
neatly tailored business suit. Self-  
possest, an aura of--all I can call  
it is 'authenticity'--about her.  
Soft, and yet somehow unapproach-  
able. One's eyes automatically

gravitated to her. She was reading a book. Something  
about the jacket struck me as familiar. What could it  
be? Something I'd been reading myself, recently, I thought. "The Great Fog"--could  
it be? I tried to get a better look. It was difficult. The car was crowded like a  
salmon steam at spawning time. I felt like Minos of Sardines. I strained my myopic  
optics. At the top of one page I could make out XXX XXXXX XXX. At the top of the  
other, XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXX...?

Carefully I counted. 123 12345 123. Yes. And---"DESPAIR DEFERRED...?" It must be!  
Circumstantial evidence, but a title with 3 periods and a question mark in it....!

I tried to sidle near her. I was burdened by my army greatcoat and carrying case.  
And, in any case, was blocked by a wall of human flesh. I was within about 10 blocks  
of where I had to transfer, and was racing with a deadline to catch a train.

As luck would have it, when I was within about six blocks of where I had to hop  
off, the individual sitting next to Her got up and I was able to squeeze in beside  
her. And then....

The Rains Came! A veritable torrent of verbiage. A Second Deluge. Have you ever  
tried to tell a stranger the story of stf and fandom in 2 minutes?

"Pardon me," I burst in on her reading, "But are you reading that just by happen-  
stance or because you're really interested in it?"

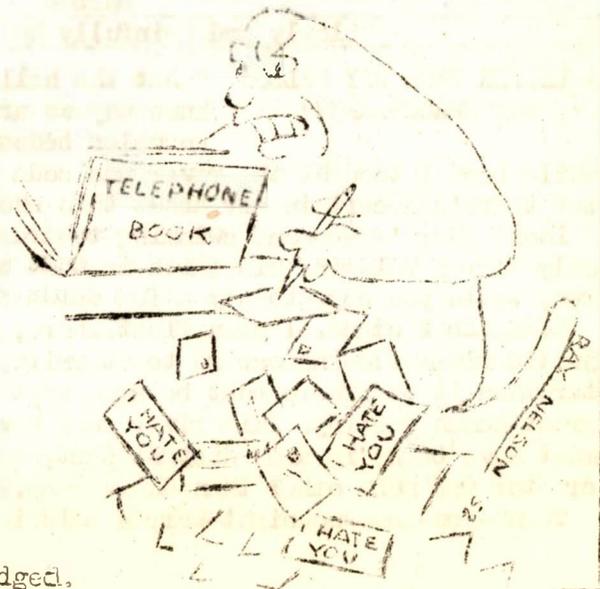
"Why---I'm interested in it," regarding me askance.

"Well, say, you'll pardon me if this all seems peculiar, and I'm incoherent, but I  
have to hop off in just a minute to catch a train, and what I wanted to tell you,  
say---do you read WEIRD TALES by any chance?"

"Oh, yes."

"Yes? Well, you know the WEIRD TALES Club--that list in the back of the mag? Well,  
we have a club--here in town--guys and gals like you and me who read these stories  
and like to talk about them...have our own  
club room...the original illustrations of  
lots of the stories...you know Ray Brad-  
bury?--he lives nearby" ---car stop--- "I  
have that book you're reading in my own  
library, which is why I happened to notice  
it. Our club has WEIRD TALES back ten years  
or more, and other fantasy mags like do you  
know UNKNOWN that's been discontinued now"  
---just a couple more blocks to go; make it  
fast, 4e--- Say, look, here's a little mag  
that might interest you--it has reviews of  
all kinds of books like the one you're  
reading now; in fact I think that book is  
reviewed--and this is my name, here on the  
envelope" ---half rising--- "I'm going to be  
out of town a couple days, but if you're at  
all interested please get in touch with me  
when I get back--we'd be glad to have you  
attend a meeting as a guest. Goodbye!"

"Thankyou for the magazine," she acknowledged.



"Vocational Plans? My mother is going to strike oil."

--Wild Hair

But she must have thought that was quite the craziest sergeant she ever encountered.



"YINGVI IS A LOUSE!"

---L. S. deCamp

THE SAD SAGA OF SHANGRI-L'AFFAIRES (Tucker is complaining about the non-arrival of his copies of Burbee's fanmag.)  
(from BLOOMINGTON NEWSLETTER No 6, Philcon Edn., Sept., 1947)

....A few months ago I got

tired of this careless publishing system and issued an ultimatum: either Burbee get each copy to me promptly as it was published, or I'd be forced to send a cash subscription.

"I'm no more Siamese than you are."

(noteslar)

His thoughtful letter of apology follows.

"Are you trying to tell me you didn't get a copy of Shangri-etc 36? I sent you one along with the rest of them. What the hell. ((Note the lapse into profanity to cover his confusion.)) No other beefs have come my way. ((Note the reference to the meat shortage to confuse the issue.)) Is there a hex on Box 260, Bloomington, Ill? Is it haunted? Is it a section of subspace in which things placed vanish for once and all? Is it the dominion of a sluglike being from Saturn who lives on carboniferous matter? There is a mystery about Box 260, Bloomington, Ill. There is a definite out-of-this-worldness about Box 260. I might go so far as to say Box 260 is extra-terrestrially inclined, if not actually extra-terrestrial. It has other-world habits. Or, to put it briefly, it is the damndest Box I have ever heard of.

I can say this with perfect equanimity, though my eyes have never rested on Box 260: ((Note his implied sorrow.))

This is the damndest thing I have ever heard of. Why, that stupid fanzine ((note how he slurs his product in an effort to reduce my sense of loss)) has been out a month or more. And no copy has reached you. This is incredible. It seems odd to me that you have not discovered the mystery of Box 260 by this time. Has it held forever to its bosom other works of fanmag nature? Had it withheld from you checks from ~~stupid~~ enterprising publishers for your ~~idiotic~~ pristine writings? Why, then, must it prey on fanzines? ((Note contradiction of quality in an effort to raise fanzine in equal value to checks.))

Oh well. I am sending you, this very minute, a second copy of that ~~excellent~~ excellent fanzine. Please allow a fortnight to pass. If it hasn't arrived I'll send you another, and another, and another, and another. I will teach my children that each and every two weeks a copy of Shangri-L'Affaires No. 36 must be sent to Bob Tucker, Box 260, Bloomington, Ill. We'll make a fetish of it. More, a whole new mythology will spring up around this."

Burbee

"Slowly and painfully he leaped to his feet."

"Wild Hair"

A LETTER FROM RAY NELSON  
(from SPACEWARP 37)

"What the hell is this all about anyhow? Doesn't anybody know why we are floating down this river of piss in a blue enameled bedpan? I just woke up myself to the situation. A

while back I thought the river was soda pop and we were riding in the Queen Mary, but there's a certain air about this whole thing that gave it all away.

Look! There's someone swimming towards us. No. My mistake. It's only Warren Baldwin. His faith in Ghod will keep him afloat. Warren, would you care to say a few words for the radio audience?

"Yes. As I stand..I mean float..here, and look out over this majestic river flowing onward to eternity, my faith grows still greater than it was. There must be some vast meaning to it all, some great human destiny. This river must have started somewhere. There must have been, in some distant past, a creator of all this. That creator was none other than Ghod...gasp...gag...gurgle...blub...blub.."

Thank-you-and-goodnight-Warren Baldwin."

--Ray Nelson



"Did that mouse run up your leg?"

It will be just like a Dargher by project except that it will actually happen!"

-F. I. Lane

# THE TRANSATLANTIC FAN FUND

On the second day of the Coroncon I convened an informal Committee of all the available leaders of British fandom to discuss the offer by Don Ford and the Cincinnati group to help a British fan attend the Philcon. The Committee consisted of myself, Ken Slater, Vinç Clarke, Chuck Harris, James White, Fred Robinson, Fred Brown, and representatives of the Liverpool and Manchester groups. It was decided:--

1. That there was not enough time to send a suitable representative to the Philcon.
2. That a permanent Two-Way Transatlantic Fan Fund be set up to help both British and American fans to attend each other's Conventions.
3. That the immediate objective be to send a British fan to the American Convention of 1954, as suggested by Ford and his group.
4. That the fan to go should be nominated by British fandom.

Accordingly nominations from British fandom are hereby invited for a British fan to represent us at the San Francisco World Convention and Westercon in early September, 1954. Nominations must be sent to me before the 15th October. They may be accompanied by a 'speech' of not more than 100 words in support of the nomination. I will find out which of the people nominated will be able to go and their names will be published in the next issue of HYPHEN, together with their proposers' 'campaign speeches'. (If it does nothing else, all this will at least produce some egoboo.) The voting will then take place.

The following nominations have already been made.

Vinç Clarke (by George Charters)

Derek Pickles (by A. Clark)

Ken Slater (by Walt Willis)

Tony Thorne (by Fred Robinson)

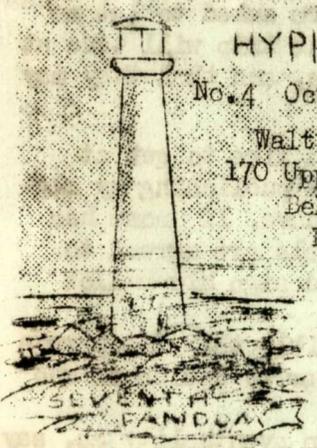
James White (by Chuck Harris)

(Chuck Harris, Bob Shaw and myself have declined to be nominated.) The above proposers are asked to let me have their 'campaign speeches'. The nominees are asked to let me know whether they are available to go. They should remember that the trip will take at least 3 weeks by the slowest (and cheapest) means of transportation, and that they may have to meet part of the cost themselves.

I was delegated the job of arranging the voting procedure but I'd like to get at least the tacit consent of British fandom to what I propose. So I'm publishing my suggestions now in time for you to register any objections you might have. If none has been received by the 15th October I'll assume the following proposals are agreed to.

1. The ballot to be secret, but each fan must vote personally and sign his ballot paper. No proxy votes or block votes from clubs.
  2. Each voter to be allowed a first and second choice. It's possible that the person chosen may prove unable to go after all and this will make it easier to decide on who the second choice of fandom is.
  3. There should be qualifications for voters, to prevent such an eventuality as, say, the entire population of Trowbridge, Wilts, voting for Norman Wansborough. They must be (a) active already in fandom to the extent of having subscribed or contributed to at least one fanzine or joined a fan club or organisation; and (b) show their interest in the project by making a certain minimum contribution to the Fund. Say 2/6?
  4. It's my own opinion that American fans should be allowed a voice in choosing among the candidates nominated by British fandom, because the whole success or failure of the project is likely to depend on whether they want to meet the fan that's going. The Americans have left it up to us to select our representative any way we like but I think it would be good sense as well as good manners to let them vote too, on the same terms as British fans. The qualifying contribution in their case might be 50¢. Comments? \_\_\_\_\_
- Bacover quotes filched from writings and conversation of Elsberry, Willis, Shaw, Clarke (Vinç), Campbell (Bert), Mahaffey, Harris, Taylor, Enever, Ryan, Bloch, Brown, Bulmer, Ford, White, Roles, and others.

I INTEND TO PRY INTO THE SOULS OF THESE FANS...YOU MEAN BENTCLIFFE HAS RESIGNED ALREADY?  
 ...THAT'S THE ONE I SHOT THE SPIDER WITH..I DIDN'T KNOW THAT DIGNIFIED RESTRAINT WAS  
 YOUR RACKET...DO YOU THINK NORMAN WANSBOROUGH IS STAR BOTTEN?...BLOODY PROVINCIALS...  
 ACID IN THE EYES...VINCE CLARKE IS A DOLL...WHAT'S LUNCOMBE CANNOT BE UNLUNCOMBE...I'M A  
 SENSITIVE LITTLE FLOWER...GENTLEMEN, THE QUEEN! VICTORIA, OF COURSE...I HAD A POETSARCD  
 FROM GHOD THIS MORNING...IF SHE HAS HER FACE LIFTED ONCE MORE SHE'LL HAVE A MOST PECUL-  
 LIAR DIMPLE ON HER CHIN...WHY, THE UNIVERSE WAS CREATED FOR EGGBOO...IF WE DON'T HAVE A  
 FILM SHOW HOW WILL WE BE ABLE TO CANCEL IT?...WALT SLUNG PUPPIES AT ME...HE WRITES LIKE  
 A LITERATE ALAN HUNTER...WHO LET BURGESS IN?...DON'T BE AFRAID, QUATERMASS, YOU ARE AM-  
 ONG FRONDS...I FOUND OUT WHAT WAS WRONG WITH ME...I HADN'T BEEN GETTING ENOUGH ICED LO-  
 LLIPOPS...WHEN FANZINES WERE FANZINING ~~THEY~~ <sup>WE</sup> SHOULD READ THEM FOR CONTROVERSY OF THE  
 MOST INTELLECTUAL AND STIMULATING ~~REASONS~~ <sup>REASONS</sup> TO HAVE FRIENDS READY TO RUSH IN &  
 SAVE ME FROM MYSELF...HIS LAST COMMUNIQUE WAS AN OBSCENE POETSARCD FROM ILERACOMBE...WE  
 HAVE DECIDED TO GET OURSELVES DISCOVERED...WHAT DID WE DO WITH OUR SPARE TIME BEFORE  
 FANDOM?...IT HAS SET NEW STANDARDS AT WHICH TO AIM: A VERITABLE GOLDEN CUSPIDOR OF A  
 CONVENTION...PICKLES AND YORKSHIRE RELICS...THE LONDON CIRCLE IS A TIGHT CIRCLE...AH  
 WHAT LACK OF GENIUS I HAD THEN...AND HE BLEW HIS OWN TRUMPET AS HE CROSSED OVER TO THE  
 OTHER SIDE...HE HIT THE NAIL UNERRINGLY ON THE THUMB...WHEN WE GOT MARRIED SHE WANTED  
 TO PRODUCE A FANZINE...THAT BEARD IS THE MOST FANTASTIC THING IN SCIENCE FICTION...THE  
 SOLE OF DISCRETION...I JUST PUT THAT IN TO CONFUSE PEOPLE...THERE'S SOMETHING QUEER AB-  
 OUT HIM...HE NEVER SAYS ANYTHING WE DO IS MARVELLOUS...FANDOM IS LIKE ENTERING A MONAS-  
 TERY...LAST ONE OUT'S A NEOFAN!...FOO TO TURNER, ANYWAY...WE THINK YOU HAVE HAD A  
 PSYCHIC LESION...OUR GREASEPIT WASN'T DUG RIGHT...ON TOP OF THIS I WAS DISSATISFIED  
 WITH MY FAN STATUS...REMEMBER, PEOPLE SNEERED AT HUBBARD AT FIRST...I HAVE FALLEN IN  
 LOVE WITH SCRAPER BOARD AND LIGHTNING STRUCK WITHIN 25 FEET OF ME THIS AFTERNOON...I  
 SUPPOSE THE GUEST OF HONOUR WILL BE VARGO STATTEN...IT'S A LONG LONEY WALT HAS NO BUR-  
 DEN...TO OVERINK IS HUMAN; TO SLIPSHEET IS DIVINE...IS SOMEBODY IGNORING ME?...HOOG!!



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