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THE READER AND COLLECTOR

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H. C. KOENIG
2 East End Avenue
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Quotations and Comments by "The Outsider"

FROM THE BLACK BRAIN *in* FANTASTIC ADVENTURES

MARCH, 1943

"The transparent glass bell....it was hanging from the ceiling on the chains like a huge bowl, ten feet wide-----I gazed at that great inverted glass bell suspended on chains from the high ceiling. I gazed into that bell. I saw the black brain."

The illustrator evidently did not read the story. The picture shows the black brain sprawled on a wooden platform. It also shows two men on the platform examining the brain under a telescope(?) and a guy on the ground with a gun. If such a scene appears in Tarleton Fiske's story, I wish one of the other twelve readers of *Fantastic* would give me the page and line. I had no trouble with the chap holding the gun, but how the two men got on the platform is too much for me.

—oOo—

FROM THE EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK *in* FANTASTIC ADVENTURES

MAY, 1943

RETURN TO LILLIPUT. *"The story itself requires special mention because it really is a sequel to Jonathan Swift's 'Gulliver's Travels.'----You'll meet many of the famous characters again."*

I must be getting near-sighted. I, for one, didn't recognize any of Swift's immortal characters. As for the story being a sequel to "Gulliver's Travels" - aren't these editors just too, too naive? Jonathan Swift didn't turn over in his grave when he heard that one --- he is still spinning.

FROM DRUMMERS OF DAUGARO in FANTASTIC ADVENTURES

MARCH, 1943

"There, close behind him, stood a woman.---She was stark naked, save for a breech-clout.---Every line, from the erect stance itself to the flashing eyes and the proud, up-pointed breasts, bespoke imperiousness."

The front cover picture by Robert Gibson Jones illustrates a scene from Drummers of Daugaro. Mr. Jones is either a very, very modest artist or his painting was censored. The gal in question (and her companions) are wearing some sort of breast plates. The darned things must have been glued on; there were no visible means of support. Gosh, oh, gosh, wouldn't Mrs. Brundage of the old Weird Tales have a lot of trouble nowadays.

And, did you notice that the little guy in the picture, who should have been naked, wore a cute little diaper. Ah, such modesty.

-----oOo-----

FROM TOMORROW'S MAIL in FANTASTIC STORIES

MARCH, 1943

Three Letters

<u>Letter No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Salutation</u>
1	November 15, 1962	Dear Dad
2	February --, 1963	Dear Dad
3	May 7, 1962	Dear Mother

The third letter mentions the death of Dad and yet nine months later the son is still writing to his father. Or am I goofy? Don't all answer at once.

-----oOo-----

FROM A PAWN FOR A KING in AMAZING STORIES

FEBRUARY, 1943

Note the illustration by some artist named Hadden. He may "get by" as an illustrator, but as a chess player - phooey! A chessboard with 56 squares!! There is an innovation for you. Now, if they would cut out three or four more rows, I'd have some chance of learning the game.

GEOMETRY MADE EASY

FROM CONTRARIWISE in LIGHT

FEBRUARY, 1943

"If anyone is interested, the Pentagon building, on the banks of the Potomac across the river from Washington, is an amazing place. It is completely ultra-modern, almost futuristic, and is, as its name indicates, in the shape of a five-sided circle."

What do you mean - almost futuristic? A five-sided circle out-futures any futuristic design I ever saw. These recent advances in Geometry are too much for me.

-----o0o-----

FROM FLIGHT UNKNOWN

MARCH, 1942(?)

"The ball was made of gleaming beryllium, and was nearly 300 feet in diameter. The surface of the sphere was made without rivets and it was as smooth as polished glass. The shape of the sphere was not streamlined in the common sense of the word, as in space it didn't make any difference as the vacuum resistance in space cannot be felt or anything".

That sentence beginning "The shape of the sphere was not streamlined in the common sense of the word---". I'd be interested to learn how one streamlines the shape of a sphere --- in any sense of the word. It appears to be a good trick -- in any man's language. But, as I said before, these recent advances in Geometry are too much for me.

-----o0o-----

OF BOOKS AND THINGS

From time to time in the fan magazines mention has been made of various collections of weird tales and ghost stories. Most of the collections have been of comparatively recent vintage, little if any attention being paid to some of the older books and stories. In view of this apparent neglect, perhaps it will be of interest if I occasionally comment upon some of the older weird books which I have collected in my search along ghostly by-paths.

The following books, one twenty years old and two of them about fifty years old, deserve a little more than just passing notice.

Wild and Weird by Sir Gilbert Campbell (1889)

The Haunted Station and other stories by Hume Nisbet (1894)

Ghosties and Ghoulies by Francis C. Prevot (1923)

The volume by *Campbell* is a rather ponderous tome of some 500 or 600 pages containing a number of tales of imagination and mystery based on the folklore of *Russia, England and Italy*. The evil-eye of *Italy*, the man-wolf of *Russia* and the glory hand form the basis of some of the stories.

Nisbet's stories, twelve of them, are in the nature of psychological studies of occult mysticism and malignant influences taken from reliable sources and personal experiences.

Prevot's Ghosties and Ghoulies is one of the best collections of short-weird stories that I have had the pleasure of reading. It is a modest little book of only 88 pages, none of the twenty stories requiring more than five pages. Ghost stories, horror tales, elementals, malignant entities—one by one they parade quickly but fascinatingly before one's eyes. Each tale requires but a few minutes to read, but many of them will be remembered a long, long while.

-----oOo-----

The literature devoted to witchcraft and demonology is immense. In view of the immensity of the bibliography covering the subject, it is practically impossible for any one person to become familiar with the complete field of witchcraft.

In some of the early issues of *The Reader and Collector*, I commented on a few of the older and rarer books on witchcraft and demonology in my collection.

The *Malleus Maleficarum* by *Kramer and Sprenger*; *Guazzo's Compendium Maleficarum* and the *Discours des Sociers* of *Henry Bouquet* were among those mentioned. Inasmuch as these books were written four or five hundred years ago, the mention of a few modern books on witchcraft might be of interest. Due to the wide diversity of opinions between the various scholars it is essential that the student be careful in the choice of his reading, in order that he does not get a one-sided and biased point of view on the subject. In general, the authorities on witchcraft belong in one of three factions depending on whether they are believers, sceptics or rationalists. "Believers, who admit the evidence and its diabolical explanation; sceptics

who deny both and regard the whole business of witchcraft as the product of hysteria and gross credulity; rationalists who accept the evidences but deny the supernatural explanation."

In looking over the numerous books on witchcraft and demonology in my collection, I find that the differences between the three viewpoints are probably best illustrated in the following books.

1. *History of Witchcraft in England from 1558-1718* by
Prof. Wallace Notestein
2. *Witch-cult in Witchcraft in Western Europe* by
Miss Margaret A. Murray
3. *History of Witchcraft and Demonology* by
Mr. Montague Summers

"Prof. Notestein's book is a valuable examination of the material available - but he is completely sceptical and avoids the more nauseating details of witchcraft. Miss Murray, as an anthropologist accepts most of the evidence as proving the continuance of a pre-Christian fertility cult." The Rev. Summers says that when every allowance has been made for fanaticism and hysteria "there remain innumerable and important cases which are not to be covered by any ordinary explanation, which fall within no normal category - and there is no other way of accounting for these save by acknowledging the reality of Witchcraft and diabolic contracts."

Every student of witchcraft would do well to read each of the three volumes mentioned above. I know of no other modern books which cover the various phases and viewpoints of the subject so comprehensively and completely and at the same time give the reader such a broad picture of the three schools of thought.

HISSING MADE EASY
(In which I play no favorites)

HOKUM HOTEL - FANTASTIC ADVENTURES

JULY, 1942

"Hoaka!" I hissed desperately.

No wonder "I" was desperate. He knew darn well that it was a hopeless hiss.

-----oOo-----

FROM THE CROOKED HOUSE in WEIRD TALES

NOVEMBER, 1942

"Come on!" I hissed.

Weird Tales is slipping in more ways than one.

-----oOo-----

FROM ABDICATION in ASTOUNDING SCIENCE-FICTION

APRIL, 1943

He stopped, then hissed: "Wait here!"

Not me, brother; I don't take any chances with guys who can hiss like that.

-----oOo-----

FROM BILL CALDRON GOES TO THE FUTURE in AMAZING STORIES

MARCH, 1943

"You'd better not!" I hisses.

That's just what I've been telling them for years and years.

-----oOo-----

GENERAL DELIVERY

Mr. John W. Campbell, Jr., Editor
Astounding Science-Fiction
79 Seventh Ave.
New York, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Campbell:

In Astounding Science-Fiction, Volume 29, No.4, you published a story called "On Pain of Death." This story was read with considerable interest and pleasure. However, I would like to take exception to the latter part. I quote -

"Then a movement of color on the floor near the warden's desk caught his eye. The floor was laid out in black and white squares, apparently of tile, like a huge checker-board, each section being about three feet square. There was a tiny snake lying on one of the black squares near Guzlick's desk. The snake crawled from a black square to an adjoining white square. Flame licked from nowhere and touched it. It writhed, stiffened, died. Wade..... flattened himself against the wall. The room was not what it seemed. It was a horrible trap..... Then he remembered the snake and the way it had died. Was it possible that he did have a chance? He shoved aside the door, stood for an instant studying the room.Stepping only on the black squares, Wade walked into the room, strode purposefully forward, stopped in front of Guzlick's desk,

"You thought the floor was charged with electricity," Guzlick said. "Well it was. The white squares were charged with negative current, the black squares with positive current. You would have died instantly and horribly, if you had stepped from a black square to a white one. But you saw the clue we left to guide the observant person to safety, you saw the snake, and you stepped only on the black squares and did not short the current through your body."... "An unobservant man would not have noticed the snake. An unreasoning man would not have seen in its death a chance to save his own life."

Wade may have been observing and to a layman he may have been a reasoning person; but to anyone with even a smattering of electrical knowledge, he was the veriest of fools. The snake crawled from a black square to a white square and went up in flame. And, from that little performance Wade deduced that it was safe to walk on the black squares. It was an incorrect deduction. The only helpful fact that could be deduced was this:-- there was a difference of potential between the two particular squares (one white and one black). The electrocution of the snake told Wade absolutely nothing about the remaining squares. It told him very little about the two squares on which the snake crawled. For instance, any one of the following combinations would have resulted in the snake's death, assuming, of course, that the potential difference was sufficiently high to do any damage.

(Cont'd. on page 8)

<u>Black Square</u>	<u>White Square</u>
Positive charge	Negative charge
Positive "	Zero
Zero	Negative charge
Positive charge	Positive " (of different degrees)
Negative "	Negative " (Ditto)
Zero	Positive "
Negative charge	Zero
Negative "	Positive charge

In other words, *Wade* could deduce absolutely nothing about the electrical condition of either the white or the black square. As for the other squares on the floor, any deduction was a sheer impossibility. Hence, it would seem to me that *Wade* did not use much reasoning in selecting the black path and walking square-by-square across the black ones. It was a shocking example of the old adage, "*Fools rush in where angels fear to tread*". As a matter of fact, assuming the border around the checker-board to be at ground potential, it wouldn't have made very much difference which square *Wade* first stepped on - a black one or a white one. He would have gone up in smoke at his first step.

The only safe way for *Wade* to cross the board was to jump or hop from square to square, being careful that at no time was he in contact with any two squares (or one square and the border) simultaneously.

Your move, Mr. *Campbell*.

Very truly yours,

H. C. Koenig.

Mr. L. J. Moffatt
419 Summit Avenue
Ellwood City, Pennsylvania

Dear Mr. Moffatt:

I recently received a couple of envelopes containing a collection of so-called *Chainzine* magazines with a request that I read them, sign them and pass them along to another fan. That request has me stumped; I don't know to whom I should send them - *friend or foe*.

I know one shouldn't look a gift horse in the mouth, but might I suggest that before sending out a new batch of material you spend a little more time in proofreading. Believe me, your magazines could stand a lot of improvement along that general direction. Here's a few glaring examples of misspelled words I culled from the pages of *Cthulhu the Mighty*, Vol. 1, No.3, edited by D. R. Dunmire:

<u>Webster</u>	versus	<u>Dunmire</u>
Reading		Readind
Sit		Sat
Infinite		Infinite
Disastrous		Disasterous (2)
Fastidiously		Festidiously
Source		Scourse
Propped		Proped
Scene		Scence
Monosyllable		Monasylables
Pervaded		Prevaded
Fathom		Phantom
Definitely		Definate ly

Take a couple of sentences from the same story. "*John began reading the crudely penciled document festidiously*". I assume you meant *fastidiously*. But, "*fest*" or "*fast*"; just how does one go about reading that way? Wear silk gloves? And how about that sentence "*Although I half guessed interlude in the cellar was wrong; what Boris Orczy's action could possible accomplish, I could not phantom*." I'll bet you were thinking of *Boris Karloff* in the *Fanthom of the Cellar*.

Then, take the magazine *Around the World in ??? Days*. This is the one you request the reader to send to some fan in *England, Scotland or Australia*. *Cthulhu* only knows why you should pick on those poor guys. Don't you think they deserve something better than a single sheet (one side only) of trite comments on and ads for a few fan magazines. Seems rather senseless to me. After all, we should do everything possible to keep relations friendly. A few more sheets similar to that one will start a war within a war.

But, why go on I've wasted too much time and paper already.

Very truly yours,

H. C. Koenig

POETRY MADE EASY

FROM THE WARRIOR'S SOUL in THE CHRISTIAN STAFF - VOLUME 1, NO. 3

*But do not weep, ye loved ones, so
O'er this body broken and bent.
It once held a soul that had to go -
That has to Heaven went.*

I frankly admit that I know very little about the art of writing poetry. I don't know the difference between an *elegy* and an *ode*; a *sonnet* and a *pastoral*. I haven't the slightest idea where to put the *accent* (if any) in *iambic*, *trochaic*, *dactylic* or *anapaestic* verse. I understand that there is such a thing as poetic license. But that last line "*That has to Heaven went*" carries things a little too far. *Poetic license?? Hells Bells!!* I'd call it *license-unbridled*.

Apropos of the third line, I'm tempted to say "*When you gotta go; you gotta go*"; but I'll skip it.