

THE "VINEGAR" WORM

NO. 3



ADKINS-

"DAMMIT, MARTHA, WHERE'S THE HORSE RADISH?"



THE VINEGAR WORM

The Magazine of Towardness

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Editor-in-Chief

Bob Leman

Assistant Editor

Fred Haggard

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Arbold Dempney
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H. Solon Glebe

Blovita Hae Gnarr
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Orphid Kelp
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Arvis Pneu
Oval Rheen
Kermit Sadpasture
Wadleigh Sears
Ron Smith
Gordon P. Stoff, D.D.
Phrates Vetch

(Ah, there, TIME)

out of the cruets

By George, here's THE WORM #3, practically a quarterly, and with a cover and all. I'm just as surprised as you are--I didn't think I had it in me. But I think its appearance represents a sort of a landmark in the life of the magazine.

For the neophyte fated, the #3 issue represents a considerable obstacle. A first issue is put out in a fine ruddy flush of enthusiasm, and a second in a spirit of grim determination that this glorious contribution to periodical literature shall not perish. But by the time the deadline for #3 approaches, the tenderfoot is inclined to be so fat with self-congratulation upon his production of two consecutive issues that he loses his energy in a cloud of day-dreams about the super-issue that he'll publish next. First thing you know, the deadline has passed, and at that point, of course, a further delay of a week or two can't matter. So time passes, while the Poor-Man's-Greeley tries to line up the ideal issue. After six months or so, when he finally resigns himself to the fact that he's not going to produce it, he figures he might as well start a new zine, since everybody has forgotten about the previous issues, anyway. The new venture may or may not follow the same course.

In this case, logorrhea has prevailed over both sloth and vaulting ambition, and a new Worm--for what it's worth--is handed you herewith. I would like to enter this notice: I would like to hear--in one way or another--from anybody who wants the next issue. I'm not speaking here to those of you who are already on an exchange basis, or to regular correspondents; I'm just trying to determine how many of the people who've been getting my effusions are actually interested. Nothing can make you feel more foolish than talking at length to someone who--you discover later--was nodding all the while you were pontificating. So take that "Free" up there to mean free for exchange, or comment, or a pactsard saying, "Send next ish."

The truth is that only one person has displayed active displeasure with The Worm. (I say active, you'll note; God knows how many of the silent ones detested the thing.) This dissenter was a most subtle fellow: he returned his copy with the central crease intact, obviously unread. Now

it was easy to understand somebody not wanting to have it around the house; what puzzled me was the fact that he'd spent six cents returning it by first-class mail. Then I noticed the return address on the re-used envelope he'd used, and the whole thing was clear. In the third or fourth line of the issue I'd said, ". . . some sort of crank publicity, on the order of scientology or dianetics." I take it that he'd read just that far: the old return address was "The Hubbard Institute of Applied Scientology," or something of the sort, from somewhere in Arizona. I took his point.

Prominent Social Figures Display The Vinegar Worm in Their Bathrooms

I am by nature an uncommonly modest fellow, and words of praise invariably bring a maidenly blush to my damask cheek. But I feel that in fairness to all of you, it is only proper that circulation be given to the reactions of some of those who receive The Worm. (And then, too, this will show you monkeys who don't like The Worm how wrong you are.) These testimonials were not solicited.

--Nikita Krushchev writes from Moscow: "Mr. Dulles has sent me a subscription to The Vinegar Worm. . . I particularly enjoyed the recipes and the investment tips."

--Mike Todd writes from New York: ". . . and even though Elizabeth felt that it was time we retired, I insisted upon staying up until I'd finished The Vinegar Worm."

--Orval Faubus writes from Little Rock: "The Vinegar Worm's fascinating biography of the Chief Justice has led me to confer upon Mr. Warren the key to Arkansas."

--Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart writes from Vienna: "Mann, dieses Buch ist sehr kühl, like."

--Dr. Ferrous Toft writes from Denver: "I had thought we were making excellent progress, but reading The Vinegar Worm made me realize just how much your condition has deteriorated. My failure with you has destroyed my faith in psychoanalysis, and I am giving up its practice to enter the veneer business."

These are only a few of the entirely unsolicited testimonials The Worm has received. Now, aren't all you people who hated the last issue ashamed?

Elsa Maxwell Plans A Vinegar Worm Party For The Duchess of Windsor

Apropos of nothing at all, I feel impelled to repeat for you a fragment of doggerel that has for years cluttered one of the dusty corners of my mind. From time to time I come upon it by chance, blow off the dust to see whether it may have some utility or decorative value, and then return it to the lumber room. Where I got it in the first place, I cannot remember, but I'm pretty sure that our old friend, Anon, received credit as the author. Its title, I think, was something like

Lines upon the Appreciation of Literature

As I was walking on the green,
A small English book I seen.
Carlyle's "Essay on Burns" was the edition,
So I left it lay in the same position.

Can anybody tell me where this thing came from? On the surface it's just the primitive humor that derives from bad grammar; but for some reason or none (a matter for Freud, perhaps) I can't escape a feeling that there's another level of meaning here--one a depth lower than the obvious comment on complacent illiteracy. What is needed is the advice of Henry Kuttner; after all, he was the man who invented people who discovered the true meaning of the first stanza of "Jabberwocky."

Porfirio Rubirosa Reads The Vinegar Worm in Bed

It happens that I am a member of a very select group--a coterie even more exclusive than The After-Shave Club. While this group is not in any sense formally organized, its members have a common bond in their survival of an experience that sent their souls through the fire. From this experience they have emerged purified, purged, and subtly different from other people. (This is called "The Far Lock.") All this serves to bind them more closely together than could any formal organization.

The experience to which I allude is that of sleeping with a bulldog. That is not a common undertaking, and thus there are not many people in The Brotherhood--indeed, it may be that Peggy and I are the only members. To tell the truth, I can't imagine anyone else being cloth-headed enough to allow a bulldog to come into his bed--because, God wot, once the dog is in, you'll never get it out.

Two years ago, when we lived in Illinois, Dolly (full name, Dolly Varden, a three-year-old bitch) very happily slept in the basement. She took it for granted that that was where dogs slept. Then I was transferred out here, and then began our trial by fire.

Dolly came out by Railway Express. She was three days on the way, and those three days must have been three days of horror for her. The bulldog is afflicted with a terrible need for affection; there is no creature afoot with such a slobbering well of love inside it. Your bulldog isn't very bright, and he's a pretty timid critter (despite his ferocious aspect) but he's the only really safe dog with strange children, and he loves all humans with an abject adoration. And in Dolly's great love lay our downfall.

When I fetched her home to our new house, she was in a dreadful state; her normally placid temperament had been replaced by a febrile nervousness; she was as jumpy as a cat. Unless the family was all together, she would go loping uneasily from room to room to make sure nobody had disappeared. Three days without her people had shaken her badly.

So Peggy suggested that we put Dolly's bed in our room--just until she returned to normal, of course. And I--God help me--I agreed. The dog bed was duly put in a corner of the bedroom, and Dolly dosed down there each night. But somehow we found her in our bed every morning, and, after a while, she acquired the notion that our bed was also hers. I made fitful efforts to eject her--every time she came sneaking up onto the bed I'd eject her--but in the end I'd always fall asleep, and next morning, there she'd be.

I gave up, eventually; and from that time to this, when bedtime has come, three of us have gone to bed. And I haven't had a good night's sleep since.

The initial problem is leg position. Forty pounds of sleeping bulldog comprise a dead weight not easily dislodged from its place. Now people move in their sleep, shifting about to allow the various muscles to rest and relax--or at any rate, people without bulldogs do so. Not so with me: when I try to move my legs, they encounter our good Dolly, squatting like a toad atop the covers. The frustration thus engendered eventually wakes me, and I give her a mighty kick. But since the covers lie between the foot and the dog, the main result of my spleen-venting is that I uncover myself. Usually Dolly doesn't even wake up.

Of course, as a rule, I'm not very well covered, anyhow; a blanket is so proportioned that it is just adequate to cover two people: When a great lump of a dog is lying between them on top of the blanket, it becomes entirely inadequate. I have by now become quite accustomed to sleeping with the right side of my body in a deep-freeze.

The bulldog's ancestors, as you may know, were, by profession, fighters of bulls; their technique was to seize the bull by the nose, and to hang on until the bull fell exhausted. For the dog to keep his grip for that long a time, it was necessary that he breathe, and to make that possible, the dogs were bred for shortness of nose. This selective breeding resulted in the "sourmug" bulldog we know today; it also resulted in a twisting and displacement of the various pipes, tubes and conduits that comprise the dog's breathing apparatus. And the effect of this is that he wheezes and snores.

There is no noise on earth better calculated to prevent slumber than the snoring of a bulldog. It is an ululation of infinite variety and magnificent irregularity, full of surprises and startling non-sequiturs. It will drone along for a time with the regularity of a phlegmy metronome--cunningly drawing the unwary into its web--and then, just as the wretched insomniac is about to cross the line into sleep, it abruptly degenerates into a coarse symphony of snorts, hawkings, moans, gasps and gurglings, raising our sleepy subject some three inches off his bed and driving Morpheus to a distance of several leagues. This can go on all night.

There is a further pitfall in sleeping with a bulldog, but it is one which delicacy prompts me not to mention in mixed company. Still, since integrity demands that I place all the facts before you, I will mention, but not elaborate upon, this final refinement of the torture. Not to put too fine a point upon it, the bulldog is by nature flatulent; and while an artful adjustment of feeding times can schedule most of the offensive outbreaks for the daylight hours, there are times when the night is made hideous.

It is said that in every love affair there is one party who is the lover, and another who is the beloved; and that the loved one has the more difficult role. Something of the sort appears to apply here. It is, I suppose, flattering to have a dog which will go to any length to avoid separation from its master; but how much pleasanter life would be if I could disregard Dolly's suffocating affection and send her to the basement where she belongs.

Don't forget to Vote for Miss Vinegar Worm

On his way to work the other evening, my old friend Arbold Dempney dropped in for a chat. Arbold is a vampire by trade, and goes to work about the time I settle down in slippers and smoking-jacket for an evening with my

books. I was, in fact, deep in de Sade's Aline et Valcour when I heard him flapping at the window. I hastened to admit him--with a sigh, I confess: he does run on so.

Arbold is a fine-looking old man when in human form. He has beautiful manners--even though he is a bit of a bore--and I can't understand all the prejudice against him. It strikes me that prejudice because of a man's profession is just as unreasonable as prejudice because of race or religion or nationality. And, after all, vampiring is the only thing Arbold knows.

He settled down in the easy chair and said, irritably, "Things have come to a fine pass when a respectable vampire has to turn to a human being for companionship--I'm glad my old mentor, Count Dracula, isn't around to see what the world has come to. I tell you, it's a lonely thing, being the only vampire in the Rocky Mountain area. My closest colleague is out in San Francisco, and that's too far for visiting. Truly, it's a lonely existence." He shook his head despondently.

"My health isn't what it was, either," he went on. "I take in a lot of poison with my nourishment, these days. Cigarettes! Everybody smokes cigarettes! I've got to find Mormons to get blood without nicotine in it. . . maybe I should move to Salt Lake City." He brooded for a moment. "And the antibiotics. Penicillin, aureomycin--poison! Salk vaccine--gives me cramps! Sulfa drugs, 'flu shots--there's hardly a human alive whose veins aren't full of poison. You've no idea, the trouble I have with my stomach."

He paused to think about his stomach. I expressed sympathy, and that was a mistake.

He bridled haughtily, and snapped, "I don't want sympathy from a human, Leman--I can take care of myself!" I murmured something soothing, and he immediately relapsed into self-pity: "Recruiting's so difficult these days. You get somebody all set up, and these infernal undertakers pump the body full of embalming fluid--they ruin it. Morticians!" He spat the word.

I couldn't think of an appropriate reply, and after a moment he stood up. "I'll be on my way, now. But I probably won't have any luck--the Department of Streets seems to have a crazy compulsion to install a street light over every dark place in town. Still, I suppose we must all do the best we can." And, still shaking his head in maudlin self-pity, he reverted to bat-shape. A little clumsily, he flapped out the window, leaving me to reflect upon the difficult lot of a vampire in these latter days.

King Farouk's Favorite Dish is Vinegar Worm Saute.

There have been some inquiries about the word "oculenteratology," which formerly figured in the name of this magazine, and which remains in the title of our book column. Those few determined souls who fought their way well into the rank jungle of the first issue found there, amidst the noisome undergrowth, an explication of the etymology of this arcane polysyllable: "Ocul is from the Lat. oculus, eye, and ent from the Gr. entomos, insect; hence, oculent, bug-eyed. Teratology, as every school-boy knows, is the study of monsters; thus, oculenteratology--the study of bug-eyed monsters." How's that for smart?

(This is, of course, the age of television. Every thoughtful American has, from time to time, reflected upon this fact, and wished for guidance through the maze of electronic living. The WORM, cognizant of this perplexing problem, has persuaded two leading authorities to give its readers the benefit of their thinking on the question. Professor Robert Bloch, whose essay opens our symposium, is best known outside academic circles, for his collection of cathedrals. Dr. Kermit Sackpasture, our second expert, is fond of nettles.)

THROUGH a PICTURE-TUBE, DARKLY by Robert Bloch

"If television did not exist, it would be necessary to invent it."—*Ben Franklin.

I became a writer of television scripts back in 1950, and began making more or less regular appearances as a television performer in 1953. But it was not until the last month of 1956 that I became a member of the television audience. As a script-writer, I had learned a few things about children's show material, how to do hard-sell and soft-sell commercials, and the best method for pleasing any sponsor (viz: eliminate the show entirely and run a continuous advertisement). As a performer, I exchanged witticisms with an unending succession of night-club comics, second-string stage and screen celebrities, baseball players, musicians, orchestra conductors, and young ladies who owed their appearance on a quiz show more to their mammaries than to their memories.

But it took the last fourteen months as a television viewer to really complete my education. During this period I have learned more about life in this great world of ours (mostly yours; in fact it's all yours, because I want no part of it) than ever before. Truly, television is an enlightening force. The old truism that travel broadens one applies doubly to television. It is impossible to remain seated before a TV screen for fourteen months without broadening considerably.

Here then, are a few of the things about life which I never realized until I discovered them thanks to the electronic miracle of television:

1) All boys, up to the age of 18, are nice. They address every adult male as "sir", and when greatly provoked, they say, "Gosh!" or "Gee!" They live in expensively-furnished white suburban homes, with parents who never quarrel, due to their wonderful sense of humor. When they go out on dates, they wear tuxedos and bring a corsage for their girls. If the boys are pre-adolescent, they usually have some sort of very intellig-

ent pet and a loveable Grandpop. This presents no problem, because the entire family is crazy about animals. Television boys do not smoke, drink, swear, or draw pictures on lavatory walls; there isn't an artist in the entire crowd in fact.

2) Television boys between the ages of 18 and 26 become "juvenile delinquents." They wear leather jackets, and their curly hair is uncombed. They don't live in homes, although ^{SOMETIMES}, when wanted for murder, they invade the homes of exurbanites for a brief stay until the head of the house outwits them. They are usually mentally disturbed, and often speak with a Southern accent. Sometimes, of course, they are members of a city gang, in which case they terrorize innocent girls.

3) Families in the \$20,000-\$30,000 a year bracket have serious problems. More accurately, they have a serious problem: how will the husband manage to become vice-president of the company? It is possible (nay, inevitable) that the best part of an hour will be spent in attempts to wangle such a promotion from the boss. Exactly four minutes before the final commercial, the husband will transform apparent failure into brilliant success and win the coveted position. During the next three minutes he will search his soul, wondering if he really & truly wants material success after all. During the last minute he and his wife will become reconciled to accepting the job, much to the surprise of every three-year-old child in the audience.

4) Many people (particularly comely young women and handsome young men) are subject to "temporary amnesia", during which time they suspect themselves of having committed a murder. Actually, of course, they are innocent; the murder was really committed by some older and

THROUGH A PICTURE TUBE, DARKLY (Cont.)

uglier person. This is a matter which can be cleared up by any competent psychiatrist.

- 5) Competent psychiatrists are able to straighten out virtually all personality-disorders in a one two-minute monologue. Anyone suffering from a mental disturbance is automatically "cured" when a psychiatrist reveals its source. In non-technical terminology, that is. Stuff like "cathexis" sounds too dirty for the audience.
- 6) There is no such thing as a married cowboy.
- 7) No "private eye" has ever failed to solve a case.
- 8) It is impossible to produce an hour-long "variety show" without including, somewhere along the line, a surrealist-ic set as the background for a dance-routine. This routine is performed by a girl who may or may not sing in addition. But no matter the nature of the set itself or the talents of the girl, she is always surrounded by four posturing males in black, skintight pants. Up until July, 1957, this number called for six males. Since then, apparently, the union minimum for dancers has been lowered, so now it's just four. The same four, I suspect, on every show. My suspicions are also directed towards the masculinity of the dancers.
- 9) On the aforesaid "variety show" of which I speak, it is impossible to address any performer by his or her last name.
- 10) All guest-stars have just released a "new album" (Music to Shave Your Legs By,) which must be held up and plugged by the M.C. before the performer is introduced. In return, the guest-star will mention that the M.C. has also just released a new album (Music to Listen To While Waiting For a Laxative To Take Effect) and if the show is a particularly pretentious one, there will be a final announcement to the effect that the whole programme has been recorded, and will be released in a new album, Music to Take the Place of a Laxative.
- 11) Really big television shows are called "spectaculars", which is a technical term meaning "dramatized fairy-tales."
- 12) The human body is a marvelous mechanism, consisting of the "mouth" a small opening, and a short tube extending into a larger space known as a "stomach". This entire area serves as a racetrack for a bunch of pills.
- 13) Cartoon animals spend most of their time jumping up and down and singing the praises of various brands of toilet paper.
- 14) It is impossible to smoke a modern cigarette unless you are an experienced outdoorsman and a trained athlete.
- 15) Every automobile is the lowest of the low-priced three, only it costs more.
- 16) Most television sets themselves are marvelous and complicated instruments, and sometimes it takes half an hour to find the little switch that will turn the TV off.
- 17) It's usually worth the effort to do so. the end.

An alternative title for this issue is THE EYESTRAIN GAZETTE, or, THE OPTOMETRIST'S FRIEND. This is, beyond doubt, the vilest piece of mimeography ever tendered to even so long-suffering a group as fandom. I'm convinced that an eight-year-old with a second-hand hectograph could do as well. Unfortunately, I can't. Maybe next time. . .

THE COVER: The Worm is by Norman Lynch, from specifications by Walt Kelly, the ghoul by Dan Adkins, and the caption by Filson Woover. The whole thing was skillfully cut upon a Sure-Rite stencil by Ellis Mills, who also cut the stencils for those pages which feature justified margins, small type and neat layout. The rest of the issue, which features nervous margins and strikeouts, was stencilled by the editor.

WHAT TO DO TILL THE REPAIRMAN COMES by Kermit Sadpasture

We all like to think that a catastrophe is what happens to someone else, but don't be fooled; it can happen to you. And while one always hopes for the best, it is well to be prepared for the worst. Therefore, I propose in this article to offer some helpful suggestions, which, if followed, will help make more bearable those difficult hours--or days--between the breakdown of the television set and the comforting arrival of the repairman.

The first, and most important, rule to follow is: Do Not Panic. To keep one's head in an emergency is to win half the battle. But this is more difficult than it first appears. The N.T.E.C. has made an intensive study of the behaviour-patterns of people with non-functioning TV sets, and their behaviour is generally as follows: first, there is a moderately self-confident experimentation with the dials, which becomes progressively more excited, until it gives way to a frantic twisting of all accessible controls. This is followed by random thumping (and sometimes kicking) at the cabinet of the TV. A few minutes later, the stark truth begins to sink in: the TV is out-of-order!

It is at this point that panic usually sets in. It must be admitted that this situation is a demoralizing one. The silence, which was bearable when it was believed to be only temporary, suddenly becomes oppressive and menacing, as the realization dawns that it is to be protracted. The afflicted family now enters a period of febrile excitement, each member shouting advice at all the others, as the small children weep, or roll on the floor in a tantrum.

Except in the most severe cases, however, at least one member of the family will retain sufficient presence of mind to call the repairman. The disaster victims now enter the difficult waiting period.

It is during this period that a little foresight will prove its worth a hundred fold. There will unquestionably be severe nervous tension; this is inescapable when a house that formerly echoed cheerily to banion-pad commercials finds itself muffled in silence; but there are a number of effective methods of alleviating this tension.

One of the best of these methods is the reading of books. Every household should have several of these tucked away as an emergency kit. Some houses already have books; but if yours does not, you should take steps to acquire some. They come in a variety of sizes and prices, and in all decorator colours also. A search of the

yellow pages of your telephone directory will tell you where they can be purchased. It might be well to buy one for each member of the family.

An excellent kind of book to buy is the type called a novel. This sort of book tells a story, and is, in many respects, as satisfying as a television drama. The neophyte will doubtless be made a little uneasy by the absence of commercials, but relief may be obtained from reading the small advertisements in an ordinary newspaper; these ads are quite TV-like, extolling, as they do, the virtues of armpit deodorants, laxatives, and patent medicines, in familiar TV terms. ("Doctors call it tuberculosis -- we call it TIERED LUNGS." BREAK the laxative habit, take OUR laxative!")

A second effective palliative for this nervous tension is conversation. Most simply described, conversation consists merely in people talking to each other. While at first this may seem to be a bit a pointless undertaking, a surprising number of people have learned to enjoy it. A word of warning however: It is best not to talk about TV.

During the waiting period, a novel and enjoyable procedure at meals is possible: the entire family may sit around a table to eat, as at a restaurant. Eating thus has not only the fascination of novelty; it is also an excellent means of educating the younger children, who may someday find themselves dining in a house without TV trays.

These are but a few of the measures you may take to prevent your disaster from utterly destroying you. A little thought will suggest many other possibilities. But keep one thing in mind: if you find the strain becoming too much--if you begin to fear for your sanity -- do not be stubborn. Visit a neighbor, and absorb an athlete's-foot-cure, or an excess-hair-remover commercial. This will return you refreshed and strengthened to your books, conversation, or other stop-gap. And remember: Do Not Despair; The Repairman Cometh...
the end.

I hit him in the gut, and he fell screaming over the precipice. I watched him fall, saw him splatter on the rocks below, in a beautiful pattern of blood and gore.

I stood for a time looking at the pattern, engrossed in the unusualness of it. When I reached the point where I saw the octopus in it, in my imaginings, I left, not wanting to spoil the previous esthetic feelings.

Such a bastard, I thought. He never looked so good before.

However, I want you to understand that I had nothing against him, personally.

Actually, I never knew him.

But he didn't treat her right, not at all, and I knew he was no good. Now me, I'm right for her and, though I had nothing against him personally, he had to go because of it, really he did.

Because he was her husband.

The bastard.

I never really understood women. Why do they always marry men who make them unhappy? I know this is true, without exception, and I watch them, on the street, in the stores, and I see the tragedy, the misery, written plainly on their faces. And I feel sorry for them, I am lost in sorrow at their plight. If they had only had the wisdom to marry me, then they would be happy; but all women are miserable because they lack me.

Who can explain it? Not I; and I always left them to their own damnation--until I saw her.

I loved her from the first moment, the first second, the first ecstatic glance. How can I explain? The things she means to me are meaningless to you. But she is the one I love, shall always love, and now I've killed for her. Killed so she can have me, and have me she shall, in this moment of triumph, while her recently departed husband lies in his beautiful pattern spread out on the rocks below where I stood.

I must see her, I thought. Go to her. Let her know that now she is free from his stifling influence.

That now she can have me.

I got into my car and drove down the dusty road, thinking of her. If only she were here with me now, I thought, it would be fine and good and she would be so happy.

But I knew I had to get to her house before I could see her.

So I drove through the dust and the day on into town toward the one who was waiting for me there with eager arms and breathless anticipation.

"My love," I said to myself, practicing, "here I am. I am yours, and you can have me, for your husband is dead."

I savored it on my lips, tasting the taste of it, finding it good, and at last swallowing it, to my satisfaction.

And then I was there, at last, at long last, I was there. I jumped out of the car and ran up the walk.

Composing myself, I straightened my tie and combed my hair, checked my suit for bloodstains. There were none. I was presentable. Now I could see her at last, at long last, I was here.

I rang the bell.

I waited.

I rang the bell again.

Hope began to sink inside me; I felt my soul crying out in anguish

I, ME -- Ron Smith

at the thought that she might not be at home, that she might be away, so that she could not have me in this hour of her need.

Then I heard her. Coming toward the door.

She opened it.

"My love," I said. "Here I am. I am yours, and you can have me, for--"

"Who are you?" she interrupted nastily.

Now was that nice?

-The End-

A Tredger Without Arbs is About As Useful As a Bent Flin-Wheel

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS EXTRA LOUD

For a number of years I've been receiving booklists from Bob Michael's Werewolf Bookshop (7055 Shannon Rd, Verona, Pa.). The last list included a broadside that was very odd, indeed. This curious document offers--to those members of the public who have an extra \$4,500.00--an unparalleled opportunity to get rich. The broadside says.

Michael himself, it appears, is pulling down a cool \$346.00 weekly through the secret being advertised. His sheet is headed, "Why Werewolf Prices Were Ridiculously Low, or, How You Too Can Make an Extra \$346 A Week." (Get that "extra!") A year or so ago, the brochure says, Werewolf was selling books below cost. And why? Why, to raise money to hire "a man to do a certain thing in a certain way--a man whose business it is to do that certain thing. At this moment. . . I'm taking out earnings of \$346.00 a week from what this man is continuing to do for me. . . And I'll keep getting \$346.00 a week out of my investment during all the foreseeable future years of my life."

Now it's my recollection that about a year ago the reason being given for the "ridiculously low" prices was that the book business was so bad that stock was being cleared to make room for warehousing products for a delivery route Michael was taking up to make ends meet. But let that go. I know you're anxious to learn how you too can make that extra \$346. Well, it's a secret. You've got to have \$4,000.00--we're told that much --but the rest of the method won't be divulged unless you give Michael 10% of what you make. This seems fair enough, but there's just a leetle hook: the first \$500.00 of this royalty must be paid in advance--before you're told the secret, that is. But, by George, if you'll send him the \$500.00, he'll let you in on the method. Line forms on the right.

I've got Egyptian flu--caught it from my mummy.--DAG

Back in 1948 or '49 or '50 or thereabouts, Fantastic Adventures ran a lead "novel" which incorporated, somewhere about its mid-point, an entirely gratuitous and irrelevant little essay of one or two chapters' length on the labor theory of value, the theories of unearned increment and surplus value, and kindred Marxian vapor. I can't remember the issue, the name of the story, or the author, but I want to get hold of the issue. It's my hope that one of you is a scholar who can remember this thing, and tell me what issue it was. No prizes, but I'll be mighty grateful.

"I drew in a breath which drained the porch of gnats."

--Peter DeVries, in Comfort Me With Apples

NO ORCHIDS FOR SIR BODGERLEIGH

By
Phrates Vetch

(Inspired by a reading of certain British novels which attempt, with varying degrees of success, to depict life in the United States.)

Chapter I

Vice-Admiral Sir Vivian P.P. Bodgerleigh, Bart., Duke of Stilton, F.R.S., V.C., was a man of regular habits. Precisely at eight each morning his man Blotch noiselessly entered his bedroom, placed a pot of tea and a basin of crumpets on the table, and then silently awakened the duke by drawing the blinds to flood the room with hot London sunshine.

On the morning of the hunt the duke awoke in fine fettle, despite the three bottles of claret he had consumed the previous evening. He took a noisy swallow of tea, spooned up a few mouthfuls of crumpets, and said expansively, "Morning, Blotch."

"Mornin', Sir Bodgerleigh. I sye, gov'nor, it ain't 'arf a fine dye for the 'unt. Proper sunny it is," the honest fellow answered in broad Yorkshire. "An' if I was you, I fink I'd 'urry me dressin'. Your storm an' strife says it's sausage an' mash for breakfast." As he spoke, he was laying out the duke's hunting-clothes.

Chapter II

As the duke entered the great hall, the hub-bub of the hunt breakfast was momentarily stilled as all the guests bowed or curtsied. "Oh, pip pip!" cried Sir Bodgerleigh, graciously. "Carry on." The guests gratefully returned to their porridge, oat-cakes and boiled rashers, while obsequious varlets gathered up the kippers, trifle and other comestibles which had fallen from plates.

The wireless was tuned to the third programme, and a Teddy Boy band was making a merry din. Sir Bodgerleigh had just filled his plate, and was making his way to the table, when a cheery voice at his elbow said, "What ho, pater! What, what?" The duke turned to face a skinny chinless young man resplendently turned out in striped trousers and morning-coat.

The duke looked puzzled. At length he said, "Oh, er, quite, quite. How d'ye do?" He stared about a bit vaguely, until Blotch whispered to him, "It's Master Evelyn, your eldest son," at which he boomed out, "Evelyn, my boy, shouldn't you be--er--in the navy, or somewhere?"

"Just been sent down from Oxford, by Jove!" said Evelyn. "So I got out the old Bentley and tocdled along to the ancestral mansion. Bit of breakfast now, what?"

Sir Bodgerleigh purpled with rage. "In those clothes? Go at once and change, sir! This is a hunt breakfast!"

Chastened, the young man retired.

Chapter III

From without came the clear, bell-like "Yoiks, yoiks" of the hunting-horn, and the assemblage trooped into the courtyard, where liveried bridegrooms stood at the horses' heads. The gentlefolk mounted, said, "View hello" to each other, gulped a tot of rum from their stirrups, and galloped off in pursuit of the savage fox.

How glorious is a hunt! The hounds in full cry, the mighty hunters effortlessly leaping walls and trampling cabbages, the music of the horn, the wind in the face, the rum in the belly--ah, life is worth living, then.

They thundered through Picadilly, leaped a hedge into Soho, and made the long ascent into the West End. Thence over a wall, past Stonehenge, along Watling Street, and through Limehouse, where serfs tugged their forelocks as the gentry galloped by. Over the downs they flew, and into the moors (or Fox's Earth) where the fox was surrounded. Guns rang out, and the ferocious animal fell dead. As is the custom, the master of the hunt dismounted and brushed the corpse, using a silver-backed military brush. The long day's hunt was over.

Chapter IV

Late that evening, Sir Bodgerleigh stood before the fire in his library, warming his whiskey-and-soda at the flames. Close by, at rigid attention, stood his son, Evelyn.

"Now, sir," said the duke, turning, "For what reason were you sent down?"

The young man turned white. He swallowed convulsively and stammered, "N-nothing at all, pater, really. Bit of fun. Girl in family way--bit of drugging--blackmailed the head of the college--coshed a fellow to get his wallet--only larks."

The old man stood as if carved from a block of stone. Only the shattering of the glass in his hand and the fact that he demolished several pieces of furniture with his walking-stick betrayed his emotion. But when he spoke, his voice shook.

"You lie, sir! What you have done is beneath contempt, but now to lie about it shows that you are hopelessly corrupt. Boyish pranks of the kind you describe are one thing, but what you have actually done is quite another." His voice almost broke. "I have had reports: you wore brown boots in town; you called a looking-glass a "mirror" and a napkin a "serviette"; you were seen going to the cinema." With the last word he turned his back, to avoid showing his emotion.

The wretched youth, thoroughly cowed, retained enough decency to feel a pang at the old man's grief. Suddenly, he realized the enormity of what he had done: he was, in effect, a traitor. He was a rotter, a cad, a wallah! How much better if his younger brother, Mary, were the heir!

And then he knew what he had to do. Squaring his shoulders, he silently removed an elephant gun from the wall, and stole from the room. A moment later a shot was heard. Evelyn Bodgerleigh had paid his debt.

In the library, the duke brushed a tear from his eye with his sleeve, stiffened his upper lip, and went forth to break the news to the tenantry.

-The End-

SCAVENGINGS

A department in which The Worm quotes its distinguished contemporaries.

*

From a short story in DADA ILLUSTRATED, ed. by Fearsome and Sadpins:

As the gloptik charged, Space-Captain Mark Murdock saw the long sharp fangs in it's horrible mouth with slime dripping from them. One bite and he would be dead! And Princess Drulynge would be at Vorkeyville! mercy! He took a strong grasp of his intra-parabolic vector disintegrator and waited, while the gloptik blew it's bad breath at him. Flames rang out, and the gloptik fell dead! With one of it's scaly heads at Space-Captain Mark Murdock's feet!

Space-Captain Mark Murdock felt relieved.

*

From an unclassifiable piece by Rachelix Kris in A GAUCHE, ed, by Lloyd Sunburn:

. . . his five senses absorbing with clandestine satisfaction the melancholic spiral descent of gray tepid water where the plug's removal contrived a hiatus in the sink's porcelain monotony, Echead towelled with Continental élan a face now decently relieved of hirsute blemish.

--Mucilage! he sighed, feeling rare Indo-Aryan root-words vibrating in the various nails of his extremities. The ultimate cupful of water hastened--glurph, glurph--down the drain, eager to be one with the wine-dark sea. Echead grinned in agony, aware that in the world were cornets, epistemology, proteins and alembics.

*

From an editorial in the O-0 of the IFFFFF:

Our new organizational set-up will soon make us the best fan-group in existence, and then a lot of so-called BNF's will be singing a different tune. WE've always been the best fan-group in the world, and most of the people who talk against us are ex-IFFFFF's who'd like to be back in. This year's membership drive will bring our membership to 500 (400 new members won't be hard to get) and there'll probably be a letter from every one of them in CEREAL. We plan an anthology of every letter ever published in the lettercols of the prozines, indexed by writer, fir line, and form of complimentary closing. Then there's the super-issue of the O-0, contributions to which will be requested from Campbell, Boucher, Mills, Shaw, Gold; Quinn, Garnsback; van Vogt, de Camp, Bester, Piper, Knight, Sturgeon, Weinbaum, Miller, Bloch, Tucker, Greenhall, Willis and General McArthur. All in all, there's a big year coming up for the IFFFFF.

AFTERTHOUGHTS

This page is added to the issue chiefly to advance an apology for the joke about Mike Todd on page two. Unless one uses the newspaper method, and does his printing only a few minutes before publication, this kind of thing is bound to occur from time to time. What may originally have been a mildly funny joke has been turned by unforeseen events into a dazzling example of bad taste. De mortuis nil nisi bonum, says the aphorism; and this might well be extended to de mortuis nil nisi serious. As it happens, I thought that Todd's overpriced travelogue was a deadly dull business; but I wouldn't want you to think that my method of movie criticism is ad hominem, or that I carry it beyond the grav

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You probably didn't notice, but "The Oculenteratologist's Bookshelf" isn't in this issue. This book column is a pet of mine; there are only a couple of things I enjoy more than reading, and one of those is talking about books. The space just wasn't available in this issue; but since circumstances have granted me this extra page, I think I'll use it to thumbnail a few of the books I was going to review.

THE MIND CAGE, by A. E. van Vogt.

I may as well be blunt about it: this is an abominably bad book. I had heard that van Vogt--crystal clear, and a living testimonial to Dr. Hubbard--had given up the practice of literature, but here he is back at the old stand, changing the subject every 800 words. He has written his usual disheveled mare's-nest of a novel, a book of relentless confusion, as full of loose ends as a mop. van Vogt used to do this sort of thing with so much verve that you didn't notice what a mess it was, but The Mind Cage is perfectly lifeless, and all that remains is the confusion. Stay away from this one.

THE MIDWICH CUCKOOS, by John Wyndham.

What happens is, a bunch of aliens land their saucer in a backwater English village, put the entire populace to sleep, impregnate all women of nubile age, and take off again. The offspring of these intergalactic unions are, to say the least, unEnglish, being telepathic and capable of mental control over humans. They constitute, in fact, a grave menace to the human race.

How the human race wins through is the burden of the novel. This is the third time Wyndham has written this book, and it's just as fascinating as it was when it was The Day of the Triffids and Out of the Deeps. Buy it.

A STIR OF ECHOES, by Richard Matheson.

The notion here is that a man named Tom Wallace--an ordinary middle-class fellow, just like you and me--has latent psychic powers, which are released when he is hypnotized as a parlor trick. The possession of these powers is more a burden than anything else, and their presence causes Wallace all sorts of mental anguish, and almost destroys his marriage. This is the best idea Matheson has had since I AM Legend, and while it's extremely lightweight, in-one-eye-and-out-the-other stuff, you'll enjoy it while you're reading. Fair-to-medium.

BOB LEMAN
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Alexandria, Va.