

THE
SCIENCE—
FICTION
FAN

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I never knew H.P. Lovecraft.

He died at a time when I had approached the point of writing to him in connection with some allusions of his to a story of mine which appeared in a certain issue of The Californian magazine.

The total sum of knowledge concerning this remarkable man came then and comes now from Donald A. Wollheim who had something more than a nodding acquaintance with him. In all of his observations of the great writer I detected a note of colossal respect, an invisible, hidden obeisance to the mind (and later) to the memory of the man whom Robert W. Lowndes has called "the last great bourgeois philosopher".

Aside from these comments and sundry other observations, Lovecraft to me was always a great dark, legendary being, swathed in the folds of long-gone centuries, a man of whose actual existence in our times I was never too certain. When the round-table talk turned to him in the few

months before his death this impression grew upon me. But when Wollheim proposed to a group of interested people his plan to save Lovecraft from being corresponded to death by the plethora of fans deluging him with mail, I suddenly became aware of him as a very much alive personality.

It is my ill luck never to have met him personally. But I am content with the few final impressions I have preserved of Lovecraft, the memory of two rooms in an ancient house in Providence, R.I., buried in the stately past that Lovecraft loved and to which he escaped from a world he never quite knew or understood, a harsh, cruel, cellophane-wrapped planet born too suddenly out of the soft hand-kissing ways of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Wollheim and I went to Providence for the purpose of visiting that house which even then had begun to be regarded as something of a shrine.

The city exuded an **atmosphere** so tangible that I felt it almost immediately we had left the train. From all sides about us low hills rose slantingly to the horizons. We stood in a sort of cup-shaped hollow and the town climbed about us in bow on row of ancient, red-brick structures, with only the suggestion of a modern building or two in the business district.

It is a place of no especial rush and hurry. Except for the roaring railroad terminal it might very well have been just another country town lost somewhere in the hills. Civilization does not seem to have changed its soul. It is a town of tradition. We walked along "College" streets and "Pine" streets and "Market" streets, all lined with tall and stately trees. On our journey up the slope toward the great college in whose

vicinity stands the Lovecraft home we met hardly another soul. On a sleepy Sunday, Providence is very still, very majestic and clean and white.

The house was a perfect frame for the life of the man who once lived in it. Shut off from direct view of the sloping street by a bend in a long, brick-walled alley, it hid from the large imposing library building beside it, the waving branches of trees surrounding it like ~~un~~thrust arms warding off the threat of absorption into a busy, moving world. We stood before it at last and gazed down the hill through the quiet, still air.

To the eye, the house, the town, the trees and the sky was a frozen world of wax, and faded, imprisoned color. Steeples and gables of forgotten years filled the whole, circling horizon.

Lovecraft's aunt, Mrs. Gamwell, met us at the door. She was a very sweet lady, not long past middle age with an aura of crinoline and bouquets of violets and old lace about her. We walked up a flight of narrow stairs together. She took our hats, ushered us down a short corridor and into a large room.

Suddenly I realized why Lovecraft had withered outside it.

It was an artist's studio, minus the huge-slanting windows, but very reminiscent of the conventional, a low-ceilinged, broad and long sort of room with its walls and floor bathed in sunlight that poured in a flood of rich gold through quaintly curtained windows and half-hidden embrasures.

It was of another set of years, a dust collector of the traditions, tastes and substance of a particularly nostalgic section of the past when Poe wandered about the back streets and hilly back alleys of this place.

A lot of oddly assorted moods and atmospheres seemed to have caught on its gingerbread character as it plowed through decades.

Plants and growing tendrils filled whole

corners. Lovecraft's desk, set against the north west window was untouched. His pencils, pens, blotting paper, instruments of writing and many scraps of note paper lay as though the author had left but for an instant.

Large squares of brilliant sunlight caught the desk-top in an interlocking web of light as the light came through the window, throwing the low-backed, angular chair behind it into polished relief. The window itself was wreathed in growths of vines and brightly colored flowers. It was the cheeriest spot in the room.

Outside it was mahogany gloom, scarred and heavy with shadows where the golden sunlight did not lay.

Mrs. Gamwell touched a photograph of Robert W. Barlow laying on a small, wicker-work table. "He's a dear boy," she breathed.

We talked for many minutes. She told us of her nephew's last days, his dry humor and his indifference as death approached. He had gone out of the world in scorching agony, the victim of an obscure but malignant disturbance of the digestive organs. As she spoke it seemed as though he had died bereft of his friends but secure in the embrace of the past he clung to even in death.

We saw a new phase of Lovecraft through her words, an eager, boyish side, impulsive, even rash. Through her weaving it was easy to imagine him sitting wrapped in an old bathrobe on the spiderish chair before his desk, writing, a Voltaire sans smarting sarcasm and biting rhetoric.

There was another room, a small one, its door almost invisible amongst a wilderness of large chromos and hard-stacked bookcases. It was his bedroom, replete with countless tiny objets d'art, sculptures and paintings by Barlow, old prints and bits of glass. We lingered in it only a moment. It was repulsive, dingy, unrelieved by light.

Then for awhile we were alone.

Donald prowled, fingering the bindings of the books, that lay in the interminable rows of shelves by the hundreds. He glanced at them hungrily with the eye of the collector. I stalked about uneasily, ferreting out atmosphere, fingering gingerly smallish plaster sculptures by Clark Ashton Smith sneering somewhat at the air of faded primness and retreat that permeated the house. But as the afternoon wore on I felt a sympathy with the room, with its late occupant, growing. For a very little while I felt very close to Lovecraft. It didn't seem incongruous then, the identity in my mind of the austere, mature giant of literature and myself a very young and very immature man, callow, brash and filled with ignorant contempts.

The mood passed. I saw again, in a light of mixed sympathy and disinterest the tumbled heaps of papers, the dirty, endless rows of books, ancient tomes and manuscripts, cracked with age, the dusty, futile remnants of a life.

What a charming anacronism the house was! It does not belong in this world and it cannot long remain. It faded romantically into a twilighted distance as we left, lost in a horde of other houses wrapped in vines lit ruddy by the sun. I remember saying something then to Wollheim about his luck to have known Lovecraft. But I am not sure of my own desires upon that point. I am not too envious, even now that the distance of the years increases the stature of the author, of the group of people who knew him intimately, Barlow, Long, Campbell, Derleth, Loveman and others.

Lovecraft, for all his giant knowledge and piercing, calculating intellect, was the deadly enemy of all that to me is everything, an inflexible Jehovah-man, a gaunt, prophet-like high priest of dark rites and darker times, clad in funereal robes and funereal visage, gazing with suppressed hate upon a great new world which placed more value upon the sanitary condition of a bathroom fixture than all the greasy gold and jewels, the bones and dirt-crushed half knowledge of a thousand and a thousand-thousand kingdoms of the hoary past, whose faithful chronicler he was and in which he lived.

STFIANA
 Ralph Milne Farley
 No. 6.

A rare collector's item, picked up in a second hand bookstore in Washington, D.C. and of which only one copy is known to exist, furnished the inspiration for two science-fiction novels, which appeared almost simultaneously, namely: the third Pellucidar story of Edgar Rice Burroughs in Blue Book, and my "The Radio Flyers" in Argosy.

This book bears the intriguing title "A journey to the Earth's Interior, or Have the Poles Really Been Discovered", by Marshall B. Gardner, published by the author at Aurora, Illinois, 1920. It is a second edition, the first having appeared in 1913. I'd like to get hold of a copy of the first.

Gardner's thesis is that the earth is hollow, with a central sun, and openings at the poles. The aurora (borealis, now Illinois) is the light of this sun, shining through these openings. The clouds of red pollen, which occasionally drift down from the north to cover the polar ice, come from the tropical land within the earth. That land is also the origin of the ancient myth of a warm country far to the northward. It would explain why certain birds migrate north, instead of south, in winter. It would explain the carcasses of elephants found frozen in the polar ice.

According to Gardner's theory the shell formation of the earth brings the center of gravity (now a sphere of gravity) nearer to the surface, and thus compensates for the fact of an earth much lighter than the earth would be if solid.

But where Gardner slipped was in assuming that Feary and Cook lied about discovering the north pole. Their records of a superhuman number of

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miles covered when nearest to the supposed pole, instead of discrediting them, fit in with Gardner's theory. For distance in polar exploration is measured in latitude and is then converted into miles; and the increasingly rapid curvature of the surface of the earth as it bends over the edge of the polar orifice would increase the coverage of latitude and hence the apparent coverage of ground in the vicinity of 90°. Furthermore, at any point on the top of the rim, the celestial north pole would be directly overhead, and thus make Peary and Cook sincerely believe that they stood at the top of the world. Also Cook's arrival at a slightly different point on the rim would account for Peary not finding Cook's records.

Anyway, Burroughs found Andre's lost balloon just within the polar orifice. And I found there the descendants of Bishop Uppri's lost expedition to colonize America in 1121.

As proof that Burroughs got his ideas from the same copy of the same book I did, I have the following letter from him, dated May 20, 1926, nearly a year before our two stories appeared:

Dear Mr. Farley:

I greatly enjoyed "A Journey to the Earth's Interior" which made me very much want to believe that the earth is hollow and quite convinced my children of the fact. We awaited daily the report from the Norge that they had discovered the north polar orifice. Maybe Wilkins will have better luck.

Again thanking you and with kindest personal regards, I am

Very sincerely yours,
Ldgar Rice Burroughs.

A discussion of this book, and of the Burroughs-Farley episode, appears in Amazing Stories for March 1940; but it is quite evident therefrom that the author thereof had never actually seen the book itself, and in fact got all his information from some secondary source.

YE FANTASIE BOOKES
by Ye Olde Booke Collector

Stanton A. Coblentz is known to science-fiction for his numerous satirical novels and short stories in which he deals with diverse aspects of our present world. He is rated as one of fandom's favorite authors. He is the author of a number of published volumes on various themes. In 1925, Minton Balch & Co., published THE DECLINE OF MAN by Stanton A. Coblentz, M.A. The work, which is non-fictional, reads like a college thesis and might be, save for lack of footnotes.

The general idea of the book is to determine whether or not humanity as a species is on its way out. We have all read in stories the question as to whether or not the mammalian age, of which we are the highest example, is not due to go the way of the reptilian and amphibian ages before us into the junk-heap of nature. Coblentz examines this question and arrives at the unpleasant conclusion that it is quite probable that we shall. Of course he leaves a little loop-hole through which humanity might crawl through but it is plain to see that he doesn't put much faith in it.

Coblentz examines the reasons for the decline and fall of the preceding dominating species - the reptiles and also the question of why any species of animal becomes extinct. He points out a novel theme in the problem of racial old age. That is that a species ages even as does an individual and that at certain point a species can die of old age even as can an individual. He analyses the factors that determine the age of a species and concludes that humanity is actually

a doddering old fogey among animals and virtually ready to kick the bucket any century now. Comparison of the superior physique of the Cro-Magnon and other prehistoric gentlemen with our own puny selves prove that our bodies are senile. Our moronic habits of coddling our weak-minded and our physically backward individuals is doing us no end of harm - if we let nature kill them off as she should, we might be prolonging the species' life. Further our brain power is not what it used to be and we are tending to overspecialize. Overspecialization in armor and size is what did in the dinosaurs and overspecialization in industrial organization, national fevers, military armor, and such like will do us in. A workman on a belt line in a modern factory does less brain work than a craftsman of a thousand years ago. Hence his brain goes to pot. Such like theorization applies to many other major factors.

Coblentz admits that some sort of drastic reorganization of society might save us but he doesn't really believe it will occur. We are too far gone in our overspecialization and our social errors to pull through.

Be that as it may, Coblentz is having a good time as writer while society still exists. He is author of a number of volumes of poetry (none of which seem to get any great rave notices) and readers of the poetry magazines know him as the editor and publisher of WINGS about which at least one poet to my knowledge shudders at mention. THE WONDER STICK (Cosmopolitan Book Co., 1929) is a children's book about Ru the Cave-Man. You know Ru, everybody do. Read one cave-man tale, read a dozen, they're all the same. At least it is labeled a book for boys, that will save at least our feminine fans from boredom.



In the realm of science fiction fandom it is only natural that certain fans will be more active and therefore better known than others. And as these fans become more popular it is also only natural that certain cities and towns are associated with them.

New York City, is by far, the hot-bed of fan activity. From there are mailed numerous publications; there numerous clubs, past and present, have had there headquarters; and from the Big Town pour countless letters from such "big shots" as Wollheim, Sykora, Dockweiler, Pohl, Glasser, Schwartz, Michael and others.

Philadelphia ranks second with its Society composed of Baltadonis, Madle, Rothman, etc, and is a source of much activity.

Dave Kyle made Monticello well-known ere he moved to 'York City; as did Morrie Dollens with E. St. Paul, Will Shepherd with Oakman and Chas. Horning with Elizabeth, while Forrie Ackerman and his crowd have placed Los Angeles in the limelight.

Clair P. Beck, late of Reno, has become known as the "Hermit of Lakeport" since leaving the Divorce Capitol for sunny California. (Please notice no pun made here about California weather).

And of course we must not forget Samuel Moskovitz at Newark, Bill Miller and Jim Blish at East Orange, the "14" gang of Chicago and Brother F(an) Wiggins of Denver.

But our lesson for to-day deals with that new Mecca of Oklahoma, that fan-center of the Southwest that hot-spot of Stephens County, to wit: the village of Comanche.

A sprawling town of 1704 people (1930 census) it is situated on a series of steep hills of red clay and has as its outstanding features the intersection of two highways at main street (which boasts a stop-and-go lite) a modern high school, complete with a willing but ineffectual football team; a weekly newspaper, a theatre and an ancient water tower. On Saturdays it assumes a semi-crowded appearance when the farmers drive their teams and Model T's in to spend the day a-spittin' and a-politicin' while the kids take in Buck Jones at the Ritz.

But Comanche's bid for fame (small as it is) in the fantasy world comes from the fact that it has spawned no less than three died-in-the-wool fans and half-dozen "luke-warms".

No greater contrast in personality could be found than in these three: Louis Clark, Daniel McPhail and Jack Speer.

Louis, swarthy, heavy-set, age 20, is now a Treasury employee in Washington, D.C. Of humble means, he has pulled himself up in the world by his boot-straps since the days of high school where he was an honor student and made outstanding grades in chemistry, (he then had his own lab), physics, math, shorthand and English. After one year in Oklahoma U. finances forced him to enter the CCC, whereby rapid promotion he was elevated to a post in the Narcotics Division of the F.B.I. then to his present position. As a fan, he acquired a complete collection of all Gernsback magazines except the first six Amazin'gs. Also a huge array of books, fiction and pure science. He wrote voluminously, scientific works, poetry, fiction

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(including much stf.) and assisted McPhail with a carboned magazine, "Strange Stories of Science" and later did a science department for Science Fiction News.

Dan, slender, good-natured, age 22, has finally come back to his old home town after years of living throughout the Southwest. He graduated in Oklahoma City and is a newspaperman by profession and a fan by choice. Easy going, he continually fights against the course of least resistance in matters of correspondence and printing, but usually with little success. He tries to be a snappy dresser, has a failing for beautiful girls and takes an active interest in the National Guard, being a Signal Corporal. He began stf in 1929 and kept it up until '34 when he dropped out. Then during 1936 he brought out his Science Fiction News and printed the final three numbers. He organized the Oklahoma Scientific Ass'n. which enrolled about a dozen members.

Last year he "soured" on stf when after months of effort for the Phantasy Legion, Dave Kyle let the organization die. But being an optimistic sort, he was pepped up again during the fall by the FAPA to such an extent that he bought a mimeograph from Montgomery Ward and now issues the Rocket for each mailing. He now has a new mag (Fandom, he calls it) all dummied out and says that as soon as he can spare a night away from the girl friend, he will start it.

Jack is about five foot six inches of energy surmounted by a fiery red thatch. Why he has never been nicknamed "Red" is beyond me. He graduates this year as a State Honor Student with exceptional grades. Unlike "Mac" he scorns the sports world; his main hobby outside stf being amateur photography in which he develops his own prints. Former associate of the News, in which he made his fan debut by covering comics, he now is widely known for his popular Institute of Private Opinion poll. which costs him about 40¢

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a month to conduct. On his hectograph, he has brought out the first of a long series of mags (Hermes, Loki), which will be unique in that he will change the name of each succeeding issue and double (or try to) the size over that of its predecessor. These mags go in the FAPA mailings.

Jack carries on a heavy correspondence, especially with his pals, Madle, Wiggins and Pogo, the High Priestess of FooFoo.

He leans toward Socialism (Mac calls his 'Fandoms only Fascist Fan') and has opposed McPhail in every international conflict of the past several years. They wage terrific carbon-copy-newspaper battles, as witness his "Mussolina Poking Bird" versus Dan's "Ethiopian Eagle" and his "Insurgent Epistle" versus "Loyalist Lion". Any day now may see the "Japanese Jaugernaut" opposing the "Chinese Conqueror".

Although these two live only five blocks apart, they meet only about once a week; so to keep in touch with one another they issue the "Comanche Comment", each typing his own section which is then stapled with the other. It's a very informal affair and includes everything from listings of letters received to personal insults.

At present they are laying plans to revive the OSA, and to that end they will soon issue a Year Book with member's pictures. There is talk of an OSA Convention this summer.

Both McPhail and Speer plan to make the coming 1939 World's Fair Science Fiction Convention in New York, and hope to lead a delegation of fans from Oklahoma and Texas. En route they will pick up Bro. Clark, so chances are that ere another year fans will be able to observe at close range Exhibits 1, 2 and 3 contributed by Comanche, "the county seat of the world", as its motto goes.

The Associate Editor is trying to locate some of Hope Hodgson's fantasy novels or short stories. Do any of you readers know where they can be obtained, also the price? Does anyone have a complete bibliography of this author?

CAPTAIN FUTURE BLOCK THAT KICK
OR
AN ENTIRELY ORIGINAL ARTICLE IN THREE PARTS
WITH INCIDENTAL MUSIC
OR
THIS MONTH WE SHALL TAKE UP
TAURUS THE BULL
ALSO KNOWN AS

PART III
By
Jack Gillespie

The Convention was to be held Sunday and just for the record I might say that at the Futurian meeting two weeks previous, it was decided that no line of action was to be taken, no heckling, etc.

However, came Sunday, the Futurians and the rest has been told over and over. The convention was not that by any manner of means. It was more a show staged by New Fandom. A pretty good show, but nothing more.

The Futurian meeting that Tuesday attempted to do what the convention didn't do and that was to discuss all the aspects of Fandom. The Futurian meeting was not an overwhelming success for there was little time for publicity or preparations.

In all fairness it must be said that the New Fandom trio are probably sincere and think what they are doing is right. They put a lot of money, time and effort into making the convention what they termed a success. Barring the six Futurians was a pretty dirty trick, but then again the Futurians haven't always been perfect little gentlemen. Possibly it is that Sykora's

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idea of a successful convention is different from ours. Sykora wanted to spread science-fiction, to put on a good show, to impress people who were just readers and not fans. What we wanted probably wouldn't interest anybody not well acquainted with the fan field. Thorough discussions, probably panel discussions on all the aspects of science-fiction and the history of science-fiction and to hell with the neophytes.

The second Philadelphia conference set to do one of the things that the Convention neglected and that was to organize an all encompassing science fiction organization. Sykora, Rothman, Spear and Kyle, showed up with definite plans. The others just came along for the ride. As a result the proceedings were very confused and Sykora railroaded through a tentative constitution, and promised to take into consideration all suggestions. To my way of thinking the drafting of a constitution for a nation wide sf organization is no thing that can be done in a hurry. It would require first, a constitutional committee consisting of people who were:

1. Neutral in fan squabbles.
2. Willing to devote time, effort and money to the task.

The Philadelphia crowd, I think would be ideally suited. They would act as a co-ordinating group all suggestions being sent to them. They would have to sift all the material and draw up ballots. First on the general structure of the organization then on all the separate points. It might require twenty-five ballots or so and a period of a year to complete. Once organized it would be, of course, a simple job to reimburse them.

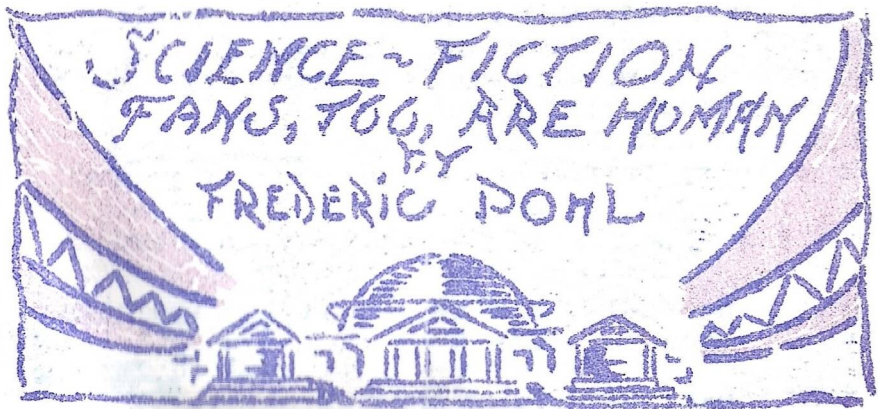
Sykora's plan is no doubt great stuff. He would undoubtedly make many new converts and have a comparatively interesting organization. But

there is something about being an ace reporter for Fantasy News that doesn't click with most fans. It's a bit too crude. When we play editor, author, poet, artist, politician, news analyst or historian we like to be subtle about it. Don't we?

The fan feuds are as stupid as they are interesting and I think in all fairness that the reason they continue is the fact that both Sykora and Taurasi have flamed themselves to a fever pitch against the Futurians. They have reached a point where they actually hate some of us. I know for a fact that no Futurian hates Sykora and few of us even dislike him. Moskowitz is comparatively cool.

OH, yes! the Chicago convention. At the Philly conference Tucker and Reinsberg had something to say about the Chicago convention which I am eagerly awaiting, for I have never seen Chicago and I want to see all the major towns of the country, then come back to New York and sponsor a movement to build a great, great, big wall about Manhattan Island.

Confucius say, (or maybe its the dictionary), "A fan is something that makes a lot of wind". Maybe he is right, fans, maybe he is right.



From the four corners of the earth,
From countries of the southlands,
From England, from Africa, from Canada,
From America, from South America,
From every corner of the four corners of the
earth,
The readers of the form of literature called
science fiction
Stand up on their hind legs and raise their
voices.

Does ASTOUNDING print a story? They write a
letter.
Does AMAZING go bi-monthly? They write a letter.
Does THRILLING WONDER drop the Science Fiction
League?
Does MARVEL SCIENCE Newlyborn appear?
Does a new fan magazine appear?
They write a letter.

From England they write to Africa,
From Africa they write to Canada,
From Canada they write to America,
From America they write to England, to Africa,
to Canada, to South America,
with interstate correspondence at a saving in
postage.

What do they write about?

In 1928 they wrote hello

In 1932 they wrote about Einstein

In 1936 they wrote about literary style.

In 1938 they write about Hitler and the
recession and the dirty nasty Reds.

"Greetings, friend . . . Sciencerealy yours".

"But $F = M \frac{dv}{dt}$ + $V \frac{dM}{dt}$ for variable mass."

"Van Lorne would be a writer if he just knew
how to write."

"I tell you, pal, that stf has got to take a
stand."

At three cents, five cents, and two cents for
the gang.

(with postal cards tabu because you can't make
carbon copies.)

Around the world and back, from fan to fan.

Ben Wohlhelm from New York? Why, he's a fan.

Carnell from Merrie England? He's a fan.

And Acky from the Coast? Another fan.

And Lowndes, Norojo, Wilson,

Baltadonis, Will Sykora,

Wiggins, Rosenblum, Michel,

Rothman, Burford, Dan McPhail,

And Jones and Smith and Robinson

And good old Freddy Pohl . . .

They're fans.

Awake, alive, alert.

The fan is right.

The fan is wrong.

The individual is one; The Fan is both.