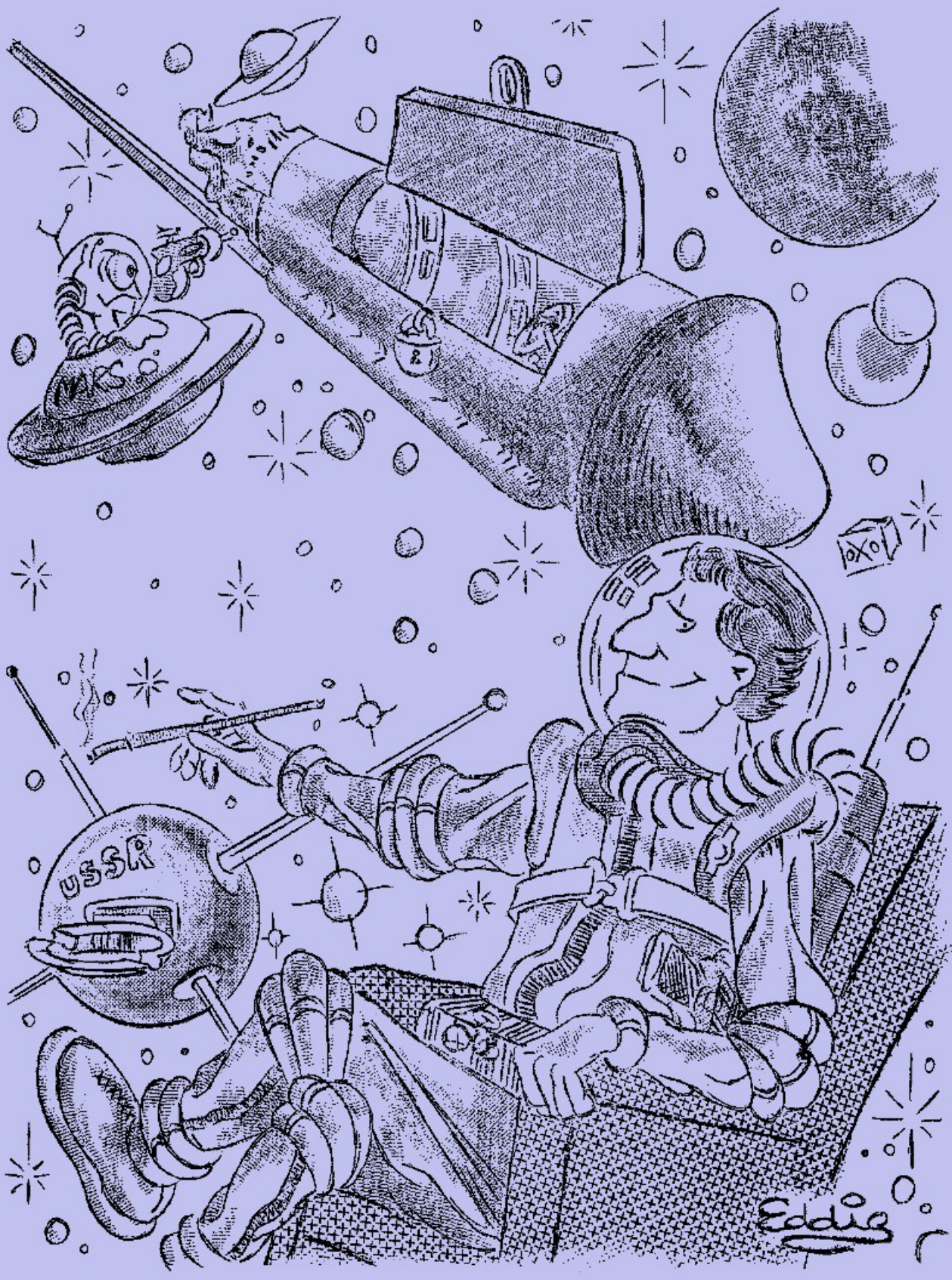
THE HARRISON SAGA



HARRY HURSTMONCEAUX O.B.E.
and CYRIL FAVERSHAM M.M.

The Harrison Saga

The Extraordinary Exploits of Sir William Makepeace Harrison

"Harry Hurstmonceaux O.B.E. and Cyril Faversham M.M."

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Foreword
Rob Hansen

> He (kindly genuflect or curtsey) was Saviour of the Western Hemisphere on numerous fannish occasions and perhaps the way he came into being is interestingly indicative of the way that fifties fandom often torturously, entertainingly, thought. Sir William, and his principal antagonist Herr von Neumann, were cut from the cloth of the Liverpool Group; and were in (almost) reality Bill Harrison and Dave Newman. Bill was a noted gourmet and bon vivant, and Dave an expatriate London fan who had moved up to live in the LiG area and had not only the temerity to challenge His choice of Dinner Wine on at least two occasions, but also upon being made secretary (or chairman, or something) subsequently vanished from fannish ken with not only the LiG minutes, but the last two bottles of Norman Shorrock's '53 Dandelion Sauterne, as well! This latter dastardly act inspired those good friends of Bill, John Owen and Stanley Nuttall (known also as Harry Hurstmonceaux and Cyril Faversham), to write a whole series of fannish extravaganzas... the one in this publication being one of the least esoteric, would y'know. Like many fannish pieces of the period, it grew as other fans contributed their thoughts in letters-of-comment; many of these – it must be admitted – concentrating on alternative nasty endings for the by now quite horribly piranha-nibbled and corgi-savaged, distinctly worn-around-the-edges von Neumann. But several were kind enough to suggest other suitable villains – should you come across a file of *Triode* and/or *Bastion* you can amuse yourselves by trying to identify those so depicted.
>
> – Eric Bentcliffe, from his *When Yngvi Was a Louse* (1982)

The first appearance of the fictional Sir William Makepeace Harrison was in what purported to be a bio of the real Bill Harrison in *Space Diversions* #9 (Summer 1957), fanzine of the Liverpool Science and Fantasy Society (LaSFaS) as it was then still known. Titled "That Demn'd Harrison", it was the latest in a series of bios of club members to appear in the zine, but the first that was so wholly fictional. Written by Stan Nuttall, with

footnotes by John Owen, it cast Harrison as the sort of gentleman adventurer who appeared in boys' papers and books of the interwar period (with his obvious Victorian antecedents) which the pair would have grown up reading. Simple, often jingoistic tales that depicted foreigners in ways that would make a modern reader wince, these were always crying out to be parodied as they also were later in the Terry Jones & Michael Palin *Ripping Yarns* TV series. Here's how Nuttall described Harrison in that profile:

> It is with some trepidation that I embark upon this article. You will recall that in earlier editions of *Space Diversions* we ran several articles on members of LaSFaS, exposing the Truth about their nefarious activities. Exposing the Truth about Bill Harrison (Sir William to his friends), however, is likely to bring on a fund of libel suits, questions in the House, international incidents, and broken treaties, not to mention the end of lifelong friendships. So we must be circumspect, and try not to delve too deeply into the darker aspects of his life, which exist, after all, in the lives of all of us. The only difference is that in Sir William's case those aspects are of an inky, impenetrable nature. In his defence, though, it must be stated with all honesty that he is the complete vindication of the British Way of Life. It is good to note too that the long line of Englishmen who insist on asking for tea on the top of the Matterhorn, who presume all foreigners are uncivilised (foreigners meaning, specifically, these who are not English), and who speak of the Continent as being "isolated by fog" – it is good to know that this long list is not dead. Kipling himself would have been proud to meet him.
>
> Bill's penchant for good living is, of course, a byword. Only the better-class restaurants will receive his patronage, and they had best be careful how they serve the wine. His bête noir in this country is warm white, and many are the wine waiters who have incurred his displeasure. Many, too, are the Head Waiters throughout the land who have learned to tremble at the approach of "Old Roman-Nose", as he has been disrespectfully referred to. It is, indeed, this very feature that is inclined to strike terror into the unfavoured (as well as elderly ladies).
>
> He dresses with the careless ease which distinguishes the more leisured classes ("leisured" being a politer term than "lazy"), and is an admirable example of Savile Row tailoring.
>
> His delight in good food and drink is matched by his

> interest in the fair sex, and it is in this respect that he differs from the Traditional Englishmen of yore. His reputation on the Continent is a mixture of admiration and awe (in France), and decadent English licentiousness (in Germany). Not wishing to lower the tone of this magazine, I will therefore draw a veil over The Incident of the Austrian's Mistress, The Affair of The Parisian Night-Club Girl, The Viennese Bubble Bath Stripper, and The Hackney Wick Nautch Dancer. No doubt the *News of the World* will cover this side of the story in due course.
>
> He is still on the right side of forty, and it is to be hoped that he will not see fit to emigrate, for the Hub of the Empire needs him yet. It is rumoured in some quarters that a certain Middle-East dictator – who shall remain nameless – quakes in his sandals at the mere mention of Harrison, the Master Intriguer; for who else but he could persuade the Egyptians to buy dirty postcards? I remember, too, an incident in the Algerian quarter of Paris... but that is another story, the film rights of which have already been sold to Alfred Hitchcock.
>
> Let us conclude, than, by saying that while men of the breed of Sir William Harrison are to be found, England is safe and the Empire secure.

All the stories by Owen and Nuttall collected in this volume originally appeared in the fanzines *Triode*, *Bastion* and *Blazon* – the first two edited and produced by Eric Bentcliffe and Terry Jeeves, the last by Bentcliffe alone.

Given the times, it probably needs to be emphasised that nothing you are about to read was ever intended to be taken seriously. The tales that follow are a parody, a spoof, a send-up of the attitudes displayed in the stories they're satirising and of their clichés. Anyone who reads them as genuinely glorifying the Empire is missing the point by several parsecs.

A number of UK fans of the period appear in these stories. People such as Norman Shorrock, Charlie Duncombe, and Brian Burgess have cameos as incidental characters. Others appear under easily penetrated pseudonyms as villains, H.P. "Sandy" Sanderson doing so several times as different characters, and Peter Reaney (a then-young fan who seldom missed an opportunity to appear in the convention fancy dress as his female alter ego Rita Peaney) turning up as the henchman Rieni. Slow-speaking Norman George Wansborough (N.G.W.) of Trowbridge in Wiltshire also gets to be a villain, complete with his thick West Country accent.

One Harrison appearance not included in this volume occurs near the end of the *TAFF 1960 Election Night Special*, an audio drama which was also written by Owen and Nuttall and can be found here:

http://fiawol.org.uk/FanStuff/THEN%20Archive/election.htm

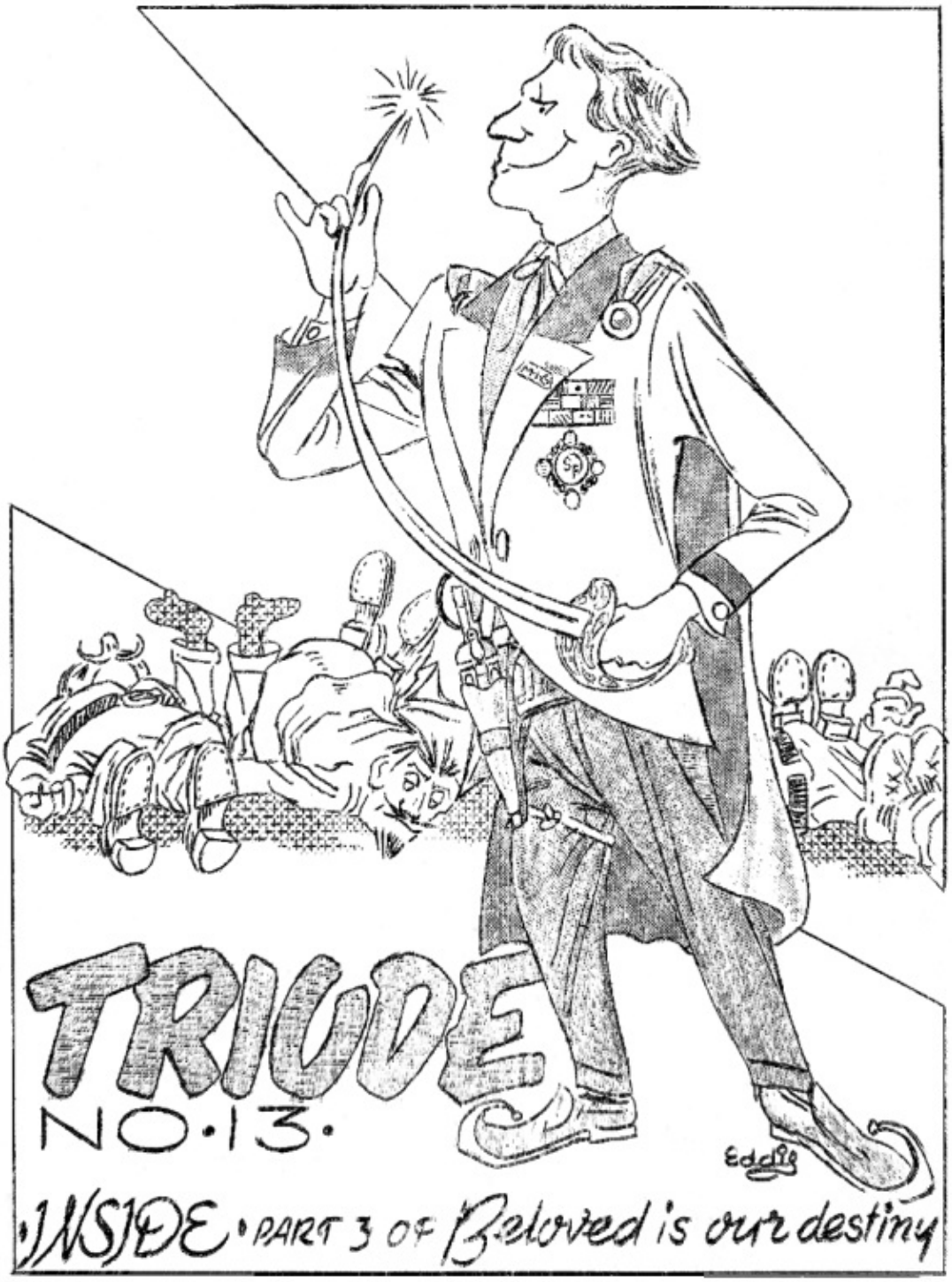
Most of these yarns were penned more than sixty years ago and so contain some contemporary references meaningless to modern readers. Where possible Dave Langford and I have attempted to explain these in footnotes (with a few longer comments in the Additional Notes appendix).

And speaking of Dave, my thanks to him as always for converting the files I sent him into the e-book you're reading, and to Claire Brialey for careful proof-reading. All of the artwork contained in this volume (except where noted) is the work of Liverpool fan Eddie Jones, who went on to a successful career painting covers for SF novels.

– Rob Hansen, January 2022

Photo by Eric Bentcliffe of Stan Nuttall and John Owen at LXIcon, 1961

Beloved Is Our Destiny



Cover by Eddie Jones for “Crossed Steel”, *Triode* #13, April 1958

1. Face to Face with a Legend

Your editors have been very fortunate in obtaining for prior publication the serial rights on a forthcoming book on William Harrison, Head of the London Chapter of the Liverpool Science Fiction Society. You will all appreciate that this is quite a scoop and we can assure you that only in *Triode* will you be able to follow this saga. We understand that a humorous article on Harrison is appearing in another magazine, but this appears to be of a light nature and only includes some small anecdotes. Whereas, the full magnitude and scope of Harrison and His achievements will only be related in *Triode*.

We were hoping that Harrison Himself might write a personal note for us, but we were informed by the Foreign Office that He is at present on a mission of some delicacy in South Patagonia. Nevertheless, we are proud to present:

Beloved Is Our Destiny

By Harry Hurstmonceaux, O.B.E., and Cyril Faversham, M.M. (co-authors of *The Power Behind the Premier, Man or God?, The Coming Struggle for Harrison, Safari with a Genius, Harrison and the Balkans*).

Part One: 1937. Face to Face with a Legend

We knew of Him, though we had never seen Him. From the gaudy cabarets of Bucharest, from the bazaars of Singapore, from cool and sumptuous apartments in Washington and Delhi, and from the festering slums of Cairo, rumours and whisperings of Him had reached us.... A beggar (we had tossed him a few annas) had used His name in blessing, once, in Madras; an itinerant fruit-vendor had invoked Him in Santiago when we had refused to purchase his wares; in Mecca we were reprieved from the agonising Death of the Infidel by a pretence that we were acquainted with Him (we were thereupon presented with the Freedom of the City). Lawrence had spoken of Him with unfeigned awe; Glubb Pasha

with fervent admiration; Mahatma Gandhi with a rare quiet reverence. For all this, though, we had no more real knowledge of the man than if He inhabited another planet; we were unaware, even, of His whereabouts at any given time.

He was reputed to be on a mission of some delicacy; where, though, was a closely guarded secret. Or He was somewhere East Of Zanzibar, on an assignment of Global Importance; that was all that could be told. But what manner of man was He? What incredible secret of personal magnetism did He possess, that made all who knew Him worship Him? All we knew for certain was, that there were some few score men in England who, having served under Him, acknowledged thenceforward but two leaders: His Majesty, and William Harrison. And they would willingly have laid down their lives for either.

It was in India, in that high summer of ’37, that our story really begins; a dreamlike, deceptively tranquil time, when History still wore a rose, and Politics danced to the strains of a waltz.... Two raw subalterns, we had left behind us the glitter and gaiety of Delhi, and were part of a force that had taken up position near the Khyber Pass. Beyond this rocky gorge, the barbarian hordes, long jealous of the wealth and power of the British Raj, crouched in eternal readiness to pounce and devour. Although we were naturally proud to serve on such a frontier, the tediousness of such an environment sometimes dispirited us. We had passed several weeks there, uneventful to the point of monotony; the heat was hellish in its intensity, the insect life omnipresent, the women scarce, and the whisky pretty vile. Little did we know, as we grumbled in our boredom and frustration, that events about us were taking a crucial turn.

One evening, as we were taking our customary Chota Peg, we discerned a figure distantly silhouetted against the violent crimson sky. We cautioned the guards, but allowed our visitor to draw nearer. As he approached, we recognised him as a Pathan. We could see clearly, too, that all was not well with him. He tottered towards us, babbling between parched lips, and collapsed grotesquely in front of our tent, scrabbling at the dirt in a pitiful effort to rise. Suspecting that he might be unwell, we enlisted medical aid, and had him removed to the Sick Bay.

It was several days before he was able to speak coherently to us, for he was in a high fever; but during his delirium a phrase or two fell from his broken lips that made us shiver with excitement and anticipation.... At last the poor fellow passed the crisis, and though still very weak was soon able to utter a few broken but intelligible sentences.

We stood over his bedside, avid for his every word.

“Sahibs,” he croaked at last, “I have a command... from the White Lord...”

“What the devil! You don’t mean?”

“Sahibs, the White Lord... Harrison, the great one...”

“Good grief!” we ejaculated. “You can’t mean??”

“He is launching a Holy War, Sahibs, a Crusade.” The man’s eyes glittered with fanatical awe. “A war to destroy the Red Devils in the North.” He raised his head painfully from his pillow. “My Master... *our* Master, The Great One, the All-Seeing... O come, I will lead you to Him. He requires us.”

“Requires us? You mean?”

“Come, Sahibs,” the man cried feebly. “Come! We are but as dirt between the smallest of His toes, but He requires that we should do His bidding; and what more” – his eyes suddenly brimmed with tears – “what more can a man ask of life?”

What more indeed! We thought, eyeing each other solemnly. “We shall be ready to leave in ten minutes,” we said.

* * * * *

Two days later found us laboriously negotiating a narrow mountain track. We had been without food, water or sleep for all that time; we were hardly aware of our own discomfort. We were in rough terrain now, a region of precipitous gorges and high crags, and had not seen another human being for twenty-four hours. But we were nearing our destination; we were soon to meet Him face to face! That one thought maintained our flagging strength and kept our spirits buoyant. “Soon, Sahibs,” breathed our guide, almost fainting with spiritual exultation; “it will be soon now.... See!” He pointed tremblingly towards a great opening in the cliff ahead of us; then, turning to us almost fearfully, he addressed us in a voice that was hushed with reverence. “Come,” he breathed. “Speak not, but follow.”

We followed him into the dark mouth of the cave, and found ourselves in a rough-hewn rocky chamber, where shadows danced eerily in the flickering light of torches. The place was bare, save for one great stone seat, almost throne-like in its proportions and decorated with curious carvings, which stood at the foot of the farthest wall. We stood motionless, gazing about us in wonderment; suddenly, our guide gripped us fiercely by the arms.

“Kneel, Sahibs!” he hissed. “Kneel! The Great One approaches!”

We heard the sound of measured footsteps, reverberating slightly through the profound stillness of the cave. The sound grew somewhat louder, and then stopped. Our throats were dry; our hearts hammered

against our ribs, for greatness walked among us. And then we knew it was all true. His personality projected and enveloped us like a protective cloak; the warmth of it surrounded us and as it did so we knew, as in a dream, that forever we were His servants.

A voice spoke. It contained within itself overtones of dignity, kindliness, high purpose, a suavity and wit that one already knew would be matchless, and a resoluteness and integrity of purpose that were incomparable. “Arise,” it said. Tremblingly, like children, we got to our feet and looked into the magnificent eyes of Harrison.

(To Be Continued)

– *Triode* #11 (August 1957)

2. Plunder in the Sun

Editorial Note:

The first episode in this series comprised the narrative of two young subalterns, Cyril Faversham and Harry Hurstmonceaux, who, whilst on patrol duty near the Khyber Pass in 1937, were brought to the secret headquarters of Harrison, "The White God", in order to assist Him in a projected Holy War against the "Northern Barbarians". The history of that gallant failure – in which the little band of men reached the outskirts of Moscow, only to be ordered home by a timorous, vacillating British Government – is too well-known to bear repeating here; the interested reader is referred to *With Harrison Through the Soviet Republics*, *The Magnificent Gamble*, and the many other works available on the subject. The episode which follows is another in the little-known series of adventures that befell two of the Great William Harrison's most loyal and devoted subordinates.

Beloved Is Our Destiny
Part Two: Plunder in the Sun
As related by Harry Hurstmonceaux

June 30th, in the year of our Lord Nineteen Hundred and Thirty Nine, and a vague restlessness in the air; though, to tell the truth, I felt snugly and irretrievably withdrawn from the world's turmoil as I sat before a cosy, crackling fire in my Albany chambers. I had been with Lord Chelmsford that evening, I remember, and the man's incomparable table-talk had left me in the best of spirits.

"Burgess!" I called, as my man entered; "I think this evening you might broach a bottle of the excellent claret Sir Humphrey was good enough to send me."

"Werry well, sir," said Burgess, and extended a salver towards me. On it reposed a slim blue envelope. "This has just arrived, sir."

"Who's it from?" I asked.

"It appears to bear a Sao Paulo postmark, sir."

"Top-hole! Then it's from Faversham," I cried, jumping to my feet.

“Open it man, and read it to me.”

“Werry good, sir.” Burgess tore open the envelope, extracted a small slip of paper, coughed twice, and announced, in his most sepulchral tones: “Come at once. He needs us!”

I jumped to my feet. “Is that all it says?”

“I have reproduced the communication in its entirety, sir.”

“Burgess, pack an overnight bag,” I said, “I’m leaving immediately for Brazil. The Great Game is on again!”

* * * * *

On July 3rd, Faversham met me in the bar of the Hotel Sao Paulo. We shook hands.

“A Big Show, this time,” said Faversham. “We’re going into the Matto Grosso.”

“In God’s name why?” I asked.

“The Lord only knows,” said Faversham. “But He’ll be waiting for us at Alto Tapajoz.” He smiled. “Got your toothbrush?”

I chuckled. Dear old Faversham; ever the jester!

* * * * *

We took rickshaws from Sao Paulo to Carumba, and from there navigated our collapsible barque down two hundred miles of the fabulously beautiful Rio Paraguay. At the river’s source we trekked overland, crossed the mountains and arrived at the Rio Tapajoz. We travelled down this immense waterway for over four hundred miles, drifting with the current and taking our sustenance from the fauna and flora of the vast green forest all about us.

Early one evening, Faversham gave vent to a huge yawn. I recognised by this little idiosyncrasy of his that his excitement was mounting. “Well?!” I asked.

“We’re almost there, old boy,” he said.

And indeed, as we rounded a bend in the river, the small trading-station of Alto Tapajoz came into view. On the green river-bank, waiting to greet us, stood a tall Eurasian gentleman, clad in a white seersucker suit. He saw us, and bowed. Of Our Master, however, there was no sign.

We disembarked, and after a few words of greeting the Eurasian led us to his small thatched house, where he produced a bottle of the most exquisite Madeira I have ever tasted. When we were seated and at our ease, he lit a large tchibouque, and after a lethargic puff or two began to speak.

“I am to convey His apologies,” said our friend, speaking Portuguese

with a slight Tamil accent; “for He cannot, after all, be here to meet you. At the request of the Brazilian Government, He has travelled into the province of Goias to quell an uprising of Indians there – the Jabadoz, an extremely troublesome tribe. It was a matter of some urgency, and if left unattended might have resulted in the downfall of the present Government, which would not have suited Our Master’s immediate purpose.”

We glanced at one another and smiled. Another tiny fragment of the great jig-saw fell into place.

The Eurasian took another puff at his pipe. “I have here,” he said, producing a small manilla envelope, “your instructions, written in His own hand. You will read the document contained herein, memorise it until you can repeat it verbatim, and then masticate it piece by piece. Do you understand?”

We nodded, and he handed me the envelope. Hastily, I tore it open and withdrew the Instructions, penned in that firm, bold hand I knew so well. Faversham joined me; and as we read the contents of the letter we began to tingle with excitement and anticipation.

The Lost City of Xingu! The legendary first home of the Incas, capital of their mighty empire before they made their last, long journey to Peru; the alleged repository of their treasures and the ancient burial place of their Emperors, for which men had been searching for centuries; and Our Master had discovered it! But that was not all.... “Look here, Faversham!” I ejaculated, turning the page with trembling fingers.

“Good Lord,” said Faversham quietly.

Treasure, treasure beyond our wildest dreams of avarice lay awaiting us in that long-forgotten city; Our Master had discovered the most fantastic agglomeration of wealth in the long history of mankind; and His plan (our eyes bulged as we read on) was simply this: to remove this fabulous cargo from the City of Xingu and take it to the coast, where six privately-chartered freighters would be waiting – waiting to carry it across the Atlantic to the Old Country! The sweeping magnificence of this scheme, and the sublime genius of its author, overwhelmed and moved us profoundly. Wiping the tears from our eyes, we read on.

“A warning,” the letter continued. “A chap called Neumann – Kurt Neumann, a German agent – has been dogging me across Latin America like a baffled bloodhound. [With a half-dozen well chosen words he painted a vivid image of Neumann.] If you should bump into him, shoot first and ask questions afterwards. He has, I regret to say, discovered the location of the city; though not, as yet, of the treasure. Good hunting!”

We memorised the missive, washed it down with a bottle of rather

inferior Johannisberger, and retired for the night; but neither of us slept much.

* * * * *

August 11th.... Through gaps in the dense foliage we could see the gaunt ridge of the Tapajoz mountains, curving like a giant spine across the heart of the vast continent; above them, a pitiless yellow sun burned fiercely in a sky of eternal blue. But the forest was a friend to us, providing coolness and a green shade, as well as an occasional vivid, violent burst of colour or sound to delight our senses. Huge multi-coloured butterflies fluttered past us; great scarlet blossoms glowed like miniature suns along our path; and the vast glades echoed with the weird cries of conies, ocelots, amontillados and armadillos. We journeyed on, labouring beneath our cumbersome equipment; and at last, emerging from the forest, found ourselves staring up in awe at the great snow-capped mountains of Tapajoz.

We began to scale one of the lesser peaks, and after a day's hard climbing were not far from the summit. Below us lay the jungle, a riot of lush green vegetation stretching from horizon to horizon.... On the second day we had crested the summit, and made camp some way down the farther side of the mountain. That evening, after we had eaten, our guide silently motioned us to accompany him. We arose, and followed mutely. He led us a short way along the mountainside to the edge of a rocky escarpment, and with a grand, expressive gesture bid us look down into the valley below.

As long as I live I shall never forget that sight. Beneath us lay a rich, fertile valley; and our hearts leaped within us as we beheld, upon a rise at its centre, a vast network of buildings and streets, with a great stepped temple, not unlike a ziggurat, rearing up at its heart. Xingu! Around the great city we could see mighty walls, and beneath them a series of long terraces, sloping downwards in gentle gradations until they merged imperceptibly into the dense foliage below.

"By Jove!" I ejaculated. "What?"

"Rather fine," said Faversham, and yawned. I could see that he was deeply moved. We turned, and made our way back to camp.

We completed our descent the following morning, and by midday had reached the walls of Xingu. Passing beneath a huge archway, we found ourselves in the great sweeping avenue which bisected the City, incredibly melancholy in its silence and desolation.

The dust of centuries swirled and eddied in that broad thoroughfare; flowery tendrils wound themselves about the walls of its houses and the statuary of its temples. Our guide led us forward, through streets and

courtyards overgrown with luxuriant greenness and huge blossoms of glaring yellow, until we came into a magnificent square. Before us rose the mighty temple we had seen from the cliffs.

"Gentlemen," said our guide, his voice trembling, "we are at our journey's end."

We passed between lofty doors, and entering the temple, found ourselves in a strange twilight world of tall pillars and echoing passageways. We came into a great pillared hall, crossed it, and descended a narrow flight of stone steps into a long, arched corridor. Our guide suddenly stopped; then touched a large stone which protruded slightly from the wall, and nodded his head as if satisfied. Stepping forward, he thrust the whole weight of his body against it.

There was a deep, rumbling sound, and without warning a large rectangular section of the wall before us slid away, revealing a dark aperture immediately ahead. Our guide stepped into the obscurity beyond, and we followed him, switching on our torches.

It was as if a thousand tiny fires had sprung up before us as the light from our torches glanced on the myriad faces of the jewels that lay scattered on the floor of the chamber in fantastic disarray. Idols of solid gold scowled at us from across the centuries, as though wakened petulantly from a slumber of aeons. Tier upon tier of strangely-wrought silver chests, overflowing with rubies, amethysts, and ornaments of incredible beauty, glittered in a blaze of riotous colour....

"Englischer pig-dogs!"

Abruptly we jerked about, our hearts pounding. Our guide gave a short scream of terror. At the entrance to the vault stood a massive figure. We recognised the intruder at once, for Harrison, in His letter, had described him to us. The gold-rimmed monocle, the huge curling moustache that concealed a duelling scar, the fixed contemptuous leer; it could be none other than SS Obergruppenführer Kurt Neumann!

We stood, uncertain of what the man's next move might be. Suddenly he clapped his hands, and from the darkness behind him came a group of natives, armed with deadly blowpipes. At a further signal, three or four of these ran towards us, and without preamble began to bind us securely with heavy vines.

Neumann gave a harsh, ugly laugh. "Fools!" he grated. "I vos following you from Tapajoz. You are mein prisoners! Now, you vill nach Deutschland be getaken, und into der Arbeitslager vill get." He snapped his heels together and gave a stiff Nazi salute. "Und ich," he bellowed. "Ich vill der treasure confiscate, und to der Führer getake it, und der Iron

Cross I vill be presented mit!”

“I think,” said Faversham, blandly, “I shall write a letter to *The Times* about all this.”

“Nein, nein!” screamed Neumann, the veins on his forehead standing out like whipcord. “You vill NICHT to der *Times* geschreiben, you English pig-dog, for you vill in der Arbeitslager be!” He gave a curt signal to his natives. “Schnell!”

The next few hours were a nightmare. We left the city, and were carried ignominiously, like captured beasts, through the dense surrounding jungle; scratched by the undergrowth, and bruised with every step our captors took. Occasionally Neumann, with sadistic glee, would flail at one of us with his rawhide riding-whip, howling with diabolical laughter as we flinched in pain. “Make it a pretty stiff letter, Faversham,” I muttered between gritted teeth....

And then there was sudden chaos – a chaos of whooping and screaming, harsh, guttural curses and sharp cries of terror. “What is it, man?” I gasped, straining at my bonds.

“Out of the frying-pan into the fire, old boy,” said Faversham. “We’ve been captured by Indians – the Zaxaquus, by the fiendish look of them.”

I paled. “Not... the Zaxaquus?”

“I’m afraid so, old chap,” drawled Faversham, with a rueful smile.

* * * * *

There was a large compound, fringed with tall, overhanging trees and, at the edge of the compound, a swiftly running river. All night long the captured natives had been flung, one by one, into the river, screaming. We wondered what terrible thing inhabited those swiftly flowing waters. We, the whites, had been reserved until the end, for it appeared that we were to afford a climax to the hellish festivities. Trussed like turkeys, we squatted in a ring of jeering, howling savages.

As morning came we watched, white-faced, as the witch-doctor came towards us. Which of us was it to be? We shuddered between our relieved sighs as the bulky figure of the SS Obergruppenführer was hauled away, cursing and bellowing, in the direction of the tumbling waters.

“What d’you suppose is there?” asked Faversham, conversationally.

“I think it might be Piranha,” I ventured.

Faversham frowned.

“Small fish that hunt in packs,” I explained, “they have razor-sharp teeth, and at the smell of blood they become ravenous. They can strip the skin off an ox in thirty seconds or less.”

"I see," said Faversham quietly, and his mouth set in a hard line.

As we watched, Neumann disappeared with a horrible scream.

Once more the witch-doctor approached us. "We'd better say cheerio now, old chap," I said.

"Yes," said Faversham. "Cheerio, old chap."

"Cheerio," I said.

"Wait!" cried Faversham suddenly. "Look – look up there!"

I looked. "By George," I cried, "an aircraft!"

"Thank God," said Faversham. "D'you suppose can it be...?"

"Of course it is!" I cried my eyes misty with tears. "It is – He!"

The strange aircraft (I later learned it was an early form of helicopter) hovered above the compound for a few moments, then gradually came to rest not far away from us; its whirling propellers slowed and halted, and from the interior of the machine stepped that suave, debonair figure we knew – and loved – so well. At the sight of Him, the entire tribe, as with one accord, fell upon their knees and grovelled at His feet, moaning and chanting in ecstatic praise.

"Deus ex machina," breathed Faversham softly, his face radiant.

Harrison did not approach us, but pointed in our direction and gave a few curt instructions in the native tongue. Immediately, two of the Indians rushed towards us and hacked at our bonds, cutting us free. As we rubbed our chafed wrists we saw Harrison striding over to the edge of the river, and we ran quickly across to join Him.

He stood looking down at the thrashing waters beneath His feet. "Too late," He murmured; "he may have been a swine, but he didn't deserve this, poor devil."

Turning to us, His eyes suddenly sparked with pleasure. "Now," He smiled, "to work."

* * * * *

August 30th – Faversham and I, each in our favourite armchair, reflected over a glass of Manzanilla on the outcome of our adventure. We had seen the P.M. that morning, and – not to beat about the bush – he'd been rather pleased with the whole stunt; and so, needless to say, were we. Harrison, of course, was not with us; He had disappeared again.

"I wonder where the devil He is now," I said.

Faversham looked musingly into the deepest recesses of his glass, as if the answer might be concealed there. "Beyond the roof of the World," he said softly, "or in far off China; in Ecuador, perhaps, or Baluchistan...." He smiled reverently. "Wherever high adventure and the call to arms is heard, wherever danger threatens the Mother Country and her proud

Empire... there He will be.” Too moved to reply, I glanced out of the window at the gathering dusk; the fallen leaves whirled in the gutters, tossed about by a gusty wind that seemed to presage a storm. And indeed, there was a storm coming. A storm that was to rage across Europe and all the world; but for now, the globe had contracted into a recollection of one Man – the light laugh of Him, the humour in His kindly eyes. I set down my empty glass, smiling.

Finis

– *Triode* #12 (December 1957)

3. Crossed Steel

Harrison (known throughout the East as “The Great White God”, in Europe as “The Master”, and in the New World as “The Fox”), having contributed what He has described as His “modest bit” towards the winning of World War II, is as active as ever in the ensuing Cold War. His adventures in the uneasy postwar years are legion, but few, if any, have reached the ears of the general public. The following is one of them, as pieced together by Cyril Faversham, who, together with Harry Hurstmonceaux, is still occasionally called upon by the Great Man to assist Him in His work.

Beloved Is Our Destiny
Part Three: Crossed Steel
As related by Cyril Faversham

At precisely one-twenty-four p.m. on Friday, June 27th, 1946, the man generally acknowledged to be the most discerning gastronome in Northern Europe seated Himself in the restaurant car of the Zagreb-Bucharest Express. At precisely three forty-three p.m., an Armenian waiter of dubious antecedents and even more dubious allegiances brought Turkish coffee to the gastronome’s table. The gastronome raised the cup to His lips, wrinkled His nostrils delicately, and set the cup down untouched. He looked up at the waiter, His clear blue eyes twinkling merrily.

“Please inform your employers that they must be more subtle,” He said, with great good humour. “Potassium Cyanide *is* a little obvious, you know.”

With a snarl the Armenian turned away; and the gastronome, chuckling, picked up His copy of *The Times* and began to read. He had barely had time to appraise the latest Test scores, however, when He felt the pressure of a hand upon His. He looked up, startled; and His eyebrows lifted, slightly, in appreciation, for above Him stood one of the most beautiful young women He had ever seen in His life.

“Are you He? Are you Harrison?” the girl asked breathlessly.

“I think I may lay claim to that distinction,” said the Great Man nonchalantly. “Would you honour me by joining me in a liqueur?”

“My name is Ilse von Haundog...”

“The *Countess* von Haundog?” queried Harrison.

The girl nodded. “That was once my title... Until these... these *scum* took possession of my beloved country.”

“I am honoured, Countess,” said Harrison. “Won’t you sit down?”

“Let us be done with formalities,” said the girl urgently, seating herself opposite Him. “You must help me, you must! My father, the Grand Duke of Serbia, is being held in the Schloss Heuriger by the Secret Police. God knows what they may be doing to him. Perhaps, even now, it is too late....” Her voice broke, and she dabbed at her eyes with an absurd lace handkerchief. Suddenly, her eyes dilated. “Look out!” she screamed.

But Harrison had seen the stiletto coming. Laughing, He inclined His head an inch or two to one side, and heard the weapon bury itself with a thud in the wooden panel behind His left ear. He turned, extricated the stiletto, and tossed it nonchalantly to a gentleman of Teutonic origin who was wrestling determinedly with a portion of Maria-Theresa schnitzel at the next table. “Hard lines, old man,” said Harrison, smiling. The Teuton looked up, directing a glance of venomous hatred at Him; then turned away, and stared fixedly through the windows at the hilly, heavily-wooded Balkan landscape as it rolled past them.

“Who is he?” hissed the Countess.

“Don’t know, really; been following me from Belgrade,” said Harrison casually, and produced a slim gold cigarette case. “Care for one? Turkish this side, Russian that.... Where is Schloss Heuriger, by the way?”

“I knew you would not fail me!” cried the girl. “I knew it as soon as...”

“Steady on, old thing,” said Harrison soberly. “We are now about to enter the Zobrovny tunnel, which, besides being a masterpiece of engineering, is almost one kilometre in length.”

The girl blanched. “You mean...?”

“I do,” said Harrison. “Under the table, quickly!”

With an ear-splitting shriek from its whistle the train thundered into the tunnel, and the compartment was plunged into blackness. Suddenly a great orange star exploded definitely not ten feet away from them; there was a horrible gurgling scream, followed by a sudden babel of voices. A few confused seconds later, brilliant sunlight flooded the compartment as the train emerged from the tunnel! The occupants of the dining-car blinked, then gasped. The Teuton who had thrown the stiletto lay sprawled across the table, a bullet through his brain.

Harrison looked levelly at His fellow diners. “Whoever was

responsible for this," he said, indicating the dead man, "ought really to brush up on his or her marksmanship." He picked up His copy of *The Times*. "We are now approaching the outer suburbs of Bucharest," he said, taking the Countess gently by the arm. "Shall we prepare to leave?"

The Café Dobra, in the heart of the Rumanian capital, was as crowded and noisy as ever but there was little real gaiety about it, gaiety being unfashionable in a People's Democracy. Harrison, however, had insisted upon visiting it, for he knew that the chef could still prepare the most succulent paprika-goulash in Rumania and it was an idiosyncrasy of His always to eat well before undertaking a venture which might be in any way hazardous. And indeed, He thought comfortably, it had proved to be a memorable meal. He picked up the pepper-pot and scattered a few grains of the yellow powder over His vodka then, raising the glass to His lips, drained the spirit at one gulp.

The Countess stared at Him fascinatedly. "Why did you do that?" she asked.

Harrison smiled. "Little trick I learned in Moscow," He said. "The pepper takes the fusel oil to the bottom of the glass – makes the drink a good deal more palatable. I..." He looked up suddenly as a hand was placed on His shoulder.

A small, greasy-looking individual stood above Him. "You English-man?" he grinned.

"I have that privilege," said Harrison, coldly.

"Ah, so I have thought!" cried the man, with nauseating bonhomie. "Then shall you drink with me!" Unbidden, he seated himself at the table and beckoned across to a waiter. "Three large measures of szilva – and quickly!"

The greasy individual, whose name appeared to be Lupescu, began to talk loudly and volubly about nothing in particular. Mistaking Harrison's steely silence for an absorbed interest, he presently began to regale them with an account of the achievements of the New Rumania. "I have been reading from your so famous author Dickens. Can things be so terrible like he describes them?"

"There is a kernel of truth in what Dickens says," said Harrison suavely, "but we're improving all the time," and in the split-second in which the other's eyes left His, He adroitly switched glasses. "For example, we've recently succeeded in abolishing whipping posts."

"I am exceedingly glad to hear it," said Lupescu with a sneer, gulping down the fiery spirit before him. "Exceedingly glad. The New Rumania..."

He coughed, and set down his glass. "The... New..."

Suddenly his eyes bulged horribly, he coughed and spluttered for a few seconds, then slumped down across the table – dead.

The Countess gave a shrill little scream, and Harrison put a hand upon her shoulder. “Steady on, old girl,” He said. “We must keep our heads. The Schloss Heuriger next, I think!”

* * * * *

Two hours furious driving along the tortuous, rutted Balkan roads brought them at last to the Schloss: a gaunt, forbidding edifice perched precariously at the top of a steep, wooded hill. Harrison parked His scarlet Hispano behind a dense clump of foliage and got out. “Please remain here,” He said to the Countess, in a voice courteous but firm, then strode off, like the lion-hearted man of action that He was, towards the dark walls of the castle.

His mountaineering jaunts in the Himalayas had prepared Him for emergencies such as these; in a moment, He had secured His foothold and was beginning to scale the vine-covered battlements. A few minutes of careful climbing brought Him to a point immediately beneath a narrow, open window about eighty feet from the ground. He squeezed Himself dexterously through this narrow aperture, and jumped nimbly to the floor of the room within.

The room was large, and apparently unoccupied. A few logs, crackling and blazing in the huge open fireplace, provided the only source of light; He could see dimly that the walls were covered with hunting-trophies, swords, firearms and the like. There was little furniture to be seen: a few heavy chairs, a table....

“Welcome,” said a voice from behind Him.

Harrison spun round. A lean, tall figure stood silhouetted in an open doorway to His right. Something glittered in the man’s hand. Suddenly he had moved, and the glittering object was flashing towards Harrison.

Harrison ducked nimbly, and the knife clattered against the wall behind Him. “Hardly the most hospitable welcome,” He said suavely. “However, since you have a taste for the melodramatic...”

He turned, swiftly removed His impeccably-cut blazer and, having rolled up His shirt-sleeves to the elbow, took two epees – ornamental, but nonetheless very lethal – from the wall above Him. One of these He tossed to the stranger with a light laugh.

The man’s nostrils flared like a stallion’s. “You choose to pit yourself against me!” he snarled, catching the weapon. “Against Gregori Tabori, the greatest swordsman in all Rumania? Very well, you have chosen; it shall be so – to the death!”

He stepped forward. Harrison retreated a pace or two, quiet and watchful; suddenly, however, he moved quickly forward, tightening His fingers on the grip to give it a beat in septime. His opponent deceived over the blade, threatening the wrist, and Harrison smoothly reversed His direction. Tabori cursed, and they began a rapid series of lunges and counter-parries, the clash of their blades echoing through the high, empty room. “Do they teach you swordsmanship, too, on the playing-fields of Eton?” snarled Tabori, recognising his adversary’s mettle.

“I’m afraid I couldn’t say, old chap,” chuckled Harrison; “I’m a Harrow man myself, you know.” And He beat His opponent’s blade with a light contemptuous touch. Suddenly, He came in quickly, as if to follow through, but checked Himself just out of reach. Tabori cursed fiercely and fluently.

Back and forth across the great hall the two men thrust and parried, the flickering firelight casting their shadows hugely against the wall behind them. Tabori, who had retreated watchfully behind the table, suddenly levered it upwards with his left foot; it swayed over towards Harrison and crashed to the floor, missing Him narrowly.

“Have you nine lives, Englishman?” snarled Tabori.

“Perhaps,” said Harrison with a light laugh, “but you have only one, and I mean to curtail that.”

His opponent’s face was now livid with a baffled fury. Suddenly, he made a savage rush forward, obviously intent on a quick kill. At this, Harrison pulled His feet together, rising to the balls of His feet and pivoting His body to the right. At the same time His blade flicked out over His adversary’s bellguard and caught him full in the chest.

“My round, I think,” said Harrison lightly, stepping back a pace as Tabori sank to one knee with a groan.

“Not quite!” said a sharp voice from behind Him; and Harrison, turning, saw the Countess von Haundog, a cold fury in her eyes, levelling a tiny silver automatic at His heart.

“You fool,” cried the girl, her eyes blazing; “I am not the Countess. She died in ’52 on a Smolensk collective-farm – from eating too much!”

“My dear girl, I knew that from the beginning,” said Harrison, chuckling.

“But how...?”

“No member of the aristocracy – even of the Rumanian aristocracy – drinks Kremser Wachtberg with Yoghourt,” Harrison smiled.

“You are very clever, Englishman,” said the girl coldly. Within her, furious anger was battling with a certain half-reluctant admiration. “But if

you knew this, why did you accompany me here?"

"Because, my dear, you are Irene Pudovkin." The girl gasped. "And because this gentleman, if I am not mistaken, is Vassily Dovzenko." Dovzenko, at the mention of his name, staggered to his feet and bowed painfully. "I have heard you described as two of Moscow's most astute agents, and I was anxious to meet you, as you, it seems, were anxious to meet me."

"But you fool, you have walked into a trap!" cried Irene Pudovkin, infuriated by the Englishman's impenetrable sang-froid.

"Not quite, my poppet," said Harrison, smiling. "If you will do me the honour of looking behind you, you will observe that you are being watched by the men of the Fifth Battalion, Royal Scots Guards."

The girl blanched as she saw the grim line of kilted men behind her. "But... how...?"

"They travelled with me on the train, disguised as Albanian match-sellers."

"But – the Armenian waiter?" said the girl bewilderedly.

Harrison chuckled. "Dickie Lascelles – M.I.5."

The girl's beautiful lower-lip trembled slightly. "And the German in the Restaurant Car?"

"Aubrey Beauchamp, very old friend of mine. Fellow-Harrovian, too. A very decent sort."

"And Lupescu, the Rumanian? I suppose he...?"

"Sir Godfrey Tremaine," said Harrison, stifling a yawn, "Intelligence Counter-Espionage. Eton man, but quite sound."

"The two zigeuners," said the girl weakly, "at the Café Dobra?"

"Cyril Faversham and Harry Hurstmonceaux, two of my most able and devoted lieutenants," said Harrison. "Ah, I see them in the doorway now. Come in, gentlemen."

We entered the room, still attired in our colourful gipsy costume. "Faversham, Hurstmonceaux," said Harrison, "you will convey this lady and this gentleman to London, where you will present them to His Majesty's accredited authorities with my compliments. A BEA Viscount is awaiting you on the lawn to convey the whole party home. As for me – I shall see you again, no doubt."

"But sir – aren't you coming back with us to England?" I asked faintly.

"England..." said the Great Man, His eyes clouding in a pleasant reverie. "I have not seen Old England these five long years.... Tell me," He asked, His voice lightly nostalgic, "does the Wye still meander like a silver

ribbon through Her verdant meads? Is the click of bat against ball still heard through the drowsy afternoons upon Her village greens? Is the sweet Devon Cider still quaffed beneath the shade of Her great trees? And is there honey, still, for tea?"

"England is England yet," said Hurstmonceaux, his voice trembling, "despite those damned Socialists. The finest damned country in the world, sir!"

Harrison nodded, as if reassured. "One day I shall return there; until then – au revoir!"

With two or three agile steps He had reached the window. He stood there, framed in it, for an instant; then waved once, and was gone.

We stood, looking at the place where He had been, and none of us spoke for a while.

"I could love such a man," said Irene Pudovkin, tears glittering in her eyes.

I turned to her. "But men of such a stamp are not destined for the love of one woman alone, or of one great Nation, even; for it is their proud destiny to dedicate themselves to the service, not only of England and Her Mighty Empire – though that will always come first – but of all Mankind. His is a lonely path, but tread it He must; it is His Noble Heritage, and His greatest joy, so to do."

We stood a moment, in contemplative silence, before leaving.

End – Part Three

– *Triode* #13 (Spring 1958)

4. Foiled Again

(From papers collected in some very strange places by CYRIL FAVERSHAM M.M. and HARRY HURSTMONCEAUX, O.B.E.)

SCENE: The Savoy Hotel, London.

The world's first gentleman and the distinguished and beautiful actress were chatting together in the Savoy bar when the doors swung softly open, and across the deep pile of the carpet strode suave, silver-haired Sir Hubert Fudge, personal aide and confidant of the P.M. Nodding first to Harrison, he then beamed his well-known grin in the direction of the actress. "Will you excuse us for an hour or two, Dame Peggy?" he said. The lovely creature smiled, nodded, and made a graceful exit, for she understood; and Sir Hubert, guiding the Great Man to a secluded table, seated himself opposite Him and spoke.

"Sorry to have to disturb you, sir," he said, "but Sir Godfrey asked me to contact you at once. There's rather a largish sort of stunt coming off."

Harrison raised the '05 cognac to His lips; nodded expectantly.

"You will be aware, sir," said Sir Hubert, "of the achievements of the Russians in the field of rockets and satellites?"

Harrison slightly inclined His noble profile. "I will."

"Our American allies, under the inspired leadership of President Eisenhower, are, as you know, pooling their scientific resources to regain the technological lead. However..." and here Sir Hubert lowered his voice to the vibrant, confidential whisper that had been the undoing of many a Ministry of Education typist – "however, Her Majesty's Government itself is further advanced in this field than is generally realised. A gigantic research programme, initiated in collaboration with the vast Brock Fireworks combine, has resulted in... Something Pretty Big." Sir Hubert leaned back in his chair and regarded Harrison with reverent inquiry.

"You've heard of the Brock Tenpenny Rocket, sir?" Sir Hubert continued.

The great man nodded sagely.

"Our new development – the BTR 16 – is an extension of that idea. At a secret launching site ten miles beyond Ditton Junction stands *the biggest firework in the history of Mankind*. Why, the great wooden stick alone is over eighteen feet high, sir, and the nation's finest glassblowers

have been working night and day to create the gargantuan Vermouth bottle from which this awesome weapon will be launched!" Sir Hubert leaned forward confidentially. "You realise the implications, of course?"

"You mean... the balance of power may be restored?" said Harrison ruminatively.

"Precisely!" said Sir Hubert with sudden ferocity. "We'll show these rotters that the Old Country still has a trick or two up her sleeve! But perhaps equally as important, the successful launching of the BTR 16 will be a tremendous prestige victory for the civilised half of Europe and The Free Peoples Of The World in general. And – and we need your help, sir."

Harrison paused in the act of lighting one of His exquisite hand-made cigarettes. "My instructions?" He said.

"I knew we could count on you," cried Sir Hubert, with tears in his eyes. "By God, sir, you're the whitest man I know... any of us know... d'you know, you're a kind of a God with us, sir; there's many a man who would lay down his life..." He broke off, as he became aware of the slightly disapproving quirk of Harrison's left eyebrow, and bringing himself under control, he continued in a more restrained voice.

"To resume, sir. The rocket, with bottle attached, will be floated above the earth's atmosphere by huge gas-filled balloons. A gigantic hole has been scooped out of the centre of the rocket to provide accommodation for yourself. At the specified height, you will activate the blue touch-paper by remote control; the rocket will take off, and the bottle will fall away. The predetermined course of the missile – up – will take it to a point fifty-three-point-two miles above the earth's surface; when this point has been reached, you will, God willing, begin to descend. If the Prophecy and Witchcraft Bureau of the Meteorological Office have informed us correctly (and I have no reason to doubt that they have), you will begin to descend immediately above the city of Moscow. Then, within six thousand feet of the ground, the rocket will explode in an awesome panorama of red, white and blue stars; simultaneously, seventeen thousand copies of 'Conservative Freedom Works' and fourteen hundred musical boxes playing 'The British Grenadiers' will be released on tiny parachutes to fall in the central areas of the city."

Harrison stared ahead of Him numbly.

"That, sir, is our plan," said Sir Hubert, a trifle nervously.

"Britannia's brain is as active as ever, I perceive," said the great man, smiling wistfully.

"No expense has been spared to make the stunt a success," said Sir Hubert, with the pugnacious forward-thrust of the chin that had earned him

the cherished accolade of “Spunky Fudge” on the lacrosse fields of Charterhouse. “We’re even providing you with a parachute. May I just... may I...”

“By all means, my dear Fudge,” said Harrison suavely. “It is the third door on the left.”

“No, sir,” stammered Sir Hubert, in an agony of embarrassment, “what I meant was... may I just... wish you well, sir?”

“You may,” said Harrison, stubbing out His cigarette on the other’s chin. “But tell me, Sir Hubert, why should it be necessary for me to accompany the rocket at all? Surely the whole thing can be done by remote control?”

“Your perception, sir,” smiled Sir Hubert, “is as acute as ever. However, there is one further request that Her Majesty’s Government has... humbly... to make of you. Amidst the confusion caused by the impact of our propaganda, we should very much appreciate it if you could parachute down (as discreetly as possible, of course) and make your way furtively to the Red Square. You would then proceed to climb the highest spire of the Kremlin, and upon the topmost gleaming cupola place... a certain china utensil of domestic origin.” Sir Hubert grinned wryly. “Think of it! By George, the Russian Government ’ud cut a fine figure when the news leaked out. What a loss of face. What a Blow For Freedom!”

Harrison laughed heartily. “Capital!” He cried. “A somewhat unorthodox mission, but nevertheless one after my own heart. Here is my hand on it.”

Sir Hubert, the tears brimming his eyes, took the proffered hand. “Bless you, sir,” he stammered.

Part the Second:
In Which, For A While, Humanity Is In A Pretty Tight Corner.
1) Tom Sets Out for Rugby School.

Tuesday, November 5th; and in the star-sprinkled darkness above foggy London town a great, sleek shape was soaring upwards. It was Harrison’s nose. Behind it sat Harrison, ensconced in His favourite armchair in the oak-panelled study that had been scooped out for Him in the heart of the huge missile.

He looked up suddenly from the volume of Pliny He had been reading, for the missile-to-earth telephone had begun to shrill insistently.

He picked up the receiver. “Hello?”

Sir Hubert Fudge’s voice crackled excitedly at the other end. “This is an emergency, sir! A disaster has occurred! By George, it is the...”

“Pull yourself together, man!” said Harrison sharply, and the febrile chattering at the other end of the line quietened somewhat. “Now,” said Harrison. “Tell me briefly what has happened.”

“Briefly... yes, sir. Well, it’s like this, sir. The NGW 111, our new prototype long-range bomber, has been purloined from its secret cache in the Euston Road.” Sir Hubert choked back a sob. “Worse than this, though, the NGW was carrying... a Cobalt Bomb.”

“A Cobalt Bomb... yes, I see,” said Harrison imperturbably.

“A man was seen to enter the aircraft. Before he could be stopped, he’d taxied the plane out onto the Euston Road and taken off in it.”

“What did this man look like?” queried Harrison sharply.

“We know the devil’s identity, sir,” said Sir Hubert. “It was... Kurt Neumann.”

“Neumann!” echoed Harrison. “But surely he was eaten alive by piranha fish in episode two?”

“So we thought, sir, but apparently the low-grade alcohol in the fiend’s blood made him unacceptable to the fish.”

“And so – he is still among us?”

“Unfortunately, yes, sir. And you are aware of the fanatical hatred he bears towards the Old Country and towards... well, towards you, sir. But what he doesn’t realise is that this bomb, which I am confident he intends to drop on London, is likely to start a chain-reaction that will split the planet asunder like a rotten apple!”

“Caller, your three minutes are up,” came the stern voice of the switchboard girl.

“One moment more, miss, if you please!” cried Sir Hubert. “The mist, sir... the mist has grounded all our aircraft... only you can save us... you’re the only one who...” There was an abrupt click, and his voice was gone.

Harrison replaced the receiver thoughtfully. *Only you can save us...* He stood for some moments, deep in thought; and then, without fuss or flurry, but with the cool and imperturbable efficiency characteristic of the man, He did the following things. Switching on the radar, He saw the tiny point of light that represented the NGW 111; then, making a few quick calculations, He flung the steering wheel hard over, cogged down to third, put His left hand out, achieved a tight U-turn, and screamed on course towards the point of light. Gauging speed and course to a nicety, He gradually brought the rocket immediately over the bomber, until they were

relatively stationary. He then opened the door of His study, strode swiftly down a short passageway, flung open the exit-door – and jumped onto the fuselage of Neumann's aircraft. The rocket from which He had jumped veered away out of control, plunging down into the North Sea.

Clinging desperately to the aircraft with one hand, Harrison whipped out His pocket oxy-acetylene torch with the other, and began laboriously to cut a hole into the metal skin of the fuselage. When the hole was sufficiently large, He lowered Himself quietly into the plane, and walked casually towards the cockpit. Over the controls, intent on his mission, sat a revoltingly familiar figure. Harrison drew closer, rapidly donning His boxing-gloves as He did so.

Some sixth sense must have warned Neumann at that moment, for he suddenly swung round in his seat, his hideous, bloated, piranha-nibbled face contorting with fiendish malice as he caught sight of the Master. "Gott in Himmel!" he rasped. "You!"

"Yes," said Harrison coolly, "and the game is up."

"Der game... oop?" snarled Neumann. "Nein; is *nicht* oop!" He lurched suddenly from his seat and, curling his fingers into great claws, hurled himself at Harrison with a foul oath.

"I think not," said the great man, stopping back adroitly; and Neumann, his features alight with a hellish hate, stumbled forward, unable to save himself, towards the already-open bomb doors. With a ghastly, blood-curdling scream he disappeared through them.

And Harrison turned His attention to the controls.

Part the Third:
Just Deserts.
(An Appendix by Harry Hurstmonceaux, O.B.E.)

From one of the Palace's lofty anterooms I gazed out across the magnificence of The Hall. It was as I had remembered it: the parks, the fine processional way, the laughing strollers; yes, thanks to Harrison, they were all still there.

I saw that the crowds were beginning to mass. We had tried to keep the forthcoming ceremony a secret, in accordance with His wishes, but it had proved quite impossible; for von Neumann's body – by one of those ironies that make me more than ever convinced that Providence is on Our Side – had been discovered impaled upon the railings outside the Mother of Parliaments, and had provided the headline of the century.

Harrison was suddenly a world-figure. The French had requested Him

to form a cabinet; the Germans had given Him the Freedom of the City of Hamburg and a life pass to any dive on the Reeperbahn; the Americans had voted Him “This Week’s Man Of The Century”; even the Russians (for He had saved them, too) had created a new award, and He was now an Heroic Capitalist Saviour of the Soviet Republics.

The murmur of voices from behind made me turn; and I beheld the visage of the man I was privileged to call “friend”. He appeared, if possible, more immaculate than ever in His superbly-cut swallow tails, and the gleaming diamond in His cravat gave Him that air of impeccable suavity which the occasion demanded. He took Faversham and I by the hand. “Glad to see you, gentlemen,” He said. “Really, though, I hardly feel that I deserve a Knighthood for the little I did.”

“Nonsense, sir,” chuckled Sir Hubert, who stood at His side, “the British Public wouldn’t be satisfied with anything else. And remember how hurt the UNO people were when you declined the Presidency.” He glanced at his watch. “Well, sir, it’s almost time for your Audience.”

We all shook hands. Faversham and I were almost beside ourselves with joy and pride. We had all, I thought, come a long way together. Then, as I watched the tall figure stride away down the long corridor, flanked with portraits of the Nation’s most noble and illustrious personages, I was impelled to think: is He not, after all, the most brave, the most honourable, the most distinguished of them all?

Once more, as of long ago, I seemed to hear the clear ring of silver trumpets and the rich, thrilling music of massed choirs, their voices soaring in triumphant praise; and once more my being was suffused with pride, for I know that whilst such men lived, Freedom should not pass from the earth. Let us, then, gaze together upon the bright and limitless dawn of Tomorrow with proud hope, and fervent joy, and true humility.

End of
Beloved Is Our Destiny

– *Triode* #14 (Summer 1958)

Further Adventures

Cover by Eddie Jones for “Harrison in Wonderland”, *Bastion* #2, 1961

The Unmasking

Due to the current International Situation we are unable this issue to present an article by Hurstmonceaux and Faversham as their presence is needed elsewhere. However, most ably filling in with a further chronicle of *Harrison* we have Harry's maiden aunt. Relating a hitherto unpublished tale of The Master.

The Unmasking
by Harriet Hurstmonceaux

The day had been, in its way, strenuous, and it was good to relax with a cigarette and a glass of wine at my elbow. My chair was deep and soft and I sat, masculine fashion, with my feet towards the fire. I smiled to myself, recalling how my mater had often scolded me, in the days gone by, for this very position I was wont to adopt. Against the wall, the radiogram played Artie Shaw in muted tones, the vibrant bass flavouring the air. In the kitchen, Pike, my factotum, was busy. A record came to its end and the autochange clicked as it slid another disc onto the turntable.

The front door bell rang, interrupting my firelight reverie.

"All right, Pike," I called, "I'll see to it."

He stood on the threshold, urbane as always, his evening cape surrounding him with mystery. "Why, Dracula," I smiled, giving him the name of our affectionate childhood. "How lovely. A glass of wine? Will you stay to dinner?"

Pike, realising as she always seems to do that something was in the wind, was hovering to take his cape and hat. "Thank you, Pike," said he, with that ineffable grace which is his characteristic attitude to all ranks. Then, turning to me:

"A glass of wine, Lady Harriet. No more, for things are afoot and time presses." When we had sat down and been served with wine, he spoke again. "It is as we thought...."

To cover the turmoil this statement caused me I carefully fitted a cigarette into my jade holder. Controlling myself with, I hoped, no visible effort I struck a match and drew smoke into my lungs.

"Yes," he continued, "He whom we all thought to be the perfect epitome of a gallant English gentleman is... otherwise. In spite of the

chronicles published in reputable magazines, He is not what He would seem to be."

He looked around uneasily. "He is in the pay of... are we free from possible..."

I leaned forward and twisted the volume control. The mordant biting thunder of Shaw's weirdly exotic "Nightmare" filled the room. Dracula leaned forward and spoke close to my ear the name of a certain Country. I nodded, and reduced the astringent Shavian brass to a murmur.

"It looks like a job for you, Lady Harriet."

My brain in a whirl, I nodded.

"I have reason to believe He is in Hong Kong," said Dracula.

"I haven't," I rejoined. "Come, peep through this crack in the curtains." We looked together. Across the road a Chinaman leaned inconspicuously against a lamp-post smoking a joss stick.

"One of His men?"

I nodded.

"Gad! You knew, then?"

"Not for sure. But now...."

A few moments later he let himself out.

* * * * *

So it came about that I left my flat a half hour later attired in the dress of a slatternly char-lady. I carried a grubby shopping bag. As I left, the inconspicuous oriental threw away his joss stick and followed. Good. He had penetrated my disguise. I led him a hundred yards along the street and into a more crowded thoroughfare. Ahead of me lay my first objective. I crossed the road and entered through the door which no man may broach.

Once inside, I turned the shopping bag inside-out and it immediately became a smart overnight satchel, stripped off the slatternly rags and revealed fashionable widow's weeds beneath them. A smart torque, with a veil to cover my face, completed the outfit.

I left, and went to the small café across the street. My shadow was nowhere in sight. At first. But after a few moments he appeared, and took up his stance outside the café, facing across the street. Within a minute he was joined by a rough-looking person who spoke to him in a cross manner. There was an altercation during which the Chinaman gestured several times across the street. Then with an angry shrug he walked away with the other. Leaving a 10/- note on the table, I hastily followed.

To my surprise they walked, not attempting to call a taxi or board a bus as I had feared. The way led down Oxford Street and then, just before Holborn, they turned into the more select part of Bloomsbury. Here, in a

street that will have no name, they entered the forecourt of a majestic and secluded mansion. I was for the moment perplexed. Then I threw my veil back and strode up the steps. My tug at the bell brought forth a butler of truly stupendous majesty.

"Madame?" he intoned.

I had decided on a frontal attack. Therefore, boldly, I asked for Him.

"Tell Him," I said, "that Lady Harriet is here."

The butler led me to an exquisite drawing room, a room of impeccable taste, cool and relaxing. I dropped my veil. It was then that I saw the picture. It jarred vilely against that lovely room, a thing of unspeakable lewdness. While I gazed with fascinated disgust, He spoke from behind me.

"Why the weeds, my lady?" I turned slowly.

"I mourn one who, in a way, still lives," I said.

He smiled, a slow evil smile that was a travesty of his usual frank openness. He took me by the arm and smiled again, with intent to disarm.

"A glass of wine, my lady?"

God forgive me for a fool, but I accepted. It was a good, dry sherry with body and strength. The next thing I knew was oblivion.

My awakening was slow and painful. It was also lonely. I was sprawled in an armchair, my dress disarranged. For a moment horror possessed me; had this monster besmirched me whilst I lay, drugged, in his power?

The atmosphere seemed different somehow, now; the house seemed cold and deserted. Every door leading from the hall was locked. Only the front door was open and I was thankful to gain the outer air. So this was His game, I thought, to persuade me that since I had found His evil lair, He had taken His nefarious schemes to some other rendezvous. I stood listening and undecided as to my next move upon the steps of the house. Then I went through the tradesman's entrance and round to the rear of the mansion.

The door looked innocent enough in its archway of red-brick. However, only a desperate resolve to get to the bottom of things gave me the strength to open it. I pushed against its green surface and entered. Stone steps, dim-lit by naked bulbs, led downwards. They went on forever, it seemed, into the very bowels of the earth.

Sound came, muffled yet ringing with distance, the sound of a rhythmless chant. The steps went on. And on. I seemed to have been walking for hours when they stopped, suddenly, on the brink of an abyss. I realised that I stood on the rim of an underground amphitheatre, a vast

chamber hidden beneath the bricks and mortar of London. Stretching into blackness on either hand were squat Gothic arches, holding up the cavernous roof and the teeming life of the surface. Rows of steps stalked to the floor of the arena, ten feet below. In the centre of the arena yellow torches flickered, their light barely reaching to where I stood. They illuminated a raised throne, and around its dais men genuflected. Upon the throne itself sat a figure in a golden mask, receiving the veneration of its worshippers. Their chant came clearly now, sung with the dead beat of jackbooted feet, a chant of lifeless subservience. The tune was the immortal “Tannenbaum”.

“Harrison, O Harrison, Harrison, O Harrison,” they intoned with foreheads beating the floor. Something died in me then.

At school we had all worshipped Him, the modest hero, and to Him I had dedicated my innocent girlish heart in unquestioning fealty. Now, faced with this gold-masked monster on His gilded throne I was sorrowful and distraught.

“Hold,” cried the figure on the throne, “bring forth the offenders!”

Slouching abjectly, two miserable figures were led forward into the light, naked and cowering. The One on the throne stood erect and a thin whip cut a tracery of blood across their backs. My gorge rose. I swallowed it desperately and forced myself to continue to watch the gruesome scene. The two prisoners – they were the two who had earlier tried to shadow me – grovelled before the golden figure, beseeching mercy, but no mercy had He. Still lashed by the whip they were dragged away back into the deep black shadows, and disappeared from my view.

Another figure was dragged forth, this time one that managed to stand erect and proud, still. “Ah,” came that rich voice. “The spy. For you a merciful death. The standard death, in fact, for spies.” The newcomer had once been a powerful man as was evidenced by his immense frame, but now the flesh sagged on his bones, and his eyes reflected the agony only the tortured can know.

“Cigarette,” He snarled. A cylinder was placed between the lips. He drew the smoke down in great gulps.

“Bandage.”

But here the captive cried halt. “Keep it ter blow yer ruddy nose on!” he shouted.

I was lost in admiration. This, one of the humbler servants of our country, going to his death with true British valour on his lips. He stood there, awaiting the shock of bullets from the guns of the front row of genuflecting chanters. I could stand it no longer. Scarcely heeding what I

did, I rushed down the steps and across the arena, drawing my veil as I ran. I placed myself in front of the captive.

"Have your evil way with me," I cried, "but let this gallant gentleman go free!"

"No mum, no, yer can't do it!"

The captive tried to shoulder me aside, but I would not let him, and in his weakened state he was no match for me.

"I know you," I whispered. "I know you, Charles Duncombe. Once you saved the life of one dear to me, and my family never forget a debt. Take advantage of your unbound feet and go man, go!"

I heard a manly sob escape him as he ran. Turning to the golden throne, I said: "Well, Harrison?"

The lips beneath the golden mask smiled mockingly. "You would sacrifice yourself to save that worthless Cockney fool?"

My voice trembled in spite of my efforts to control myself. "He is worth ten of you!"

"But not one tenth of you," He said. "Lift your veil, and let my slaves see the face of their new mistress."

"Please," I begged. "Please, for the sake of what you once were, for the Harrison that is dead, spare me that."

There must have been some residuum of goodness in Him for He said no more, merely indicating the empty throne next to His own. I seated myself, wondering how many luckless maidens before me had occupied this doleful seat. He sent the slaves away and in their place came a committee of masked figures with whom he proceeded to plot such black and treacherous schemes as made my blood curdle. Sick to my soul, I gave the appearance of plotting with them, inserting such garbled items of information as I could think of. Then, when their dastardly plans were complete, He took me by the arm.

"Come, my beloved," he said.

Knowing full well that a fate far worse than death awaited me, I went with him, down a black tunnel in the amphitheatre wall. At last, in a bedroom of sybaritic luxury, He turned to me. With a shudder I went into His arms. As I raised my cringing lips to His, my eyes tightly closed, a voice cried "Hold!"

I stood stupefied. There at the door stood my brother, with Charlie Duncombe at his shoulder, as in the old days. And behind him no, it could not be! The luxurious room spun around me and I would have fallen but for Harry's strong arm.

For standing behind them, in the mouth of the tunnel, was Harrison

himself! I stammered like a schoolgirl.

"But – but who...?"

Quietly, Harry stripped off the imposter's mask, while Duncombe kept a black automatic levelled. Beneath the mask, the face of He, Himself. What blasphemy was this? My brother's fingers went to work again; he stripped off what appeared to be a thin plastic mask, formless in itself, but when stretched over human features taking on shape and form. The appearance, indeed, of genuine flesh.

The features revealed were those of Dracula, my childhood friend, otherwise Sir H.P. Sanders-Blunt!

* * * * *

Once again I sat at my own fireside, the lovely Shavian brass a muted murmur. My brother and Charles Duncombe were there, and, almost unbearable ecstasy, He sat beside me. He, who normally eschewed the company of women, with His arm around my shoulders, and a glass in His hand.

"Poor Dracula," I sighed. "Why, o why did he do it?"

Harrison coughed sympathetically.

"The old story, my dear. The desire for Power, a frustrated sex life – then temptation. Poor fellow. It was a deuced clever scheme, though. But when he tried to drag you into it, there he overreached himself."

And He squeezed me. He squeezed me! Could one ask for more? Dare I? I turned my face to His. The phone rang.

"It's for you, Sir," said Harry.

He took the phone, listened for a moment, then replaced it slowly. For a second He looked at me, more than friendship in His eyes. Then He shrugged. Such things were not for Him.

"Well, gentlemen, it seems that I must go," he announced.

From the window we watched Him walk away. A tear rolled down my cheek.

"Buck up, old chap," said my brother huskily.

"I wonder where..." I whispered.

"Ne' mind w'ere 'E's gorn, mum," came Charles Duncombe's voice. "Wen 'E wants us, E'll call. E'll call, mum, donchu worry."

I put my hands on his shoulders, gazed into his honest blue eyes. Here, I thought, is the real backbone of England.

"And when He calls, we must go," I said.

– *Triode* #15 (Winter 1958)

The 39 Schweppes

by Harry Hurstmonceaux, O.B.E., and Cyril Faversham, M.M.

I. In Which He Receives His Instructions.

Should the intrepid adventurer stumble by chance into the quietest and most secluded Mews in all Kensington, and there rap at a fine brass doorknocker to enquire his way, he might well discover himself at the threshold of a snug bachelor apartment, a place of mellow and harmonious furnishings, warmed by a roaring orange fire whereon a gleaming kettle bubbles and hisses merrily; he might then, before he is kicked into the gutter, briefly discern therein a rack of ancient and cherished briars, a shelf or two of books, a crate of Double Diamond, and a few hunting trophies; and he would doubtless receive the impression that the occupant of the flat was a Man who would find His deepest contentment in a bowl of shag, or a jar of punch, or the pit at a good play with jolly fellows of His own ilk. And indeed, our hypothetical inquirer would be correct in his assumption; for here, Gentle Reader, lives One who, were it His privilege to choose the manner of life He should adopt, would render Himself so snugly unobtrusive that we should doubtless hear no more of Him.

And yet, fortunately for us, He is not permitted to do so, for Her Majesty and Her Ministers have often thought it prudent in the past to avail themselves of His assistance in certain little matters, and are likely to do so, we dare say, for many years to come; and because of this happy circumstance we are enriched and, we think it not extravagant to say, ennobled by further acquainting ourselves with the almost incredible exploits on behalf of the Crown of this most sublime and godlike, yet most self-effacing, of Men.

Our narrative then, opens – opens at Greytowers, the country residence of General the Hon. Courtenay Foote, who'd received his baton after the Dieppe show; and here, not many months ago, Sir William Harrison might have been discerned, striding through the magnificent grounds with a brace of keen-eyed beagles on one side of Him and a rather splendid girl named Daphne Fortesque on the other. Suddenly, Sir Courtenay approaches Him in great haste, agitatedly brandishing a sealed and beribboned Dispatch from Chequers; the Great Man takes it and, waving away Daphne, Courtenay and the dogs, He slowly opens it.

His finely-chiselled features register lively interest as He peruses the document; and then, with characteristic agility, He bounds across the lawns to the house, dons His fur-lined greatcoat and tartan deerstalker, and bids the house-guests a brief but gracious farewell.

Within an hour, He is closeted with the Premier at the latter's country residence. He nods intently, now, as the Prime Minister tentatively outlines his suggestions, and a few minutes later He takes the old boy's hand in a cool, firm handshake. "Whatever I can do, sir, I will do," He chuckles modestly; "and I must once again thank you for entrusting to my care this most delicate of missions."

"God bless you, my boy," cries the P.M., tears trickling down his cheeks onto the half-gnawed leg of pheasant he is holding, "and good luck to you!"

Harrison waves, briefly, as He enters His scarlet-and-gold, chauffeur-driven, llamaskin-upholstered Rolls; He is in Mayfair by early afternoon, and shortly afterwards is discussing the affair with us in our suite at Claridges.

We are, it seems, to make a little journey to Scotland.

II. Which Tells, In The Past Tense, Of A Damnable Plot.

The Flying Scotsman roared north; and we re-entered our private carriage after a protracted and memorable dinner of pickled mushrooms, pasty of venison, ragout of fatted snails, larks' tongues in tangerine liqueur sauce, swan soup, a dish of sturgeon, roast woodcock, a lamprey pie with Westphalia bacon, a dish of pancakes steeped in Tokay, Mousse Sir Brian Robertson, Venezuelan Cheese, a bottle or two of Crème de Violette and three vintage Ship's Woodbines. As we hung out of the carriage window, giving back to Nature what she had bestowed upon us, the Master outlined the nature of the problem that confronted us.

"Our destination, gentlemen, is Scotland," said the Lordly One, "a land of stalwart men, delectable women, and bonny children, almost all of whom, I need hardly say, are intensely loyal to Her Majesty."

"Almost all?" we queried abruptly.

"Almost, gentlemen," said Harrison soberly. "There exists, you see, a tiny but vociferous organisation which, unless it is quickly snuffed out, may give rise to a spot of bother."

"You mean... there may be a Rising?" we exclaimed incredulously.

"It is not beyond the bounds of possibility," said Harrison, as the train

thundered over the Forth Bridge. “The trouble, gentlemen, originates in the wickedly fertile brain of one Hamish Petriona McSinderson, a direct (if quite unofficial) descendant of Haggis II, who ruled that part of Scotland which is now known as The Gorbals during the latter half of the ninth century – B.C. McSinderson has gathered about himself a band of ruffianly malcontents whose avowed aim is to place him on the throne of Scotland as their allegedly rightful ruler. The hard core, as it were, of this sinister little group consists of three men: McSinderson himself; a fanatical kilted devil who calls himself Laurie McBurgess; and a vague, shadowy figure whom I suspect to be the Brains behind this whole devilish business, and who is known only as ‘N.G. McW.’”

“The besporraned dastards!” we cried involuntarily. “But...”

“Patience, vassals,” said the Master, taking a meditative, eight-second pull at His Slivovicz-flask, “and I shall, as is my wont, make all plain.

“Young Eamonn McMorgan, our Scottish man – who was found last week, you may recall, drowned in a vat of Drambuie – had managed to discover that the tartaned hotheads had set up their hellish HQ in an abandoned porridge-mine in the Western Highlands. Our mission, therefore, requires that we, too, base ourselves in that area. We shall be posing as three effete Sassenachs, gentlemen, who are in the district for the excellent grouse-shooting which may be had there. I have arranged accommodation for us at the Gasthof Burns, near Fort William,” the Great Man continued, distributing false beards, faded tweed suits, shooting sticks and monocles to each of us; “and I think we should not be too uncomfortable there. I seem to remember awarding it Three Stars when last I visited it.”

“A Harrison three-star!” we gasped. “But – there are only seven others in all Europe! We begin to think, Master, that we shall enjoy this little stunt no end.”

Our Master, however, was now immersed in the Bombay edition of *The Well of Loneliness*, and made no reply. With a swift surge of exhilaration, we began to don our disguises.

III. The Mines Of Doom.

It was late afternoon of the following day; for seven hours we’d stalked a shootable sixteen-pointer over the Arroch screes and down the corries of Sgurr Beoch, and a curtain of thin, wind-driven rain swept against our fur-lined boiler suits as we staggered across the bleak, bracken-covered wastes, grimly hanging on to our rifles, gas masks, maps and portable

porridge-diviner. Suddenly Harrison came to a halt; looking down we perceived that the needle on the diviner was beginning to twitch slightly. “By jove, Sir,” we exclaimed; “does this mean...?”

“It means, gentlemen, that we have not far to go!” said the Master briskly, and began to clamber down the side of Glenlivet and across Ruiseach Side to the Tollig. We followed Him (as we would, indeed, through the gates of Hell), and found ourselves, presently, at the entrance to a shallow bracken-covered valley. Ahead of us, through the driving rain, we were able to make out the lettering on an ancient, bracken-covered sign. It read:

LOCH LOCHRY
PORRIDGE MINES
(1921) LTD
KEEP OUT

“Huzzah!” we cried, and laboriously unstrapping a battery-driven tape-recorder from Harrison’s sturdy, bracken-covered back, we switched it on. The stirring strains of “God Save The Queen” emerged from its tiny speaker, and we stood, saluting at attention, while the Anthem was played. Then, laboriously strapping the tape-recorder back on to the Master’s back, we strode bravely forward, tears of pride and joy streaming down our asinine, bracken-covered faces.

The entrance to the mine proved to be a normal, uncomplicated sort of hole in the bracken-covered hillside; entering, we found ourselves in a dark, labyrinthine maze of porridge-dripping passages. We wandered about for several days, striving desperately to get our bearings, but without success; suddenly, the Great One came to an abrupt halt and pointed to the floor. “See, gentlemen!” he cried exultantly.

There, at our feet, was a small bottle which had once contained a well-known proprietary brand of mineral-water. “And look, Sir,” we cried; “here’s another – and yet another!”

“The thirty-nine Schweppes, gentlemen,” said the Lordly One, slowly lighting a Cubano Perfecto. “McMorgan mentioned them in his last communiqué. They will guide us through this hellish maze to the centre of things. Come!”

Without further ado, we began to follow the trail of bottles which led us through a network of tortuous, shadowy passageways; and now, ducking beneath great stalagmites of dry porridge, passing long-abandoned

workings, and easing our way past huge trucks filled with the sere and dusty cereal, we came to, at last, a little cavern where the trail of bottles seemed to terminate. Ahead of us, set into one of the moist grey walls, was a door; and from beneath it we detected, faint but unmistakable – a gleam of light!

"Hist!" breathed the Master; we cautiously approached the door and listened intently. From beyond, we could hear the murmur of voices; one or two words were plainly distinguishable.

"Hooses o' Parrrliment... aye... bomb underr Speakerrr's chair... aye... damned Sassenachs bloon sky high!... och, aye... hee-hee..."

"I have heard enough!" cried Harrison in fluent Lallans, and with one mighty thrust He had burst open the door. Before Him, seated at a rude wooden table, were two men: one a lean, bespectacled devil who betrayed no trace of animation at the sudden interruption, the other a tall, thick-set figure wearing a tattered kilt and a Tyrolean hat. A third ruffian was vaguely discernible, standing in the shadowy recesses of the chamber. Harrison swiftly drew His flintlock and aimed it at each of them in turn. "Your diabolical game is up, gentlemen," said He; "and I shall be greatly obliged if you'd raise your hands into the air... Come back, ye sleekit, cowerin', timorous beastie!" and He fired at the shadowy third figure, who nevertheless managed to make good his escape through a fissure in the porridge-wall.

"A pox on't!" cried the Master vehemently; "we have here if I am not mistaken – and of course I never am – Messrs McBurgess and McSinderson; and yet I fear that the third member of this ghastly little troupe – the one who managed to escape just a moment ago – is the devil we most need to fear." He smiled, suddenly. "Nevertheless, a good bag for one day."

"Where, Sir?" we cried eagerly, our beady little eyes gleaming.

"Sensualists!" cried Harrison sternly. "Now, bind these rascals with stout leather thongs, and we will escort them without delay to the nearest gillie."

IV. The Laird O' McAroon

The following morning, refreshed by a sound night's sleep and a hearty breakfast of herrings-au-kirsch, and happy in the knowledge that two of the unholy trinity were safely behind bars, we were taking our customary Constitutional among the foothills of Ben Nevis when our progress was arrested by the sudden appearance of an Armstrong-Siddely Star Sapphire,

which arrived as if from nowhere and jolted to an abrupt halt directly in front of us. Before we could gather our scattered faculties, a burly, unshaven ruffian in Jackie Dennis kilt and tam-o'-shanter had emerged from the car and, brandishing a rusty claymore, brusquely indicated that we were to enter.

"What," Harrison said sternly, "does this mean? Who the deuce are you?"

"If ye'll get in, Sassenach," grated the villain, "ye'll soon find oot."

We had no alternative but to enter the vehicle, which now began to bump its way erratically across the moors. Presently we reached an obscure minor road, and were then driven North for some time, passing through a remote region of fir-covered hills, with no sign of habitation save the occasional TV antennae on a crofter's cottage, or now and then a huge serpentine head protruding from some blue loch. At last, having ascended a one-in-five hill and rattled over a rickety wooden drawbridge, we came to a halt and were ordered out.

We found ourselves in the courtyard of a large and gloomy castle. Prodded by blunderbusses, we passed through an ancient archway and up a flight of broad steps. We emerged in a great, echoing hall, where we waited a moment or two before being ushered into a private chamber beyond.

The walls of the room in which we now found ourselves were hung with tattered tartan draperies and ancient haggis-skins. The floors were carpeted with pine-needles, and the only furniture to be seen was a rude wooden bench at which a strange kilted devil was seated fingering his bagpipes.

"N.G. McW., I presume," said the Great One grimly.

"Arrr, so oi've got ee at least, then!" croaked McW., his de'ilish features alight wi' malice. "As to moy oydentity, Oi be known to moy friends and associates 'ereabouts as the Laird O' McAroon; an' that's ow yew'll address Oi, if yew please! Och, ye nearly had Oi in them porridge moines, didn't ee? But Oi was too smart for ee, begorrah! Och?"

"You, Sir, are no Scotsman," said Harrison sternly; "neither are you a member of any branch of the British nobility. So let us drop this silly pretence, shall we?"

"Noah, mister," said McW., pensively, "mubbee Oi be main shoggish, but mubbee Oi bain't no moa boddlesome than what Oi niver wur. You be a smaart maaan, 'Arrison, Oi can see that; but 'twon't do ee no good, zee, cos within an hour, ee won' be aloive to tell about it ee won't."

“You wicked West-Countwy Wotter!” we cried, but Harrison remained calm.

“You have, sir, a pronounced Loamshire accent,” said He with some curiosity. “Now, why on earth should a man whose roots are embedded deep in the soil of England be lending his assistance to these wild Celtic visionaries?”

“Cos Oi was agoin’ to be the power behoind the Scottish throne, thass whoy, dammee!” snarled McW. “Oi was goin’ to ave power – *power*, do ee understan’ Oi? Power and money! Moy own little line o’ printin’ presses so them damned APAs ’ud be able to read moy great work; moy own staaf of sekkerterries, toypists, rewrite men, punctyation editors; arr, an ’arem o beauteous femmefans, too...” He broke off abruptly and stared into space, his eyes glassy, his lips curved in a fiendish smile. “But enough o’ this,” he cried suddenly; “yew’ve spoilt moy chances, you ’ave, an’ you’m agoin to pay! Guaaaards!! Throw these dammed interferin’ townies into the Oubli – oubil – into the Dungeons.”

We were then roughly seized by six or seven of the ruffians, and bundled down a steep flight of steps into a damp, gloomy chamber set deep into the foundations of the castle. Here, we were chained to three pillars, and the guards hastily left, slamming the great door behind them.

Suddenly, from a grating set low in the opposite wall, we saw a trickle of water emerging. The trickle grew, and began to lap around our ankles. “James Robertson Justice!” we cried. “So they mean to immerse us!”

Chancing to look up, we beheld three giant anacondas writhing their way relentlessly down each of the pillars. “A tight corner, Sir,” we said between gritted teeth; and Harrison nodded grimly. “It’s going to be even tighter, I fear,” said He; “for, if you will look closely at the walls, you will observe that some infernal mechanism is driving them closer and closer together....”

It was true; the room was growing smaller! And now, from the wide apertures in the grating, we beheld a trio of sharks emerge; they flicked their tails wickedly, and began to make straight for our pillars.

“Farewell, cruel world!” we cried. “We have at least the satisfaction of knowing that we have done our duty to the utmost of our ability.” And we launched into a final, ragged chorus of “Rule, Britannia”.

The water was up to our chests, now; the anacondas were not a foot above us; the walls were pressing closer, closer together; the sharks were sniffing curiously about our legs....

V. Waters of Destiny

Inattention to details of no seeming importance has confounded many a scheme, both noble and infamous, during man's long and turbulent history; and so it proved – fortunately for us – upon this occasion. "Our host, gentlemen," said the Master, smiling at us from His pillar as the sharks sniffed curiously at His waistcoat-buttons, "has made one small but significant error in his hellish little undertaking: he has (I am happy to inform you) neglected to use stainless steel for these chains which now bind us, and I have the distinct impression that they are already beginning to rust. In fact –" He gave a Herculean Heave at His bonds – "I am convinced of it!" With another great tug, the corroded links suddenly snapped, and the Great Man was – free!

"Whizzo, Sir," we cried; but of course, all was not well with us yet! No, by George. The Great One, however, had everything under control; hastily withdrawing a fly-spray from the folds of His cloak, He swam to our pillars and dealt rapidly with the anacondas, which were, by this time, almost nibbling at our ears; then, loosening our chains, He swam back to His own pillar and finished off the remaining reptile. The snakes dropped into the swirling waters below, and were devoured in one gulp by the sharks.

These latter, strange to say, had not yet attacked us; and muttering prayers of gratitude, we swam hurriedly towards the door. "I do not think, gentlemen," said Harrison, lighting a Havana, "that the matter of our egress will prove unduly troublesome; the water has undoubtedly rotted the door-timbers sufficiently for us to punch our way through, Oh yes, as I thought!" cried He triumphantly, for at the first blow of His fist against the door, the whole structure collapsed into a thousand soggy fragments.

The flood of water that ensued swept us forward through the doorway, carrying us along a broad corridor. Harrison managed to grasp at a grand piano which floated nearby and, bedraggled but triumphant, we clambered aboard it. "Nobly, nobly done!" cried the Great Man exuberantly, as we drifted lazily along the maze of passageways; and we nodded our assent. "Indeed, Sir," said we, "this has been a miraculous deliverance. One thing, however, we don't quite understand: why didn't the sharks attack us when they had us at their – er, mercy."

"Professional etiquette, gentlemen," said Harrison, dashing off a Chopin étude. "You may recall that for some years I was a practising lawyer." He smiled with wry good humour.

"...Look, Lord!" we cried suddenly; for the current had now carried

us into a great banqueting-hall, at whose farthest end we could discern a knot of figures. As the waters carried us forward, we caught sight of McW. standing in the midst of the group, an expression of pained incredulity on his diabolical features. The level of the waters had by now subsided a little, and we were able to leap from the piano to the floor, drawing our tiny silver Berettas as we did so. “Stay exactly where you are, McW., and don’t move!” said the Master, splashing His way across the floor to where the astonished fiend and his henchmen stood. “This, I’m afraid, is the end of your little escapade apart, of course, from several rather tedious years as guests of Her Majesty.”

“Arrr...” gurgled McW., unable to believe the sudden change in his fortunes.

“What about these other rascals, Sir?” we queried. “Are we to take them all in?”

“No, gentlemen, you are not,” said Harrison, and turned to face the ruffianly crowd. “Return to your homes, peasants,” cried He; “and let this be a salutary lesson. Force, even when backed by the guile of such a leader as McW., is no match for Justice, Freedom and Human Dignity.”

“God bless ye sirr, for a decent and honourable mon!” cried the misguided oafs, and trudged away, muttering penitently amongst themselves.

“Come, my lads!” said Harrison briskly; “I’m anxious to see an end to this affair. Bind the ruffian with stout leather thongs, and – to Edinburgh!!”

VI. Envoi

...The punch in the muffled earthenware jar had begun to thicken a little on its spices, and Harrison now began the delicate ritual of grating sugar against the lemons, lovingly drawing the subtly aromatic oils from the fruit; then, producing a bottle of rum, a blue china box of cinnamon, and a philtre or two of secret essences, He poured and dusted the ingredients with a gentle reverence into the jar. Some minutes later, having steeped our glasses in the fragrant steam, we began gratefully to fill them. Outside, we knew, the bitter wind would be causing the flaring yellow gas-lamps to dance and flicker eerily; but here the winter night was shut out by thick, crimson curtains, and we sat about the blazing fire in our huge Pickwickian armchairs, drinking and sipping with grateful hearts.

“A bowl of shag, gentlemen?” said Harrison, and we accepted cordially. “And then, perhaps, the gallery at some cheerful nonsensical

play – what?"

"A capital notion, Sir!" cried we. "Let us take the Yellow Albion bus to the Strand, where we shall dine on stout and oysters, view the latest crop of fillies at the Lyceum, and perhaps take supper at the Tavistock, and then, on to a party at Black's!"

"Done!" cried the Master, bringing His fist down on the George IV table. "Pray trot outside, Hurstmonceaux, and whistle us a hansom. I, meanwhile –"

Before He could complete His sentence, however, there came a firm but reverent knocking at the door; Harrison walked over and opened it, admitting a tall, distinguished gentleman in evening dress, wearing a dark red carnation, Inverness cape, monocle, and short imperial.

The visitor greeted us formally. "I have come, Sir," said he, addressing the Master, "at the behest of Her Majesty's Foreign Minister." Harrison nodded briefly, and turned to us.

"Off to the Lyceum with you, good fellows," said He, smiling a trifle wryly. "It appears that my services are once again required."

"Indeed, no, Sir!" we cried hotly; "for if danger and the call to High Adventure once more beckon you, so also do they us; if you see what we mean."

"Capital, capital!" cried the Great Man heartily; "and now, sir, if you will take a pipe and a bowl of punch, perhaps my lieutenants and I may hear the nature of the problem that confronts us?"

"Thank you, Sir," said our visitor, seating himself. "I'll come directly to the point. We have lately become aware of certain rumours concerning a possible Rising in the Gugumbu District of Uganda...."

Finis

– *Triode* #16 (August 1959)

The Splendidest Adventure

(*The Story So Far:* Marucci has confessed to Captain Cater that the plot against the under-secretary was devised by Biancheri and his wife. At the instigation of this woman, Marucci succeeds in obtaining incriminating documents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in St. Petersburg, at the same time sending an anonymous letter to Mr. Gerald Oldfield (the member for Antrim West, one of Dudley's bitterest political opponents), preferring against him a charge of murder. The Grand Duke Stanislas knows the truth, of course, from what has been told him at his own Embassy. The Meldrums, a worthy pair, still remain in ignorance of the true character of the Station-master's daughter, whom they have adopted out of charity. *Now Read On.*)

The Splendidest Adventure

(Being another chapter from the crowded life of William Harrison, Esq. As related by Cyril Faversham, M.M., and Harry Hurstmonceaux, O.B.E.)

I. An Incident In The Hotel Magnifique, Brownlow Hill, Liverpool. (As related by Oscar de l'isle Plumfritter)

I put on the lush orchestral LP, lit a Sobranie Black Russian cigarette, took a grain or two of snow; then settled down with my glass of Crème de Violette at the side of the voluptuous Eurasian girl. This, I thought nastily, is what Gracious Living is all about. Suddenly, there came a firm, strong knock at the door. Cursing fluently in Quechua, I rose to answer it.

I opened the door an inch or two. Before me I saw the ascetic, aquiline features and keen eyes of the most potent personage in the British Empire.

Pale-faced, I bade the Great Man enter; then, running before Him into the apartment, I hastily ground out my cigarette, flung the cocaine out of the window, boiled the Hugo Winterhalter record, hid the girl under the carpet, and poured the liquor into the aspidistra pot at my elbow. But He had already entered the room and and was staring disapprovingly about

Him. His firm grey eyes met mine, and He frowned.

"Mercy, Great One," I stammered, grovelling in the Slivovicz-spattered carpet at His foot; "I – I got into bad company in Trowbridge. There's a certain tavern there called the Norman George, and..."

"Get up man, get up," said the Master, with an expression of faint distaste. "I came here," he added, after a moment, "to request your assistance with a forthcoming little stunt; but I see now that I misjudged my man. You're no longer – clean, somehow." He sniffed twice. "I shall seek out Hurstmonceaux and Faversham."

Turning on His heel, He pulled out His machete and began hacking His way through the aspidistra leaves towards the door. "Yield me but one more chance, O Mighty One!" I cried, trembling like a beaten cur, but He was gone.

II. An Encounter In An Abbey Wood Doss-House. (As related by Hurstmonceaux & Faversham)

"Faversham, Hurstmonceaux, my two able lieutenants! Has it come to this?" cried the Lordly One, peering down into our little hammock. It was five in the morning, but the sight of His noble countenance soon shocked us into complete consciousness, and before long we were chatting gaily together over three great, steaming plates of bangers and mash. "Actually, we're not as impoverished as we would seem, Sir," whispered Faversham, smiling faintly; "we're on a Special Mission here." "Tracking down the Abbey Wood pneumatic-bosom deflator," added Hurstmonceaux, and we explained about the swine who'd been terrorising the young virgins, if any, of the neighbourhood.

"A sordid and trivial assignment," said Harrison grumpily. "I'll speak to the P.M. about it."

"Don't be too harsh with him, Sir," pleaded Faversham somewhat apprehensively; "we're rather enjoying it here."

But speak to the P.M. He did; the Old Boy was really quite apologetic, for Governments have toppled before at a disapproving word from Harrison. We were immediately taken off the case, and one o'clock that afternoon found us lunching with the Master at Frascati's.

"It is of prime importance that I employ two decent chaps on this particular Stunt," said the Great Man, after the debris had been cleared away, "because it intimately concerns rather a decent sort of girl, and one who desperately needs our help. Not only this, but it involves the stability of the entire Free World..."

“Doesn’t it always?” we murmured.

“...The young lady in question,” continued Harrison, uncorking a bottle of Niersteiner Spätlese ’49, “...impeccably bred, corn-yellow hair, eyes as blue as periwinkles, tiny tip-tilted chin, mouth like a fresh young rosebud, fond of horses – is being held captive by Kurt Neumann’s filthy gang in the Schloss Unrath, near Villach in Austria.”

“Kurt Neumann?” we gasped. “But surely... surely he was impaled on the railings outside Westminster in *Triode* 14?”

“Yes,” Harrison replied, “so the world believes. In fact, though, only his head was impaled, and so the dastard’s principal faculties remain unimpaired. But to resume: the young lady in question (her name, by the way, is Adela) is the only surviving daughter of Sir Giles Mingo-Fotherdew, one of the Atomic Energy Commission’s most brilliant men...”

“Wasn’t he the chap, Sir,” queried Faversham, “who discovered how to make a passable Pernod by dropping aniseed-balls into heavy water?”

“He was,” said Harrison, meditatively sipping His 1935 Chateau Romani Conti du Domain, “and now the devils have his daughter in their hellish clutches. Unless he leaves Harwell immediately, and goes to work for the Other Side, they’ve threatened to...” Harrison left the sentence uncompleted; but we could sense His mental turmoil at that moment.

“The unutterable scoundrels!” Faversham said hotly. “You can bank on us, Sir, to see the Stunt through.”

“Thank you – chums,” said Harrison simply. “Then shall we say – an early start in the morning?”

“What a marvellous idea, Sir!” cried Hurstmonceaux and we rose together. “An early start tomorrow morning,” we chanted in unison.

III. Infamy In The Edelweiss. (Hurstmonceaux & Faversham)

0700 hrs. next morning saw us on the Dover Road; we took Reggie Pencewell’s private car-ferry to Boulogne, and our maroon Lancia Aprilia was soon hurtling down the road to Alsace.

At Holsheim, we drew in at Bugatti’s where young Bugatti himself ran out the specially tuned sky-blue supercharged 575c for the Master; with a rasping roar and a wave of the hand we thundered down the dusty road to Switzerland. We spent the night at Basle, at a rather decent little pension where we were served with a not unreasonable Frieschlingsteak, washed down with a flask or two of Blogwasser. The meal was enlivened by Hurstmonceaux’s discovery of a tiny transistor-powered wire recorder

in his sauerkraut, and we chuckled merrily at this example of the crudity of Soviet Counter-Espionage.

By 1000 hrs. the following morning we were in Salzburg and, pausing only to exchange the Bugatti for a crimson Hispano-Suiza (done to confuse the enemy, He said; "Never mind the enemy," we thought, "you're confusing us!"), we sped on again, taking the road over the Grossglovener in preference to the valley road to Villach.

As we turned left at Winklen towards Villach, a silver-grey Mercedes swung out behind us. "Ha!" exclaimed Harrison with a smile, "we've flushed the rotters" – and down went His foot. Near Kolbratz He spun the car off the road and into a clump of trees. The Mercedes sped past. Taking the Railton-engined Morris Minor out of the boot we sped back the way we had come as far as Iselsberg and then took the lower road through Hermager to Villach. Nevertheless we reached our destination in precisely three minutes under the World Record.

The Castle was approximately fifteen minutes' drive from the pretty little town, and we drove on without stopping. The weather was glorious, and Austria cast her old enchantment over us as we roared gaily up narrow, winding roads that clung precariously to the mountainside. We sang as we drove; the Master was in fine fettle, and His rich baritone led us in chorus after chorus of "Please Don't Pull Our Gasthaus Down" that resounded through the valleys and started at least four landslides. Suddenly, as we rounded a bend in the road, we saw ahead of us, on the peak of a steep wooded hill, the fairy towers of Schloss Unrath, its turreted spires soaring into the emerald-blue sky. A splendid sight, God wot! And yet we knew that behind those ancient fornications lurked the worst sort of cad, and that in his dastardly clutches was the loveliest creature who ever trod the croquet-lawns of Hemel Hempstead. "The Game's afoot!" cried Harrison, His eyes sparkling, and we started to negotiate the tortuous, dusty road that led up the hillside to the castle.

As we drew nearer, we noticed with no little astonishment that the huge, oaken doors of the main entrance stood wide apart; beyond them we could see part of a huge hallway. We drew to a halt, in a swirl of flies and dust, a few yards from the wall of the Schloss; then, concealing our Carmen Ghia Volkswagen (for students of minutiae the Minor was changed at Amoldstein) in a nearby coppice of sassafras trees, we walked towards the open doorway. Harrison, who had reached the entrance first, paused, looking down at the great doorstop; our gaze followed His, and we saw there three empty milk bottles, together with a note, hastily scrawled in Platt-Deutsch, which said simply: "Gone on a picnic. Leave three

litres."

"What does this mean, Sir?" we queried. "Is it some sort of hellish ruse?"

"Shut up," explained Harrison, "and follow me."

He preceded us through the great arched doorway; we followed after, and a moment later found ourselves in a mighty, echoing hall whose high walls stretched completely to the ceiling. Three tall windows of Macedonian stained glass allowed a shaft or two of sunlight to filter wanly downwards, but the general effect was one of unrelieved sombreness. Before us rose a huge stairway of time-worn sandstone; on one of its steps lolled a gigantic mastiff. Rats scampered fearlessly over the skull-littered floor; bats, coots and woodchucks uttered their eldritch cries in the obscure heights of the vaulted roof. Suddenly, from behind us, we heard a great shuddering crash. We spun round, our eyes wide with apprehension.

The great doors behind us had slammed shut! And now, from a doorway in the deepest recesses of the hall, there emerged – a corpulent figure.

Neumann! The hideous piranha-nibbled face, the florid egg-spattered moustache, the ghastly, gaping hole in the centre of his forehead where one of Her Majesty's railings had penetrated – there was no mistaking him! And behind him, struggling in the grip of his two loathsome accomplices, was – the lovely Adela Mingo-Fotherdew!

"Unhand that Englishwoman, you curs!" cried Harrison, drawing His Smith & Wesson and directing it at Neumann's black heart. But the latter only laughed – horribly. "Fools! Into mein liddle trap haf you walked!" he sneered, then turned to his two henchmen. "Rieni! Santesohn!" he bellowed. "Schow der schwein ve business mean!"

Those were a grotesque pair. One was a youth who looked as if he had just been brainwashed; the other was bespectacled, expressionless and appeared capable of anything.

Abruptly, one of the thugs seized Adela's left arm in an iron grip! The other, stepping back a pace, began, slowly, to twist her right arm behind her....

"Play the game, damn you!" cried Harrison, His blue eyes flashing angrily. The girl winced as the pressure on her arm tightened; but, splendid filly that she was, made no sound apart from a continuous high-pitched shriek. "You hellish rotter," said Harrison with a quiet, contemptuous fury that would have withered most hellish rotters where they stood. Not so Neumann.

"Ha!" he barked joyously, relishing every moment of the situation.

“Now, please, you vill der gun drop – yes?”

“Don’t do it Sir!” cried the girl suddenly. “It – it doesn’t matter about me.”

“You’re a thoroughbred, Adela,” said Harrison between gritted teeth, “you’re white all through. But I’d be a hellish sort of cad if I let this beastliness continue.” And with a terrible glance at Neumann, He threw His revolver to the ground.

“Ist gut!” cackled Neumann. “Und now, I a little surprise arranged for you haf tomorrow for.” He gave a few curt, guttural instructions; his henchmen released Adela, and each produced an automatic. “Please to follow,” he grated, walking to a nearby doorway. The steps beyond the doorway led down into murky depths, and at the bottom a short passage ended in a huge oaken door. Flinging the door open, Neumann motioned us inside. As we stepped into the dungeon, for that was what it was, great steel nets fell about us and before we knew what had happened we were trussed, gagged and bound. Great chains were then passed around the Master and iron balls fastened to His wrists and feet. Neumann was obviously taking no chances with his proud adversary.

“Tomorrow, ve vill see, ja,” cackled Neumann, and the door clanged shut like the knell of doom.

We spent an uneasy and distinctly uncomfortable night.

The following morning, Neumann and his henchmen came for us. Our gags were removed and our hands and feet were released. All of us, that is, except Harrison. Neumann then forced us up into the hall, Rieni and Santesohn dragging Him behind us.

Faversham managed to whisper to Harrison, “Haven’t you got the special set of tools including pneumatic drill, trepanning saw, capstan lathe, arc welder, silver-plated jemmy and icepick you usually have under your left armpit covered by skin-coloured sticking plaster?” “No,” He whispered back, “I loaned it to James Bond.” “This is another fine mess you’ve got us into,” we muttered.

The fiend Neumann preceded us up the great main staircase, pausing only to aim a vicious kick at the mastiff, until we came to a stone balcony overlooking another large hall. Immediately below us stood a huge, open vat, filled to the brim with a strange, greyish substance that bubbled and steamed like some hellish broth. Suddenly, we became aware of its aroma – and we shuddered.

Neumann turned to us. “Ja!” he screamed triumphantly, his good eye gleaming redly as he saw our reactions. “You are right; es ist ein inferno of – *molten apfelstrudel*!”

“You guttural guttersnipe,” muttered Hurstmonceaux fiercely.

“A leetle inschpiration of mein own,” Neumann continued, chuckling insanely. He bowed ironically to Harrison, then spat vehemently. “Und you, der Meister,” he snarled, “vill first into der pot gegehen! – Lumpen!” he roared at his two thugs. “Ve will haf un for der pot, as they say on your decadent, imperialistic British ITV – Him into der hellish flaming strudel-maelstrom – *fling*!”

The two men frogmarched Harrison forward. Still encased as He was in chains and iron balls, we wondered how He could get out of this predicament. What worried us most was – how could the authors get Him out of it?

Then – with a single bound He was free. “Huzzah!” we cheered, producing tiny Union Jacks and waving them frantically; “prang ’em, Sir!”

Cursing, Santesohn made a wild grab at Harrison’s shoulder and missed. He struggled frenziedly to regain his balance but it was too late; with a ghastly cry, he tumbled over the edge of the parapet, plunging with a sickening plop into the ghastly morass. He sank immediately, like a ton of scrap, and left no trace.

We looked down, aghast. Suddenly, with a tremulous little cry of “Muther!!”, Rieni, the remaining thug, turned and started to run along the balcony towards the staircase. “Back komm!” screamed Neumann hoarsely, drawing a tiny quaker-oats revolver and firing blindly at the retreating figure; then, seeing that Harrison was in the process of donning His boxing-gloves, he too gave a hoarse animal cry of terror and lurched away down the balcony. Now freed of our bonds, we followed at a safe distance, dodging the hail of decaying Wiener-Schnitzels that the scoundrel flung at us as he retreated.

The long balcony, as we soon saw, interconnected the two main halves of the castle; as we proceeded along it, we looked below and could see Rieni scrambling down the staircase and across the great hall we had first entered. He had arrived at a point of the wall close to the gigantic oaken doors; and now, reaching upwards, he tugged at a large lever set high into the wall. Simultaneously, we began to hear a deep, rumbling sound. “Look!!” cried Adela, pointing.

Below our balcony, a little further along from us, we could see a vast mechanism of huge, time-worn cog-wheels that had begun to grind slowly into motion. “It seems,” said Harrison tensely, “to be the apparatus that controls the main doors. Egad, yes... the mighty portals are swinging ajar!”

Without warning, the sharp, echoing report of a gun-shot reached our ears; and we caught sight of Neumann again, further along the balcony,

shooting down at his henchman. “Feigling!” he screamed, obviously overwrought, at the hapless Rieni, firing again and again. “Verrater!” Moving forward as unobtrusively as we could, we gradually drew closer to him....

Suddenly, with a sharp, despairing cry of “Terree!”, Rieni slumped to the floor.

The great doors, meanwhile, continued slowly to open; but it was too late for Rieni, who would never pass dazedly through a door again. Neumann had been oblivious of our presence during all this time; but now, satisfied that his erstwhile assistant had met with his just deserts, he turned with a snarl to face us. “Back, Englander,” he roared, “or ich vill shoot, already!”

But Harrison, His dentures set in steely determination, marched relentlessly forward. “Caution, O Lordly One!” we cried; but He strode on. (God, what a man!) “Drop that pistol, Neumann,” He said calmly, lighting a Havana. “Your hellish game is at an end.”

Neumann, delivering himself of a stream of guttural abuse, fired three times, at point-blank range.

Click... click... click, went the gun impotently; and we sighed relievedly, for the Almighty had proved once more to be on our side. The Teutonic devil had run out of caps!

“You forget, I can count,” said Harrison, and tossed His spare pair of boxing-gloves at the trembling rotter. “Come!” He called, above the grinding din of the huge wheels. “Defend yourself!”

Neumann, snarling like a Trapped Beast, quickly donned the gloves, and swung viciously at the Master with a bludgeoning left-hander which would have irreparably fractured Harrison’s medulla oblongata. The Great One, however, nimbly sidestepped the blow, and countered with a stinging right that landed squarely in Neumann’s scarred and pitted mush. “How’s that for centre!” cried Harrison.

“Revenge vill I haf!” yelled Neumann, scattering a few assorted teeth around in the process. He took another wild swing at the Master, who just swayed imperceptibly out of reach, then His left came up from the wrist in a short, sharp jab that had all the power of a thunderbolt behind it. It caught Neumann full on the chin. For a moment the hellish cad stood quite still, his eyes glazing over, and then he began to totter slowly backwards. Suddenly, his foot scrabbled at the parapet edge and, before Harrison could step forward to save him, he gave a hideous scream, his arms flailed wildly and then, with a last despairing attempt to regain his balance, fell over the parapets edge into...

Into the relentlessly-grinding cog-wheels!

With a sickening crunch, and two loud pops, the great wheels ground suddenly to a halt. “Reverse the mechanism!” cried Harrison, white-faced.

Frantically, we rushed down the staircase into the great hall, Adela and Harrison following. Hurstmonceaux reached the wall first, and pushed the lever upwards; slowly the huge cog-wheels began to turn back, and from their centre emerged...

Adela covered her face with her hands.

Harrison strode quickly towards the quivering, amorphous mass; drawing His tiny monogrammed automatic, He put two or three bullets into it. It suddenly stopped quivering and lay still.

Adela tripped like a faun to the place where Harrison stood, and gazed mutely into those fine brown eyes like a trusting, grateful child. “Kingly soul,” she said, with a directness and sweet simplicity that kindled the fires of Harrison’s deepest being. “Daddy and I will never, never forget what you have done.”

The intrepid adventurer’s voice was gentle as He replied. “Adela,” He murmured, “I should very much like you to call me... Willie.”

“As you wish – Willie,” said the divine creature, blushing a bright crimson. “I’ll always think of you as... my very special chum.”

“See here, old thing,” said Harrison huskily, gnawing at His Old Harrovian tie, “can’t we... dash it, what I mean to say is, can’t we ever be more than just – well, than just – chums?”

Adela lowered her beautiful eyelashes. “I’m sorry, Willie; really, truly sorry. But you see, I’m engaged to... rather a fine man. Oh, perhaps not as great, or famous, or clever, as you are; but one whom I love with all my heart. Please – please, dear friend, don’t turn away...”

“Is it – is it young Aubrey Soddscout?” asked Harrison in a low voice; and the girl nodded. “They tell me he’s – quite a splendid chap.” Harrison mustered a brave smile. “I think I shall leave you now, Adela,” He added, after a moment; “but I want you to know that, now and for ever, I shall always regard you as – as a brick.”

“Thank you,” said the girl gravely. Then, with a light laugh, Harrison kissed Adela’s fingertips, bowed low, lit a cheroot, blew His nose, and strode manfully towards His Ferrari-engined Goggomobil (***). He turned once, and called back to us.

“Hurstmonceaux! Faversham!” came the clear, ringing tones we knew so well. “Escort the fair Adela to England, will you. As for me... I have other work to do. You may find me, perhaps, where the high Andes soar into an ice-blue sky, or where the splendid wreckage of Attic Greece

forms a backdrop to some grimmer drama of our time; where tribal drums beat out a savage message of frenzied, primitive passions, or where proud Fujiyama stands her ancient guard over the mystic isles of Nippon; or perhaps where tall trees sway, languidly, in the lulling warmth of the Trade Winds...."

"Drop dead," we muttered, and began scraping Neumann off the wheels.

**** NB. to A.M. & J.B., it was in the boot of the Volkswagen. [Footnote in original, probably addressed to Archie Mercer and John Berry.]*

– *Triode* #18 (May 1960)

Harrison in Wonderland

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Harrison in Wonderland
Cyril Faversham, M.M., and Harry Hurstmonceaux, O.B.E.

1. Duck!

The surging crowd of idolaters, journalists, pickpockets, and beatniks parted respectfully as the Great Man strode majestically through the main concourse at Idlewild.

"But, Sir!" yelled Kowalski of the *Tribune-Observer*, making an unsuccessful grab at His lapel. "Sir! Isn't there anything, er, specific you can tell us?"

"Perhaps I can say this," murmured Harrison (and the crowd hushed magically); "I hope to confer with your President later this afternoon!"

"At the White House?" queried Schultz of the Michigan *Sentinel-Globe*.

"No, al fresco," replied Harrison jovially, lighting His meerschaum. "I flatter myself (to use your delectable patois) that I'm no slouch on the links... DUCK!!"

A small, cylindrical object clattered to the floor not six feet ahead of Him, fizzed and whirred for a moment or two, and was silent. Striding forward, Harrison stooped, picked it up, and scrutinised it quizzically. "As I suspected," He chuckled, His leonine features puckered into a smile, "made in Peking." With a light laugh, He tossed the bomb into a nearby cuspidor and strode out of the building into His waiting, supercharged Ferrari 375 Millemiglia.

"What A Headline!" cried Marinetti of the *Post-Herald-Mirror-Newsday*, and rushed screaming to the nearest phone-booth. Harrison, meanwhile, was being whisked away to Akron, Ohio (Security were taking no chances). From there He would be flown to Bellows Falls, Vt., and thence to Berkeley, Calif., where a picked team of FBI men would accompany Him, in a specially-chartered prototype Comet, to the Nation's capital; and thence to the Fairview Golf Course.

II. A Capital Notion.

Their business completed, the men who guided the destinies of Two Nations shook hands and prepared to go their separate ways. "Goodbye, Mr. Murrow," said Harrison, "I've greatly enjoyed our little chat."

"Farewell, Master," intoned Ed from the steps of his beautiful colonial residence; "I hope you enjoy your stay here."

"I'm sure I shall," smiled Harrison, waving His adieux and entering the cream-and-turquoise Facel Vega that purred gently in readiness for His departure. "New York, Lord?" queried Hurstmonceaux at the wheel.

"I think not," said Harrison, grinning. "To begin with, they have arranged a little demonstration for me there, some weird rite which entails showering me with tiny scraps of paper from a great height. In addition, General Motors want me to manage their New York Office; Nabisco have requested an interview with reference to putting a tiny plastic replica of my nose into each of their cereal packets; and the British Colony insist that I attend their annual 'Benedict Arnold Pity-You-Didn't-Make-It Party'. No, no, gentlemen; our business here is completed; a full communiqué is being sent by ICBM to the Lord Privy Seal; and I would suggest we spend a few lazy weeks in a congenial environment before returning home."

"A capital notion!" we cried warmly, and drove blithely away in the general direction of the Hialeah Track.

III. This Won't Do

But it was not, alas, to be. In Florida, as everywhere else, Harrison was permanently surrounded by sightseers, pimps, and bright young men from *Time*; and He began to acquire, as He Jocularly remarked, "all the sensations of a tropical fish in a crowded aquarium". His every action, too, brought a heated reaction: in Boston, The Loyal Sons And Daughters Of Suffering Eire punctured His tyres with pitchforks, while His English

accent incensed the McCormack press to unparalleled verbal vitriolics. Las Vegas offered Him a twelve week stint at the Golden Nugget; MGM and Fox competed in bidding for His life-story, or even little fragments of it; Jack Benny was actually prepared to offer Him money for a TV guest-appearance. A nationwide "Harrison Week" was instituted; the American Matrons' Guild demanded He do a series of concerts à la Liberace; and He was mobbed and stripped nigh naked by souvenir-hunting teenagers in Bleak Corners (Mich.).

"No, no, gentlemen, this won't do," mused the Great One after a month or so. "We must discover some recondite niche, wherein we may give ourselves unreservedly to utter quietude and mellow meditation." He was silent for a moment or two (which we knew to be a sign that All Was Not Well).

"You've doubtless heard of Marsh Mallow, the West Coast private-eye," He continued; and we nodded. "Indeed, yes, Lord; but what –"

"You've read his books?" the Master queried, and we smiled. "We have, Lord; but what –"

"Then you must know," said the Great Man wryly, "how little business he does – the odd errant redhead, the odd case of murder or blackmail – hardly a paying proposition, one might think. Now, Mallow and I have swapped stamps for many years," He continued, "and this has given me an idea. I intend, gentlemen, to treat Mr Mallow to a three-week paid vacation and – if the fellow is willing – to adopt his identity during the next chapter. This should ensure a quiet time for all of us. You will accompany me to L.A., and, should a spot of bother by any remote chance develop, you will remain always within screaming distance. Now, gentlemen – how does my little plan strike you?"

"Like a sledgehammer, Lord," we murmured feebly.

IV. The Short Hello

I took the bottle out of my desk drawer and poured myself a slug. It tasted lousy. There was a roach crawling across the threadbare carpet, and I watched it casually, as if I wasn't interested. The phone rang and I picked it up, still keeping one eye on the roach. "Yes?" I said.

"Is this Mr. Mallow, the detective?" The roach was just coming into range, and I kept very still. I said it was Mr. Mallow, the detective.

"I'd like to hire you, Mr. Mallow," said the voice. A woman's voice. At a guess she wasn't above thirty. A blonde maybe. A blonde in a white silk shirt and jodhpurs, holding a long cigarette in a pair of golden

tweezers, her hair tied with a small scarlet bow, maybe. Let's face it, Mallow, that's the kind you usually get. I raised my right foot, and brought it down hard on the roach. I felt better.

"What was it you wanted done?" I asked politely.

"I want you to find my husband," the voice said. "He's been missing seventeen years."

I said I would be happy to find her husband for forty bucks a day and expenses. I was beginning to feel lousy again. That's the way I am. I took another slug of rye. I lit a cigarette.

"I'm at Room 221, Van Nuys Apartment Building, just down the hill from the Strip," said the voice. "Can you come over right away?" I said yes, I could come over right away, and put down the receiver. I stubbed out the cigarette and lit another.

I shaved and took a shower, and began to feel less like the box the cat had had kittens in. I put on my powder-blue suit with the dark blue shirt and the display handkerchief. I got into my car and drove east along Wilshire. I lit a cigarette.

There was a black Plymouth convertible tailing me as far as La Cienga. As I drove into the curve of the Strip a Packard Clipper took over. At Lost Canyon the Packard turned right and a Lincoln Continental started to follow. I smiled wryly. I was getting to be used to it. I lit a cigarette.

I parked in front of the Van Nuys building. I went into the square barren lobby with its cuspidors and rubber plants. I got into the elevator.

"Which floor, bud?" sneered the elevator-boy.

"You ask a hell of a lot of questions, sonny," I said affably. "Now let me ask you one. Why did you kill Eddie Geiger?"

He paled. "You a shamus or something? Anyway, what makes you think I killed Geiger?"

"Well," I said affably, "how's this: Geiger got some notes from your sister and he was trying to blackmail your father with them. George Lavery was behind Geiger. He had something on you, too. Lavery was killed by Degarmo, who was in love with your sister. But Geiger was playing a deeper game than any of you realised. He hid his wife out at Realito and put Canino in to guard her... so it would look as if she had run away with Almore. Canino not only impersonated Mrs. Almore, he was blackmailing her. Mrs. Almore happened to be in the pornographic-picture business, and both Canino and Lavery knew this. That's why they killed Degarmo, and that's why you shot Geiger."

"It *is*?" said the elevator-boy bewilderedly, opening the doors at the sixth floor. "Thanks, sonny," I said wryly, stepping out into the corridor. I

could take care of him later. Right now I had forty bucks a day and expenses to earn.

I pressed the bell at number 221. It chimed softly. A brunette opened the door. She was twenty or so. She wore yellow slacks and they looked good on her. She had a good mouth and a good chin. She had two eyes. Her hair was tied with a polka-dot ribbon. It was blue. “You’re cute,” she giggled, and fell into my arms.

I straightened up and pushed her gently before me into the apartment. Then I closed the door behind us. “It won’t work, Neumann,” I said affably. “Take off the mask.” I lit a cigarette and waited.

V. Which Tells of a Hellish Pie and Mental Cruelty

Needless to say, we had been following our Master with unflagging zeal, and were now listening intently at the door of apartment 221. Hearing the name of the arch-fiend von Neumann spoken, we flung open the door without further ceremony and rushed into the room. Harrison, we saw, was covering the “brunette” with a black oxydised Walther PPK 7.65 Automatic mk. II. “Take off the mask, Neumann,” He ordered briskly; “the wig, too.” The “brunette” swore volubly in Platt-Deutsch for several minutes; then, reluctantly, “she” obeyed, and we beheld...

Reader, do you recall the last reel of *House of Wax*, where the villain’s mask melts, and – you do? Then we’ve no need to detail the ghastly sight that seared our eyeballs at that moment. Picture it in yellow slacks and mauve sweater, is all.

We shuddered uncontrollably. “Yes, gentlemen,” said Harrison grimly; “Neumann, as you see, is very much alive! I will explain. Six months ago, Dr. Ernst Frohlich, the distinguished Swiss plastic-surgeon and cuckoo-clock assembler, reported that a hideously disfigured individual had visited his clinic and begged him for help.”

Neumann had suddenly produced a large piece of Pizza Pie from inside his sweater, and was brandishing it menacingly. “Idioten!” he grated savagely. “Do you zis pizzatort see? Vell, no ordinary pizzatort is it but *ze most hellish pizza in ze History of Mankind!!*”

“To continue,” said Harrison imperturbably, lighting a cheroot, “the good doctor took pity on this much-battered individual, and patched him up to the best of his (no mean) ability. And so –”

“Inside zis-pizza,” Neumann was bellowing, “instead of ein savoury strudel, resides ein filling of *hellish nitroglycerine!!* Und now unless you drop ze gun, out of ze window step, und down ze feuer escape zo – every

man, voman und kind in L.A. *vill to Kinkdom Komm be geblasted!*"

"...It was only afterwards," explained Harrison as we descended the fire escape, "when the fellow had left without paying his bill, that Frohlich realised he'd re-assembled the most dangerous and dastardly man in the world."

"Korrect!" cackled Neumann. "Me!! – Und now – pliss into der vagon to step. Schnell!!"

A large removal-van, its doors ajar, stood parked in the vacant lot immediately before us. We marched bravely forward and entered the vehicle, surreptitiously waving the tiny Union Jacks which the Master had distributed. "What does this mean, Lord?" we queried anxiously; but Harrison, either deep in thought or paralysed with fright, made no reply.

"Face ze wall!" snarled Neumann; and we did so, anticipating the worst. It came: a blinding flash, followed by a sharp, shooting pain through the head, as if we'd been slugged by a baseball bat (as, indeed, we had); and then we remembered no more....

We awoke, tightly bound, to find ourselves on the floor of a rude wooden hut, devoid of furniture save for a superb thirty-inch console-model TV set which stood immediately before us. Neumann was leering down at us, his hideous, piranha-nibbled, etc., features alive with an unholy glee.

"In dis remote shpot you vill die of thirst and famine perish!" croaked the cad; "but before you do, you vill zat you had never been born vish!" He switched on the TV set. "Ein' klein' diversion of mein own devising!" he chuckled. "Und now, farevell; I to der Empire Shtate Building moost gespeed... mit mein hellish pizzatort!" And, hurling a final oath at us, he left.

Before us, the image on the screen flickered, then grew steady. And now, with sound matched to vision, we became aware of the full horror of Neumann's hellish "diversion". For there, in full, unnatural colour, we beheld the image of a politician; behind him, garish banners reading "Vote For McGoonigle – He'll Do The Best He Can" were displayed. He began to speak....

"We can't take much of this, gentlemen," said Harrison grimly. "However, there's a candle on the floor yonder, and if I can but..."

"Liberty, decency and human progress," intoned the figure from the screen; "the inalienable right of every American to his sacred birthright, his hard-won and dearly cherished gift of..."

Harrison, bound hand and foot, had somehow managed to drag Himself to the far corner of the room, where the stub of a candle flickered.

Taking the candle between His teeth, He began to crawl laboriously back...

"...Thanksgiving," the politician continued, tears trickling down his leathery cheeks; "turkey, 'n' Mom's cranberry sauce – nobody makes it like Mom, do they? New England in the Fall; watermelon 'n' blueberry pie 'n' good old Milwaukee beer..."

"Hurry, Sir, hurry!" I moaned. "I think Hurstmonceaux's – beginning to crack!"

"I'm coming!"

"...Kindly folks... simple homespun philosophy... the gang at the old drugstore, 'n' that freckled schoolkid – you used to carry her books, remember?... 'n' Mom, 'n'..."

Harrison, candle between teeth, lowered it to the rope that bound Hurstmonceaux's hands. A few seconds' painful effort, and Harry was free. Bounding to the set, he kicked in the screen and rushed yelling about the room for several minutes before he subsided, trembling, on the floor before us. Then, collecting his faculties, he began to undo our bonds.

"A close call," said Harrison, soberly.

VI. Gung Ho!

Seconds later, we staggered outside to find the vehicle gone, and ourselves in an arid wilderness. Harrison produced a map and compass; and casting His clear grey eyes at the Pole Star twinkling in the dusk, He made a few rapid calculations. "We are here," He said, pointing to the map. "*Bulgaria*, Lord?" we queried anxiously; but the Great Man appeared not to hear.

"I've a suspicion," He said, "that Neumann will make for the nearest airport, which is presumably at Ogden, Utah; therefore, gentlemen, our next stop would appear to be Ogden."

"But how, Lord?" we stammered feebly.

"Voilà!" said Harrison, smiling, and our jaded spirits rose at the incomparable enterprise and ingenuity of the Man as He produced from the folds of His cloak three gleaming pairs of roller-skates. "Put these on quickly, and Gung HO!"

"Huzzah!" we roared, waving our Union Jacks; and gave vent to a chorus or two of "Vivat Haec Sodalitas".

Once started, we skimmed across the desert at a steady twenty-five knots, and by midnight had reached the town of Ogden. Skating to the airport, we learned that an "ugly furren critter" had hired a helicopter not an hour previously. "Did he say where he was going?" inquired Harrison urgently.

“Why, yais,” said the man, scratching his pate bewilderedly. “’Fore he left, he bought him one of these Giant Slingshots from the airport store...”

“Good Gladstone!” cried Harrison. “Then there is not a moment to lose!”

“...And he asked which wus the quickest direct route to New York, an’ ah said, ‘Well, ah believe they’s a transcontinental jet service from Yuma.’ An’ did I tell you he bought one of these here slingshots... first time we sold one of them since Davy Crockett passed through....”

Official formalities were dispensed with as soon as the Great Man’s identity was revealed. The authorities offered us the use of a small jet-plane, but Harrison resolutely refused to take what he described as an “unfair advantage”, and within fifteen minutes we were airborne in our own helicopter. “Decent of these chaps to make us a present of the machine,” said Hurstmonceaux, as we whirred above the desert; “but why on earth, Sir, has the fiend purchased a slingshot?”

“His scheme, gentlemen,” said Harrison, tight-lipped, “is diabolical in its ingenuity; he intends to hire another ’copter in New York to hover within range of the Empire State, and catapult his hellish pie from a safe distance!”

“By th’ Lord Harry,” we muttered, and whirred through the night in silence.

VII. I Think Not!

The following morning, we stopped to refuel at a little town in Southern Nevada, and here – joy of joys! – we learned that a helicopter had been seen not long ago, travelling north across the desert. Pausing only for a hasty Crèpe Suzette – unfortunately served flambé – washed down with a bottle or two of Californian Riesling, we hiccoughed our way to the helicopter and hopped north.

Two weary hours of further reconnaissance brought us immediately above a remote little township in the middle of the desert.

It seemed to be a singularly sleepy little place, even for Nevada, and exhibited no signs of life. But wait! Hold hard! Stay! In the centre of its wide, deserted main street stood – a helicopter! And from it we beheld emerging – a familiar cloaked figure!

“Huzzah, huzzah!” we shrilled. “And now to land, and entrap the blighter!”

“I think not,” said Harrison swiftly, and set the helicopter moving

rapidly away from the town.

"But, Lord," we cried petulantly, "the bounder's obviously stopped for tiffin! He's helpless – we can..."

"Silence, minions!" quoth Harrison sternly; and then, "What time is is?" He asked.

"Fourteen minutes to twelve, Sir," said I, "but what..."

"Listen, gentlemen," said Harrison urgently. "I have just consulted the map, and must now tell you that the little community we are so rapidly leaving behind is the dummy township built by the AEC to test their newest and most powerful C-Bomb, which is scheduled to explode at noon *precisely*."

"By thunder!" cried Hurstmonceaux; "then – the fiend is doomed?"

"Ten-four," said Harrison, meditatively igniting a reefer; "and so are we, unless we move quickly. However, I think we should be clear of the danger-zone in good time. But you see, gentlemen, time does not permit us to rescue our Teutonic adversary, even if we so desired."

It was Hurstmonceaux who broke the thirteen-minute silence that followed. "So perish all evil men," he said softly.

"So indeed!" I cried heartily. "And the fiercest and most implacable enemy of Tyranny, whensoever or wheresoever it raises its Cankerous Visage, is that Man who, when Danger threatens for our beloved Islands and Commonwealth, and for those Gallant Allies at whose side we are ranged, and whose Proud Destiny we so gladly share... ah... where was I?"

"Making your customary fade-out speech," said Hurstmonceaux.

"But hark – and see!" he cried suddenly, pointing to the horizon.

We turned, and saw, slowly unfurling in the far distance, the great, mushroom-shaped cloud.

Envoi

The sweet smell of magnolia filled the warm Southern evening; in the chinaberry trees the jaybirds were chattering, and from the horizon came the distant rumble of General Lee's artillery. On the broad verandah, a distinguished, liveried, negro footman was serving us with mint juleps; behind us the tall colonnade of Tara soared heavenwards, and on the trim green lawns confronting us, the 90th Annual 'Gator Wrestling Contest was in full swing.

We rose as a young lady in crinoline, pink sun-bonnet, and yellow gloves joined our party. "Ah hope you're enjoying the contest, suh?" she enquired, seating herself at Harrison's side. "We-all are most anxious fo'

you-all to taste the true gracious flavah of our Southern hospitality... ’specially of me,” she added, with a meaningful smile.

“You-all are?” said Harrison. His left knee trembled violently. We groaned, for we knew the signs and were no whit surprised when the Master rose, suddenly, and offered Miss O’Hara His arm. “You’ll excuse us, gentlemen?” he leered.

“Why not?” we said, as they strode off bravely into the sunset; “we’ve been excusing you for years.” And, sighing, we ordered two more juleps.

Finis

– *Bastion* #2 (1961)

The Fandromeda Strain

Beryl and I recently attended a little soiree held by LiG members Stan and Marge Nuttall to welcome back to these shores that well known saviour-of-the-western-hemisphere Sir William Makepeace Harrison. The Great Man made little of His recent adventures but a rather nasty scar on His kingly proboscis hinted that, as usual, his exploits had not been entirely without incident, as did his obvious exhaustion after mixing the cocktails before dinner. Whilst he was unable, for reasons of National Security, to regale us with details of His recent journeyings, he was able to let me have an expurgated account of a recent exploit for publication in *Blazon*. Written, as always (Curse it!), in a remote Hindi dialect by His able (?) lieutenants Hurstmonceaux and Faversham.

– *Mi* vol.3 no.3 (date uncertain, ed. Bentcliffe)

Return of the Master

Many of you, dear readers, will have read over the years of the exploits and adventures (if by such humble words we may name them...) of SIR WILLIAM MAKEPEACE HARRISON. These few adventures (which a Kindly Government has allowed to be published), so ably chronicled by his friends, Harry Hurstmonceaux and Cyril Faversham, have amazed, astounded and enthralled multitudes; and not only in the English-speaking world is His name a household word, for the writings of his two favourite aides have been translated into no less than seventeen languages, including Welsh. In which proud land he is known as Cymru the Conqueror for his exploit in saving Tiger Bay from being drunk dry by an arid Arab. Hence the cry – “Cymru am Byth!”, “Harrison For Ever!”

The most famous of His exploits, of course, have been those in which He has thwarted the evil machinations of the arch-fiend, the horribly-piranha-nibbled arch-fiend, Herr von Neumann. Many of you will have wondered at the resilience of this oft-destroyed demon in escaping from sudden death time after time, to confront The Master once more with Fates too horrible to recall. “Could,” you may have wondered, “this embodiment of evil be quite human?” What is the secret power which has enabled him to escape his doom not once, but many times. Is he a Rosicrucian, mayhap?

And then, you may have also wondered at the Superhuman qualities exhibited by Harrison – here too, is perhaps one who can be described as "more than human".... His god-like qualities, His impeachable virtues, His impeccable taste, His strength in combating evil, His nose – all these may have led you to think of Him as someone not merely of our humble breed. A favourable mutation, perhaps? Or something more....

At last it is possible to tell at least part of the story behind the story – not all, for not all can be translated into human terms. But let us begin at the beginning....

THE SCENE: SOMEWHERE IN THE GALACTIC DEEP
THE TIME: IMMEASURABLE EONS AGO

A meeting was in session – no earthly mind could have realised this since there was no gathering of bodies, the members of this strange council met only in mind. "Life has been detected on a new world, Sol Three," came a thought. "It shall be observed and protected," came a reply; "you, Xryalce, shall have the charge of perfecting a suitable being for this purpose. And, since this is an oxygen-planet, let your creation have a nose for trouble."

Elsewhere in space; on a planet of a strangely dark star, a most peculiar monster cackled harshly to itself as it added strange potions and ingredients, moulded protoplasm, meanwhile "eavesdropping" via its extension into the twelfth dimension on that very meeting.... "And trouble it shall find," it mused, "this shall be a pawn of most powerful evil... double, double, boil and bubble, let This One be a lot of trouble. He, he, he, heeeee...."

– Eric Bentcliffe.

Eons Later...

The Fandromeda Strain
by Harry Hurstmonceaux and Cyril Faversham

Harrison stared beyond Q's head at the grey metal wall with its dials, scanner screens and flashing lights. I'd give my next month's stipend to know what the hell they are all for, He thought. He felt depressed. His thoughts revolved about Sheila Blige, and He wondered just why it had all gone wrong. God, He thought, but I could use a Wolfschmidt.

"Ah, so you're here, Willy," Q was saying. He had raised his eyes from his paperwork, and was noting briefly but with seeming approval. Harrison's casual aquamarine dinner jacket, brocaded Mapps & Crotchet shirt and diamanté bow tie. "Yes... well now, we're sending you off to take a look at this chap Gustav Stool* – you know something about him, I take it?"

** Surname generally spelt Steel, but the first two appearances are definitely Stool in the original fanzine. Possibly a joke.... [Ed.]*

Harrison jerked himself together. "Head of LAFF, isn't he, sir?"

Q nodded gloomily. "League Against Fan Fanaticism. Pretty murderous and dedicated organisation. And they mean business, Willy. Here, CIA sent me this just forty minutes ago. Read it." He handed Harrison a rather creased paperback copy of *The Carpet Baggers*.

"I've already done so," said Harrison. "Perfunctorily amusing, but –"

"No, no, *here*, page seventeen, para two; comma at the end of the third line."

Harrison took a transistorised electron-microscope from His waistcoat pocket and, holding it over the comma, read: "CIA to Q. Urgent. Information received LAFF proposing to endanger Good Life by exterminating elite of International Fandom at Frome Worldcon. M.O. not clear, as full details were known only to our operative WM7, eliminated 0317 hrs (EST) today. Death due to homogenisation of the thalamus caused by subsonic pistol fired at close range. Operative was discovered naked and completely smeared with glutinous brown substance which lab analysis and Consumer Association tests established as chocolate Yoghourt. Unmistakably an action of LAFF counter-espionage: request urgent action by competent agent. – Love to Bedelia and the kids. Message ends."

Harrison nodded, pocketing the book. "Anything detailed on Stool, Sir?"

"Let's see." Q opened a thick manilla folder. "Ah yes, Sixtyish. Totally bald. Thickset. Purple eyes, no eyebrows. Three nipples. Likes women. Pathological obsession about chocolate Yoghourt. Formerly a St. Pauli pimp amongst other things. Lives well, present source of income unknown. At the moment he's at the Bideawee Christian Lodgings, Frome – this year's Worldcon Hotel, you know. Got a suite there under the name of 'Sir Coventry Climax'. He's with a woman who claims to be his daughter, calls herself 'Dandy Climax'. There's also a kind of valet – a Chinese dwarf by the name of 'Crunch'." He looked up. "And that's about

it."

"Not much to go on," said Harrison. "I take it you want me to leave right away?"

"Yes, get down there for about seven. Book in the Bideawee under the name of Warren G. Wonka – it's all laid on. Find out what's happening and take any action you see fit. Draw the usual issue from stores. You'll need a neutron gun and possibly a microelectroencephalograph. And, Willy –"

"Sir?"

"This time don't forget your anti-satyriasis jab."

- 2 -

The restaurant, with its revolving pink-glass dance floor and tired balalaika orchestra was almost prototypically mediocre, even tho' it did evoke memories of early London Conventions; but (apart from the execrable Sauce Bernaise) it had been a good meal, and Harrison felt more or less at ease. Sheila Blige was almost forgotten now, and His thoughts began to revert to food, good and bad. He recalled a dingy little place in Kuwait where the Chicken Chakhadarta was always flambéed in fusel oil; and the extraordinary Cafe Pizarre in La Paz, whose menu included enchiladas served with orange mousse.

"I do hope you don't mind me joining you. All the other tables seem to be occupied by these delicious fan-people."

Harrison looked up. Opposite him sat a girl of about nineteen with a pale, oval face of exquisite prettiness. Her hair (the exact breathtaking golden-brown of the Mercedes CGB 4750 he'd driven south from Sao Paulo the winter of '63) fell in soft, unsophisticated profusion about her shoulders. She wore a formal turquoise evening gown whose rather prim décolleté revealed her slender white shoulders and the promise, as they say, of full firm breasts. She smiled with a disarming candour.

"I'm Dandy Climax," she said softly.

"I can well believe it," said Harrison, sinking His teeth into an avocado. "Sir Coventry's girl, aren't you?"

"You know Daddy, then?"

"Slightly. I'd like to know him better, of course. And, indeed, his daughter." He irradiated a calculatedly casual smile. Something about her cheekbones reminded him of a little Thai sing-song girl he'd known briefly – twelve minutes or so – in Kuala Lumpur.

“Perhaps,” he said, “I might show you my collection of Eddie Jones originals, the unexpurgated ones, of course?”

“Of course,” said the girl, with a kind of droll impatience. “And, well, I want to talk to you anyway. It’s important, too. Something that may affect the lives of all these darling fan-people.”

“I see... you know who I am then?”

“Certainly. As a matter of fact, I’m from the Department too. I’m nothing to do with Steel really, my name’s actually Gillian Gorringe.”

“Of the *Shropshire* Gorringes? *Brigadier* Gorringe’s daughter?”

“Yes. Yes...but listen. Steel’s cooking up something pretty fearful, as you know – and I’ve found out it’s scheduled to happen tomorrow night at the Banquet. Look, we’d better go up to your room – Steel’s men are all over the hotel. I’ll tell you everything upstairs.” She rose.

“Everything,” she repeated rather couchantly.

- 3 -

Harrison groaned, softly, and turned his head on the pillow.

“Are you awake, Gill?” he whispered.

The girl’s eyelids lifted, and her periwinkle blue eyes regarded him with the blissful languor of sated passion. Her full, moist lips – tactually reminiscent of, he thought, a rather good cranberry jelly with kirsch he’d once had at Sardi’s – parted slowly.

“Darling,” she murmured softly, “d’you know anything about boring old subsonic microwaves?”

“Good God,” said Harrison, “Why?”

Gillian shifted restlessly between the soft sheets.

“Well,” she breathed, “you probably know they exhibit a frequency response of exactly seventy-eight point two decibels –”

“Yes, yes... go on.”

The girl’s eyes were misty now, and full of an infinite tenderness. “All these wonderful people – Ethel, Brian, Ramsey – oh, it mustn’t happen, it MUSTN’T!”

“Yes, but what’s Steel planning to do?”

“Well, Sir Norman Shorrock’s an amateur wine-maker, as you know, specialising in fermented cinders. He’ll undoubtedly be drinking his own stuff at the Banquet tomorrow when he makes his speech on Null-A Logic and The Human Predicament. Fermented cinders, you see,” she added quietly, “exhibit a frequency response of precisely seventy-eight point two

decibels."

"Hell," said Harrison. He propped himself up on his elbows. "And where's Steel now?"

"He said he was going to the Institute."

"Institute?"

"Yes, it's some sort of phoney medical Research Centre he's set up – a former depot of the Min. of Ag. and Fish he's acquired. But I believe the whole business smells."

[A line of dialogue from Harrison is evidently missing here – Ed.]

She shivered. "Why? Are you going there?"

"Well, perhaps not right away," smiled Harrison.

- 4 -

Ten thirty p.m. Harrison left the Brabham in a fairly discreet lay-by and made his way on foot down the dark rutted lane that led to the Steel Institute. After about a half mile, his path was barred by a pair of great wrought iron gates. On either side of them stretched a tall wire-mesh fence, obviously electrified, possibly radioactivated. He took out what looked like a small gold-plated propelling pencil and twisted its cap, once. The pencil immediately began to emit a low buzzing sound; from its point came a thin beam of yellow-green light. Harrison directed the beam at the metal of the gates, and waited. After exactly nine seconds the pencil disintegrated.

Muttering an untranslatable Urdu obscenity, he tried the gates. They were unlocked, and he pushed them open. Inside, he found himself on a long elm-bordered driveway. At the end of it he could see the dark bulk of the Institute building. He walked cautiously forward.

There was a sound of dogs barking; it grew rapidly louder, more distinct. By God, they were onto him already! And they were getting closer....

He turned as there came a rustling from the shrubbery, a melee of baying and yelping, and suddenly two great dark shapes were upon him, snarling and tearing. He tried to fend them off with one arm, while with the other he fumbled in his jacket pocket.

"Fang!" came a man's cry. "Sabre! Where the 'ell are yer?"

Harrison had managed to find the tiny mauve capsule he'd been searching for. He bit into it once, quickly, and flung himself to the ground.

"Don't 'ee move!" came the man's voice. "I see yer! I got a rifle 'ere!

Stay where y'are!"

"Keep back, you bloody fool!" roared Harrison above the baying of the dogs. "That pellet contained Zyklon-B! It's gas, d'you hear me, gas! Keep clear!"

A man's tall silhouette suddenly appeared from the gloom, and simultaneously a ghastly, sulphurous stench began to permeate the night air.

"Gas, is it?" said the man suspiciously. "Down, Sabre; down, Fang! Down boys! Gas, eh? Well you don't frighten me, mate! You just come along, and we'll see what Matron Lindsay has to say about all this."

"The bitch!" said Harrison with feeling, thinking at that moment not so much of Matron as of Gillian Gorringe.

- 5 -

"In all my twenty-two years as a Stipendiary Magistrate, I have never encountered a case of such abject foulness. That a man of your standing –" Harrison's eyes flicked gloomily about the courtroom – "a man in important and confidential Government service, should stoop to such... such adolescent voyeurism..."

Harrison gave a start. There in the back of the courtroom sat Gillian Gorringe, alias Dandy Climax. As lovely as ever, and undoubtedly as lethal.

"...I observe too, that in July, 1965, you were fined forty shillings for persistently importuning the mezzanine maid at the Balaclava Hotel, Burslem...." And, there was a big, bulky man beside her. Quiet grey suit. Bald; no eyebrows; purple eyes. Evil. Unmistakably Gustav Steel. And next to him a dwarf. *The* dwarf. Small and imperfect in every detail.

"...However, in view of your comparative youth and distinguished Abyssinian record, I am prepared to take a lenient view.... Five pounds, and you may consider yourself extremely fortunate...."

Harrison paid his fine and got out of the courtroom as quickly as possible. He ran into the rainswept street and approached a taxi-driver propped against his cab.

"A girl," he panted. "Beautiful – a bald-headed man – a Chinese dwarf –"

"Ah, well now, that might he a bit difficult. But I know a nice little widow, late middle-age, very accommodating she is too."

"No, NO, *NO*! Have you *seen* anyone like that?"

The driver scratched his head. “Well, yes, as a matter of fact I have. They took my mate’s cab about five minutes ago. I heard them ask for – let’s see now – the Club Tabu. That’s a place off the cattle market. Very sexy. You know – interesting diversions.” He winked. “Shall I take yer?”

“Yes,” said Harrison. “But hurry, man, for God’s sake HURRY!”

“I know how it is,” said the driver.

The Club Tabu was a typical back street cellar club, deserted at that time of day. There was not even a solitary attendant to question Harrison as he descended the steep flight of steps to the dim, dusty smelling bar. He looked about him apprehensively. No one. There was a door to his right. He tried it. It opened into a long, white tiled corridor, and he passed along it to another door marked “GENTS” at its far end. Beyond this, a spiral of worn steps led downwards into gloom; he descended them cautiously. He found himself in a dank, evil smelling brick labyrinth.

“Remain quite still, please.” The voice came echoing from somewhere behind him. “Quite still.” There was the customary sudden, blinding flash....

- 6 -

Strangely enough, he had no headache, but he felt sick and rather dizzy. His first impression was of a muted, purposeful buzz of activity; slowly opening his eyes, he was dazzled by a fantastic even, white brilliance. He became gradually aware that he was sitting upright in the centre of an enormous blue-tiled room – some kind of control centre? On a long raised platform opposite, a dozen or more white-coated technicians sat with their backs to him before a bank of screens set into the wall. He was strapped tight – with leather thongs, by the feel of it – to a rigid, high backed metal chair. A figure moved into his range of vision, and with a sudden shock of fear and revulsion he recognised Dandy Climax. She was dressed in the uniform of an officer of the Bulgarian W.V.S. Beside her the dwarf, in an impeccably tailored Eton suit and shiny black topper, jumped up and down in manic glee.

And now the most traumatic sight of all – Steel himself – moved into view. His thick, muscular legs were encased in a pair of mustard yellow ballet tights; fastened from his neck and falling about his naked, hairless, sweat glistening, tri-nippled torso was a torero’s crimson cloak, gold edged and spangled with golden zodiacal symbols. Tiny jade bells, of an exquisite design (probably Ming Dynasty, thought Harrison), dangled from

his earlobes, and in his hand he carried a broad bamboo scimitar (Harrison identified it as a pangu, a weapon much favoured by the hill tribes of unexplored northern Sumatra). Observing that his victim had regained consciousness, Steel strode jauntily over to Harrison and stood looming over him, his ugly egg of a head sleek with sweat.

"Ah," he smiled, stubbing out a Gauloise with leisurely relish on the tip of Harrison's nose, "He's awake at last – our Ministerial superman, sent down by Whitehall to save dear old fandom! Well, chum, allow me to explain to you what's going to happen to the whole Nocturnal Emission in approximately three minutes from now."

Steel's voice was deep timbred and he enunciated his words rapidly, in slightly accented but very precise English – the precision, perhaps, of some dour anonymous nanny in his unimaginable childhood.

"You'll just miss seeing it on our monitors, I'm afraid – but I'm sure you'll be interested in some of the organisational details. You know, I take it, that Sir Norman Shorrock – something of a gastronomic masochist, one fancies – is drinking his own cinder wine at the banquet tonight. The bottle, of course, will be broached immediately before he begins to speak." He glanced at his watch. "Which will be almost any time now."

"Exactly seven and one half seconds after the cork has been drawn," he continued, "the F to R ratio of a megalostat secreted beneath the banqueting table will become critical. Homeostatic imbalance will thereupon ensue, and – presto! No less than eleven tons of Chocolate Yoghourt will disembogue into the banqueting hall through eighteen concealed wall gratings at a mean temperature of twenty-seven hundred degrees Centigrade, OBLITERATING EVERY LIVING THING IN ITS PATH!!!"

There was a rising murmur of excitement from the technicians, who had begun to crowd about the monitor screens. It was obviously nearing zero hour.

"Interesting," said Harrison, feigning a calmness he certainly did not feel. "And just what are your plans for me?"

Steel's eyes flickered in the direction of the screens.

"For *you*, my dear old pillar of the Establishment, we've arranged a fairly imaginative, if melodramatic, apotheosis. The chair to which you are strapped, you see, is fixed to a conveyor belt leading directly into our experimental laboratories. We've only a couple of minutes but I feel I must tell you briefly, what's now about to happen to you at the various – what shall I call them? – assembly points. In Bay One you'll be given a ten second spray with a rather ingenious little bacteriological device which

will infect you – permanently, I'm afraid – with paratyphoid, chicken pox, yaws and swine fever. After that you'll visit our Chrosomosomatic Disintegration Chamber, where the molecular structure of your genes will be completely reformed within forty seconds flat." He smiled. "That, I fancy, should be rather fun. Next, you'll reach our patented wave-radiation apparatus, where you'll be bombarded with concentrated cosmic particles for eighty-three seconds precisely. Finally you'll be given an enema." His eyes darted to his wristwatch. "Et voila, c'est tout."

"You're mad, of course," said Harrison conversationally, "quite mad. Coprophilia, obviously, but combined in this case with a pathological hatred of fandom and fan-purity. Are you basically an anal-retentive, I wonder, or was it just that Brunner once refused to sell you his autograph...?"

"Sir!" came a hoarse, excited cry. "Megalostat activated! Yoghourt now entering pipeline! Sixty-three seconds to zero!! All systems, GO!"

Steel's eyes glittered insanely. "Twelve years... My God, I've waited twelve years...." He pressed a button at the side of Harrison's chair. "Goodbye, old chum," he said, with a quiet, crazy glee. "Sorry you'll miss the show!"

Harrison's throne jerked forward and began to trundle slowly towards a low, brightly lit tunnel directly ahead. Above the whine of the synchrogenerators he could hear the low menacing rumble of molten Yoghourt surging upwards into the pipes. All those wonderful, wonderful fans.... He could almost hear the frenzied screams, the hoarse gurgling.... There had to be some way out, some seemingly trivial detail He hadn't considered – think, man, He told himself feverishly, THINK!

His thoughts raced. First, the conveyor was obviously controlled by some sort of high torque rotor rheostat. Probably too, there was a series parallel starter. Now what was it his old science tutor used to tell him about three-phase interlock driving mechanisms? Ah yes, yes – but he'd have to be quick!

He was able to move his fingers – just. Fumbling with his right hand, he managed to locate the neutral link assembly on the chair arm. Does the bloody thing have auxiliary isolators for sequence starting, he wondered. It ought to have – it must have....

And for once in this story his luck was in. The toggle spring suddenly snapped away from its shroud support, and with a quick crazy upsurgence of hope he saw the gusset plates on the multiple gudgeon unit begin to buckle. He was almost at the tunnel's entrance....There was a great grinding roar as the reverse entry adaptors slowly tore themselves away

from their spreader housings and toppled, with a shattering crash, to the laboratory floor. *My God,* He thought dazedly, *it worked!* Bless old Stinky Carruthers!

He jumped from the chair. “Stop him!” roared Steel. “Don’t let him get to the controls!”

A needle beam of concentrated negative-protons flashed past his ear. He ran to the control panel and threw the de-activation switch. Another beam sliced into metal not more than five centimeters from his head. He was done for, but they wouldn’t get those wonderful people at the Banquet, they wouldn’t eliminate the backbone of fandom. No use to run now. He turned, heart pounding, and waited for the final beam – the one that would reduce his cortex to a glutinous grey omelette.

“*Everybody keep quite still!*”

As Harrison’s eyes darted to his left, he saw two completely incredible things. First, the white coated technician who had been firing at him was crumpling slowly to the floor. Secondly, Dandy Climax was holding one of the new Dunhill pocket disintegrators against Gustav Steel’s middle nipple. Beneath her stood the dwarf, his wrinkled little face grim.

“What the hell?”

“Keep very still, everyone,” said Dandy Climax levelly. “In exactly three and one half minutes, seventeen men from the N3F Counterespionage unit will be joining us. Until then, you’ll please do as I say.”

Steel’s face – his whole head – had turned a hideous greenish grey. Saliva trickled from his blubbery underlip. His mouth worked impotently, trying to frame the words that would encompass his rage and disbelief.

“*You,*” he croaked. “You – and Crunch?”

“Operatives C/34/DFG/9 and /9k respectively,” said the girl blandly. “Keep quite still, please.”

“But no, no, it’s not possible; we were – you were my...”

“Mistress?” said Dandy Climax, with a little tremor of disgust. “Yes, I was your mistress, Steel. Even now I can’t think of your caresses without a crawling sensation. But it was worth it,” she added quietly. “My true love, Brian Burgess, has been saved....”

God, what a girl! thought Harrison. But if she was from the Department, why had she sent him on that wild goose chase to the Institute? Never mind, he’d take it up with the writers afterwards. Because now there really would be an afterwards.

“So you really are Brigadier Gorringe’s daughter?” He said, with an

uncertain grin.

"The Department, Willy, burdens me with many strange names," smiled the girl. "My real one's Halo Groyne. Friends – special friends – usually call me Halo."

"May I?" asked Harrison.

"May you what?" queried Halo kittenishly. But that, dear reader, is another story.

The End

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: The authors would like to acknowledge the technical assistance, guidance and money of the following, without whose help the incredible story you have just, we hope, read could never have been told; Sir Gavin Proudpiece, KCB, MBE (Dept. MI5); Blacky Duquesne (N3F); the Imperial War Museum; United Artists; Birds Eye International; and Roger Corman. A special debt of thanks is due to Miss Mackintosh of Greek Street, London, for her unflagging co-operation at all times during the preparation of the mss.

Blazon #1 (1972)

The Clean Sweep

Prologue I:
Narrative of Cyril Faversham, M.M.

Glancing up disconsolately from my trayful of unsold Richard Nixon Talking Dolls (Batteries and Tapes Extra), my eyes bulged as I beheld the white-robed figure striding towards me across the park lake. I squinted in disbelief, but as he stumbled up the bank, tripped over a hydrangea bush, and cursed in fluent Bulgarian, the last of my doubts were dispelled. It was Him!

"Faversham," he said simply, "I have come again."

"Bloody hell," I said, "not again!"

Prologue II:
Narrative of Harry Hurstmonceaux, O.B.E.

The two figures were nearer now, and I could see that one of then – a veritable scarecrow of a man – carried suspended from his neck a trayful of unsold Richard Nixon Talking Dolls, while the other, clad in a white crimplene tube-line robe, seemed to be leaving behind him a copious trail of slimy water and pond-weed. Still, I thought charitably, it takes all sorts, and they may be good for a copper or two; and without further ado I launched into my pièce de resistance, "The Happy Wanderer", not unduly stressing the obbligato and allowing the melodic line its full sonority.

Abruptly, the robed figure clapped its hands over its ears. "Stop it," it cried, "for God's sake stop it!"

"Harry," croaked the other feebly, "what kind of a greeting is this? Don't you know us?"

"Good God," I cried, unstrapping my orchestra and stepping forth, "Cyril! Dear old Cyril! But I thought you'd gone down for another three!" I turned to the robed figure. "And can it be – can it really be..."

"I think we can talk rather more comfortably in my flat," said Harrison with a jovial smile. "I assume one of you does have the cab-fare? That's the trouble with robes," he added easily as we frowned at him, "no pockets!"

Prologue III: Joint Narrative
Harrison's Proposition.

"I need you both," said Harrison, as we relaxed in his flat over a quarter-bottle of Iberian Airways rosé, "for a rather interesting little stunt."

Faversham staggered weakly to his feet. "Now look here, guvnor," he croaked hotly, "I may have sunk low, lower than I ever thought possible, but there are certain things..."

"No, no, Cyril," said Harrison, smiling, "you misunderstand me. I meant *your* sort of stunt – yours and Harry's."

"It's a lie!" croaked Faversham. "A filthy lie!"

"Cyril," said Harrison with a light laugh, "I'm talking about danger, travel, high adventure – saving civilisation!"

"Good grief," croaked Haversham, "not the Belfast Constabulary!"

"No, no," said Harrison, chuckling, "serving me, men – serving me!"

"Well!" murmured Hurstmonceaux, "I don't know about that...."

"Good!" Harrison said heartily. "Then it's all settled. My God, if I'd only had three battalions of men like you in Mozambique! ...But to business. Now I'll need to make reservations at Heathrow, so first we'll have to find a public phone-box." He smiled winningly. "I assume one or other of you has some loose change?"

The Story, I.
Joint Narrative.

Scene: the Observation Lounge of a Goodyear Dirigible high in the azure heavens above the glittering, snow-capped peaks of the mighty Andes.

"Ever wonder about the hot-air balloons you see all over the place these days?" queried Harrison, meditatively munching a morsel of marzipan meringue.

We masticated in bewilderment. "Balloons?"

"My God," groaned Harrison, "they've been hovering over every major city in the world for weeks now – don't you ever read the papers?"

"Only Andy Capp and the racing," we muttered shamefacedly, then brightened. "Something to do with Nimble Bread, maybe?"

Harrison gave a grim smile. "What would you say, gentlemen," he asked, "if I were to tell you that those balloons were in fact huge aerosol sprays, manned by fanatical crews who await imminent delivery of 'RKO',

a deadly disintegration gas capable of reducing bricks, mortar, concrete and wood to a fine powder in forty-five seconds flat? What would you say, eh?"

"We'd say," we replied, "that your glue was beginning to melt."

"Indeed?" said Harrison, his smile as thin as the butter on a British Rail sandwich. "And if I were to tell you that the man behind the entire hellish enterprise was the deadliest enemy humanity has ever faced, the incredibly revolting V.T. Flask?"

We blanched and trembled alternately; now blanching, now trembling. V.T. Flask! The most odious creature in either hemisphere! A man so evil he made Attila the Hun look like Pat Boone! A man so physically repulsive it was impossible to pay him a compliment! V.T. Flask, inventor of such nightmarish horrors as the blunt corkscrew, the hexagonal tyre, the chastity-belt alarm-bell! V.T. Flask!

"Not V.T. Flask!" we ejaculated simultaneously.

"The same," said Harrison. "And immediately below us now, men, lie the fiend's infernal gasworks." He slid open the door and turned to us, smiling, his hairpiece fluttering in the stiff Andean breeze like chickweed in a hurricane. "Gentlemen," he cried, "Pinocchio!"

"Don't you mean Geronimo, sir?" we stammered, but he had already jumped.

The Story, II.
Joint Narrative.

Scene: The V.T. Flask Gasworks, a technological wonderland of white tiles, bubbling phials and inscrutable dials.

We stood nervously in the control manufacturing area, confronted by a huge vat of gurgling mauve liquid and seventy armed guards. "Well, as I've always said," Harrison smiled, nonchalantly lighting a cheroot, "you can't win 'em all."

Suddenly a gong boomed, a great oaken door whined open, and into the room lurched a one-armed, one-legged dwarf, completely covered in warts, pustules, and matted black hair, and clad in Army surplus boots, a polka-dot leotard and a rather fetching thigh-length turquoise cape. His single Cyclopean eye, set like a hideous red coal slap-bang in the middle of his forehead, glared at us with a venomous hate, and we shuddered uncontrollably. It could be none other than V.T. Flask himself! V.T. Flask, a man so depraved he made the Marquis de Sade look like Gene Autry!

V.T. Flask, the man Bela Lugosi used to have nightmares about! V.T. Flask, the only human being to have been deported from Tangiers at the age of 4½. The indescribably revolting, revoltingly indescribable V.T. Flask!

"V.T. Flask, I presume," Harrison murmured, carelessly tossing his cheroot into the vat.

"No," croaked the dwarf, drawing a gold-plated laser pistol from his sock, "I'm his P.R.O. I'm afraid Mr. Flask can't be here to greet you himself – he's taking a little holiday in Melanesia until things blow over. – Blow over, get it?!" And he cackled maniacally for several minutes, the guards dutifully cackling with him. "Right," he muttered at last, "let's cut the cackle and get on with it. Kindly walk ahead of me to that sinister archway."

We did so, and the fiend prodded us with his laser up a flight of slimy stone steps into a dim, dank, armadillo-ridden attic. Sliding home the door's massive bolt, he leered at us through the tiny grating. "What a gas!" he cackled, and lurched away, leaving behind him a trail of what looked like undercooked green porridge.

"Don't panic, chaps," Harrison smiled, turning to us. "Just watch me, and do exactly as I do."

So saying, he swiftly began to dismantle his tubular-steel bunk, reassembling it within moments in the form of a hang-glider, its sails ingeniously constructed from the bunk's flimsy blankets. Amazed as always by the man's resourcefulness, we quickly followed suit, and ten minutes later the three of us stood shoulder-to-shoulder at the attic window, tightly gripping our tubes and gazing down at the snow-capped Andes far below us.

"This is it, men," smiled Harrison. "Remember the Alimony!" And with this brave cry he soared forth into the blue, dipping, pivoting and rising like some magnificent overfed eagle. "Come along, lads," he called cheerfully, "I've laid on a BAC-111 at the airstrip at Guantanamera, and there's a splendid thermal out here that'll take us all the way there!"

We stared at each other in resignation, shrugged, and stepped together into the azure void.

Envoi.
Joint Narrative.

The BAC-111 glistened as if it had been freshly scrubbed, and we were pleased to note that the carpets and upholstery appeared to have been

recently shampooed. Dinner was excellent, apart from a faintly soapy taste to the Crèpes Suzette, but the cognac, we felt, was underlaid with a distinct flavour of washing-up liquid. We mentioned this to Harrison.

"Washing-up liquid, eh?" He grinned, and glanced out of the window. "Below us now, gentlemen, lies New York City. Care to take a peek?"

We peered through the port-side pane, and our eyes started from their sockets. Hastily replacing them, we gazed down in amazement. Below us was a fantastic sight – the principal thoroughfares of New York lay storeys deep in a foaming mass of coruscating mauve bubbles. Here and there, a titanic bubble completely enveloped some legendary landmark – Liberty pointed the tip of her torch through an enormous shining sphere; the Empire State Building glimmered a vague mauve inside its huge, elongated blob. The Jefferson Memorial, the Golden Gate Bridge, the Hoover Dam, all wore vast, shimmering skins of transparent mauve! We turned to Harrison, stuttering out our incredulity, and he smiled.

"D'you recall that magnificent moment in the gasworks, chaps," he said, "when I nonchalantly tossed my cheroot into the vat?"

We nodded dazedly.

"Well," he went on, "the tip of the cheroot contained 'MGM', a powerful counter-reagent of my own invention, which transformed the 'RKO' into a completely harmless and rather exotically-perfumed," he chuckled gently, "bubble-bath soap."

"Bubble-bath soap?"

"Just so," He grinned. "Little did V.T. Flask suspect that he was undertaking the biggest clean-up in the history of environmental enhancement! London now shines like fresh-hewn marble, Liverpool glitters in snowy splendour, and even Port Said doesn't smell so bad. In addition, the stuff's a pretty fair aphrodisiac. I may take out a patent," he added genially, raising his tankard of cognac to his lips.

We stared out in wonder. Far below the great bubble of the Staten Island Ferry drifted dreamlike over the foaming mauve waters. Outside our aircraft window, a huge bubble suddenly appeared, like a balloon strayed from some cosmic revel, shimmering in the mellow afternoon sun; it hovered for a while as if smiling in at Harrison, then popped.

Finis

Letters to the Editor

Darius T. Pfeffermueller, Route C38107, Bleached Bones, N.M.

As for "Clean Sweep", well – I know it was supposed to be funny (hor-hor), and I don't want to sound like an ole fuddy-duddy, but simple fifth-grade physics should've told the authors an aerosol gun just WON'T spray bath-lotion, not even the LEAST gooey!!! (Let E3 equal 1428, then E23 x 5C = 19.783!!!) – Loved the rest of the ish, tho'.

Peter G. Retch, Crimea Terrace (Unadopted), Slumton.

I know the Harrison thing was supposed to be a joke (hor-hor), but just for the record, Eric, a hang-glider made of tubular steel and blankets just wouldn't be aerodynamic. I know it's a small point, but I happen to work in the aerospace industry and I'm afraid it completely ruined my enjoyment (?) of the Harrison thing. When are you coming over, by the way? And why don't you phone me any more?!?

R. Milhous Nixon. Address not given.

Would you kindly advise your contributors that royalty payments are due on all sales of dolls.

(Advertisement) A CHANCE TO GIVE!

My name doesn't matter. Enough to say that I believe in Harrison, understand what he is trying to do, and enclose _____ to help him do it.

Please note carefully: Cheques and POs should be uncrossed, and made payable to Bearer. Coins, antiques and lead guttering, while also welcome, should be carefully packed and carry adequate postage. NO CORRESPONDENCE CAN BE ENTERED INTO.

Address all gifts to The Harrison Foundation, Club Sexy, Biarritz.

– *Triode* #21 (June 1975)

Cover by Jim Cawthorn for *Triode* #21, June 1975

His Final Bow

Cyril Faversham, M.M., G.C.E. (Failed) and Harry Hurstmonceaux, O.B.E., R.A.C.

O kingly soul, O lofty mind,
O strength beyond comparison;
O heart that beats for all mankind,
O William Makepeace Harrison!

With a harsh scream of its tyres, brakes and passengers, the tulip-bodied Hispano-Suiza with the Zubrowski-fitted 8 litre Issotta Fraschini quadruple overhead camshaft engine (bored out to 12 litres with two-stage supercharger) and sporting a fluttering Red Ensign and squat, almost phallic radio-aerial, rounded the U-bend in the narrow Welsh mountain road. Suddenly, there was another, shriller scream – this time a peasant's – and the sight of a figure hurtling into a hedge momentarily distracted the car's occupants. The peasant, a thin, black-shawled woman of about forty, stared wild-eyed after the car, her work-worn hands clawing impotently at the empty air. "Assassins!" she howled, her face working uncontrollably. "Eengleesh meelords! MERDE!"

From the fast-disappearing vehicle, something was thrown. It glittered briefly in the late afternoon sunlight and fell with a metallic clink into the dusty road. The woman tottered forward to examine it.

It was a golden half-sovereign.

"Hate that sort of thing," said Harrison, from behind the wheel; "not good for my image. Still, that'll take care of any damage, one hopes. And now men, to the matter in hand. Z wants me back in."

"Look out! That coach! It's full of nuns! Look OUT!!"

"...Back in Whitehall by seven p.m. at the latest. Apparently since OGRE got James, there's nobody left in the Department with the jaunty, reckless courage (or scriptwriters) needed for these bigger stunts except myself..."

"The level crossing! The gate! Yah! No! Ya! AHH!!!!"

"Have faith," said Harrison simply, smiling as the wood and metal splintered harmlessly about our windows. "And now – the plot. One evening last week, as I was entering the main lavatory of the Athenaeum, I noticed a chap sprawled face-down on the floor; so I strolled across and

looked the fellow over. Recognised him immediately as young Kyle, one of the Department's best men. Stone dead, of course. And they'd gone through his pockets. Even cut the lining of his jacket. Jermyn St. job, too, the bloody Philistines! But I knew Kyle – damned resourceful young cub – so I kept on looking. Finally, I took the carnation from his buttonhole. And I was right! It wasn't a carnation at all, but a carefully-crumpled piece of beetroot. On it was a message. It said: 'Contact Shorrock. Spider in London.' Cryptic enough, eh? Until I remembered Professor Shorrock's in charge of the AEC's methylated-spirits plant at Sodding Parva."

"*The* Professor Shorrock?" we ejaculated.

"None other. (And kindly do not ejaculate when I am speaking.) Well, the Professor told me Kyle'd been working on a leakage of information. He'd managed to nab the inside man, but the fellow hanged himself in his cell before he could be questioned. On his cell-wall he'd scrawled: 'Only way out. If I talk, Spider will get me.'"

"And the Spider," we chorused, "is in London!"

"So Kyle believed," said Harrison. "And that reminds me, I must contact the bogeys – the poor devil will still be there on the washroom floor."

(At that very moment, half the world away, a Bosnian samovar-attendant was painfully scribbling a note in Attic Greek to the British Attaché at Macchu Picchu. A long pearl-handled knife protruded from his head; but the Old Country was in danger, and the message – had – to get – through....)

II. The Plot (You Should Excuse the Expression) Thickens.

In war, His martial stamina astonished every garrison;
Many a daughter and mama dreams blissfully of Harrison.

Eight-thirty the following evening saw us at Harrison's chic little pièd-a-terre beneath Blackfriars Bridge, where an informal little gathering (white tie and decorations) was being held. Threading His way through the throng, our Master beamed us a greeting and introduced us to our fellow-guests.

"First I'd like you to meet Gavin and Julia Malpractise (Gentlemen, I have grave news)... May I introduce Arnold Longstaffe and his friend Sandy – what a stunning necklace, Sandy!... (The news, gentlemen, concerns our old adversary von Neumann)... and this is Hyacinth

Heartsease; God, but you look too utterly devastating, my sweet... (Von Neumann is alive!)... Sir Hubert and Lady Mountebank, may I present..."

"Alive, Sir? But..."

"I think you know Beverly Winn, of *Lovely Lady* magazine... (You recall that the fiend was thought to have perished in that C-Bomb testing area?)... and this charming creature is Lady Pamela Playthinge... (Well, it wasn't a testing area – it was Vegas!)... Sir Bertram Bumble, how very good of you to come, sir... (Map-reading, gentlemen, was never my forte)... And now I really think you know everyone."

"Everyone except that swarthy little man in the corner, Sir," we murmured, pointing to a nondescript-looking individual wearing a grey opera-hat, Oxford bags, canary yellow pullover and ankle-length sealskin greatcoat.

"That fellow," said Harrison, "will lead us to von Neumann." He unfolded a fragment of beetroot. "He just brought me this message. Here, read it."

"'Your presence is urgently requested'," we read, "'at secret emergency meeting of Cabinet at disused warehouse in Camberwell. Bring minions. Bearer will guide you.'"

"Sounds all right, as you see," said Harrison casually. "But there's one trifling flaw. If Harold* sent him, where's his Young Socialists Badge?"

** Harold Wilson was then Prime Minister. [Ed.]*

(Little did we then suspect that, at that very moment, the British Attaché at Macchu Picchu – having shaken off the greasy little man in the alpaca jacket and panama hat – was wrinkling his brow over a tiny scrap of paper he'd received that morning from a certain Anglophilic wine-waiter at the Balinese legation....)

III. Der Schpider

Montevideo, far Cathay, New York 'n' Basra, Paris 'n'
Vienna, Mold and Mandalay, He's seen them all, has Harrison.

Our Master's purple and gold Ford Nucleon (its front fender already crumpled, "but then," as He often said, "what are fenders for?") propelled us violently through the bustling streets to the fashionable heart of Camberwell. Our sinister guide remained silent and we, too, sat without speaking, mutely admiring the vehicle's interior decor (undoubtedly Cecil

Beaton's chef d'oeuvre), and ruminating on the possible outcome of this strange Rendezvous with Destiny.

After some light badinage with a seventy-year-old pedestrian on a zebra-crossing, and a friendly bout of fisticuffs with two taxi-drivers, we came to a halt before a huge block of luxury flats. Entering the foyer, we squeezed ourselves into the penthouse lift and swiftly glided upwards. Abruptly, we stopped; the lift doors slid back and we found ourselves at the threshold of a palatial apartment. Our "guide", who had suddenly produced a Smith & Wesson 45, prodded us forward with a foul oath.

The room in which we now found ourselves was furnished in unimaginable splendour. Its carpeted walls, extending fully to the ceilings, were hung with the works of Matisse, Saint-Saëns, Braque, and Eddie. Innumerable gas-jets flooded the room with brilliant radiance, and white tiger-skins and ivory chaise longues, each one worth a King's Ransom, were scattered carelessly across the floor. But beyond the cool, softly playing fountains – there, in the room's farthest corner – there, beneath a heavily-shaded light...

In that corner, Reader, stood a low, four-wheeled trolley. On it rested a huge spheroidal shape, like a distorted beach ball, and about the Shape was a network of fine wire mesh. Behind, on a second trolley, we could see three tall metal tanks, bearing the respective legends "Carbon", "Schnapps", and "H^2O". From these, three tubes fed directly into the centre of the Blob. Drawing closer we behold, with a shudder of revulsion, that the pink jelly beneath the mesh was *pulsating*.

"Ahhh," came a faint, guttural voice from somewhere within the jelly; "mein guests have arrived."

"Von Neumann!" we cried aghast. "But – what devilish misfortune has brought you to this pass?"

"Mein Gott," quivered the Blob, "vot a question. Do you read *Triode* or don't you? Eaten alive by piranha, impaled on railings, fed into cog-wheels – you think I'm immortal, already? And besides, isn't this the final episode? But von thing's for sure – this time I'm taking you three with me!"

Harrison smiled with quiet confidence, knowing the writers were on His side. "We shall see," He murmured. "So you, von Neumann, are the infamous Spider."

"Not qvite!" barked the bestial Blob. "Allow me to present to you der Schpider's *oder four legs*!"

(...Meanwhile, in a filthy estaminet in the Old Town of Marseilles, two

Greek stevedores were discussing pigeon-racing over a bottle of anisette. They looked up, suddenly, as the door swung open and a lean, haggard Englishman, clad only in a loincloth and monocle, staggered into the room. The newcomer smiled wanly at them, and then, without a word, produced a tattered slip of beetroot from his nether regions before dropping, lifeless, to the floor....)

IV. Homo Gestetner

Should you but mock at Empire's cause, 'twould be unwise to tarry, son;
Best to evade the vengeful claws of William Makepeace Harrison:
But relish ye the sparkling jest, the verbal thrust-and-parry, son?
Then search Earth over; none can best the wit of William Harrison.

A trap door in the ceiling opened, a rope-ladder was uncoiled, and down it clambered the most motley assortment of humanity one could hope to encounter outside an OMPA session. Neumann ironically introduced them, one by one, as they descended; they were, however, already known to us: the notorious "Pretty Boy" Bourgeois; Phenella Barker; Peter South, ex-lighting cameraman for Hammer; and James T. Phulovit, the prominent oral sadist.*

---

* *That is: Brian Burgess, Ella Parker, Peter West and John T. Phillifent (with a possible sideswipe at James T. Kirk, another character notoriously full of himself). [Ed.]*

"Und ve," screeched Neumann, quivering like a half-set blancmange in an earth-tremor, "der Schpider compose!"

"Collectively?" queried Harrison intently.

"Correct," smirked South, "individually we are merely an agglomeration of steaming nits, but together we constitute a new and tremendously powerful species – Homo Gestetner!"

"Go on," said Harrison, His green eyes steely.

"Herr von Neumann," continued South, "is the central ganglion of a complex organism composed of myself (computer); Bourgeois and Barker (teleports); and Phulovit (telekineticist and press-agent). Together," he added matter-of-factly, "we shall conquer the World. Eh, gentlemen?"

"Oberammergau!" chortled Neumann. "You can say dot again! Boot now," he continued, pulsating vilely, "it is time for der reckoning – nichts? Alors, I an idea haf got, und dis ist itt: ve vill der Meister und minions into der roof-garden getake; und den, funf seconds start vill ve gegive; und

den... upon dem vill ve geloose – *der hell-hounds!*"

"Excellent," grinned South.

"Worthy of me," stated Phulovit.

"Jeezez," we murmured.

(...At that precise moment, above the trim green lawns of Lord's, twenty-seven racing pigeons fluttered towards Kensington. Only one man looked up at them; but he looked long and hard. If asked, he would have given his name as Theodopolous Cantharides, and his occupation as an importer of raisins; but his eyes gleamed with a strange, unfathomable joy as he watched the birds fly over....)

V. The Hounds of Doom

Then trust in Him through thick and thin, for by the Great Lord Harry, son,
Aryan Blobs JUST CANNOT WIN when matched with William Harrison!

And this, Gentile Readers, is where you came in. Handcuffed, and bedaubed from toupees to toenails with a well-known beef extract (with seven different ingredients), we stood at the threshold of the extensive, thickly-wooded roof garden. To our right was a low brick wall, and against this were chained twelve huge Pembrokeshire Corgis, straining furiously at their fetters and glaring at us with red, malevolent eyes....

Harrison turned to us, His brown eyes twinkling. "Stand firm, chaps," said He imperturbably; "and on no account attempt to run." And he began to hum a little tune from Milhaud's "Saudades do Brasil".**

** *No mean feat! [Footnote in original.]*

"Schum!" roared Neumann, manifesting every symptom of Progressive Disintegration of the Psyche. "Your funf seconds oop ist! You haf to stay poot chosen, and so –" and he gave a shrill maniacal laugh – "*release der hunden!!*"

The chains dropped from the wall, and the pack of huge dogs rushed forward, baying and howling madly. We shuddered, awaiting our fearful fate....

And then – mirabile dictu! – the hounds paused, as if uncertain, and scented the air for a moment or two. Then, instead of making for us, they turned about, growling, and began to advance menacingly towards... Neumann and his followers!

The latter backed away, their faces transformed into white masks of fear, their gestetner co-ordination completely shattered by terror. In a moment, the first of the dogs was tearing at von Neumann's mesh....

The moments that followed were Not A Pretty Sight. We averted our eyes; and when the last of the hoarse screams had died away, and we returned our gaze to the hellish scene, our antagonists were gone. We recognised a fragment of Barker's plus-fours; South's Leica, developing-tank and collection box; a few shreds of Neumann's wire mesh; a much thumbed copy of *Bastion* where Phulovit had been – and that was all.

"But, Sir...." we stammered, as the twelve plump dogs, happily wagging their tails, nuzzled against us....

VI. Envoi

Thus shall we end our hymn of praise (before it gets embarrassin');
Unto the ending of our days – we'll serve Thee, Makepeace Harrison!

"I know, I know," chuckled the Master over Souper Intime at Prunier's; "you are doubtless agog for me to explain why, during our recent little Stunt, the hell-hounds refrained from devouring us?"

"As a matter of fact, Sir," we said, decanting a little Tiroler Riesling Spätauslese '49, "we managed to work that bit out for ourselves. We were observant enough to notice that, whilst being escorted into the roof-garden, you managed to slip certain objects into our opponents' jacket-pockets – and into Neumann's mesh."

"Oh?" said the Great Man wryly, nibbling at His Savarin Chantilly, "and what, pray, were those objects?"

"Balls," we replied, between mouthfuls of Escalope de Chien Andalou.

"Aniseed balls, to be precise. Dogs are reputed to find them irresistible."

"Splendid, gentlemen!" quoth Harrison, His clear blue eyes sparkling above His '47 Reine Pédauque, "You do Me credit. And now may I ask what your future plans are?"

We smiled fondly at each other over our Carbonnades à la Flamande. "We'd like you to be the first to know, Sir," we said. "We are now," we giggled shyly, "officially engaged."

"Capital, capital!" cried the Master heartily, clapping His hands familiarly on our thighs. "You deserve each other. I am, of course, to be Best Man?"

"We regret, Master, that you are not," we said firmly, sniffing suspiciously at our Saltimbocca alla Bel Paese. "It's to be a quiet affair at St. James', and we don't want any bombs in our bouquets. You understand, we trust, Sir?"

"Of course," chuckled Harrison, as the Tia Maria vat was trundled in. "Well, it's been a splendid partnership, gentlemen; absolutely splendid. We may not meet again in this great cricket-match called Life – but who knows? There may yet be another Innings on some greater Pitch, where the grass is forever green, and the Great Umpire never calls 'Out'."

"Yes," we replied with moist eyes, "and think of the money we've made, too! *Alien**** have just offered us a cool eighteen bob for the 8-mm cine rights to the series. That, plus our ten per cent from you..."

*** *A reference to Manchester's Delta SF Film Group, who published the fanzine* Alien. *[Ed.]*

"Ten per cent?" queried Harrison sharply.

"Why, yes – the ten per cent for doing the series, Lord." Harrison's voice was cold. "I'm afraid I don't follow."

"You mean," we spluttered, almost choking on our Martell Cordon Argent – "you mean, you think we've been playing Brian Epstein to you all this perishin' time for free!?"

Harrison's tiny button-eyes gleamed shiftily. "My dear chaps..." he began, in his best Ronald Colman manner, but our hands were already at his throat.

Finis

– *Triode* #19 (March 1974)

Appendix

Cover by Eddie Jones for “The Unmasking”, *Triode* #15, Winter 1958

Afterword
Rob Hansen

I wasn't sure what to expect when he agreed to see me. Now over a hundred years old and long-retired, he was still fit, his mind mostly still sharp, and he could easily have passed for someone in their seventies. He had a room in the retirement home provided for its elderly by his old regiment and it was in this room, surrounded by mementos from his long and adventurous life, that I interviewed him, Sir Harry Hurstmonceaux KBE. What follows are a couple of short excerpts from that interview – which will be published in full in the next issue of *The Journal of Harrisonology* from Cambridge University Press – beginning with the answer to a riddle that has puzzled many who have studied the adventures of the great Harrison:

> "Having read all the accounts by you and Cyril Faversham of your adventures with Harrison there's something I don't understand..."
>
> "Oh?"
>
> "When von Neumann was ground into – and I quote – 'a quivering amorphous mass' by those massive cog-wheels at Schloss Unrath in Austria, this was how he became the malevolent 'Blob' you faced in your final adventure together, correct?"
>
> "Yes."
>
> "Yet when next you encountered him after Schloss Unrath he was, albeit hideously disfigured, comparatively intact. How is that possible?"
>
> He stared at me for a moment, then sighed.
>
> "I was sworn to secrecy and a gentleman never breaks his word, but after all this time I suppose it doesn't much matter any more, particularly now that Cyril, God rest his soul, is no longer with us. Harrison and I later pieced together what must have happened. You'll recall that the Master pumped several bullets into von Neumann, thinking it an act of mercy. Well, we left the rotter for dead but, alas, he wasn't. Minutes after our departure he was found by his henchman Rieni, who'd survived his fall into the vat of molten apfelstrudel but had been left hideously

disfigured."

"Wait!" I said. "It wasn't Rieni who fell into the molten apfelstrudel but his other henchman, Santesohn."

"Ah, yes, well..." said Hurstmonceaux, shamefacedly.

"What?" I demanded.

"You have to understand that when we departed Schloss Unrath, Faversham and I 'liberated' half a dozen bottles of a remarkably fine schnapps, with which we celebrated the successful conclusion of the whole sordid business that same evening. When we came to write up those momentous events the following morning, I'm afraid we could no longer recall which particular henchman had met which particular fate, though we did record their final words correctly, of that I am bally certain. In our defence, it was *very* good schnapps. When we realised our error the account had already been published. A damned nuisance, but at the time it didn't seem an important enough detail to warrant the trouble it would be to correct, so we never did. To continue... after Rieni got the blaggard to safety and secured the medical attention he needed, von Neumann instructed him to assume his identity until he was recovered enough to once again threaten all that is decent. We should have suspected Rieni had taken the fiend's place when, before being unmasked, 'von Neumann' spent several months living as a young woman."

"Why?"

"Because Rieni not only was skilled at creating life-like masks, but when not henching for the vile miscreant he worked in cabaret as a female impersonator. Made rather a good Marlene Dietrich, too."

"Really?"

"You sound surprised, yet henchmen have lives of their own, too, old boy. Why, I daresay even Faversham and I might be described as such, but as devoted as we were to Harrison the same applied to us. Rieni recorded several albums as Dietrich and you'd swear you were listening to the divine Marlene herself. I have a couple if you'd like to hear for yourself."

"Later, perhaps."

"Y'know, when we were at boarding school together Cyril and I were both members of the dramatic society. Whenever we did Shakespeare he would always play the female roles – only

one in the society who had the legs for it – and why not? There's nothing wrong in dressing as a filly if it's for the purposes of entertainment. Which reminds me of that time in Jaipur when an officer entered our barracks and caught the men performing a chorus line routine from *Gold Diggers of 1933*. Tore a strip off us, he did. 'This isn't the Navy!' he admonished. Quite right, too, though even he had to admit that our high kicks were damned impressive. Nothing wrong in a chap dressing as a filly as part of manly hi-jinks like that, of course, or if it's for the purposes of entertainment. Oh, and there was that one time gaining entrance to a villain's lair required one of us to disguise himself as a woman. Had to be Faversham, of course; the legs, y'know. So yes, there's nothing wrong in dressing as a filly to gain entrance to a villain's lair, or as part of manly hi-jinks, or for the purposes of entertainment, but a chap living as a woman for so long... well, it's ruddy *unnatural* is what it is. And I can scarce believe what they show on the TV, these days. There's that drag programme that shouldn't be allowed. Y'know, the one hosted by that Rand Paul chappie."

"I think you mean Ru Paul, Sir Harry."

"Oh, yes, quite. Probably be a damned different show with the other wallah, what? Anyway, disgusting affair, should be banned. Although there was that one fellow on season nine – or was it season ten? – who made a particularly fine looking woman, by George!"

"Getting back to Rieni, what did you mean about it being all right to reveal his part in all this now that Cyril Faversham is no longer with us? Why would that matter?"

"I knew the Master had read the map wrong, but that wasn't the sort of thing you pointed out to the Great Man. However, knowing the bounder we then believed to be von Neumann must still alive, I was on my guard. That's why I had my suspicions about the pretty young Southern belle who so enchanted the Master at the end of that stunt. Could it be...? I shook the old noggin and foolishly dismissed such speculation from my mind but shortly thereafter, while Cyril was fetching drinks, Harrison came rushing back, white-faced and devoid of his usual sang froid. He could immediately see in my eyes that I Knew. 'We will never speak of this again,' he said, 'and for God's sake don't tell Faversham!' And I never did."

The interview concluded with me asking Sir Harry if he had any final thoughts about William Makepeace Harrison.

> “I like to think he’s still out there somewhere,” he said, wistfully, “still somehow in his prime and fighting the good fight. Yet even if he isn’t, his mantle has now passed to another, someone to carry the torch who is every bit as urbane and sophisticated, as suave and debonair, and as popular with the ladies as ever her father was.”
>
> “You mean...?”
>
> “Yes, by God! For so long as England endures, there will always be a Harrison!”

(2022)

Additional Notes
David Langford

In the original fanzines the spelling of Hurstmonceaux tended to vary erratically as the saga went on, often appearing as Hurstmonceux. The longer version seems truer to that fine distillation which is the Harrisonian spirit.

The true identities of Hurstmonceaux and Faversham, though never really secret, were "officially" revealed in Eric Bentcliffe's pen-portraits of Liverpool Group members in his *Waldo* #1 (December 1959), and more resoundingly in his *Triode* #19 (March 1974):

> There have at various times been attempts to unmask the authors of the Harrison Saga; these have been thwarted, in the past, by whatever means have been necessary by the government in power. It's possible that *Triode* has been the only fanzine subject to "D" Notices. However, since some time has passed since The Master was last used in an active capacity I have now obtained the permission of The Ministry in question to reveal the identities of His chroniclers, known previously only as Cyril Faversham and Harry Hurstmonceaux. They are that well-known Liverpool Group double-act John Owen and Stanley H. Nuttall. And whilst the Harrison story in this issue purports to be their final opus, I am hoping that fannish public demand will encourage them to continue with their chronicling of Sir. Wm. Makepeace Harrison's exploits. Can we hear it for John O. and "Old Nutters", please???

The reverent capitalisation of pronouns referring to Sir William Makepeace Harrison – He, Him, Himself and so on – is somewhat inconsistent throughout the saga. This scholarly edition attempts to use His proper pronouns throughout the first four episodes published as *Beloved Is Our Destiny*, and thereafter follows the increasingly erratic capitalisation of the original fanzine appearances.

In "Crossed Steel", Harrison's little trick of adding pepper to vodka because it "takes the fusel oil to the bottom of the glass" is borrowed from James Bond, who does the same in chapter five of *Moonraker* (1955) by Ian Fleming. Fusel oil was an impurity in bathtub spirits that was thought

to make hangovers worse: the idea was to send it to the bottom and *not* drink it, rather than drain the glass – as Harrison then does – in a single gulp.

In the space-themed "Foiled Again", "silver-haired Sir Hubert Fudge" may well be a nod to the likewise silver-haired Sir Hubert Guest who was Controller of Space Fleet in the *Dan Dare* comic strip. The subtitle of Part the Second, "Tom Sets Out for Rugby School", is in fact not a chapter heading from the famous Rugby School tale *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857) by Thomas Hughes.

In "Harrison in Wonderland", only the most benighted readers will fail to detect the pastiche of Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe in the section titled "The Short Hello" in echo of *The Long Goodbye* (1953).

In "His Final Bow", the multi-villain Homo Gestetner riffs on *Homo Gestalt* in *More Than Human* (1953) by Theodore Sturgeon, and adapts its key line: "I'm the central ganglion of a complex organism which is composed of Baby, a computer; Bonnie and Beanie, teleports; Janie, telekineticist; and myself, telepath and central control." As well as his obvious joke name, the briefly mentioned Cantharides – importer of raisins – could perhaps allude to "Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant / Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants / C.i.f. London" in *The Waste Land* (1922) by that rip-roaring pulpsmith T.S. Eliot.

Besides the Owen/Nuttall *TAFF 1960 Election Night Special* mentioned in the Foreword, Harrison makes a guest appearance as the only possible *deus ex machina* to save English fandom from a Scots plot in the *Macbeth*-based "Witch Switch" by Don Geldart, published in *Scottishe* #26 (December 1961) edited by Ethel Lindsay. This verse drama can be found in the TAFF ebook *Faan Fiction 1930-2020: an exploration* (2021) compiled by Rob Hansen.

While we consider Eddie Jones's depiction of Harrison to be definitive, others can be found: by Jim Cawthorn on the cover of *Triode* #21, and by Steve Stiles on the proposed cover – eventually used as a frontispiece – for his 1968 TAFF trip report *Harrison Country* (2006). In that report, Steve wrote of an incident at Thirdmancon, the 1968 UK Eastercon:

> ...as a special toast, the entire room stood up, locked arms, and gently and solemnly sang "Harrison": "H-A-Double R-I-S-O-N spells Harrison"... It was a pretty dramatic moment, almost religious, and I was spell-bound. This Harrison fellow seemed like some combination of Bloch, Tucker, and Burbee to the

British fen. Later, much later – well, as I type this, I had the opportunity to check my copy of *Fancyclopedia II*, which had to say the following about Harrison: “The mainstay and chief support of the British Empire, though such people as Churchill, Montgomery, Cunningham, et al filled star supporting roles. *Triode* ran a lengthy series, *Beloved Is Our Destiny*, which revealed the part played by Harrison in a few of his less important deeds such as saving Asia, America, Europe, Africa and other areas of the world from menaces like the plague, revolution, nuclear warfare, usw. His more vital accomplishments cannot be discussed in a public document....”

How could I possibly do less than name this report *Harrison Country*?

Harrison by Steve Stiles

Original Appearances

The first four episodes appeared under the overall title *Beloved Is Our Destiny*. After the first, Michael Moorcock himself wrote in to say: "*Beloved Is Our Destiny* was a lovely bit of satire." (*Triode* #12).

- "Face to Face with a Legend" – *Triode* #11, August 1957, edited by Eric Bentcliffe and Terry Jeeves.
- "Plunder in the Sun" – *Triode* #12, Winter 1957-1958, edited by Eric Bentcliffe and Terry Jeeves. Interior art by Eddie Jones, containing the Harrison cameo at the end of the Contents list.
- "Crossed Steel" – *Triode* #13, April 1958, edited by Eric Bentcliffe and Terry Jeeves. Cover artwork by Eddie Jones. Story reprinted in *The Best of Fandom 1958*, 1959, edited by Guy Terwilleger; and in *When Yngvi Was a Louse*, 1982, edited by Eric Bentcliffe.
- "Foiled Again" – *Triode* #14, Summer 1958, edited by Eric Bentcliffe and Terry Jeeves. Interior art by Eddie Jones adapted for the cover of this ebook.
- "The Unmasking" – *Triode* #15, Winter 1958, edited by Eric Bentcliffe and Terry Jeeves. Cover artwork by Eddie Jones.
- "The 39 Schweppes" – *Triode* #16, August 1959, edited by Eric Bentcliffe and Terry Jeeves.
- "The Splendidest Adventure" – *Triode* #18, May 1960, edited by Eric Bentcliffe and published by Terry Jeeves.
- "Harrison in Wonderland" – *Bastion* #2, 1961, edited by Eric Bentcliffe and published by Terry Jeeves. Cover artwork by Eddie Jones.
- "The Fandromeda Strain" – *Blazon* #1, 1972, edited by Eric Bentcliffe.
- "His Final Bow" – *Triode* #19, March 1974, edited by Eric Bentcliffe and published by Terry Jeeves.
- "The Clean Sweep" – *Triode* #21, June 1975, edited by Eric Bentcliffe and published by Terry Jeeves. Cover artwork by Jim Cawthorn.

Further Reading

Three recommended nonfiction books about the general realms of literary endeavour inhabited by Sir William Makepeace Harrison (Whom God Preserve):

- Colin Watson: *Snobbery with Violence: English Crime Stories and Their Audience* (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1971; revised edition Eyre Methuen, 1979)
- E.S. Turner: *Boys Will Be Boys: The Story of Sweeney Todd, Deadwood Dick, Sexton Blake, Billy Bunter, Dick Barton et al.* (Michael Joseph, 1948; various revised editions including Penguin, 1976)
- Richard Usborne: *Clubland Heroes: a nostalgic study of some recurrent characters in the romantic fiction of Dornford Yates, John Buchan and Sapper* (Constable, 1953; revised edition Barrie & Jenkins, 1974)

The real Bill Harrison

The End

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