

Among Our Contributors

ROSEL G. BROWN —

one of the most interesting newcomers in the field, has appeared in this magazine previously and had a story in Fredrik Pohl's STAR SCIENCE FICTION NO. 5.

AUGUST DERLETH —

equally prominent in the mystery field as the creator of the inimitable Solar Pons pastiches, is of course the author of some superb material in the Lovecraft tradition.

GORDON R. DICKSON —

appears only once in Don Day's monumental Index to the SF magazines 1926-'50. Since then, he has appeared in every magazine in the field and is the author of several novels.

JOHN BRUNNER —

prominent British SF and fantasy writer and novelist, makes one of his rare appearances in this haunting story about the adventures of Gerald Howson, Psi.D., Curative Telepath First Class, W.H.O. The sequel will appear next month.

LESTER DEL REY —

needs no introduction to any reader of SF and fantasy.

WENZELL BROWN —

author of more than twenty novels about contemporary matters makes, we believe, a first appearance in the field with this article.

Dr. LESLIE R. SHEPHERD —

distinguished British physicist and space-travel authority, writes on SPACE PHYSICS in an article published here through the courtesy of Mr. Sam Moskowitz, former editor of SCIENCE FICTION PLUS.

ERIC FRANK RUSSELL —

also needs no introduction to any reader of science fiction.

BELLE C. DIETZ —

President of the Eastern Science Fiction Association of Newark, is active in New York fan activities.

Y. IBN AHARON —

a frequent contributor to James Moseley's *Saucer News*, is Editor of the *Journal of Correlative Philosophy*, published by the Advaitan Buddhist Theosophical Society.

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THE ANTS OF IRELAND'S EYE

by WENZELL BROWN

MOSAIC gynandromorph — this is the scientific name for one of the weirdest creatures that has ever made its appearance in the animal world. The mosaics are ants, but abnormal ants made up of scattered bits of the male and female of the species in contradiction to every law of orthodox genetics. The presence of these ants, over a hundred of them, found on one tiny rock-bound uninhabited island poses a frightening question: Has some power been unleashed that can upset the whole sexual pattern and change all animals, including man, into hermaphrodites?

To date, the emergence of the mosaic gynandromorphs has remained a scientific mystery, one that has been shrouded in secrecy for fear of the panic reaction of a public that may jump to the conclusion that atomic fall-out can destroy man by converting him into a fantastic creature made up piecemeal of the two sexes. Incredible as this may sound, some sci-

entists believe that such a theory may well contain an element of truth and they point out that it has already been established that radioactivity can effect the genes of the second generation in such a way as to cause sterility.

A tiny island known as Ireland's Eye forms an almost unearthly backdrop for the inexplicable phenomenon that violates every biological law. An aerial view of the island gives the landscape, with its deeply ridged and eroded rock surface, a lunar cast. There are no houses but perched on the highest peak are the ruins of an ancient abbey, bleak, crumbling walls, a spiked gate and eeriest of all, two leper windows ranged on either side of a roofless altar. The only inhabitants that Ireland's Eye has ever known were a group of lepers and the Catholic priests who tended them. Even so, more than two centuries have passed since the last of these lepers left this island retreat.

Ireland's Eye is in sight of Howth Head on the mainland of Ireland. The fisherfolk of Howth have always regarded the island with superstitious dread and their fishing vessels have habitually kept a goodly distance from its shores, particularly at night when, according to rumors lights sometimes wink on and off among the rocks and banshee screams echo across the waters. A plausible explanation comes readily to hand. Ireland's Eye lies in the hollow of Dublin Bay, just opposite the estuary of the Liffey River and for this reason is ideally situated as a way-station for smugglers who for generations have prided themselves on running the blockade of the river patrol and delivering their illicit cargoes directly to the warehouses of Dublin.

The presence of mosaic gynandromorphs on Ireland's Eye was originally reported in unsigned articles in British medical journals. The ants were first described as "degenerate females" unable to mate or lay eggs. It was pointed out that hitherto all known ants had belonged to one of the two "true sexes," but that these ants were "monstrosities" wherein male and female parts were thrown together in a seemingly senseless pattern.

The hermaphroditic ant was not altogether unknown. Prior to the find on Ireland's Eye, a total of thirty-seven such ants had been recorded, throughout the world, over a period of one hundred years. In Ireland's Eye, one hundred and fifty-seven mosaics were located; moreover, these mosaics were of three separate and distinct species; thus shattering any theory that they were the offspring of a common queen.

The mosaic patchwork of the ants of Ireland's Eye, rather than the fact that they were hermaphroditic, was what marked them as weird and frightening. We know that in human beings elements of the male and female exist in every body, that the

most virile of men has a miniature womb. In rare cases both the male and female characteristics are fully developed to create the full-fledged hermaphrodite. The mosaic is something quite different. Translated into human terms, the individual might have a single breast, the arms and legs might be shaped completely differently, the eyes might not match, the face be bearded on one side but not on the other and the sexual organs non-functional.

Photographs of these ants show wide variations on the mosaic patterns. One ant has a female left wing and thorax while the abdomen is half male and half female, divided in the center. Another ant of the species *Myrmica Rubra Sabuleti* is composed of scattered bits of dark male tissue embedded in light female tissue. It has one short male antenna and one long female antenna. Each ant photographed is completely individualistic in its bisexual pattern. The only common note is that none is fertile.

The scientists who discovered the mosaic gynandromorphs of Ireland's Eye were first attracted to the island by rumors of strange fungi growing among the rocks close to sea level and of unexplained mutations in plants along the shore and in sea animal life in the vicinity. The theory was immediately advanced that unpredictable currents had brought down small particles of radioactive materials which had washed across the shore of the island. Presumably, this was the aftermath of nuclear tests made by the Russians in far northern waters. However, absolutely no trace of radioactive deposits could be found. This did not completely obliterate the theory. Heavy storms or even the natural movements of the ocean waters could have removed these deposits or reduced them to such a degree that current testing methods would have been useless.

As scientists flocked into Howth, it was inevitable that word should

leak out to the press. The first stories printed in London papers created a miniature panic as a segment of the public foresaw a future in which the sexes would be hopelessly scrambled. Fearing public reaction against the entire atomic testing program, British and Irish authorities quietly put the lid on the happenings in and about Ireland's Eye.

Nevertheless, speculation continues among British scientific journals, and several less spectacular theories have been produced to account for the strange denizens of the island. One of these is that the ants have been effected by contact with the skin, tissue or other castoff bodily material from the lepers who once lived in the sanitarium. Medical officials tend to scoff at such a theory, labeling it as preposterous, especially so because of the number of years which have elapsed since any leper has set foot on Ireland's Eye. They point to the countless generations of ants that must have been bred during this interim.

Another theory is that the soil in this particular area possesses some peculiar chemical substance which causes the mutations. This theory was strengthened by the finding of other colonies of mosaic ants on the mainland near Howth Head. However, a careful examination of the soil for chemical content has failed to give any clue to what this substance, if it exists, may be. A still more prosaic school of thought has suggested that chemicals used in the factories that dot the River Liffey might be the causal factor in the creation of these monstrosities of the ant world. These chemical deposits are so dense that they dye the water of the Liffey a deep brown which appears black as

it flows under Dublin's picturesque bridges. Nobody, however, has been able to isolate any specific chemical compound which could cause the mutations nor has any explanation been advanced as to why, if this theory is correct, these colonies of mosaic ants should be restricted to the very limited area of Ireland's Eye and the adjacent mainland, while not existing along the Liffey's shores.

To date, the solution to the mystery which shrouds Ireland's Eye remains in a state of speculation and it looks as though this condition would continue for some time inasmuch as many of Europe's leading scientists have appeared on the scene and failed to come up with any satisfactory answer.

Meanwhile, whatever the cause of these monstrosities, they cannot fail to excite the imagination of every true aficionado of science fiction. Since the dawn of the genre, science fiction writers have been fascinated by the concept that through some process of development, ants may challenge mankind for domination of the world. Whatever the forces at work on Ireland's Eye, they have brought about the most uncanny animal mutations in history. This being the case, is it not possible that these same, or other, forces could result in even more fantastic changes? Could radioactivity develop ants of gigantic proportions? Could some chemical substance, as yet unrecognized, endow ants with superhuman brains? The possibilities are limitless and present an intriguing challenge. Perhaps in the end, where the scientists have failed, the true solution to the mystery of Ireland's Eye may be brought to light through the fertile imagination of some sf fan.
