

# OPERATION FANTAST

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SIXPENCE

# Operation Fantast

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## Conventional

We rather fear that the NORWESCON, America's 1950 Scifan 'vention, is not receiving the publicity accorded previous conventions. Odd "squibs" appear in fanzines and in some prozines, but not in the quantity or quality of previous years. Nor are news letters so frequent or so specific. For our buck we have received one package, containing our membership card (endorsed in some very visible invisible fluorescent ink), one letter, one report, and some "stickers." The stickers we have used for their intended purpose, and we hope they serve some use. But, ladies and gentlemen of the Convention Committee, please remove the lead from your boots, and get out some really worth-while propaganda. There are only three months to go! (Note—One U.S.A. fan has written US for news of the convention!)

But good news for European fandom is word from Ted Carnell (editor of fan-produced professional magazine NEW WORLDS) that a European convention will be organized in London for 1951, to coincide with the Festival of Britain. Probable dates will be around Whitsun, but more definite information will come later. Guest of honour will be American author L. SPRAGUE de CAMP; and many of those lonely souls, the continental fans, will be attending.

This event, given proper publicity, will be a major advance for "Science Fiction" in Britain. The publicity must, however, be "proper." Let us avoid all suggestion that we are "Super-man" enthusiasts flashing toy ray-guns and riding comets. We must at the same time avoid any impression that we are swollen-headed little bigots, self-appointed saviours of civilization. We are, more or less, seriously interested in the advance of science and mankind, and although we read our form of literature for enjoyment and "escape," there is much in it that gives us to think. Let us try to put that angle over to any reporters or other enquirers who may approach us.

Thanks are due to Mr. Carnell for this venture. Mr. Carnell has long been one of Britain's pioneers in the field, and OPERATION FANTAST hopes that all fans will give the convention the same enthusiastic support that they gave to the scheme to revive "NEW WORLDS." Don't forget that there are many "odd jobs" connected with conventions, and we are sure that Mr. Carnell will welcome offers of concrete assistance—apart from the fact that every British fan who can attend the 'vention MUST!

We also hope that many U.S.A. fans may find the means to attend, possibly as representatives of their firms to the Festival of Britain.

As a final note, may we suggest "EUCON" as a code name for this convention.

Fantastically,

JOYCE & KEN SLATER.



## The Last Straw

by Cedric Walker

"I want you to understand clearly that this is a gamble," Morton said slowly. "You may lose your life, or—worse—your reason. But if the experiment succeeds . . ." A light came into his eyes and his voice trembled. "Death or madness on the one hand. But

on the other—Freedom! Freedom such as man has not known for generations! You will be the first, Trent, besides myself, to regain the precious birthright of freedom."

The man on the operating table smiled. "Save your breath, Morton. I am not going to change my mind at this stage of the game. What sort of an existence is there to look forward to in this well-planned, ordered world of ours?" A heavy note of bitterness underlay the last words. "I'm glad—proud, to have been chosen."

Morton still hesitated. "The last man died. My fault, I was too eager. My new-found power urged me on. But the failure taught me much. I think I can do it this time. But I had to warn you, there may be something I have overlooked."

"Get on with it! We've been through this often enough. And there is always a chance I'll be picked up by one of their random mind-sweeps."

"That would make things a bit difficult, admittedly. I haven't had sufficient practice to be able to combine the concentration needed to screen your thoughts with a delicate physical act such as this." He sprang into sudden activity. "The Emsee doesn't know what's coming to it. Ready?" He slipped the needle under the skin of Trent's forearm and pressed the plunger.

In a moment Trent was unconscious, and the surgeon began his work. Presently he opened the tiny door in his friend's skull which housed the thought-receiver that, in common with every citizen in this modern ordered world, apart from the hereditary rulers of the Emsee, he had carried from birth. The little machine which gave the Department of Mind Control power of life and death over all others on the planet. He worked slowly. It was a ticklish business removing the tiny apparatus without damaging the delicate tissue surrounding it.

In the midst of his labours he was interrupted by an urgent buzzing at the door. He frowned, and cursed under his breath. He had given explicit instructions that he was not to be disturbed. Ignoring the summons, he continued carefully wielding the scalpel. The buzzer continued with renewed urgency. Crossing to the door, he clicked on the screen. A pale face surrounded by a glorious mass of bronze hair appeared, blue eyes seeking his imploringly.

"What is it, Pat? I told you distinctly . . ." She cut him off, "Listen, darling! They're coming! They'll be here in a few minutes . . . you must go!"

"Who is coming? What are you burbling about?" Morton's tone was harsh, but an icy fear plucked at him. The Emsee—how could they know?

"The Emsee, you fool! Oh, you must go, quickly!" The girl's face was anguished, strained. "I don't know what you are trying to do, but they've found you out. I saw them on the street-screen. They'll be in the elevator by this time. They're carrying needles—you know what that means!"

Morton suffered an age of agony in split seconds. If he were to be captured his entire scheme would be destroyed and with it the last hope of freedom for mankind. On the other hand . . . he glanced at the still form on the operating-table. Impossible to take him along. Death if he were moved in his present condition. Death if he fell into the hands of the Emsee.

No time for regrets. Abruptly he flung open the door and raced madly after the flying heels of the girl. Left—right—left—up a short flight of stairs—the elevators would be temporarily useless on this level—and he was bundling himself into a taxi on the roof. A few startled faces had greeted their hurried appearance. As the vehicle lifted under the light touch of the girl on the controls, he had a brief glimpse of the guards erupting from the elevator shaft. Needle-rays were lifted into the air . . . futile. In a moment the scene was left far behind.

Morton looked sideways at the girl. "Thanks, Pat," he said simply. The girl pouted. Despite the situation, Morton grinned. In the few months she had been in his office he had known her pout quite a number of times, and it never failed to bring a grin to his face—and to cause a little tug at his heart. He had grown quite fond of her in the short time. In fact, he was considerably more than half-way towards putting the inevitable question. Besides, she was an excellent stenographer.

"Is that all?" she said.

"No, there's this as well." Morton leaned over and kissed her heartily, then surveyed her for a moment. Dissatisfied, he repeated the process, while the taxi wobbled dangerously. After a time the girl spoke. "Jim, I knew you were up to something. I could see it in your face all these weeks past. Why didn't you tell me? Maybe I could've helped you."

Morton moved over and took the controls. He glanced at the screen as he swung the machine on a new course. No sign of pursuit. "They've become slack. Too many decades of submission. Not a spark of opposition. Yes, I am afraid our friends are showing a deplorable lack of efficiency." After a short pause he continued, "I wasn't sure. How could I be? I dared not risk losing everything. I could tell nobody—not even you. I'm out to smash them; now do you see? Smash 'em. I'm a one-man revolt. Of course, I could have told you and screened you, but that would've meant only added worry, and I had enough with—Trent, back there. . . ." His voice faded for a moment.

Pat's brows were furrowed in puzzlement. "Screened me? I don't understand. What do you mean?"

"I'll tell you all about it later."

He was silent for the remainder of the journey. In the twilight of the closing day they zipped between two tall peaks of mountains and landed in a tiny clearing in the wood-covered valley. Morton drove the taxi forward until it was well hidden among the trees. "Safe," he announced; "but not for long, I'll bet." He glanced anxiously at the girl. "I wonder why they haven't—" He broke off. "But they can't be such fools!"

As if in reply to his thoughts, the girl suddenly clapped her hands to her head. A look of horror came into her eyes, and she turned an agonised, imploring look upon Morton. The whole of his being came welling up in sympathy for her. The devils had started! Simultaneously he felt probing fingers creeping into his own brain. Hitherto he had accepted the thoughts sent out by the Ministry to avert any suspicion they might have had, and had allowed the newly-found power of his latent brain to come into force to control his physical being. Though indeed he had been subject to very few of the routine mind-sweeps. He was—or had been—a very highly respected citizen, and a very useful one, because of his scientific achieve-

ments, to his masters at the Ministry. But no need for pretence now. He thrust out the probing thoughts contemptuously and turned his full mental powers to aid the girl.

Her face was a mask of agony. He pressed out his thought-screen to encompass her, and the thought-daggers beat around her with renewed intensity. They jabbed viciously at Morton's screen, striving to break through. Slowly, relentlessly, he drove them back. The effort was well-nigh intolerable; sweat formed on his brow and ran down his face, but gradually the torturing waves retreated. Abruptly they ceased. Morton sank back thankfully. The girl was pale but still conscious, and she smiled weakly up at him.

"They ordered me to go to the city."

"Forget it, now."

"This must be the first time an order of theirs has been disobeyed," the girl said in wonderment. She looked at him, her eyes wide. "Now I understand. Now I see what you hope, to destroy the Emsee. Jim, it's the chance the world's being waiting for." Her eyes shone in the starlight. "You can deliver mankind from bondage!"

Morton beat his fists together. "If only I had more time. How the deuce did they get on my track? That I can't understand. I would have trusted Trent with my life. It couldn't have been him. Then who?"

"Perhaps your tampering with the thought receiver may have set off some signal in the Ministry."

"I've thought of that. But the point is, you see, this wasn't my first attempt. I've tried previously, and failed—. For other reasons."

The girl's lips formed into "O" but said nothing. "Unless—Forget it! Not much point in worrying about it now."

"What will you do, Jim?" Pat asked.

"First thing is this—" He put his thought into practice. They sat very close, their backs against the friendly bulk of an ancient oak. For a time neither spoke; the peace and stillness of the place enveloped them soothingly. Only occasionally from somewhere deep in came the strange warbling cry of a night bird. Nearby was the sound of some tiny burrowing animal. They at least were unfettered—the lowly creatures that crawled and hopped and flew. Man was their superior, but he had never sought to establish any overlordship in regard to them. As free now as they had always been; free to follow the path down which their instincts drove them; free to kill or be killed, perhaps, but—free! In the darkness, with his arms around the girl, Morton told her how the knowledge of his unique power had slowly thrust itself upon his consciousness; the long hours of self-examination. The careful husbanding, learning how to control it; the triumph when he at last brought to fruition the mighty power of the latent portion of his brain.

"Soon," he said, "all men will use their entire brains, instead of the tiny portion they have been making shift with all these ages. The ancient races—the Atlanteans, perhaps—used their brains as I do. For some reason men stopped . . ."

"In the meantime I found I could absorb the thoughts sent out by the Ministry into my old brain; at the same time my new brain was the real master of my body and gave its own instructions at the command of my will. For the first time since Emsee seized power and became, virtually if not technically, the Government, a human being had free will."

"My path was obvious. I had free will. Therefore I could plan the destruction of the Emsee when every other person in the world except the officials of the Ministry could not even think thoughts of rebellion for fear of the torture-waves, and of having 'improved thoughts' thrust into their heads. My plan was to release a sufficient number of people to help me to storm and destroy that damned machine that holds the world in thrall. The first attempt I've told you about—and you know the result of the second. Lord! if only I had more time!"

He put his hand on the girl's cheek, and turned her face to his. "And you—I've got you into a pretty mess."

She said nothing. He fell silent, brooding darkly. The minutes slipped past. The girl shivered, but he didn't seem to notice.

He startled her by suddenly leaping to his feet. "I've got it!" he exclaimed. "It's a hell of a chance, but we've got to take it. I couldn't tackle the Ministry directly—they're on their guard now. They have made one attempt to force you to them. Undoubtedly they will try again. This time they will succeed."

"But you beat them last time?"

"And could again! But why? Suppose we let them think they've beaten me when they try again. After all, they know nothing of the true nature of my power. At present they're completely in the dark. They may think I've somehow managed to dispose of my thought receiver and was attempting to do the same for Trent. Beyond that they are mystified. All right. When they call next time you go to them. It's putting you in the lion's den with a vengeance, but I don't see what alternative we have. If we fail there's no further hope for mankind."

For answer she stepped nearer to him and lifted her face. . . . After he had explained the rest of his plan to her they sat waiting. Later he watched her climb into the taxi and fly off over the tree-tops, obedient to the summons that beat remorselessly in her brain. His heart was heavy as the faint humming died away.

The Ministry of Mind Control was situated in an imposing building. Morton pictured its mighty facade blasting into nothingness. He noted that the guard—normally a token one—had been considerably increased, and the needle-guns were much in evidence. He smiled. A lot of good their needles would do them when the time came for him to throw his screen around the girl and allow her to place the tiny zenonian bomb he had given her. Their sublime confidence in their absolute control of the girl would prevent their searching her. And then good-bye to their machine—and Emsee and the whole crew of them! Freedom once again for all mankind, he exulted. Odd, though, they had not cordoned off an area around the Ministry. Pretty cocksure, they were. Well, all the better for him. He had little doubt of his powers, but it would be all the easier if he were to be closer in space to Pat.

He glanced at his wrist. Not much time left, surely. Then it happened. A half-dozen of the Emsee taxis suddenly appeared from nowhere and dived upon him, forcing him to the ground. The air had become miraculously cleared of all other traffic. A dozen needles impinged on him simultaneously, turned low so as only to paralyse him. He was carried into the building, along a corridor, and pushed without ceremony into a room. The guards retreated.

The paralysis wore off, he rose to his feet, and turned to face the smiling man seated at a desk at the end of the room.

"How do you do, Morton?" said the man pleasantly. Morton recognised him as the Chief Controller. "Won't you sit down?"

Morton glanced around him. There was no one else in the room. A solitary needle-ray lay on the smiling man's desk within easy reach of Morton. He made a start towards it and then changed his mind. Too easy.

"That's right," said the Controller. "Take it! It was put there for you. You will undoubtedly need it."

Morton ignored that. "In a moment," he said, "the whole place will be blown to hell, and us with it."

"I think not," smiled the other. He scratched his nose and leaned back in his seat with a barely-concealed yawn. The door opened and the bronze head of Pat appeared. Morton started towards her, but she did not seem to notice him. "Still busy?" she asked, in tones of mild surprise,

of the Controller; "I just wanted—never mind, I'll come back later." The door closed.

"I think not," repeated the man at the desk.

Morton felt the room spin about him. "I—I—but . . ." he floundered helplessly.

"She is one of our best agents," said the Chief, "as well as being our greatest expert in telepathy." He spoke with pride. "Fair actress, too. Should have gone on video." He seemed to have forgotten Morton's presence.

"How—how did you manage to find out?" the latter at last gasped.

"Find?—Oh, I see. Why, she told you, did she not?"

"You mean—?"

"The first time you tampered with one of our thought receivers, of course. You don't think we are complete fools, Morton, surely? But we let you carry on. We had Miss Pat take up a position in your office, to gain your confidence. Though I must say you were pretty discreet—at first—as it happened, unavailingly for you, since we knew from the start. We planned your escape and everything. We had to know the secret of your brain—oh, you had a unique power all right—sufficient to destroy our influence over you. We dared not tackle you directly: you might have destroyed yourself. And dead, you were no use to us. Someone had to gain your confidence, someone had to be as near to you as it is possible for two humans to get. You had to be in love with that person, so that the last barrier was torn from your mind. Oh, it worked beautifully."

"But the torture she suffered—?"

"—was real enough. Miss Pat is a remarkable woman. She would not be in our service if she were not. Incidentally, we had a great deal of amusement watching your so ingenious little scheme. You might like to know that you would probably have succeeded if you had had the guts to play a lone-hand game, instead of tampering with our thought receivers to get yourself a following."

Without a further word Morton picked up the needly and pushed the button to maximum.

The Chief's smile grew broader . . . .

FINIS.

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★ ★ STAR ★ ★  
GAZING ★ ★

By CECIL A. HARPER.

When "the man in the street" looks up at the sky on a clear night, he, of course, observes a multitude of glittering stars in the canopy above him. He may also behold the moon, in bright crescent form, sinking towards her couch. Occasionally he sees a meteor shoot across the sky, leaving a glowing trail behind it; and still less frequently he spies a comet. Amongst the stars are planets, but he cannot distinguish them. Whether or not, all these celestial objects are in motion, even the "fixed stars."

The motion of the meteors, or "shooting stars" as they are so often called, he cannot doubt. The moon, although he cannot actually see it moving, his own common-sense informs him does move, as it keeps changing its position with reference to the background stars. Of the planets, the same may be said. But the stars are a different matter.

Normally, the movements of the stars are too slow for visual observation, and most of them are never completed in a lifetime. With a

planetarium, however, periods of months, years, centuries, and even thousands of years, are reduced to mere minutes, or perhaps seconds. Not only that, but stellar conditions existing hundreds and thousands of years ago can be reproduced. There are many people who would "get quite a kick" from seeing the motions of the stars, which normally take many lifetimes, revealed and untold before their own eyes in a matter of minutes. It would be possible to see what the sky was like when you were born—and when your parents were born.

In the 17th century, Huggens and Roemer constructed their "Celestial Motion Machine." Since then numerous devices have been made and used to demonstrate the movements of the planets around the sun. In 1719 the Earl of Orrery built an instrument which showed the motion of the planets of the solar system, and their relative sizes and distances. In the 18th and 19th centuries, numerous improvements were made, but all the early devices suffered from faults, of which one of the main errors was that the orbital motions of the planets were shown as circular. It was not until 1913 that a German named Zeiss constructed a reasonably accurate Planetarium.

His version was a large dome some 50 feet in diameter, inside of which was a large cage-like affair, which moved round in a path representing the orbit of the earth. Inside the cage was a periscope, through which the observer could look at the stars and planets of the Zodiacal constellations, these being accurately represented onto the inside of the dome by a mass of small electric bulbs.

This type of Planetarium was, however, out-dated a few years later, when Dr. Bauesfeld improved upon it with the type of device in present use. He retained the dome, but constructed a rather elaborate apparatus that projected optically the images of the stars onto the inside of the dome. The dome is increased to twice the size, having a diameter of 100 feet. And instead of a cumbersome cage for the observer, the Planetarium of to-day has seating capacity for 250-300 people. A special type of seat is used, which ensures the fullest possible comfort in looking upward. The seats are arranged around the base of the dome, in circles; the actual projecting instrument stands in the centre of the floor, looking rather like a machine from a cover by Paul, come to "life," for it is a weird-appearing piece of apparatus, covered with projecting lenses and knobs. The projector is so arranged that it can be rotated on an axis parallel to that of the Earth. The sun, the moon, and the planets are represented by lifelike models, and an eccentric circular motion results in an elliptic movement, to allow for the angles between the orbital planes.

When in operation, you see the relative sizes and speeds of the planets and their satellites—represented by the globes—revolving around a similar model of the sun. All the visible stars in the constellations are reproduced on the inside of the dome by the projector itself. When the period of a few years is compressed into a few minutes, it is possible to see the planets and their moons chasing each other across space. They advance and retreat, and describe circles and loops around the sun, just as they do in nature, but much faster, naturally. Then, when the projector is put in action, the visible stars in the sky are set revolving around a point near the Pole Star, and they can be seen to rise and set. Whilst the stars revolve, you can see the sun appear on the eastern horizon and cross overhead, but without obliterating the stars amongst which it moves.

Regrettably, England is one of the few countries in Europe without a Planetarium. This should not be so, for it has been proved that they are invaluable for astronomers, and of interest to "the man in the street."

[Since Mr. Harper sent me the preceding article, I have seen mention of plans for the construction of a Planetarium in Britain. Any further information that readers may be able to give would be appreciated.—K.F.S.]

S.F. & S.F.—The publisher of this fanzine regrets delays in production, due to change of plans. S.F. & S.F. magazine, to do for science-fiction will now be issued as a "little"

what other "little" mags do in other fields. An increase in sub rate will take effect for all new subscriptions. Old subscriptions will be honoured. British price now 6/3 for four issues.

## Quiet Meditation

By R. J. BANKS, JNR.

For a long time he had lain in meditation while his skin grew thicker and the size and variety of the little parasites changed greatly.

Immediately after his separation from the Great Father-Mother whom he swam around constantly he had striven long and hard to return. Finally he had seen the hopelessness of his plight and had resigned himself to it.

Only Marras, Varlan, and himself had been troubled with the little parasites. He had sorrowed for Varlan when the parasites destroyed him, and he had rejoiced with Marras when her parasites had destroyed themselves.

The little parasites dug deep into his skin to gather deposits of "minerals" and plied their puny "ships" over the secretions of his skin and through the gases of his body as they evaporated.

From time to time he had thrust a fiery hand through his ever-thickening skull to kill a few of them. Though up to the last few years the only trouble they had caused him was their petty thoughts interrupting his own divine musings.

Seven times lately he had felt the sting of their machines of self-destruction, and now he had resolved to try to exterminate them all if it happened again.

\* \* \* \* \*

The plane was like a B-36, yet unlike it. The belly turret had been sacrificed in favour of an enlarged bomb-bay, and the plane bore no insignia nor lights. It was a very sinister-looking aircraft!

Oak Ridge lay silent and unsuspecting below. When the bombardier gave the command to drop the bomb the pilot's curt reply was a very simple and a very Russian "Da!"

\* \* \* \* \*

In a single instant he knew three emotions he had thought could be felt only by the parasites. He felt anger, fear, and hurt as the terrible fire that was much hotter than the fire which was his life burned into him.

By the time it was all over there was a hole fourteen miles in diameter through his protective skin. His rage consumed him, and he shot forth from the hole!

\* \* \* \* \*

On the following morning the *Moscow Daily News* carried the following story:

### IMPERIALIST AMERICA DESTROYED.

Last night a heroic Russian bomber crew met its death when it dropped an Atomic Bomb on Oak Ridge, Tennessee, where the capitalists stored their A-Bombs.

The result of this heroic deed was that all living things on the North American continent died almost immediately, so did all South American life, and the water (as far away as our Siberian coast) boiled for several hours.

A very interesting phenomena is that a few minutes after the initial blast of the stored bombs, which blasted a hole fourteen miles in diameter to an undetermined depth in the ground, huge tongues of gaseous flame belched forth from the hole. Our scientists explain that the gas probably escaped from the centre of the earth, but they assure us that it will cause no ill effects. If there had not been a surplus of these gases in the earth none would have escaped.

\* \* \* \* \*

He climbed upward until he was halfway to his adopted child, Mun. Then he reformed his body and prepared to wipe out the parasites in one sweeping move.

He was already feeling the intense cold on his roundish body, and he must act promptly or sink back into his skin unsatisfied.

As his skin turned slowly beneath him he sank closer to it and burned the little parasites to cinders.

Then, as quickly as he had come, he sank back into his skin to resume his quiet meditation. He was satisfied that he would not be interrupted again.

THE END.

## Longevity

By DAVID H. KELLER, M.D.

The problem of prolonging the life span of the human race has attracted much thought and research on the part of world scientists. During the last century the life expectancy has increased from thirty-six to sixty-six years. Many former enemies of man have been controlled and a few even conquered. At this time, only sheer neglect or ignorance makes death from typhoid fever or diphtheria possible. Dental hygiene has greatly reduced prostatic disease, and tuberculosis and diabetes can be successfully combated, provided the patient has sufficient wealth and leisure. Deaths from cancer are fewer, and pneumonia and heart disease are better understood and earlier treated. Children's diseases, such as scarlet fever and measles, can be prevented, while vitamins and endocrines add greatly to the comfort of life.

Thus an old person is no longer a rarity. They have become so numerous that old age pensions have become an important part of national economics. California and Florida are filled with the aged who find it hard to die and often equally hard to live with any degree of financial security. Labour Unions in the United States seem more interested, at present, in securing old-age pensions for their membership than they are in gaining higher wages and shorter working hours.

Meantime much of medical research is devoted to the problem of prolonging life, and science-fiction authors write very learnedly concerning the time when there will be no more death. In my novel, *LIFE EVERLASTING*, I picture a golden age in which there is neither sin nor disease and no one dies except from an accident or personal desire. Of course, this is sheer fantasy born of wish-fulfillment, as such a society, even if attained, would, in the end, defeat its own aim.

A wise man said that the length of life "was three score years and ten and if by reason of strength it be four-score, yet it is full of labour and sorrow." And that seems to sum up the final efforts of scientists to prolong life. For it is not the length of life but the happiness of it that really counts in the long run.

There is no doubt that life, at present, is more comfortable. Inventions, machines, social welfare, have all contributed greatly to the ease of existence. Rapidity of communication and travel have lowered boundaries and brought nations closer. Much of the tedious handwork of the past has been replaced by the simple process of pressing buttons. The housewife in America has even lost the art of bread-cutting. Deep freezing, packaged foods, etc., have made cooking almost a lost art. Clothing is bought already sewed and stockings are no longer darned. Radio, moving pictures and television have taken the place of former time-consuming conversation. The home has become obsolete; man is born in a hospital, educated in large schools, marries in a church, goes to a hospital when sick and dies there, to be buried in a cemetery so vast that the living have to secure a guide to find the grave of their loved one.

Meantime, the old people are finding it increasingly hard to secure work. In America a society has been formed to help those over forty secure positions, but nothing has been done for those who are over sixty

and still vigorous. This class, by its increasing number, has become a real problem to the democracies of the world. What can be done with them or for them?

In America an effort is being made to provide pensions for all over sixty. But even the most fantastic dreamer cannot imagine a pension of more than one hundred dollars a month. Fifty years ago this would have been ample, but now it is barely sufficient to furnish the actual necessities and provides none of the luxuries which go toward making life happier. This sum simply enables the old man and woman to keep on living an unhappy and often uncomfortable life.

There are certain fundamental laws of biology. When these are ignored, man has to pay the price. Pioneers ploughed the western prairie and raised large crops of wheat, but by disturbing the soil they simply caused soil erosion and turned large portions back to dust bowls. Salmon used to throng our American rivers, but when large cities used the rivers for sewage disposal the salmon simply disappeared. In the same way science disturbed the relation between man and disease, with the result that large numbers lived to old age and now are so numerous that society does not know how to care for them.

Perhaps the wisdom of future generations will find an answer to the problem. Personally, I would not like to see the interest of the medical profession slacken as far as prevention of disease is concerned. Nor am I against providing for the aged, no matter what this may cost the youth or middle-aged of life. But there will be no easy solution, and the problem will become more difficult in years to come, for there is no doubt that the percentage of those over sixty is certain to increase as the wisdom of the scientists conquers more and more diseases.

It seems to me that more time should be spent in helping the old people live happily. Just how that can be done is a large question made more difficult by the disappearance of the old form of home and the rapid disappearance of familial solidarity. In our present housing shortage there is little room for aged parents or virginal but senile aunts. Youth has lost contact with age, does not realize it, and therefore is not interested and without desire to understand the problems, hopes and dreams of the past generation. The aged are simply placed in the attics of life, to remain there, till death ends the perplexity of their life.

Not a pleasant picture, but none the less true in spite of its drabness. Yet, in spite of it, scientists continue their efforts to prolong life and science fiction authors write fluently of a society in which there is no death. Personally, I hope the time will come when no one will live beyond their usefulness or past the time when there is no longer days filled with unhappiness and nights restless from worry over the financial problems of the morrow.

## Book Reviews

By E. J. CARNELL.

This department has changed slightly, to cover both the American and British fields with brief notes. The heading "review" is hardly apt, but it is hoped that future issues of O.F. may be able to devote more space to this section.

In the British field, most notable appearance is "INTERPLANETARY FLIGHT," Arthur C. Clarke (Temple Press, 8/6), a non-fiction work by a well-known author, who is also Assistant Secretary of the British Interplanetary Society. Many books have been written on this subject in recent years, but Mr. Clarke's work includes the latest available information on the possibilities of space-flight, and therefore earlier works are now "out-of-date." Written in language that anyone can understand, this book should prove popular with both fan and non-fan.

Reprints of fantasy books are still appearing, and Margaret Lawrence's *Mo. 7 QUEER STREET* is again available at 4/6; Le Fanu's *UNCLE SILAS* at 9/6; *BEST GHOST STORIES*, Ridler, 9/6; *SLEEP NO MORE*, Rolt, 8/6, and many other "borderline" books are available. For Haggard fans there are the 5/- edition of *AYESIIA* (Ward, Lock) and a 3/6 edition of *SHE*. New books are rare on the British market at the moment, but I hope to be able to list some for your information in the next issue.

Major release from the U.S.A. presses is the first of the Heinlein "history" series, *THE MAN WHO SOLD THE MOON* (Shasta, 3.00, 19/6), which has long been awaited. The inside covers give the table of future history, and I note with great interest that there are many "stories to be told"—not yet in magazine format—which will doubtless prove as interesting and entertaining as all Heinlein's stories. Best anthology currently available is the Gnome Press *MEN AGAINST THE STARS*, edited by Martin Greenberg, with an introduction by Willy Ley. This book is a successful attempt to tell the story of man's conquest of space, by selecting tales from different authors, and placing them in sequence in one book. *TRENDS* by Isaac Asimov opens the book, and man's early ventures are told in Manly Wade Wellman's *MEN AGAINST THE STARS*. Adventures inside and outside the solar system are covered in the sequence, Padgett's *THE IRON STANDARD* showing the difficulties of trading on Venus, and *COMPETITION*, by E. Mayne Hull, takes us into the period when man is thrusting past the frontiers of the far stars.

Many other books are still pouring from the presses in the States, but space will not permit more than this cursory glance at two of the leading items.

## General Chuntering

Firstly, an apology to those many British and American O.F. supporters who have unfulfilled orders and unanswered letters . . . there is a whole "chapter of accidents" behind my failure to keep up to date, not the least of which is the fact that, although my address is unchanged, I've had to move house, and for about a fortnight in later April and

early May hardly a thing has been done. In late May I go on leave, and that will make things even worse. . . . Bear with me; you are not forgotten! Elsewhere you will find comment on the European Convention to take place in London in '51 . . . that is big news. . . . Then there is the news that Walt Gilling's *SCIENCE FANTASY REVIEW* becomes a sister professional mag to *NEW WORLDS*, under the title *SCIENCE-FANTASY* . . . first issue due in July. . . . *FANTASY PRESS* is now under the sole ownership of Lloyd A. Esoback, who has bought out his non-fan partners . . . latest title now available is *FIRST LENSMAN*, famed "link" story 'twixt *TRIPLANETRY* and *GALATIC PATROL*. . . . Fantasy Press hope to have the last name Smith story available this year, but have set a pretty full schedule, with *MASTERS OF TIME* by Van Vogt, which includes *THE CHANGELING* and *RECRUITING STATION* (new title gives book title) followed by Verrill's *THE BRIDGE OF LIGHT*, Williamson's *THE COMETEERS*, *GENUS HOMO* by de Camp and P. Schuyler Miller, and last item for '50 is a brand new tale from the pen of John W. Campbell, Jr., *THE*

**MOON IS HELL!** . . . Britain's new Turbo-jet car in the news reels looks pretty much like any other car, but if and when it goes into production, you'll see the difference. . . . Quoting from a postcard from L. Sprague de Camp, the history of *VIAGENS*, basic for new tales from his pen . . . "Viagens (pronounced "vyah-zhaynhas," rhyming approx. with "paints") was set up about 2000, shortly after Mars was reached. It's a publicly-owned corporation, and since it was set up by Brazilians, and the U.S. of Brazil (now, 2150, the world's leading power) holds the largest block of stock (23%) its name and official language are Brazilo-Portuguese. When Earthmen reached other stars with planets, they followed the analogy of the Solar System and named the planets after the gods of various mythologies: those of Rigel Kentaurus after Hindu gods (Vishnu, Krishna, etc.), those of Procyon after Egyptian gods (Osiris, Isis, Thoth, etc.). *Proxima* was reached in 2010, upon perfection of the mesonic drive, others soon thereafter. *Hehr* is of course an egregious screwball." . . . Prof. Paul Elliott is reported as saying the H-bomb might change the seasons . . . what seasons? . . . at least part of the "ice-bomb" story in last issue of O.F. is possibly explained by report of a high-flying passenger liner which lost some soapy water someplace in that region. . . . Algernon Blackwood has made a film, wherein he sits and tells a story, using solely a few sound effects to create atmosphere . . . invention of "Death Ray Man" Grindley Matthews, projector to show pictures on clouds, was recently used by Volkswagen firm in Hamburg for advertising . . . this is now claimed to be a new German invention . . . pre-war New Yorkers can probably remember differently . . . *PHAROS BOOKS*, one of Britain's hard-trying fantasy publishers, have had set-backs, but it is probable that Alfred Gordon Bennett's *THE COIL* will appear shortly priced at 8/6 or 7/6. Bennett's out-of-print *THE DEMIGODS* may appear later this year in a cheap edition from another publisher. . . . Bertram Chandler should be back from round trip to Australia in about a month. . . . I wonder if his trip has been productive of another yarn? . . . social news we missed last issue was that Peter Phillips is now father of a baby girl . . . reported to be something of a super-child. . . . it is, however, emphatically denied by our London correspondent that John W. Campbell has accepted her first story . . . in point of fact, he rejected it! . . . items from Ley and Bonestell book which appeared in *Daily Express* are reputed to be result of liaison 'twixt Chapman Pincher and Arthur C. Clarke. . . . two new books shortly to come from *PRIME PRESS*, limited editions, by Doc Keller, are *THE LADY DECIDES* and *THE ETERNAL CONFLICT* . . . they seem to be delayed, though. . . . Ray Palmer, editor-publisher of *OTHER WORLDS*, has announced a new mag, shortly available, titled *IMAGINATION*. . . . Rog Phillips, contracted with *CENTURY BOOKS* for seven tales this year, has two on the stands already, *TIME TRAP* and *WORLDS WITHIN*. . . . others should appear about once per month. . . . four major radio networks in U.S.A. are giving try-outs to fantasy. . . . Mutual Broadcasting System was first with "2,000 PLUS," reported not so good. NBC runs series titled *DIMENSION X*, which teed off with Williamson's *WITH FOLDED HANDS*, followed by *KID FROM MARS* (Friend) and *FIRST CONTACT* (Leinster). Columbia have done *MARS IS HEAVEN* (Bradbury). . . . Film studios also working hard . . . some re-issues of the old Buck Rogers type are a bad start, though . . . but Balmer & Wylie "WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE" to follow *DESTINATION MOON* is promising. . . . Avon Fantasy Reader is not defunct . . . at long last No. 12 is available . . . about three months overdue. . . .

## Science Review

Several correspondents have asked me to devote scireview to an explanation of Einstein's newest equations. Others want to know what the difference 'twixt the A-bomb and the H-bomb is. Both these matters are somewhat beyond me, but, of the two, I think I am more likely to succeed in shedding a little light on the latter. Experts will please forgive any outstanding "boners," and corrections will be published.

To straighten out the first points, stop thinking about "atom" and "hydrogen" bombs, and refer to them as "fission" and "fusion" bombs. The terms are nearer . . . "fission" being the release of energy by breaking down heavy elements; "fusion" being energy obtained by combining the particles of lighter elements.

If you look at a table of elements, you will see that the atomic "weight" of certain elements is greater than the number they are given in the atomic scale. Roughly speaking, the difference between the number and the weight is the quantity of extra particles of mass without charge. You will note, also, that this excess is often greater in proportion at the ends of the scale than in the centre.

By "fission" the heavier elements are broken down to reform lighter elements, and the difference in mass or weight is in part given off in the form of heat-energy. In "fusion," again, the lighter elements are combined to form heavier elements, and there is again a difference in mass—or weight—which is lost by the release of energy.

All sci-fans are familiar with what is known as the "Phoenix Cycle" whereby it is presumed a sun generates its energy—the process of building up the hydrogen atom to the helium atom in (I think) six easy stages. As the total mass of the helium atom is less than the total mass of the hydrogen atoms needed to form it, there is a resultant release of energy. This possibility has been known much longer than has the principle of "fission" reaction. It has been established, however, that this "fusion" will only occur at extremes of temperature, and to this the "fission" bomb is the key. It has been stated in respect of the first nuclear explosion at New Mexico, in July, 1945, "the materials of the bomb were raised to a temperature exceeding that of the interior of the sun." A temperature of more than twenty million degrees on the absolute scale! Subsequently it is probable that far greater temperatures have been reached, and it has been suggested that these have run into hundreds of millions of degrees; however, no authority for such statements can be given.

So far as we are aware, the self-sustaining "Phoenix Cycle" of the sun has not yet resulted from experiments—if it had, it is highly probable we should no longer be in a position to discuss the matter. It is possible that we shall not be able to start this particular cycle, but in comparison, "SCIENCE TO-DAY" (Nos. 168 and 169) suggests certain other probable and possible methods of obtaining energy from the atom, at a greater rate of efficiency than the 0.8 parts per thousand of the fission process.

Firstly, the bombardment of Lithium isotope-7 with hydrogen nuclei; the lithium absorbs a proton, and splits to give two helium nuclei. The proportion of mass released is in the order of 2.3 parts per thousand. It is pointed out that both hydrogen and lithium are available in quantity, and may be combined chemically as lithium-hydride.

Secondly, the use of radio-active hydrogen (Hydrogen-3) to fuse with hydrogen-2 (Deuterium), combining to form Helium-4, with a release of 4 parts per thousand.

In the second case, the heavy isotope of hydrogen may be difficult to obtain in quantity; in the former case, the reaction may be difficult to control, once commenced, as theoretically it is quite probably a self-sustaining cycle.

A third method, once very popular with science-fiction writers, is the fusion of Hydrogen-2 with Tydrogen-2 to form Helium-3 and a spare neutron. This is probably the easiest operation, but the efficiency is no greater than that of the fission process.

The following table gives the approximate comparative efficiency in parts per thousand:

Solar reaction	...	...	...	...	...	8.0
Hydrogen-3 + Hydrogen-2	...	...	...	...	...	4.0
Lithium-hydride	...	...	...	...	...	2.3
Hydrogen-2 + Hydrogen-2	...	...	...	...	...	0.8
Fission	...	...	...	...	...	0.8

Now, my friends, you may be a little wiser; if you are not, please don't ask me. I don't really have the foggiest notion of what I have so lucidly (?) explained above!!

## Magazine Notes

Biggest event for Britain is, of course, SCIENCE-FANTASY. First issue due in July. As I am not privileged to pre-view the 'zine, all comment must be held over, but I am certain that Walt Gillings will give us a worth-while magazine for 1/6.

Two other new magazines are available to the British reader, FUTURISTIC SCIENCE STORIES, and WORLDS OF WONDER. Both the product of John Spencer and Son, at 1/6. These are scheduled for a six-weekly appearance. Unfortunately, they will not appeal to the Astounding addict—or, for that matter, to any of the "old" hands; nevertheless, these two magazines will fill that gap which exists between the full-fledged sf magazine, such as NEW WORLDS, and the non-sf mags. An introduction to the field for the non-reader, which is something we badly need in this country. For Messrs. Spencer & Son this is a new venture, and I am sure they will welcome constructive criticism. One must remember that fandom as such is not the true British reading public—our taste has been developed by the only available source . . . the American magazine.

Rumour has it that Australia now has a real sf mag of her own. This has not yet been confirmed by the boys down-under, but we hope so. One thing worries me . . . how will we ever find enough money to buy all these mags? They now number over 25 . . . and soon will reach 30! Avon OUT OF THIS WORLD is the latest, with a comic section. Due in June is Ray Palmer's second sf mag — IMAGINATION. Others are rumoured, but no definite information is to hand.

Glancing through SUPERSCIENCE, I am struck by the fact that as yet no issue has appeared in which the cover seems to bear any relation to the contents. The latest, May, is the same. However, contents show a steady improvement, and although the latest issue does not feature a "Jameson" story by Neil R. Jones, I can recommend two shorts—Francis L. Ashton's THE LONG WAY, and William Morrison's HOP O' MY THUMB. FANTASTIC NOVELS, another of this foursome, is also showing changes. Policy is turning more to the reprinting of shorter tales, with the result that May issue features four stories, two of 1938 vintage, and two of 1920. And all four quite good reading. The March issue featured Ray Cummings' lengthy tale THE MAN WHO MASTERED TIME, which, with all due respects to Mr. Cummings, was not one of his better tales. April FFM carried John Beynon's THE SECRET PEOPLE, and a new short by Arthur C. Clarke, GUARDIAN ANGEL. The latter is the better, Beynon's story being of the older, slow-moving type. ASF May issue is worthy of note for no other reason than Hubbard's article DIANETICS, which is really only an introduction and history of this "new science"—however, it will doubtless encourage readers to buy the book on the subject, available at \$4.00. The stories are nothing but support . . . strong support, however. THE HELPING HAND, by Poul Anderson, gives a new twist to something very apparent in history; that it is often better to refuse a "helping hand" from a superior culture. Part two of Van Vogt's latest serial shows all the usual complexity one expects from the master of the twisted strands.

Avon Fantasy Reader No. 12, which I thought was never coming, is here. It contains the usual good selection of stories that to many readers are new, THE BLONDE GODDESS OF BAL-SAGOTH, by Robert E. Howard, being my favorite. Clarke Ashton Smith, Sax Rohmer, Miles J. Breuer, and five other authors go to make up a good coverage of nine tales. Improvement in the Ziff-Davis magazines is most noticeable in FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, May issue featuring a long novelette by an author unfamiliar to me: Gregg Conrad THE MENTAL ASSASSINS, which gives some new ideas on how to treat the total invalid. John D. MacDonald is also present with a tale that has an old theme, but which is very well written—VANGUARD OF THE LOST. May issue of AMAZING had an old-time "threat to civilisation" yarn by William Cartell, SLAVES OF THE CRYSTAL BRAIN, and a Rog Phillips yarn, THE LOST BOMB, which

made good and amusing reading. June number also has one by Rog, IF YOU WERE ME . . . , which deals neatly with a case of switched identity, and a snort sf yarn by none other than August Derleth, "THE ISLAND OUT OF SPACE." But nothing in either issue was really outstanding, although averagely better (to my taste) than past years.

OTHER WORLDS, May, the fourth issue of Ray Palmer's mag, has a Van Vogt story, but prize yarn in the issue is by Eric Frank Russell, DEAR DEVIL. Mr Russell seems to have found time to write again, as he also has tales in the last two issues of WEIRD TALES. Other item of note in OTHER WORLDS is COLUSSUS, by S. J. Byrne, which is a sequel to PROMETHEUS II., a lengthy yarn printed in AMAZING, Feb., '48. For the Shaver addict, this is the nearest thing at present available.

Another addition to the field is FANTASY FICTION, a small quarterly, printing mainly "borderline" material. I cannot honestly say that I enjoyed this newcomer. WONDER STORY ANNUAL, Lead yarn Fletcher Pratt's ONSLAUGHT FROM RIGEL, is a gift to those folk who still hanker for "the good old days." The reprint of D. D. Sharp's THE ETERNAL MAN was something of an error, though. This has appeared too often . . . most omnivorous readers must know it by heart. The other four tales are somewhat better selections.

I fear that the possibility of reviewing, and doing justice to, the entire field becomes a job that would call for a forty-page fanzine on its own. So I am afraid readers who do not take all the magazines will just have to put up with these few notes . . . but for Brackettfans, there does not appear to be any new story available in the last batch of mags.

#### FOOTNOTE

We hope that this issue of OPERATION FANTAST will be somewhat better in general appearance. However, for the reasons given in General Chuntering, we have not been able to do all that we hoped. At the time of writing we have still not been able to unpack, the room devoted to our "office" is still at the mercy of the decorators.

The result is that the letters we promised to print won't appear. The fanzines we have received will not be listed. Maybe some small adverts have been missed. We are sorry, but it has been impossible to find and assemble a good half of our "Notes for OF" file. The whole lot fell out of their covers in transit and, although we have done our best to sort the main things out, some we just could not find! We don't blame dero, we are ourselves at fault, and all we can do is say "sorry," and beg your indulgence.

Voting on O.F., 3 gave Peter Ridley's "The Natives" 30 votes, and Sandy Laurence's "ROAD" 18 votes; the balance of some 30 votes were evenly distributed over the other contents.

For the next issue we have nothing special lined up, although we have plenty of worthwhile material on hand. For reasons, see para two above. One thing we can promise you, and that is a set of highly amusing verse (or worse) culled from SPACEWARP, and dealing with the god of fandom . . . ROSCOE THE BEAVER. We know many readers don't like verse, but we can promise you that many of you who are averse to it (respirators issued on request) will really enjoy these lines.

All for now, good reading, folks, and we'll be seeing you Londoners soon.

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