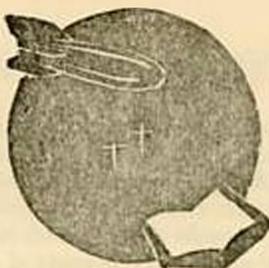


SLANT



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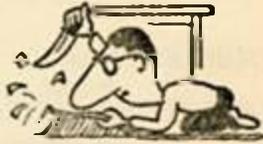
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COVER BY JAMES WHITE
INTERIOR ILLUSTRATIONS BY WHITE, SHAW & BANISTER

SLANT is published at 170 Upper Newtownards Rd., Belfast, N. Ireland, as frequently as possible. Editor, Walter A. Willis, of that address. Art Editor, James White. Associate Editor, Bob Shaw. Subscription, two issues for one current s-f promag. or 25c or 1/6 in cash or stamps. Free on request to NSF members in Europe. Subscriptions exchanged with other magazines.

INCLINATIONS

This was meant to be just an ordinary issue, for a change, so of course it turns out to have more innovations than any of the others. Some are due to a new press, which has cut down the number of fanhours needed to produce the magazine and made things like coloured interior illustrations so pleasant to do that if you like them too we might never go back to inglorious monochrome. It has also squashed that old over-inking begey of ours, so that our illos are now decently two-dimensional and we can do justice to the 'unparalleled linoleum cut technique of James White.' For a nice example of the Great White Way see the detail of the man's head on p. 21. James has now left wood as a medium and is working for good on linoleum. This is OK by me; after all, what's the use of saving floor-covering if you haven't any floors left?



Then you'll notice we have stories by Peter Phillips and F.G. Rayer, names pleasantly familiar to readers of ASF and NEW WORLDS. We have had stories from past issues reprinted in promags, but this is the first time we've been offered new stories by professional authors. Mr. Phillips' little gem might have been written for us, Mr. Rayer's I know was, and both were all the more welcome for being entirely unexpected.

So was the discovery, in Belfast of all places, of our new associate editor, Bob Shaw. A few months ago he was one of that vast number of subacute fans who think that all there is of sf is the British edition of ASF, and saves a half-year's skimpy output for an orgy at Christmas. Exposed to the full fury of the professional and amateur field he recovered in time to join us

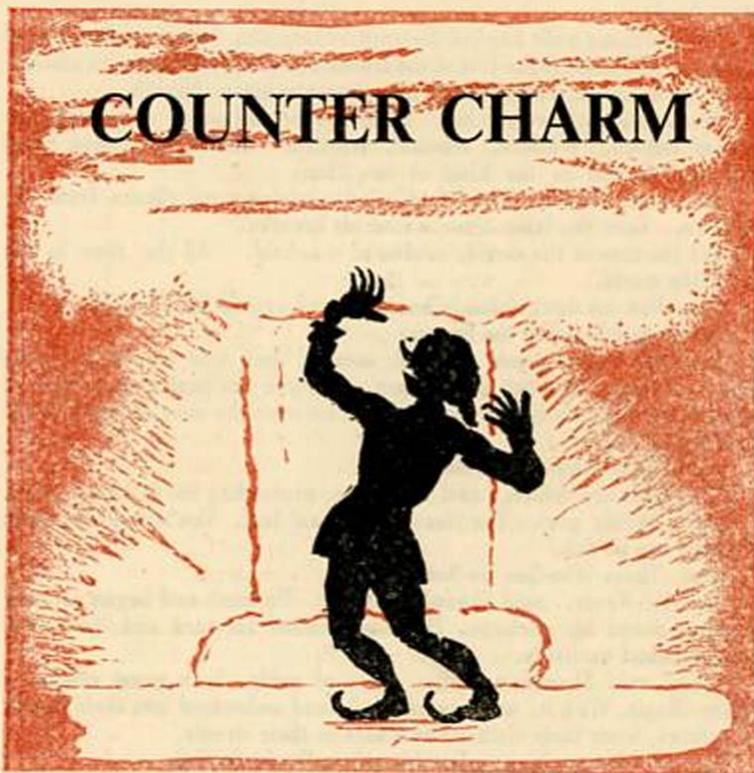


on this issue, which is the first in which a horde of as many as three people have been involved. Since he was primarily a pen and ink artist his ideas for story illustrations had to be interpreted for you by James, which has meant a lot of conferences in the Art Department. However, Bob hopes to develop his own wood-engraving technique for the next issue and throw off all restraint. So be on your guard.

We hoped our last cover would create some sensation, preferably one of pleasure. Only Lee Hoffman spotted our secret: 'I am laughing at your comments on multicoloured ink. I know how you done it. I haven't spent years as a stage hand for nothing. It's done with lights. Simple.' Yes, Lee, the ink IS extracted from the internal organs of animals. Cruel, but Art must be served.

After making some uncalled-for remarks about [Please turn to p.24.

COUNTER CHARM



BY PETER PHILLIPS

Shavallan adjusted the burden on his old, bony shoulders and toiled on. Loose shale slid from under his plodding feet. The journey to the Silent Lands had been weary, but his goal was nearly in sight. Cloud-mist wreathed the upper slopes of Slieve-na-mona; but the summit of the mountain was clear, and as he emerged from the mist, Shavallan saw the throne of the King of the Shee.

The court was in full session, awaiting his return; and a burden heavier even than that which weighted his shoulders lifted from his heart as he saw

his own folk, and their many cousins and relatives gathered here from distant lands.

Two northern trolls hurried forward to help him, but Shavallan waved them away and came to the foot of the throne before he put down his offering with a sigh of relief. The package was almost as big as himself.

Three pixies started plucking at the paper and string with quick mischievous fingers. 'Whatisit, whatisit, whatisit?' Shavallan shoed them away, and bowed to the King of the Shes.

'Sit down,' said the King. 'And let's be having some silence from the rest of ye. Give the feller time to find his breath.'

'All the time in the world,' muttered a kobold. 'All the time in the great wide world.'

Shavallan sat down thankfully and leaned against his package.

'How was it?' asked the King.

Shavallan took a pinch of snuff, sneezed once and shivered. 'Great magic,' he said. 'Greater magic than even you can make, sire, with all respect to ye. There is silence everywhere: not even the song of birds or the squeaking of rats.'

'And Those-Who-See-Us-Not?'

'The fields are yellow,' said Shavallan, pretending not to hear. 'Even the weeds barely grow. The trees are without leaf. The rivers are sullen and there are no fish.'

'But Those-Who-See Us-Not?'

'See-Us-Never,' said Shavallan simply. He knelt and began to untie the string round his package. The King leaned forward and the others clustered round excitedly.

'This,' said Shavallan with a trace of pride, 'is a great charm, a Counter-Magic. With it, we may go freely and unharmed into their houses and palaces, wear their clothes and dance in their streets.'

He took his time in revealing his gift to the Little Folk.

'All the time in the world,' grumbled the kobold again. 'All the time in the great wide world.'

'Well, what IS it?' asked the King impatiently.

'It is,' said Shavallan, turning back the wrappings, 'a Geiger Counter for the Detection of Residual Radioactivity.'

THE END

THE WORK OF A MOMENTUM. 'It took but a slight inertia for them to leap over the edge of the pit's mouth.' AMAZING, Oct., 1934.

QUICK ON THE UPTAKE. 'She gave a small cry of satisfaction, then quickly grabbed it up and sped down the path.' SUPER SCIENCE, July '50

SUCH STUFF

AS DREAMS



BY D. R. SMITH

I am not a frequenter of pubs myself, but as the friend I was to meet had fixed on the Red Lion as a suitable rendezvous there I was, patiently waiting for him while stretching the consumption time of a shandy beyond all reasonable length and listening with keen interest to the conversation of two more ardent toppers who leaned earnestly across the table at my side. Medium sized working types they seemed, only remarkable in that one wore a full beard while the other was so clean-shaven it was doubtful he needed to shave at all. They were giving each other detailed information about the remarkable dreams each claimed to suffer from, delivered with the intense earnestness created by the consumption of sufficient beer.

'Nightmares,' said the bearded one. 'Absolute nightmares is what I suffer from. Chronic nightmares. Every night the same. March march march, mile after mile, carrying a bloody silly bow and arrows and other junk, thousands of us, fed up and far from home. Sometimes it's worse. Sometimes there's a bloody battle. Lots of flipping

great things on slipping great cart-horses belting down at me with spears and things. Shoot arrows at them, no good, ping go the arrows off the armour. Only chance is shoot the horses, shoot the poor sodding horses, makes you weep to hear them scream; and sometimes they've got armour too. They'll get me one night. Can't wake up; only time I wake up is when we kip down for the night. Cor!

'You are happy compared with me,' claimed the smooth one. 'You, my friend, at least have some life, some variety. My dreams are of such complete and utter boredom that I can hardly support the misery of my life. There I am in a huge factory, a human fly clinging to the side of the machine that fills the factory, watching the part allotted to my attention. A sliding thing goes back, seizes a huge piece of metal, drags it between frightful fangs of harder metal which tear pieces off as it goes past, releases at the end of the stroke ready to be gripped again and passed on through the machine, and repeats the performance. Right, grip, left, release, right, grip, left, release; ten times every minute, six hundred times every hour, my head swinging to watch it until it almost falls off.'

'Why do you have to watch it?' asked his friend cunningly.

'That is the most maddening thing of all. I don't know,' said the smooth one, taking a despairing swig of beer. 'I don't know. If anything goes wrong the machine stops, puts itself right, then carries on. It is the same everywhere, thousands of us watch, no one knows why. It is the law. Everything is the law. We are not paid; we have right by law to all we need or desire, food, clothing, recreative machinery, anything we want while we obey the law to watch the machine.'

'Anything?' asked the beard.

'Anything,' affirmed the other.

'What about women?' said the beard with an obscene leer.

'Women?' The smooth one looked puzzled. 'I don't think there are any. Or perhaps there are no men. Amazing. I think there are some somewhere, now I come to think. What's the matter, you look surprised?'

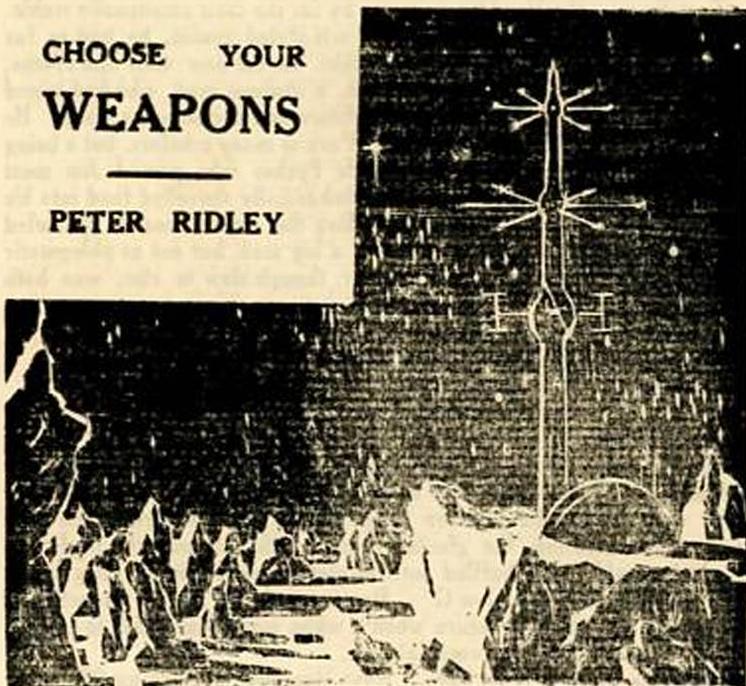
The bearded man did indeed seem astonished. In his agitation a gulp of beer went the wrong way. He choked, spluttered, gasped for breath. 'A fox on the knave who taught you to waken your comrades with a bucket of water, you rogue! he panted. And vanished, flicked out of existence soundlessly.

His fellow-toper looked at the empty space blankly, cogitated, came to a surprised conclusion, grinned shame-faccdly at me, said 'What a silly dream I've had,' and vanished too.

THE END

CHOOSE YOUR WEAPONS

PETER RIDLEY



The asteroid was a study in blinding white and darkest black; there was no air to soften, no life to colour, its dead surface. Stark cold, burning heat. Jagged cliffs, deep dark crevices, and stretches of flat congealed lava. A harsh world, without compromise.

At the edge of a lava plain, seemingly clinging to sheer rock, was the 'Lighthouse.' Only the short tower containing the radiating apparatus and airlock protruded above the surface. The living space and store rooms were hollowed from the solid rock.

Three men kept Space Lighthouse X3B radiating its ethereal signposts. Three personalities, three egos, confined for months at a time within the close walls. Even on Earth, where it is at least possible to walk abroad without the discomfort of a space suit this situation has produced many a tragedy. Small wonder then that the three occupants of the Lighthouse were, to say the least, on bad terms.

Curt Rogers, the Head Keeper, was by far the most emotionally stable. A small compact man, dark, cynical, a self-styled realist, he had so far managed to keep the others from open fight. He sat now with Jim Frome, who was off duty. Frome was tall and thin, a studious man, who had joined the staff because the job offered ample leisure and facilities for study. He was not however detached and distant, as are so many scholars, but a being who felt keenly, fiery and impulsive. The Psychos who passed Jim must have been asleep, thought Curt as he mechanically shovelled food into his mouth. In the Monitor room, lazily watching the control board, sprawled the third member of the trio, Tom Brady; a big man, but not as phlegmatic as his appearance suggested. His temper, though slow to rise, was both vicious and enduring.

The clock chimed 17.00 hours. Brady slouched in, and without a word Frome took his place at the Monitor board.

Curt looked up from his book.

'Think I'll go out for my daily inspection,' he remarked.

Brady grunted.

The lift whined to a stop, and Curt stepped into the smitroom. He tested one of the half dozen space suits, then struggled into it. In the air lock he watched the air-pressure gauge slowly sink to zero. The door opened easily, exposing the glaring contrasts that formed the landscape of this little world. He shuffled out, the electromagnets in his soles partly balancing the effects of the low G. Having made his routine inspection of the Tower he was about to return when a whim made him decide to explore a little. He tuned in his communicator.

'Hello the 'house. Curt here. Have inspected, everything OK, going for a walk now.'

He heard the gasp of astonishment, and chuckled. The asteroid was barely the most pleasant place to go strolling, but at least he would be away from the other two for a time.

Jim would be sitting at the Monitor board, lovingly cleaning his old Colt .45, a weapon with which he was astonishingly proficient. Brady would by now have rolled into his bunk, and be snoring, a low rasping irritating snore. Curt was glad to be out among the silent metal-streaked rocks.

He had crossed the lava plain and was climbing the steep cliffs on the other side, when without warning the electromagnets of his soles failed. He floated slowly down to the plain, kicking wildly. His threshing feet struck ground, and he was flung hard against the cliff side. A sharp sliver of rock ripped his suit, and he died painfully as the air rushed from his armour, and his stomach bleated and burst. The body gyrated for a few minutes, then settled onto the bare rock.

Frome, at the board, heard Curt's last cry over the open communicator circuit. He buzzed for Brady, who appeared rubbing sleep

from his eyes.

'What the hell'd you wake me up for Frome?' he snarled.

'Something's happened to Curt, get a suit and see what's wrong. I can't leave the control board.'

'I don't take orders from you, Skinny,' growled Brady.

'Get a suit and get outside you filthy swine,' shrieked Frome, clenching and unclenching his fists. 'He may be badly hurt.'

Then the fight which had been brewing for months started. As if by agreement they moved in, flailing vicious blows. Brady, big but slow, swung a bony fist in a wide circle. Frome ducked, smashed the blade of his hand across the big man's nose and brought his knee into Brady's groin. As he writhed on the floor of the Monitor room, Frome dashed for the suitroom.

Hastily Jim donned his suit, and without bothering to test it hurried into the lock. Once outside the Tower, free from artificial gravity, Frome ran in long leaps across the lava plain to the spot where sprawled the body of Rogers. It didn't take him long to realize that Curt Rogers was dead. Turning from the unpleasant sight Frome did his best to refrain from being sick, a messy proceeding inside a spacesuit. He called the Tower, and told Brady what had happened, then, steeling himself he took the corpse by one metal shod foot and commenced to tow it back to the Lighthouse.

He was half way across the plain when he heard Brady's gloating voice in his earphones.

'Don't come any closer Frome. I've got the rifle lined on you. You remember the rifle, telescopic sights, high powered, for emergencies the regulations say. This is an emergency, isn't it?'

Frome stopped, letting the body drop slowly to the naked lava.

'You're mad Brady, they still hang people for murder.'

'Not me,' came the snarling reply 'If one can get his suit slit so can another, I shan't plug you dead centre, just graze you.'

Jim stood still for a moment, then jerked his left arm from the sleeve of his suit into the body, took his Colt from its holster and put it in the suit's tiny airlock. He screwed the interior lock home. Unhurriedly he raised his right arm, and commenced to open the airlock.

Brady's unpleasant voice sounded in his ears.

'Thinking of using that .45 of yours, Frome? he chuckled. I'm a good two hundred yards away, just right for a rifle, but impossible for a revolver. Just stay there Frome, I may let you live a little longer, but not too long.'

Slowly Jim Frome undid the outer air lock door and took out his Colt. It was no ordinary gun: the barrel was some three inches longer than usual and was rifled the whole length. The ammunition, hand cast and filed, fitted the barrel perfectly.

As Jim raised the gun to take aim Brady spoke again.

'Sure I know that ain't no ordinary pistol, but it won't carry two hundred yards, so you might as well save the shells, someone else might be able to use them.'

As he finished speaking the big man fired, there was a flash, a rapidly dissipating puff of smoke, and the bullet sped silently over the head of his intended victim.

Jim pulled his trigger, heard Brady gasp, and saw him begin to fumble with the sights, but the Colt's bullet, well aimed, smashed into Brady's belly, releasing the air from both suit and body. Unemotionally Jim watched the armoured corpse slide slowly down the cliff face to the plain.

A precisely typed foolscap sheet lay on the polished plastic top of the Commissioner's desk. It was marked 'Urgent,' and headed 'Transcript of transmission from Lighthouse X3B. 19.00 hours G.M.T.'

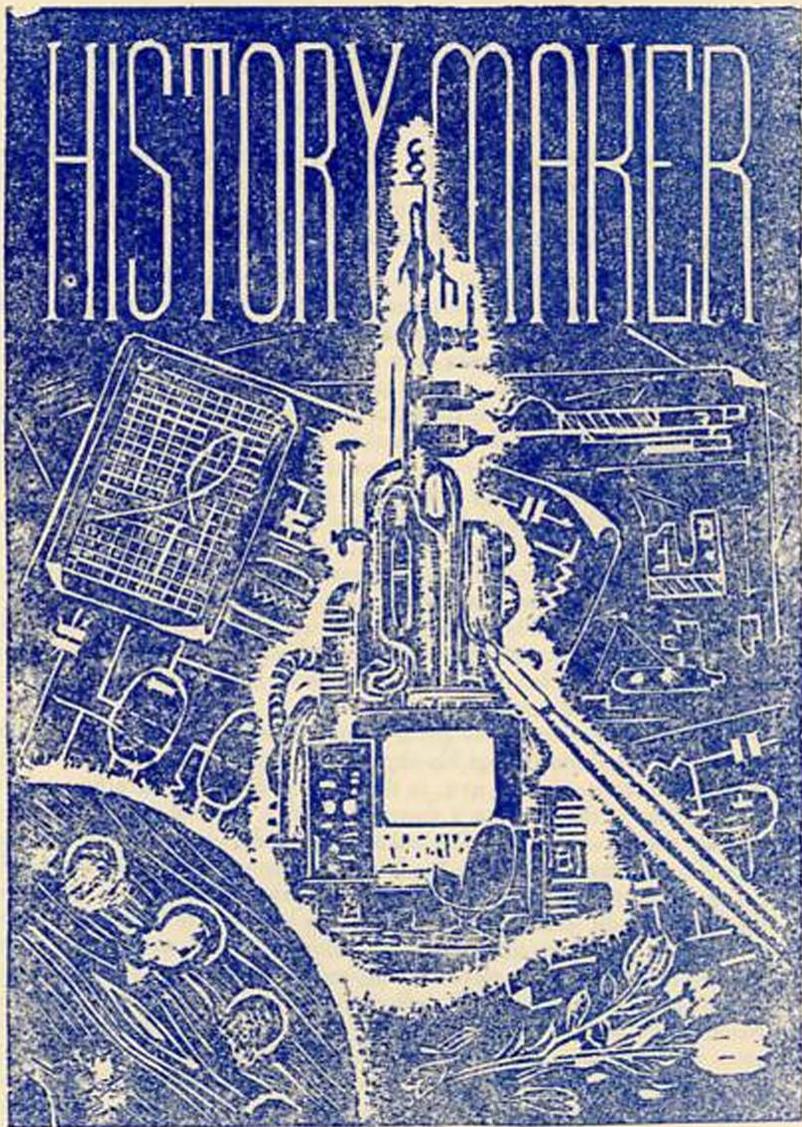
Keeper Brady then announced his intention to kill me, he did not however realize that on an airless, almost gravityless body such as Asteroid X3B the bullet from a revolver would carry as far as that from a rifle. His first shot missed me, since he had not adjusted his sights to conform with the conditions mentioned above. I was then forced to fire in self defence, and killed him.

Signed. J.M. Frame.'

The Commissioner sighed, and took up his cup of tea.

This is the tale of Frederick Wermys
Whose parents weren't on speaking terms.
So when Fred wrote to Santa Claus
It was in duplicate because
One went to Dad and one to Mum:
Both asked for some plutonium.
See the result: Father and Mother,
Without consulting one another,
Purchased two lumps of largish size
Intending them as a surprise,
Which met in Frederick's Stocking and
Laid level ten square miles of land.

(M.K. in N.S. & N.)



BY H. T. McADAMS

THE HISTORY MAKER

Please believe me when I say I'm innocent, Inspector. I'm not the criminal type, But if it's a confession you want, I have one. Only you won't recognize it as a confession. You'll have to hear my story first.

First of all I'm an artist. You have to understand that. Yesterday I would have told you differently and would have been just as emphatic on the point. You see I used to think I was an engineer. In fact it's a point I've been trying to decide ever since I took my degree at Central Tech, although in looking back now it seems pretty obvious that my undergraduate interest in science was strictly from the standpoint of art. I think I was more impressed by the beauty of the Principle of Duality and the poetry of the Pascal Triangle than I was by the power of mathematics to solve utilitarian problems. Now I regard such applications as vulgar, if not repulsive.

I don't need to tell you I didn't turn out to be a very good engineer. The Head of the Department of Engineering at Central prophesied that in no uncertain terms every time he found I had squandered an elective on something like 'Creative Writing' or 'The Theory of Strict Counterpoint.' Yesterday I would have agreed with him; today I know it was one of the few really intelligent things that I ever did. Maybe you think I'm going the long way around in telling you all this but there's no other way to make you appreciate the significance of what has happened.

Any engineer would have given his right arm for a chance to work with Dr. Arnak, the world-famous bio-physicist. The problem of mutation, which is so little understood even now, in the pre-war days was attracting only a small portion of the attention it deserved. I felt a sense of importance from the fact that I would be treading unknown ground and that the project was so confidential that I was to be Arnak's only assistant. I considered it the ideal opportunity for putting my 'scientific training' into practice. But after the first day with Arnak I realized how little true science I knew. A short time before I had been studying poetry, painting, even flower arrangement, and, incidentally, a little electrical engineering in my spare time. Now I was plunged into the biological applications of quantum mechanics, statistics, Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle; and the googoscope. I know you don't know what a googoscope is. You probably don't even know what a plotron is, but you enjoy listening to your radio just the same, don't you? As for the googoscope, no one else knows what it is either. But I do. And that makes all the difference.

I don't suppose you knew Arnak. Now I'm not so sure I did either. He was like olives; you had to learn to like him. He was one of those individuals toward whom your first feeling is one of intense dislike. Somehow you got the impression that at best he was being only mildly tolerant of your presence. But that was because he was honest enough to withhold his opinion of you until he was sure he could be sincere. As he looked at you from his wide-set eyes, recessed in their caverns of shaggy brows, you seemed to be surrounded, if not ambushed, and a little helpless. But after a while the eyes didn't analyse you any more. They smiled at your bewilderment over a chromosome map. They twinkled in anticipation of a knotty problem. And they danced with little lights when they saw a pair of dice. But occasionally they stared blankly at the ceiling, and you felt somehow that they saw far, far beyond.

Besides being unexcelled in the field of bio-physics, Arnak was quite adept at gambling. I know it seems inconsistent, but the two ideas aren't really so different. You'll see what I mean before I've finished. Certainly I don't want you to consider Arnak a gambler in any of the undesirable senses of the word. To Arnak it seemed to be more of a hobby than a passion. 'Heads or tails,' he'd say. Or, 'Shoot a quarter!' And then I'd know he was ready to call it a day. It was Arnak's one unrequited streak of folly, if he had one, and all of us do. From one standpoint it makes us appear a trifle ridiculous. And from another standpoint it keeps us sane. But in Arnak's case it was something special.

You probably don't see how this is important, but it was. As a matter of fact it's how the whole thing started. It was on one of my few lucky occasions and I had just taken Arnak's last penny. For a while he was a trifle moody and didn't say anything. I knew he was concerned with something more than hurt pride, so I went quietly on with the business of closing the lab for the night. Moments like this were one of Arnak's peculiarities I had learned to respect, for they usually produced new ideas, some of them good. Suddenly he snapped his fingers excitedly.

'Kazoo, that's it! That's the answer!'

'The answer to what?' I asked. 'A bad habit?'

'No!' he came back. 'Mutation.'

Now I know that mutation is a pretty random thing and might be metaphorically compared to tossing coins. But metaphor was my way of thinking, not Arnak's. As a matter of fact if I were ever so ill-advised as to use what I might consider a well turned phrase, it was either ignored, misunderstood, or re-stated in more precise language and followed by the inevitable *est-ce que*. But the truth was that I didn't know what Arnak was talking about. I told him so.

'Statistics, Probability,' he said. And then, after a slight pause, 'Do you know what a googol is?'

Just like that! No build-up or anything. But that was Arnak for you. Always changing the subject. Only it wasn't so much that either. It was something in the way Arnak thought. If you ever managed to get to the same point in a conversation as he did, there was one thing for sure, you hadn't followed the same path. Somehow he seemed to think through a whole group of premises at one time, instead of taking them one at a time.

'Googol?' I said. 'Sounds like baby talk. Or is it a new social theory?'

'A googol is one followed by 100 zeros.'

'A number like that should be a big help in counting the number of electrons in the universe,' I said, for lack of anything more intelligent.

'Or for expressing the probability of things that are usually thought of as impossible,' he said, 'and that is where it fits into our problem. There might not be a chance in a million of dropping an egg from a ten-story building without breaking the egg. But there might be a chance in a googol, or a few googol googols. And as long as there is any chance at all it isn't impossible.'

'If you look at it that way,' I ventured, 'nothing would be impossible.'

'As a matter of fact we confuse probability with possibility,' said Arnak. 'An impossible event is only one which is highly improbable, so improbable that it has never happened in the history of the human race. But it might happen a million years from now. And it might happen tomorrow. Whether you consider something possible or not depends upon your level of confidence. In the tossing of coins you expect to throw heads half of the time, or in other words you have 50 per cent confidence for heads. But actually there is a possibility, although a pretty small one, of throwing heads as many as a thousand times straight. In this case your confidence would be very low, for it would happen only once or twice in a million times.'

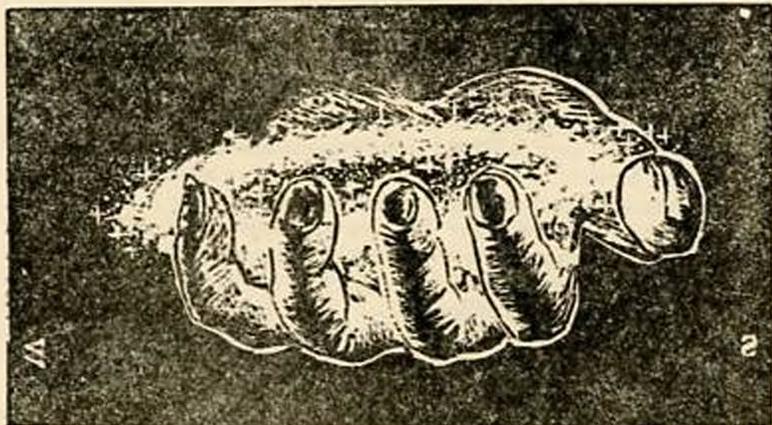
'I think I see what you mean,' I said, not altogether honestly, 'but just what does it have to do with mutation?'

Arnak gave me a condescending look that he intended to conceal, but which told me that he considered the connection only too obvious.

'Quantum mechanics has developed the idea of probability waves,' said Arnak. 'You are familiar with the work of de Broglie, Schrodinger and Born. This implies that probability is a type of radiation. If we could develop an oscillator to generate this radiation in proper frequencies we could increase the chances for mutation, and perhaps could even produce them at will.'

Maybe it was because I didn't understand Arnak's pattern of thought. Or maybe it was because I didn't understand quantum mechanics. But the whole thing sounded a little farfetched to me, and was strongly repulsive to my æsthetic sense. I was never in sympathy with mechanistic psychology.

A human being, I believed, was one case in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Arnak and I always disagreed vehemently on this point. His universe was a complex of functions; mine was a complex of fictions. His was mathematically precise; mine was intuitively flexible. To him life was a type chemical reaction, as characteristic as oxidation or double decomposition. To me it was an æsthetic experience. According to Arnak man was chemically a mass of asymmetric molecules, biologically a complicated matrix of stimulus-response bonds. To me he was an indeterminate quantity. I need hardly say that the logic was always on Arnak's side. Syllogistic reasoning. Non-Aristotelianism. And a dozen other concepts I could never understand. Little wonder, then, that I thought I had been a prodigal son to have neglected all these things, especially with



Arnak's perpetual eulogies. Emotion was a sign of weakness, and art was a waste of time. I began to regard myself as a ridiculous little being for ever toying with the affairs of the soul, which can not be caught in the net of science and which must therefore be of the same questionable savour as dogfish.

The disturbing thing was that here was a man that in many ways represented what I had always wanted to become. His was the knowledge I had always dreamed of having. But his soul and mine did not seem to speak the same language. In fact I often doubted that he had a soul. I thought that it must have offended him and that he had long since plucked it out like an evil eye and cast it from him. But I began to wonder if this attitude toward life, the cold, impersonal, intellectual regard for things,

was the true color of that chameleon called a scientist. I became more and more convinced that the emotions must be supplanted by the intellect, that art must give way to science, that the rash folly of 'beauty 'as its own excuse for being' must be put away, like other childish things. And so it was that my conscientious objections against Arnak's instrument for the synthetic production of probability waves eventually were no longer conscientious, nor objections.

By this time you have guessed it. Arnak gave me the job of designing such a machine. I don't need to tell you that the next few months were full of work and heartbreak, or, as Arnak would have said, frustration. I spent every available minute studying; noon hours, a few minutes while waiting for a bus, evenings. I even invented a kind of pseudo-philosophy to relieve the tension of lack of sleep. This philosophy was based on the premise that everyone gets too much sleep. TMS became the symbol of a disease, a kind of prognostic amnesia, which robs men of knowledge before it is ever obtained. I worked as I had never worked before, but it was not enough.

What Arnak had asked me to do was to design an oscillator that would make the magnetron look like a tuning fork. This oscillator had to produce frequencies at the very threshold of the annihilation of matter, and then had to cross that barrier! The idea was to produce more and more probability waves in less and less time. The assumption was that there is no such thing as a one-to-one correspondence between any single cause and effect. Of course for a given cause some effects are more probable than others. But if you sample the situation often enough you are almost certain to come across something new and different . . . So a circuit had to be included which would trigger at a certain bias and would sort out all the variants in the probability waves above that level. Then these variants had to be put in a condition of stasis for future use as required.

The main trouble was the oscillator. Even if it had been possible to design a satisfactory circuit the components would have been destroyed by the extremely high frequencies. The '860 rule' would have seen to that. The answer seemed to be a trans-energy oscillator, beyond the level of gross energy, on a still higher plane of existence. At least that was my explanation. I'm afraid I had not yet completely rid myself of mysticism. Arnak, of course, had his tensors and systems of logic.

The solution turned out to be a rather obvious one. I had been reading 'The Decline of the West' and had remarked to Arnak about Spengler's opinions of modern physics, particularly his insinuations that quantum mechanics explains only the action of the human mind, not the natural phenomena themselves. Arnak had translated this in his literal semantic way and had come out with the right answer.

'If the oscillator has to duplicate the action of the human mind,' he said, 'we have only to substitute human brain cells for the

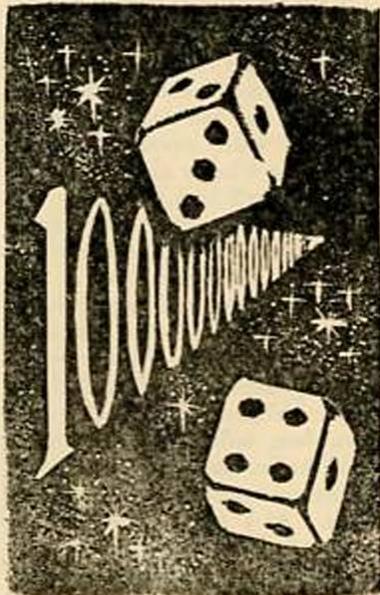
oscillating elements.'

To Arnak that was a simple enough statement, but the synthesis of these cells stopped us for a while. It didn't bother me too much. It was Arnak's baby, and I had troubles of my own. But Arnak's consuming passion for the work was sufficient for both of us, and one day we found that the instrument was complete, to the last soldered connection. We called it the googoscope, the first psychic oscillator, capable of frequencies of the order of googocycles per second. I didn't understand the nature of the vibrations, but according to Arnak's statistical mechanics they were the probability waves we were after.

The stasis was effected by copper pseudo-spheres, another of Arnak's ideas. He said that the result would be accomplished by the fact that the pseudo-spheres obeyed the geometry of Lobachevsky and therefore could not release their impulses into a Riemannian world. I was satisfied with comparing it, in my metaphorical way, to the recording of a symphony on a phonograph record, which is only a disc of vinylite until played, but whose sound track then becomes a spiral stairway to the stars. In the case of the googoscope the wave-forms for mutation would lie latent in the pseudo-spheres until they were passed through the materialization stage and amplifier. Then, and only then, would they cause those changes in living things which might eventually lead to new varieties, species, genera; even to new races of men. The theory seemed sound enough, but maybe I was a little too confident, and maybe I had gotten too far away from the truth.

By this time you are probably wondering why Arnak was so determined to produce mutations. I wondered too, but every time I asked about the purpose of the project Arnak invariably managed to lose me in his peculiar train of thought long before I had found out what I wanted to know.

'It is not so much the ultimate purpose that matters,' he once said, 'as the by-products we obtain along the way. Civilization itself is a process, not a product. It is a kind of reversible reaction tending towards equilibrium. It must be cyclic,



otherwise it would be fatal. In fact a period of history like the Dark Ages was not to much one of regression as of regeneration, the beginning of a new cycle.'

That was all. I guess I was supposed to fill in the missing lines myself, but I didn't find this very profitable. I knew that in general mutation is harmful to a species, and often results in the reversion to low survival types, but the connection of this fact with a cyclic theory of history was far from obvious. I only know that from that day onwards the struggle with myself was more violent than ever. It was almost as if a powerful premonition was clamoring at my heart for attention, and I was locking the door with a rusty key.

I can't hope to describe the tenseness of that fateful moment when we made our first trial with the googoscope. Arnak was seated at the controls and I was looking over his shoulder into the huge translucent visa-screen. If the instrument worked properly we should be able to see visual images of the life forms represented by the pseudo-spheres. But don't get the idea that the function of the instrument stopped there. We could produce in reality anything which appeared on the visa screen by the simple matter of materializing the wave-forms. As I gazed into the strange luminous orb I somehow had the feeling of betraying the confidence of a friend. And yet I felt a huge uncertainty myself, a lack of confidence, which seemed to increase as Arnak advanced the probability multiplier dial and as the geogolometer needle climbed inevitably, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen sigma. It was as if someone had entered those quiet niches of my mind known only to myself, and had stealthily lighted the little lamps which were always there, but which never burned brightly, if at all. It was like looking through the window of my soul and for the first time seeing its nakedness. I jerked myself back to reality. 'Something in the powerful psychic forces whose fields we are in,' I thought.

Suddenly the visa-screen blossomed in its blue and golden iridescence like a huge composite flower. The petals of the flower rotated like the wheels of a stagecoach in a western movie and along the stroboscopic spokes of the wheel were fleeting, disconnected images, images not of what was but of what might be. There seemed to be no time sequence to the incidents. The googoscope selected the highly improbable incidents, the so-called 'impossible' incidents, in a random manner. Perhaps, indeed, time itself may be random, instead of possessing a definite direction. I began to see what Arnak had meant about the 'by-products' of the googoscope, for certainly all unusual events are not concerned with physiological changes in living things. As I saw empires crumble, as I saw men slain, tortured, mutilated, I was thankful that these things had never been, that they represented a confidence level far below the threshold of consciousness and that they were locked in the barren prophylaxis of the pseudospheres.

Yet the vision had hardly faded from the screen until somehow I had the feeling that they DID exist, had always existed. And a moment later I did not question them at all. I was reminded of Pope's couplets:

'Vice is a monster of so frightful mien
As, to be hated, needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.'

Suddenly I was afraid. What if the pseudospheres should fail? What if there were circuit leakage? What if . . . ? There seemed a million possibilities. And then the awful truth! There WAS a possibility, or more accurately a probability, that the pseudo-spheres might not serve their appointed purpose and would send a scourge of marauding evils over all space and all time. For if the mind thinks by probability waves, then certainly there is a probability for anything the human mind can conceive. And we were multiplying that probability googols of times each second. We were raising its level of confidence closer and closer to that of conscious reality. Arnak and I and the machine with its human brain cells, we were the Three Fates. We could shape destiny at will. It couldn't go on! It would drive us mad!

'Turn off the power!' I won't even pretend I wasn't a little hysterical. 'Quick, Arnak, for God's sake!'

And then it happened. The screen exploded like a million suns. And in its brilliance a desert stretched away somewhere into obscurity. And when the vortex of swirling sands settled back to earth each grain was a grinning, livid corpse. It was like Alamagordo, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki rolled into one. You are familiar with these things. It's practically all in the Smythe report and the rest you have read in the papers. But the part that has never been told is the part the gongoscope played. You've also heard of the effects of radioactivity on mutation, and like everyone else you probably have your own morbid theory of the end of mankind. But the mutants, millions of them, grotesque, repulsive, obscene, which arose from the desert sands of the visa-screen, outdid the most morbid of them all. For a moment I hid my face in my hands; it was more than I could stand. For I realised that a new era had been born, a horrible synthetic era, which in its inevitable sweep would cast Man down from his place among the stars and would shackle him in the chains of savagery to begin all over again the long, tortuous trek across the abysmal desert of ignorance. And I knew that those chains had been forged by mutation, by atomic fission, by the gongoscope; in short, by man himself.

I turned accusingly toward Arnak, in complete mistrust now of his logic, his tensors, even his sanity. Only . . . Arnak was not there! And the gongoscope was not there either! They had disappeared, vanished, as

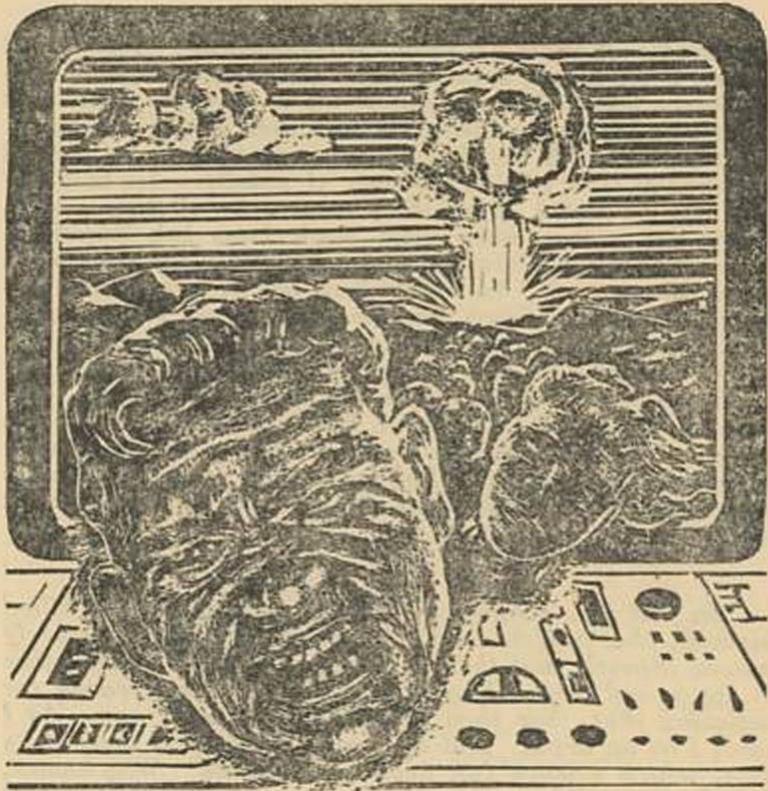
completely as if the earth had yawned without putting its hand before its mouth. I can't describe my feelings at that moment. All the vague uncertainty converged to a focus: the lamps flared in the niches of my mind and left their searing marks. A thousand frantic thoughts raced through my brain, from optical illusion to cosmic disintegration. I don't know how I managed to keep my sanity . . . perhaps I didn't . . . there must have been strong magic in the air. Perhaps that magic was the letter, the letter which lay there before me, the letter soiled and crumpled, as if from being carried too intimately in a man's pocket, and too long. I recognised my name on the front, and the bold precision of Aroak's lettering. I broke the seal and read:

Dear Kazan:

By the time you read this you will probably be feeling pretty bitter. No doubt you'll recall all our old arguments about mechanistic psychology. You'll be convinced now that there are some fields of human activity that man has no right to enter. You'd like to have me there so you could say 'I told you so' and then promptly wring my neck. But all this mental mayhem is no good, Kazan. Be reasonable, and try to understand.

You remember what I said about civilization being a process, not a product. Man must fall so that he can rise again. Otherwise he would achieve all his wants and would reach a null point, a spiritual doldrum, to die at the mercy of his own intelligence. His very existence depends upon conflict. That is why Nature planned to give a curse with every blessing. When you asked why I wanted to produce mutations, that was about the only answer I could give. But our dying civilization can rise again only through a new race. This is the way it has always been. Throughout history new cultures have arisen because one race overcame and succeeded another. Only there was no new race. So I had to create one! I don't need to tell you that mutation was the obvious means. Or that a race of mutants will inherit the earth. But this race, due to the reversive nature of mutation, will start at the bottom with unlimited opportunity for struggle from savagery to civilization. Nature, as always, had the antidote to the poison, but Man himself had to write the prescription. I'm afraid we made history, Kazan, in a very literal way.

I know it seems strange to you for me to talk this way, especially the metaphor. But I was more of an artist than you knew. I couldn't tell you this before: you might not have understood. I have always hoped you might, I hope so now. You see, it was because of your artistic nature that I chose you as my assistant over all the expert engineers I might have had. For I know that you have felt the insane, relentless urge to create, and that you have tasted the beauty of beauty, and the beauty of ugliness. But there was always the



possibility that you might not see the creation of a world in the same way as the creation of a poem, or that you might not appreciate the tragedy of mankind in the same way as the tragedy of 'Hamlet.' After all I was working in a new medium, the medium of life itself. I knew you'd understand a landscape in oils, a tone poem, a sonnet, a metaphor in words . . . but would you understand a metaphor in mutation? I had to be sure, so I kept my secret. It was quite a game, but now the play is over, and I can be myself.

That's just about the story, I guess. Unless you are still wondering what happened to me and the gooscope. Only a small technical detail of changing the bias. Just as raising the confidence level produces things which have never existed before, lowering the confidence level erases things which were once known to exist. In this way I simply

postulated the non-existence of myself and the googoscope. I may as well tell you, if you haven't already guessed, that the pseudo-spheres were a deliberate hoax. Their only purpose was to throw you off the track and to keep you from wandering too much about what I was up to.

It had to be this way, Kazan. The googoscope was too powerful an instrument to let fall into the hands of posterity. You know that now. For the control of probability waves makes all things possible. It gives man a force which makes atomic fission look insignificant. That's why I had to destroy the googoscope, Kazan, and that's why I had to destroy myself. You see the brain cells for the psychotron were a part of my brain. Fourth dimensional surgery, you wouldn't understand. But that made the psychotron and my brain a resonating system, and put us both on the same level of confidence. That's why to destroy one was to destroy both, and that's why I'm writing this letter. But don't get the idea that I'm a martyr, Kazan. I'm not, my motive was strictly a selfish one. With the googoscope left for future men, don't you see what they would do? They'd change my world; they'd change my masterpiece. And that, Kazan, is one thing an artist can not endure.

Arnak

So you see, Inspector, I didn't kill Arnak; he killed himself, that is if he really is dead. Perhaps he merely moved himself and the googoscope to some other place in space and time. Maybe I don't have any reason for believing that, but then maybe I don't need any. As I said, I'm an artist, and art has an inexorable logic of its own, which science can never understand. Who knows, Arnak may still be making history, as he strives, like any true artist, toward perfection. For now and then all the vague uncertainty returns: the lamps flare in the niches of my mind, and I wonder.

T H E E N D

NOTE: 'Googol' is a genuine word. It was coined by Edward Kasner in his book 'Mathematics and Imagination': or rather by his small son, for it's supposed to be the answer he gave when Kasner asked him what he thought of when he thought of a very large number. So I suppose it can be regarded as the only onomatopœic numeral.

If you should happen to want an even larger number, a 'googolplex' is 10 to the 'googol' power.



CLIVE JACKSON

Clive Geoffrey Banks Jackson, also known as Geoffrey Cobbe, and late of Whitstable, Kent, is as near to being an associate editor of this magazine as anyone can be who now lives on the other side of the world. I first heard from him after our first issue, when he wrote a short appreciative note asking whether 'Telekinetic and Battered Toast' had been written by me or some other lunatic. Recognising a kindred spirit, and that together we might make one wit, I wrote asking him for material, and when No.2 was nearly ready I wrote

again. This demonstrates at once the perspicacity which has made me the best fanmag editor in Ireland and the laziness which prevents Jackson from occupying a similar position among the world's s-f writers.

He retaliated with his first story, **THE STILL SMALL VOICE**, which **Waldheim** called 'a little gem' when he reprinted it in the **AVON FANTASY READER**. Soon after, Jackson came over to visit us for a week. Bob Shaw was still fasting in the wilderness at that time, so his sketch had to be based on a photograph, but it is a pretty accurate, well accurate anyway, picture of Jackson who as you can see looks pretty human for a Whitstable native. He is not tall for a member of the **SLANT** staff, barely six feet high (fan activity here is at a very high level) and is a very pleasant easy-going fellow, rather like Robert Mitchum only not so dopey.

Among the 137 brilliant ideas which came out of this little convention was **SWORDSMEN OF VARNIS** in **Slant 3**, reprinted in **OTHER WORLDS**. Bea Mahaffey was kind enough to tell us later that it was extremely well received by her readers and that 'if Clive keeps on like this, **SLANT** is going to have to battle with the prozines to get his stories.'

Unfortunately another battle intervened, and Clive was posted to Singapore. This has interfered with his writing, but we are still corresponding. I wrote him for a **thombasil** biography and, since apparently nothing much has ever happened to his **thombasil**, this is what I got. 'Born 30 3 25, about 500 years too soon. Inspected for tentacles, extra eyes etc. and allowed to live. Profession, dilettante. Compelled by force [Continued at foot of next page]

INCLINATIONS —Thanks.] the way we continue things from one page to another, the otherwise charming young lady who rejoices, if that is the word, in the name of Ermengarde Fiske thought Jackson's *The Enemy*; 'entirely professional, though few promags would publish anything admitting such a basic truth. After that I am sure the next *Slant* will contain a modest note mentioning that TE has been purchased by 'The Ladies' Home Journal.' 'Modest note' is good — touche — but the prediction was bad, though I hope the LHMJ will at least reciprocate this plug.

Jackson's 'Black Bart' had less unanimous approval, though busy Mr. Merwin may have taken it seriously when, pulling one of my own puns on me, he astigmatized the mag as 'alien corn.' Sam will have his little joke (soon, let's hope) but he was nice about our artwork, bless him. A. Bertram Chandler had a new twist. 'I liked BB, but then I've never cared much for the all too prevalent type of sf story written by, for, and about boy scouts. Like westerns, sf is greatly improved by a good stiff shot of sex. Heresy it may be, but I still think that DM would have been improved by an odd blorde or two. (And I should like before I die to investigate the technique of copulation in free fall.)'

When space is short it's always the poor editorial that's cut but I must apologise for suspending 'The Good Old Days', which Anthony Boucher, with others, hailed as 'a noble department, well worth expanding.' We'll get it out of the department store for next issue: the promag excerpts which fill in meanwhile were exhumed by George Charters. Also in No.6 will be an entirely delightful science-fantasy by Banister, a story by British pro author E. R. James, and one in a new vein by Jackson. In the meantime, won't you let us know what you think of this issue? — Please. *Slainte!*

THE CLEAN BREAST Covers, and illos on pages 11, 17 21 26, 34 & 37, linocuts by JAMES WHITE, p.7, wood. Pages 3, 5, 15 & 31, sketches by BOB SHAW realised in lino by James. Cartoons on pages 2, 43 & 44, and portrait overleaf, drawings by Bob professionally photoengraved. By the way, Bob says James and he are not like his cartoon figures: they're really much bigger.

The Department headings on pages 33 & 43 were drawn and engraved by MANLY BANISTER, but on the former page you'll find that Manly is entitled to more credit for this issue than that. We wouldn't want to embarrass anyone by public thanks for private deeds but we must say this, that without his help and encouragement, in many other ways than the new press, this magazine would be far less in every way than it is today.

of circumstances to devote a certain amount of time to H.M. Royal Air Force. Religion, Jacksonist-agnostic. Politics. Jacksonist-utopianist. Hobbies; the solution of the *Mystery of Woman*, sociology, disputative confabulation, and the sampling and classification of ales, beers and other euphorics. Betes noires: cinema organs. Old Doc Methuselab, poetry by Walter de la Mare, and people who ask, 'But what would the rocket PUSH against up there?'

THE FANSMANSHIP LECTURES, by BOB SHAW

Fansmanship is the art of convincing other fans that you are a much bigger fan than they: and as a branch of S. Potter's 'Lifemanship' it will help to relieve fandom of some of that disgustingly genuine good fellowship of which there is at present far too much.

For students aspiring to BNFmanship one of the ploys useful for asserting your supremacy in local fan groups is PENAMEMANSHIP. All that is needed is a knowledge of pseudonyms, but this, when wielded by an expert fansman becomes a pleasure to watch. The inexperienced fan may easily be made to feel awkward thus:

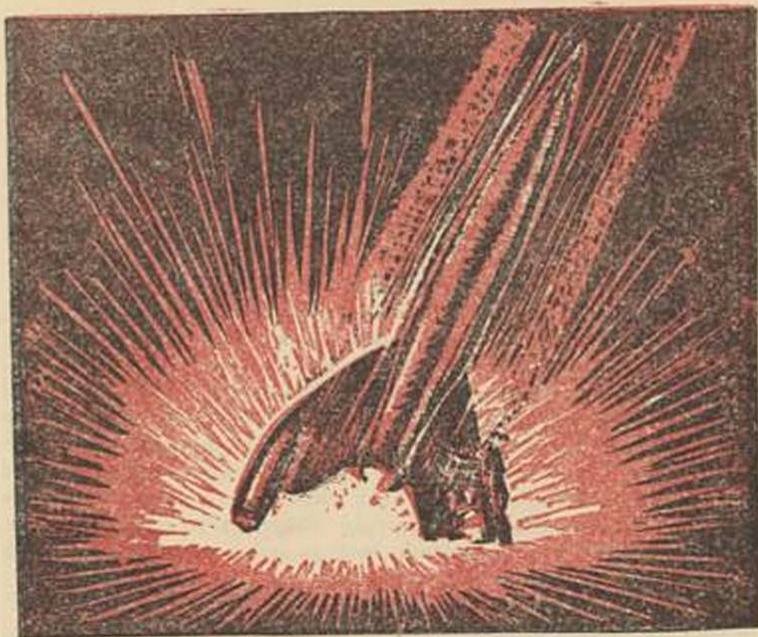
Neofan: 'I really enjoyed that story of Padgett's!'

Fansman (shooting him a curious, mildly surprised glance): 'Yes, Kuttner IS rather good.' While one master fansman once broke up a meeting of his local group with the ploy now known as 'Holly's Gambit' — i.e., playing an sf author's work which had NOTHING WHATEVER TO DO WITH SF. C.S. Lewis had just been thoroughly discussed when Holly remarked rapturously, 'Ah yes, 'The Problem of Pain' — brilliant!' An equally strong feeling of distrust can be induced by the inimitable Bloggs among even third year fans by unearthing a once-used pen name and employing it in subtle attack thus. (Heinlein has been discussed.) Bloggs, reverently, 'Ah, yes, JOHN RIVERSIDE!' He has obviously read an entire series of stories which the group is too ignorant to have discovered.

The more advanced student may then proceed to LETTERSMANSHIP. This does NOT consist merely of ignoring all letters from fans less important than yourself. The true fansman answers all such letters, but in such a way that the victim will NEVER WRITE TO HIM AGAIN — lettersmanship at its best. Standard plays include misspelling his name, inordinate delay, and mention of piles of unanswered letters. If these are of no avail S. Broly recommends, in addition of course to affecting total ignorance of the previous correspondence, not only quoting a reference number and addressing the writer as 'Dear Sir,' but marking your letter SIGNED IN ABSENCE.

An allied field is ZINEMANSHIP — convincing the other fan that his mag is so much wasted paper. With a neat mag it is usual to remark tolerantly that it must take (i.e. waste) a lot of time. With others, saying warily: 'of course appearance isn't everything' is usually enough to suggest that the contents aren't up to much either. (Note: For postal play fansman R. Ostler advises (a) regretting that you have not had the time (i.e. inclination) to actually READ the mag yet, or (b) singling out for praise the most insignificant filler, preferably something quoted from ANOTHER FANZINE. — w.a.w.)

In future lectures I hope to discuss other aspects of fansmanship, including EDITORSMANSHIP, SUBSCRIBERSMANSHIP, REVIEWMANSHIP, COLUMNCRAFT, FEUDYORK, and BNFmanship itself, with various ploys, including the deadly Indirect Chance Ploy, Teehee Play, the Great Big Man Gambit, Infant Prodigy Play, and counterploys such as Dimwerthy's Defence.



THE GATECRASHERS

BY *KEN BULMER & WALTER WILLIS*

Old Sam wedged himself more comfortably in the corner seat of the bar parlour. 'As I was saying,' he coughed, 'them beggars out on Noval IV was more than human, more like devils, as Brant found out.'

He sucked thoughtfully on his blackened briar. The bar lamps reflected dazzlingly from scented bottles and glistened on his whiskery chin as he looked round the cosy little room. 'It wasn't like this when Brant and his men landed on Noval IV. Crippled, they were. Couged a piece outa that planet big enough to swallow the Amazon. Yeh.'

'Seen a few things in my time, I have, son.' Old Sam paused reflectively and the blossoming mushrooms of spacial explosions seemed for a moment to kindle in his eyes. 'Yeh, a few things. But Brant's touchdown

on Noval IV, that must have been one for the book. O' course, he had to put her down on the dark side, wasn't much choice with most of his tubes gone and air sizzling out so fast you could have played a trombone orchestra with it. Time he got his crew sorted out, well, they was pretty scared, first expedition and all.

'Brant was a big chap, caught him wallomping round in my space boots when he was ten . . . or eleven, near enough. Tanned the hide off him that time.' Old Sam wheezed at the memory. 'Didn't stop him shipping out on the SOLA a couple of years later. Noval IV? Oh, yeh, yeh, when you've seen what I've seen . . . Pinky Slymans got it first. Fat flabby fellow, Pinky: remember when we had to ditch off Perseus had the dickens of a job with Pinky, shoving him through the emergency airlock. On Noval, well, Pinky'd no more than settled his insides after the crash when a thing took a fancy to him. Thing like them boneyard skyscrapers you see in museums. Only this one had slabs of flesh on it, yeh, solid flesh right down to the backbone. Pinky gave a God-awful yell, well, who wouldn't, getting gobbled up like that, but it fair turned the other chaps' stomachs. All they found of Pinky was a space glove, and that had only three fingers left.' Old Sam looked reflectively at his glass.

'Well' he resumed, 'Brant tried to put some guts into his men, but he'd hardly got his mouth open when a flying mammoth, or some such unnatural critter, grabbed up Scragger Landis. Always handy with his fists, Scragger. Useful bloke to have beside you. Why, on Konan II he held off six of them damned ten-armed Konans while . . . well, that's finished now. Musta been a sight, seeing Scragger sail off dotting that there jet-propelled elephant in the eye. Don't think he lasted many rounds.'

Old Sam buried his whiskers in his pint and gulped noisily.

'Sparky Carew bought it next. Little chap, Sparky. Didn't come up to Brant's shoulder, but you should have seen him with a blaster. Pity he didn't have one on Noval. Slid right down the gullet of a snake, feet first too, which made it all the worse on account of he was yelling bloody murder all the time.

'I reckon them blokes of Brant's were longing to be back in deep space. Noval IV didn't possess a moon on its establishment, musta been black as a tunnel, except for them eyes. Musta stunk like Billingsgate in a strike.'

Old Sam sucked comfortingly at his briar and surrounded his shaggy head in a cloud of sulphurous smoke.

'Anyway, Brant decided to run for it. He and Tosh Watson dodged past the end of the ship. Tosh went first, always a fly boy, Tosh. First met him in the Old Kent Road, bogging Tower Bridge to a Martian tourist. We got pickled afterwards to celebrate. Course, I had to throw in Waterloo Bridge to close the deal. Noval? Well, some sort of dragon snapped up poor Tosh. A torn space-cap fluttering on an eyetooth, a bloody spaceboot on an incisor, and that was the last anyone saw of him. Poetic justice, him being so sharp

himself. Well, I suppose Brant staggered all of ten miles that night. Not good biking country. Noval. Came back to the wrecked ship of course. Just about dawn, that would be.'

Old Sam chuckled and coughed in a convulsive spasm.

'When the sun came up there was a road as wide as Piccadilly, no farther than you could throw a spanner. Course, Brant sets off for this road like it's five minutes to closing time. Must have been a bit light-headed or something by then. Any weaker chap would have caved in long ago. One of them damned beasties up and followed him. Its feet were as big as the dome of St. Pauls, banging the ground like a trio hammer. Its hide was straining over its muscles, eyes sticking out like lollipops. It was coming like a rocket-racer, only thing faster was its smell.

'Well, there was only one thing Brant could do. He just slung himself to one side, like when we used to play rugger in the back yard. He caught a flick from the tail, knocked him all off jets. Busted a leg. Still, that was nothing new to Brant, he busted both of 'em playing spaceships out of his bedroom window when he was ten . . . or eleven.

'As he lay there, suffering some, I suppose, he saw a beetle car shoot down the road and a couple of humanoids clamber out and walk towards the monster. That confounded flesh-and-blood tank had gone tearing on, couldn't make turnaround fast enough for another snap at Brant.

'Well, son, that monster just ups and stops in mid-air. Slap bang up against an intangible thought-force wall. Permanent fence affair. These two humanoids just walked calmly through, just like you'd walk over to the bar there, and the bloody beastie slunk off.'

Old Sam blew the froth carefully away from a fresh pint.

'Brant tried to shout and wave, didn't manage much more than choke out a spot of blood. He was all in, more done up than the time he caught space fever off Mira. Wanted to be bucked out into space then, always strict on the regulations was Brant. Strict on regulations, yeb, that's a good one, that is. Course, he only attracted the beastie that way. It came over and snuffed at him, one eye on the humanoids, and growled and dripped saliva in bucketfuls. And Brant was lying there helpless.

'Just about then Brant caught the thought.'

Old Sam began to stuff his blackened briar with shaking fingers, tobacco spilled unheeded on the beer-stained table.

'Heb, heb. Brant got the thought. It didn't come from the two humanoids, but from the barrier. Must have been automatic, like the way it let intelligences through. Brant got it plain and clear, like when Ma used to call for dinner. And, son, what do you think it said?'

There was no wait for any reply. Shining drops welled onto the old pipe and the gnarled fingers.

'I'll tell you, son. It said, 'PLEASE DO NOT FEED THE ANIMALS.'"

Old Sam doubled up, clutching his heart. 'As I was saying,' he coughed, 'them beggars was more than human, more like devils, as Brant found out.'

COMMENT

by CLIVE JACKSON

Since I am now in the Inscrutable East, Malaya to be exact, I asked Walter to change the title of this column to . . . [Unprintable — waw] but this is impossible because SLANT has no Chinese characters. [Contributions of any type gratefully received — waw] On the other hand, in fact on all hands, we have here a superfluity of Chinese characters, all teeming like mad, and busy exporting the latex which in my opinion they would do much better to use between themselves. Which reminds me that to avoid confusion among our French readers I would like to assure them that the present title of this column is in English; there is no question about it.

PASS THE EGOBOO. In the report of the 'Invisible Little Man' Award Dinner one fact impressed itself on the mind with the delicate insistence of a sledgehammer, and that was that Bradbury thinks Bradbury is pretty good, and that the other characters were anxious that he shouldn't entertain any doubts about it. The annoying thing, of course, is that he IS pretty good.

CYRANO WITH A STRANGE DEVICE . . . I propose to silence once for all the controversy as to whether Britain or Russia invented the atbody — 'ram jet' to you. Both of them were noted out by that prominent feature writer Cyrano de Bergerac, one of the few s-f authors who are DEFINITELY not Henry Kuttner. He described it in detail, circa 1650, without even bothering to patent it, and here are his specifications, or specifications, freely (or at least very cheaply) translated for the benefit of my English-speaking readers.

'I foresaw very well that the vacuity which would happen in the icosahedron by reason of the sunbeams united by the concave glasses, would attract a great abundance of air, whereby my box would be carried up; and that proportionable as I mounted, the rushing wind . . . furiously penetrating the machine, must needs force it on high.' (*Histoires de l'Etonnement Frissonant.*)

I love that 'furiously penetrating the machine.' So French. Unhappily the broad principle is useless in Manchester or California, the essence, or essence, being sunlight.

ARTFUL DODGE 'Yes, DODGE is LONGER, WIDER, HIGHER on the INSIDE for extra leg room, shoulder room, head room. Yet on the OUTSIDE, DODGE is SHORTER, NARROWER for easier handling and parking, LOWER for road-bugging stability.' (advertisement.)

A high executive of the automobile industry told me that in creating this new marvel of travel comfort technicians had spent years perfecting a hyperspace wherein the OUTSIDE of the car becomes the INSIDE, and vice

versa. But he admitted that some problems inherent in the nature of the hyperspace had not yet been solved. When the driver looks in the rear vision mirror he sees only the back of his own head, and since the INSIDE of the car is on the OUTSIDE it is necessary to get out of it to drive it. It is felt however that these minor disadvantages will be outweighed by its appeal to mutants, who acclaim the room now provided for extra legs, shoulders, heads. I was shown a testimonial from a Mr. Forewarned, who says: 'I found this car quite easy to handle; in fact I consider it an ideal sports car.'

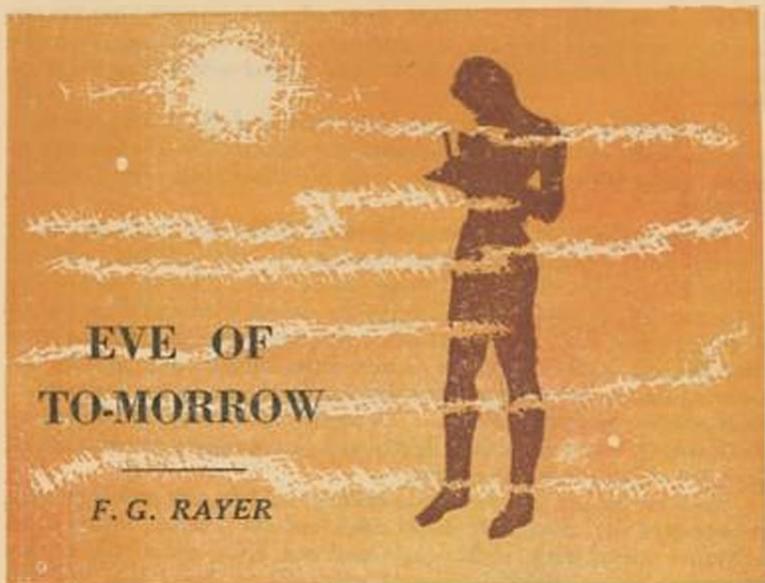
And so I bid you a reluctant farewell from the Mystic East. It is raining, as it usually does at this time of year. This is called, with Oriental inscrutability, the Rainy Season. We Occidentals refer to it as the monsoon, because if it's not actually raining at the moment it is sure to come on soon.

(Editor's note: One of the results of the current unpleasantness in the Far East, of which you may have heard, is that Clive's column this issue is more like a plinth, and was even shorter before your editor got his hands on it. If you don't like it, blame HIS warped mind.)

SIDELIGHTS (I)

BANISTER AND THE MICE ' . . . Well, the mice got into it. I had a habit of leaving the door open, and that's how the mice got in. I found five in there once, and went in to join the party, closing the door behind me. Picking up a club, I took off after them. Round and round the walls they went in high gear. Did you ever run round a room on all four of its walls? It is quite an experience — especially a room only eight feet square. Well, this experience taught me that I had a new talent — a talent for catching mice. I developed a tom-cat complex. I sneered at other cats. I lurked in shadowed corners, under the sink, and in the oven. I caught and killed 21 mice, practically with my bare hands. They were clever, those mice. They could not be trapped. So I baited traps and hovered nearby. When the mice came out to spit on them, I crushed them into mouseburger. I was creatively destructive. I made inroads on the army of mice that had long disputed my mastery of this house. But it could not last. No victory ever does. The mice were simply cleverer than I. While half their number sallied forth to do battle with me, the other half remained in the walls, busily breeding future warriors. How could I win? I had to capitulate. I found a cat who would consent to live with us, and the creature is smarter than I and the mice put together.'

YALE ABOUT THE GILLS 'There was a taught look about the young man's mouth' **SUPER SCIENCE, BRE 1.**
THERE, THERE. 'The book is faintly amusing, but the illustrations are terribly distressing. They are awful.' **AMAZING, July '34.**



Steel shod boots scuffed rhythmically through the peppery hills, leaving a winding trail in the saffron dust. Eyes stared ahead at the yellow plain, unmarked by movement or artifice of men, or turned sometimes to look back, following for a moment the long trail which soaked across the slopes, up a valley, and from sight where the ochreous horizon met the sky. Away to the left stood, pole-like and corky, the remnants of once living woodland. An ear, delicate and shell-like as the painting of an old master, turned towards it, but no birds sang in the dead trees. No creature stirred under them, or man or machine moved among the brittle, fossilised trunks.

The feet went on, and the sun cast ahead the shadow of a beautiful woman, fine of face, firm and graceful of muscle and limb. She altered her direction slightly, and soon her shadow fell across the torn roofs of empty buildings buried up to the eaves in the drifting brown particles. She paused, as if wondering what past knowledge of men lay buried here, hidden for ever as the sterile earth drifted like sand into the great libraries of the world, then went on. A light wind moaned over the undulated brown, raising tiny eddies of brown particles like wisps of smoke, and she began to hurry. Since growing things had relapsed their tenure upon the earth fearful dust-clouds often raced upon the screaming wind, so that a dark twilight came at mid-day

and the sun was hidden. The poisoned, dusty soil rose many miles into the air, sweeping fantastically across whole continents. Rivers ran brown and no fish stirred in their polluted depths, or in the seas, tainted with the same noxious death.

Her footsteps came to a stream, and she halted. No plants grew upon its barren banks and the swirling brown water held no life. She followed its course, going down upon the plain, eyes searching always for something that lived.

Farther on, a town lay empty, the wind-driven sterile soil only up to its second floor windows. She went through the tall buildings, upbrought through the dust like the relics of some ancient city, listening always, her eyes never still. Beyond a great building the curling wind had drawn away the all-pervading dust; the bonnet of an automobile showed, and scattered bones, burning brightly in the sun. A newspaper flapped, uncovered by odd chance, yellowed and crinkly. 'The decision to use poisonous radio-active dust must never be lightly taken . . .' a partly visible paragraph in big type said. She bent, touching the sheet lightly with gloved fingers, but it crumbled like a dry, fragile leaf into nothing.

She went on, her face expressing nothing, until she had passed through the unpeopled city. Soon night would come, and she stopped, taking from her back a satchel made of thin chain-mail and lifting out a book of thin steel pages. With a pointed instrument which left an inerascable blue line upon the steel, she wrote: *This is the thousandth evening since I was sent out by my master to search. I have found no living thing. In five more days I shall return to my master.*

The sun sank; a brilliant moon shone across the dusty hills, leaving clear-cut, inky shadows, and she went on. Once a sharp clear crack came echoing through the night and she turned towards it, walking until she found herself among the sticks of a dead forest. Another bang broke, scattering a thin mist of fine earthy particles, and she turned away, her face expressionless . . .

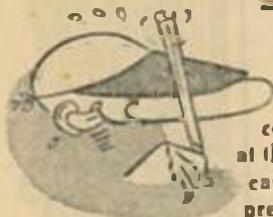
The sun shone brightly as she approached her home, a steel dome upon high rocks. Blown earth lay piled against one side, but the steps were half clean and she mounted slowly, her shod feet loud upon the naked rock. The dome had windows, and a sliding door. Now it stood slightly open, and a trickle of dust lay in the crack in which it rolled. She went in, looking each way, then stopped. Bones, white in the dimness, lay near a couch. An eddying wind had swept dust upon them, and upon all the objects in the room.

For a long time she stood motionless, gazing upon the bones, and listening to the sigh of the wind, now rising. Soon the poisoned, dusty soil would race upon the wind, darkening the sun and silting into obscurity great buildings where lay the whole knowledge and history of mankind, unread for fifty years.

As if at a loss, as if having no activity pattern to respond to this, the

unexpected, she stepped backwards quickly. One steel heel caught in the groove in which the door slid, and she fell backwards, jarring down the rocky steps. There, her head split like a compressed tin-can; tiny wheels and electronic tubes sprang through the opening and lay on the dust. One foot twitched, then she was still, her machinery silent, the mechanisms of her cogitation halted.

The rising wind swept long trails of dust across the peppery hills; a pole-like tree snapped, but no eye saw it fall, and no ear heard it, or the piping gouts carrying the saffron dust high in the obscured sky



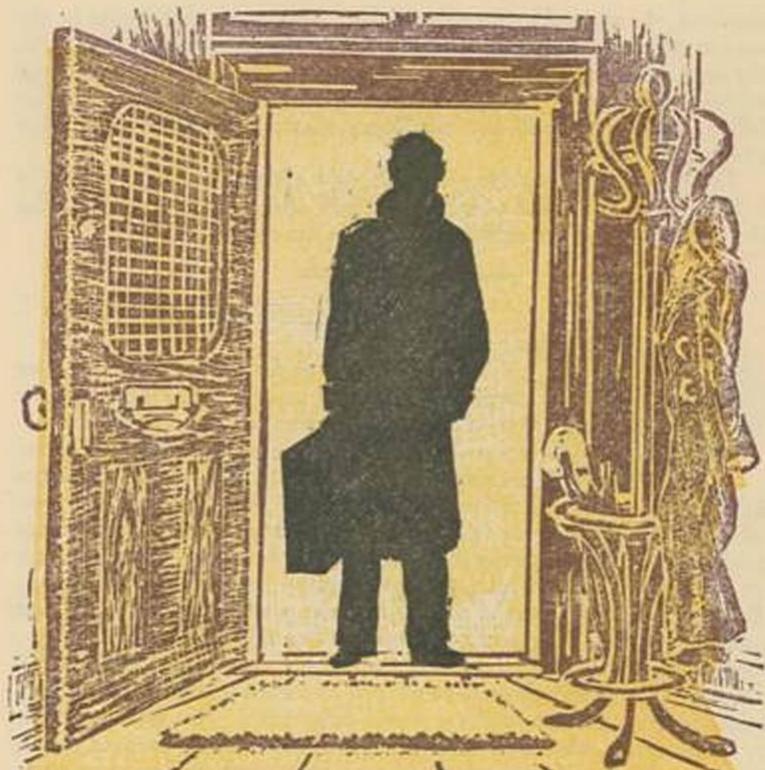
THE AMATEUR EDITOR

Poor as they are, pages 7—10 were the best we could do on our old machine. You might wonder at the difference between those pages and these, because after all a printing press is just a device for pressing paper against type. You could for instance put the type in a box and clip the paper to the lid. That's how our old press worked. Ink the type (the machine was a 'hand inker', and it certainly made a good job of our hands), close the lid, bear down on a simple lever, and your page was printed. Or at least decipherable marks were left on the paper.

But for *printing* you need a lot of pressure, evenly distributed, and that means a heavy piece of precision engineering. Our old press was almost a toy, so small you could nearly throw it over the house — and many a time we felt like trying. The bed and platen were warped and when we tried compensating for this by extra pressure the lever would disintegrate. This first happened, very spectacularly, when we were finishing S3. The model has been out of production over 20 years (we liberated it from a junk heap), and no spare parts were available. I think the manufacturers wanted to forget about the whole thing, and no wonder. The local blacksmith made substitutes, but they broke too, during the production of S4. There is nothing more wearing on the nerves than leaning on a lever which may distribute itself round the room at any moment, unless it's blowing up a balloon until it bursts, and I can tell you that our determination to go on with SLANT after No.4 was rather grim.

It was then that one of those things happened that reinforce your faith in the essential goodness of people. Maely Banister, having bought a power-driven job, crated up his former press and shipped it off to us, all the way from Kansas to Ireland. Just like that, a piece of valuable machinery which two men can barely lift, an unsolicited gift and at his own expense, shared only with Marjorie Houston. You'll guess how we felt about that. And you've already seen something of what it can mean to the magazine.

Incidentally, the new SLANT press is of course the one on which the printing for NEKROMANTIKON 1 & 2 was done, and you'll find a sketch of it in the cartoon at the beginning of NEKRO 3.



THE STRANGER

by CLIVE JACKSON

A stealthy mist came in from the sea, creeping up the bleak shingle beach, curling round the up-turned dinghies and the locked bathing cabins, rolling across the wide, deserted promenade and its forlorn strip of turf, and across the road to nuzzle at the dismal windows of the Georgian terrace houses facing the sea.

A tall man carrying a suitcase walked alone in front of the houses. He sniffed at the mist and hunched deeper into the raised collar of his heavy overcoat; then, coming suddenly to a decision, he pushed open a wrought iron gate and ran lightly up the steps to one of the Georgian front doors. 'Board Residence', said a discreet brass plate by the bell-push.

Ding — dong: one high note and one low note rang from the tubular chimes in the dark, panelled hall, calling little Mrs. Rigden from the darker depths of her big, dark house. Straight from the huge iron cooking range in her steamy kitchen, yet she was crisply clad in correct crepe, her glossy black hair gathered behind and primly wound into a bun, and no gleam of perspiration on her delicate white skin. Coming quickly into the hall, she paused to study herself in the mirror on the wall stood; flattered perhaps, and softened by the light from the stained glass panel in the front door, but attractive still at thirty and after seven lonely years of widowhood. Once she had been beautiful. She sighed, patting her hair, and opened the door.

Tall and motionless in dark silhouette against the white swirling sea mist, the man waited for her to speak; she, blinking up at him, dazzled by the sudden brightness, saw little of his features except the ears lying back unusually close to the head, the skull very high and close-cropped.

'Good morning?' she said, tentatively, and the man touched his brow with an odd Oriental gesture, saying in a deep, slightly accented voice, 'Morning. I can hire room?'

'Hire? Oh, you wish accommodation. Well, it's very late in the year and I fear there's no staff. But please come in, Mr. —?'

'Omen. Thanks.' He stepped past her into the hall, so tall that his head almost touched the lintel, walked without hesitation towards the lounge and inside, before the fireplace, turned and looked at her.

Now, seeing his face clearly for the first time, she felt that suggestion of unreality which sometimes pervades a very vivid dream; the impression that things are not what they seem, that something is out of place.

She studied his face, not handsome but full of character; strong jaw lines, cheek bones high and rather prominent; very thin, almost feminine eyebrows, oddly up-tilted at the ends; the mouth too wide, thin-lipped but not cruel. Looking then into his eyes she caught her breath and quickly dropped her gaze, feeling like a small child caught prying into what does not concern it. For if his long, slightly Satanic features indicated an age of forty or less, his eyes, deep and calm and grey, mirrored a thousand years of pleasure and pain, of worldly experience and unearthly wisdom.

Recovering herself, she made a little nervous gesture towards one of the armchairs, seating herself also, and after a moment she spoke determinedly, still fighting the compelling wave of unreality which threatened to engulf her entirely. 'I don't as a rule take in guests in the winter, except my one permanent resident, but —. How long do you propose to stay, Mr. Omen?'

'I can stay indefinitely?' he said, fumbling the last word, which came off his tongue clumsily, as though he had used it very seldom before.

'Yes. I think we can manage that. I hope you don't mind children, Mr. Omen? I have a girl of seven and a boy of ten, but they're good children and quiet about the place. The boy David isn't mine, although he's just like a son to me; I adopted him, poor dear, after his parents were killed in the blitz.' She pulled herself up suddenly, horrified. She was chattering like a washerwoman; what ever must he think? But he sat waiting for her to finish, then said, without expression, 'I don't mind,' and stood up, terminating the interview.

He inspected his room curiously, seeming anxious only for her to depart. At the door she turned, and said, 'Lunch is at one, Mr. Omen', but he gave no sign that he had heard, standing by the window and gazing in deep abstraction at the blanketing mist.

Old Mr. Randle, with his beak nose and desiccated skin, dry and remote and ancient as a tortoise, resented the new guest. Winter was his peaceful time; time of cozy hibernation among his fine leather-bound books; time of fireside stories for the two children, and, afterwards, of quiet talks with Mary Rigden while she sewed or embroidered, or darned his socks. In the summer the sun no longer warmed his thin blood, and everywhere the streets, the beaches, the parks and, worst of all, the house, were full of people; chattering, excited, brassy, ill-mannered, rushing people who grated on his nerves and offended his ears. Now he glared across the table at the intruder, hating him for upsetting the even tenor of his fading life and his peaceful companionship with Mary.

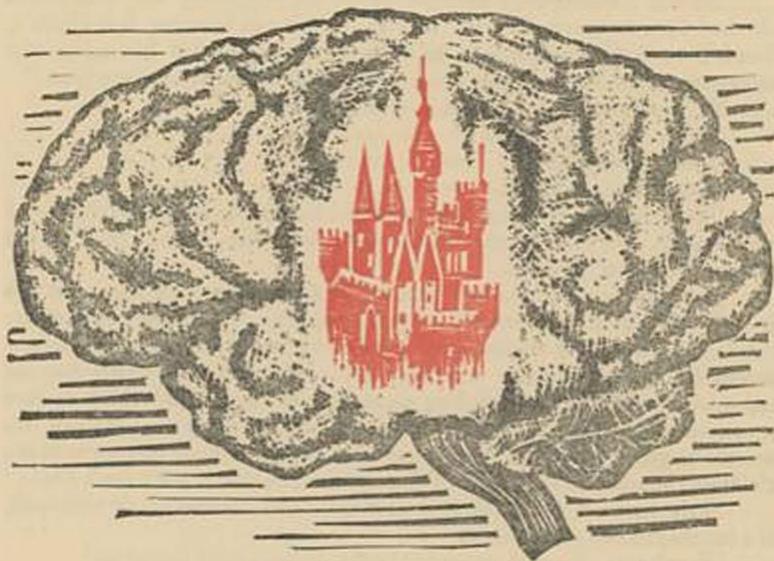
Joan and David, back from school with the breath of November on their flushed cheeks, sat watching Mr. Omen in fascinated silence, their usual talk stilled by his strangeness and their appetites almost forgotten. He in turn appeared to be studying them, but said nothing, and Mary tried to draw him into the circle with light conversation, asking, 'Where have you come from, Mr. Omen?' and, 'How long have you been in England?' and, 'How do you find our climate?' But when he answered her in his strange, clipped speech, it was only, 'East,' and 'Not long,' and 'Too cold'; answering only of necessity, without interest or warmth.

Soon she gave up the attempt, and immediately he had finished eating he got up and, taking his coat from the hall, disappeared out into the mist, leaving Mr. Randle muttering furiously, 'Blasted foreigners! No manners! No breeding!' Mary Rigden, puzzled but sympathetic, said gently, 'Poor man, he's so far from home. He must be uncomfortable among these strange surroundings and people.'

After tea that evening, Mary and old Mr. Randle sat before the fire, he reading and sometimes talking, she with her sewing, and when it was time for her to put Joan to bed she realised that the children were not about and the house was quite silent. She went into the hall, calling them, then up the

dark stairway and along the passage until she heard the soft murmur of voices from Mr. Omen's room.

Realising then that she had expected this, she did something that she had never done before; approached the door with stealth and applied her eye to the keyhole. She could see nothing for the key, which was on the inside, but clearly now she heard Mr. Omen saying in quiet, persuasive tones, "S not really there, but'll seem to be 'f you 'magine it entire, 's I've taught you. Try now, Joann." Then Joann's voice, full of suppressed excitement and triumph, "There, I did it! Oh, I did it!"



Mary, overwhelmed by fear and suspicion, threw the door open, and taking one step inside became transfixed by the scene in the room. Mr. Omen, seated in an armchair but not relaxed; David, serious and intent, sitting on the floor at his left; Joann standing on his right, holding his hand, her face alight with unnatural exaltation; and on the gate-leg table in the curtained window bay, a glittering fairy castle, tier upon tier of turrets, spires and battlements in perfect detail. Mary recognised it as a reproduction, five feet high, of a picture in one of Joann's books, but far more beautiful, and during the brief second that it endured, it was indelibly photographed on her memory.

Then it was gone, as if at the snapping of a switch, and Joan gave a small shocked cry and collapsed to the floor. Mr. Omen stood up, alarm and anger in his eyes, towering above Mary as she rushed forward to gather the unconscious child into her arms; then turning upon him, her voice vibrant with anger she said, 'What have you done, you *devil*?'

Calm again, expressionless as usual, he answered, 'You should'n've burst in. She was concentrating hard. She'll be 'right.'

Mary, now more frightened than angry, swept the children out of the room and bundled them unceremoniously off to bed. Joan fell asleep at once, exhausted. Then, pale but determined, Mary walked slowly back to Mr. Omen's room and knocked on the door.

He was standing with his back to the fire, expecting her, and before she had time to speak he said, 'I've no 'ntention of harming the children. You believe that?' Looking into his calm grey eyes she felt her misgivings evaporating like dew in the sun, and slowly nodded; 'Where are you from?'

He was noncommittal. 'Future. Far future.'

'Why have you come?'

'I am — fugitive.'

'A fugitive? Why?'

'Cause people're being pers'cuted 'nd killed. My people. We're hated — minority. We've different minds, don't think like others. So I've run away. Don't turn me out.'

In amazement she realised that he was pleading with her, and felt herself responding with warm maternal sympathy. Yet another part of her mind, fluttering like a trapped bird, was telling her that the whole thing was impossible, a crazy dream. A stranger out of Time, a fairy castle that did not exist! But now she was smiling up at him, saying, 'I don't think you are a coward. Yet — you have run away.' Earnestly, trying to penetrate his enigmatic gaze; 'I will not send you away, but you must not tamper with the children's minds. What Joan was doing; it seems harmless but I don't like it.'

'Only because you think of it as magic, and 'sociate magic with evil. It's not magic; you can do it too.'

'Thank you,' she said somewhat tartly, 'I don't think I want to.'

During the weeks that followed he remained aloof from Mary and the old man, spending whole days in his room or tramping the wind-whipped Downs behind the town. Only Joan and David claimed his attention, spending all their evenings with him, and regarding him always with such adoration that Mary sometime found it in herself to be jealous. But when the children were not there he seemed so lonely and lost that her heart was softened, and she tried to ease his loneliness by small acts of kindness. Even Mr. Randle, sensing that the stranger was not quite what he seemed to be, made allowances, even concealing his disappointment at the children's desertion of his bed-time story telling.

So it was, until one evening when Mr. Omen came in out of the chill

December dusk, blowing into his hands to warm them as he strode into the firelit lounge. Mary was sitting motionless by the fire, but when she jumped up and switched on the lights he saw that her expression was cold and determined, and began to prepare the explanation he knew she would demand.

She came straight to the point. 'Mr. Omen, I went to the Public Library today.' He did not answer, so she went on deliberately, avoiding his compelling eyes; 'The librarian informed me that I had drawn out eight non-fiction books during the past fortnight, all taken out by David in my name. Yesterday he got a thing called 'Mathematical Biophysics.' I wrote it down, look.'

Still no answer from Omen, who stood with bowed head facing the fire, hands spread to its warmth.

'So I came home and looked in his hidey-hole, under his bedroom floor. The books were there, and others too. And these. She picked up a thick pile of foolscap sheets from the table by the mantel, the upper one covered with close-lined writing in David's crabbed hand.

He turned his back to the fire and looked down at her. 'Yes. David's notes.' He seemed to be mentally taking her measure. 'You understand he's changed; Joan too. Their I.Q. can't be measured now by your standards'. There was no patronage in his voice; he merely meant 'the standards of your time'.

She made an impatient gesture. 'Of course! These notes are unintelligible to me. But why have you done this?'

He sat down casually, so that she automatically followed suit, thus placing the conversation on a less formal footing. 'When I said I was a fugitive I didn't tell all. I came with a purpose.'

'David and Joan?'

He nodded. 'They, or two similar. My aim's to alter the future. My own time.'

'I can't believe that.'

'Oh yes. I did so by moving backwards in time. But I must alter it to plan.'

'But surely! Two tiny children —'

'I explain. Rulers in my time are the scientists. We're danger to them, 'cause our minds c'n unravel most complicated problems while they're struggling with elementary research. So, they try to destroy us, and will, because we're few, and they're many. But if we gain sufficient numbers earlier, before the scientists become the ruling class, things'll be different.'

'Ah, I can understand that. Then the children are —'

'The foundation of a future civilization.'

Judging that he had said enough, he watched her carefully as she struggled to grasp the immensity of what she had learned.

'And you?'

'I must stay here, or go farther back. It's impossible to go back and then forward again.'

'I see. I see.' Not looking at him, lost in thought, she got up and walked slowly out of the room.

Mary hardly spoke during the next few days, and dark circles appeared under her eyes. The children, home from school for the Christmas holiday, watched her anxiously, but Mr. Omen was his usual disinterested self. She lacked the preparations for the Christmas festivities half heartedly, and it was left to Mr. Randle to put up the decorations, a task in which he took great pride, though he was careful not to show it.

To Mr. Omen, Christmas Day was a new experience and his laugh rang loud and frequently, which amazed even the children, because nobody had ever heard him laugh before. Soon, to their delight, Mary began to laugh with him, emerging at last from the shadow-world of deep abstraction in which she had lately lived.

Late in the evening, after David and Joan had been sent reluctantly to bed, Mary and Omen and old Mr. Randle sat round the fire, sipping a little wine and feeling very cosy and replete. After a while, Mary went upstairs, returning in a moment with a cardboard box, which she placed in Omen's lap, saying, 'You are the only one who hasn't had a present, so I thought — that is, I —.' She sat down suddenly and looked away. 'Happy Christmas!' she whispered.

Mr. Omen lifted the lid and took from the box a pair of felt carpet slippers, not new but promising great comfort. 'You haven't any slippers,' Mary explained anxiously.

From the door, Mr. Randle called, 'Goodnight, you two! See you in the morning,' and shuffled slowly up the stairs, smiling to himself. He knew the slippers had belonged to Tom Rigden, and his old eyes were still sharp enough to see that Omen knew it too. Philosophically he mused that it was good to feel that Mary had someone at last, because his time, after all, was nearly up. And so to bed.

THE END

Ermengarde Fiske's

NEW YORK LETTER

When your editor asked me to contribute a piece of non-fiction, as he had a backlog of fiction on hand that would stretch over the centuries, I cheerfully acceded and sent him a short story by return post. However, he is a very demon of subtlety and prepared a little pasticcio (I just learned this word myself and I feel I ought to pass it on for the cultural uplift of readers of this magazine) of my previous letters, omitting for some strange reason several clever remarks I had made about the publication itself, such as the interesting way in which the stories ran right into the articles and how glad I was

that a slavish devotion to proof-reading did not mar the fine, full flavour of the journal, threatening to use this in SLANT if I did not cough up a Letter.

Nonetheless, being like most editors somewhat in dread of authors (even semi-authors, like me), he was afraid to do anything to the selections he had chosen except to add a meagre number of conjunctions at too remote intervals, with the result that the whole thing looked as if it had been written by a grasshopper, and since I didn't want my dark secret (I am a grasshopper) to be known, I rewrote it. I also took the opportunity to do a little work on the punctuation, which he considerably did not touch. If you think it's bad now, you should have seen it before.

One of the great pleasures I am going to get from this is seeing my work a *l'anglais*. In Britain, I am given to understand, American authors are translated into English, but in America every last morsel of British spelling is preserved by the publishers to lend a really exotic touch to the work. Often I have murmured to myself, 'Oh, if only I dared write of honour and goal and forge cheques,' and now my opportunity has come. Of course I wouldn't do this myself (to use British spelling in America is an affectation; it is too common to be an eccentricity, which I wouldn't mind.) but I trust Mr. Willis will see that it gets done. I also hope his type fonts have enough parentheses; if not, he can use dashes fore and aft. I have tried to preserve a judicious balance between dots and dashes so as not to tax any one symbol too severely.

Northern Ireland is a very appropriate place for an *sf* magazine to be emanating from, because it is the one dark continent left; that is, as far as school is concerned, and naturally we learnt everything worth while in school. We learnt all about the Southern Irish (a passionate, romantic people), the English (a supercilious, romantic people) and even the Scots (a dour, romantic people) . . . but nothing at all is known about the Northern Irish (shall we classify them as a mysterious, romantic people?) I did however find out what that word *Slainte* means with which your editor always ends his editorials (except when they run off the page too suddenly) At first I thought it was a misprint for SLANT, and, with that ready diplomacy which has alienated me from so many, forebore to mention it. But the other day, wandering into a giftie shoppe, I found it inscribed upon a drinking glass, the others in the set bearing such witticisms as *Skool!*, *Salud!*, and *Cheers!*, so I gathered with the aid of these Rosetta stones what it means.

Your editor feels that the transition from drinking to flying saucers is a simple one, but I resent that. He has struck directly at the roots of my simple faith (I met an Englishman once who said he had Norman blood and when I asked him whether he had simple faith he replied that: actually he was C. of E.) as I believe implicitly in flying saucers. I am sure they contain anthropologists from another planet. I saw one myself once (a flying saucer, of course; I have seen flocks of anthropologists in my day, as I was going to be one myself until I found I might be called upon to go

to places where there was no hot water) but I didn't have time to investigate because I was late for a wedding. The wedding wasn't much fun, even though the Third Man was there with his zither (I drop the name casually, so that you may be the more impressed). All I got out of it was a piece of cake which I put under my pillow because I remembered there was some pretty sentiment attached to this. After tossing about on the sharp corners of the box for some time, I eventually fell asleep and dreamed that the world was destroyed by a slow atomic chain reaction left over from the last war, so the cat and I ate the cake in the morning. It was lousy cake too.

What has tended to put me off flying saucers is the fact that so many fans believe so strongly in them, and I'm such a snob that I like to believe only in things in which nobody else believes. Even sf has got quite respectable these days — like folk music — which annoys me, though I must admit that ten years ago I wasn't reading it myself. I was a disgustingly intellectual child, reading only literature with significance and deep inner meaning, and only with maturity have I come to realise that sf and murder mysteries alone have significance and deep inner meaning (except Thurber, of course).

There was a time when, strolling through the streets with an sf magazine under my arm, I used to be accosted by elderly ladies who would press small Bibles in my hand and beg me to see the light. Today I see them trotting past with a Bible under one arm and ASTOUNDING under the other. Now everybody reads sf and it has fallen into the hands of the masses. Of course that's only in America. Undoubtedly through the evil efforts of rival publishers from another galaxy, sf does not seem to have been so well promulgated in Europe. I hear that your editor's request for French fans failed to bear fruit — had he advertised in Russian now, he would at least have been assured of several subscriptions from our FBI.

I sent ASTOUNDINGS to a couple of people in England once, and, while both were, properly enough, astounded, one said he liked his sf to deal with the present rather than the future, in which he couldn't take the same warm interest. (As I remember my original letter, I believe I went on to say that, for the most part, I tend to agree with him, but your editor evidently thinks my opinions lack general interest.) I showed another promag to a Dutch girl whom I was trying to interest in sf and she said it frightened her. It couldn't have been the cover, because she is old enough to know that life is full of half-clad ladies tied to weird machinery while being besieged by leering monsters.

Returning to flying saucers, I see there hasn't been any particular epidemic of them around these parts of late, but my favourite comic strip, 'Pogo Possum,' which I recommend to all readers of SLANT in the fortunate position of being able to lay their tentacles on it, is running a whole series on Flying Sorcerers, which I feel represents a definite advance for science fiction... or something anyway. The same newspaper in which it is running reprinted Frank Scully's book on flying saucers in serial form, and the thing that



Since we keep getting subscriptions from what you might call the sane fringe of sf, a short note on technical terms might not be out of place. If my memory serves me right — if it does, what a horrible punishment — the name 'fan' was foisted on his readers by Hugo Gernsback some twenty years ago. We have been stuck with it ever since because 'articulate readers of imaginative fiction' is long and life is short. For some reason fans are born amateur journalists and produce large numbers of 'fantines' — henceforth called 'fanmags' here for the very good reason that this one often runs out of 'i's. They vary in size from the minute 'Fanscient' to mimeographed monstrosities, and in quality from 'Nekromantikoo' through good to ordinary. There is no such thing as a bad fanmag, because what's worth doing is worth doing badly. A 'BEAT' is the bug-eyed monster you see on certain promags if you don't rip the cover off in time, not to be confused with a 'BNF' or Big Name Fan, however close the resemblance. Finally, 'egoboo' is a word invented by Forrest J Ackerman (who else?) for the inflation of the ego which results from praise or seeing one's work in print. It is the motive for other people's activity as opposed to the creative impulse which inspires one's own.



FANSCIENT

OFF THE CUFF Mr. Hal Clement is understood to have expressed considerable surprise at Ken Slater's disclosure that he is Arthur C. Clarke's alter ego. 'Little did I know,' he stated, 'while piloting a B24 during the [over]

NEW YORK LETTER (ctd.) pleased me most about this was that one day there was a slip-up in the proof-reading (Note to Editor: do not thou likewise) and the name came out Skully. I do not recommend the book (this week's capsule book review) and likewise I am a fervent opponent of dianetics, in case anybody cares . . . and I do hope somebody does.

Your editor has given me one week in which to submit revised copy or forever hold my peace, but I hope he remembers that letters are not being similarised between Belfast and New York and allows me an extra week in which to write, as beautiful prose like this takes time and effort and clean paper, which I have to steal. Anyway, if you don't ever get to read this, it means he didn't allow me the time.

Ineluctably Yours,
Ermengarde

war, that simultaneously I was working in English radar laboratories.'

THE GOLD STANDARD I have nothing against dianetics but its author, in fact I only wish I had thought of it myself, but if Hubbard must have advertisements in ASF let them all be proper paid advertisements. He can afford it. As it is, the mag is becoming a sort of Dianetics Digest or Hubbard Mystery Magazine, and what with ham radio and psychology Mr. Campbell seems to have been too busy to watch out for competition. Now, with Gold in there pitching while Campbell is out there preaching, ASF has lost its long unchallenged leadership, so that even us staunch followers of Campbell are inclined after seeing GALAXY to believe rumours of a little note discovered on his desk: 'You will have to be as good as Gold or there will be a clear out — yours truly, Street and (if you'll pardon the expression) Smith.'

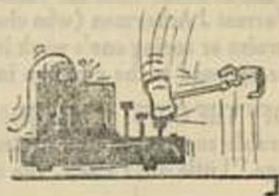
HOW SOPHISTICATED CAN YOU GET?

'The covers were to be patterned in the 'New Yorker' style — sophisticated humor. As for instance, a dog in a spacesuit, mournfully eyeing a lamp post.' SCIENCE-FICTION NEWSLETTER, Dec., 1950.

RECOMMENDED RIVALS 1. 'Nekromantik', Manly Banister, 1905 Spruce Ave., Kansas City 1, Mo., USA. 25c. The usual thing to say about this kind of amateur magazine is that it is as good as a promag, which is like saying a handbound book is as good as a mass-produced product. Nekromantik is not just better than many promags, it is different. It features fantasy and weird fiction by amateur authors, with occasional professional contributions. Usually outstanding are the stories of Marjorie Houston, America's most promising amateur writer in the genre.

2. 'The Rhodomagnetic Digest,' organ of the 'Elves Gnomes and Little Men's' Cnower, Science Fiction and Marching Society', 2524 Telegraph Ave., Berkeley 4, California. 25c. Only a group of undoubted adults would dare to take a name like that, and these Little Men turn out a very responsible and intelligent magazine.

3. 'Quandry', Lee Hefman, 101 Wagner St., Savannah, Ga. 10c. An unpretentious and very attractive fanmag, illustrated by Lee's clever cartoons.



SALE PROXYBOO LTD. are pleased to announce that it has been found possible to carry on with fandom after the suspension of only three major fanmags. This has involved however some curtailment in our promag commitments, and we are in a position to offer the following item of surplus equipment. **ONE RECONDITIONED PLOT-TWISTER**, Mark VV 111. The plot is inserted at one end and emerges at the other in any desired degree of complexity, highly polished and all loose ends neatly tied up. With tins of interest (sex, humor etc.), cylinders of atmosphere, and assorted thrills and punches machined to a critical point for easy insertion. For those who prefer to work their own plots we suggest our robot long distance plotfinders, for far-fetched plots, and our patent plot-thumper which when screwed to leggord, slow moving plots produces a strong kick at **THE END**.

STOP PRESS

A campaign has been started against the unfair increase to TEN DOLLARS of the British sub rate to ASF. To clarify the position I asked Messrs. Atlas, publishers of the British reprint, whether they would like to make a statement. In a courteous and prompt reply they say: 'It is completely untrue that we are in any way responsible for the increase and we are glad to have the opportunity of saying so. We have not the slightest connection with or influence upon the price, whether subscription or otherwise, of the American edition.'

In the circumstances the best thing for British readers to do first is to protest direct to Street and Smith, as suggested by Vince Clarke and Ken Bulmer in their excellent circular, and ask them to change their mind before the goodwill built up with British readers, and authors, is destroyed. We will be very grateful for any support American readers can give us.

New British promag, SCIENCE FICTION FORTNIGHTLY disguises behind juvenile covers surprisingly well-written stories in a refreshingly British style.

AUTHORS! We need your help to make this a little magazine of quality science-fiction. In return we offer a minimum circulation of 300 literate readers, full extracts from their comments and reviews, an attractive presentation of your work, and a life subscription to the magazine. (Your life or ours, whichever is the shorter.) Our backlog is kept low and stretches only half way through the next issue. We want pithy articles, and fiction too short, intelligent or unusual for the promags. This is a chance for both pro authors and amateurs to experiment with new ideas.

SUBSCRIBERS. Magazines or books mailed as 'Printed Matter' go at only one and a half cents for each 2oz. No customs decln. needed. Nos. 1 & 2 are out of print. A very few copies of 3 & 4 are available at twice the current sub rate. To get their free copies of the next issue British NSF members must ask within a week of receiving the current one.

SLANT is affiliated to the United Kingdom Amateur Fantasy Publishers Association. The other members are Operation Fantast, a printed magazine of high standard, Capt. K.F. Slater, 13 Gp. RPC, B.A.O.R., 15, who has also large stocks of magazines etc for sale: Wender, an interesting mimeoed mag. M. Tealby, 8 Burfield Ave., Loughborough, Leics., England; and Phantasmagoria, a new and enterprising mimeoed mag by Derek Pickles, who is now European NSF representative, 41, Compton St., Dudley Hill, Bradford.

CHALLENGE, the most finished poetry of the atomic age and the finest in fantasy poetry. Editor, Lilith Lorraine: associates, Stanton A. Coblenz and Evelyn Thorne. Send us your best and it HAS to be good. Price per year 1 dollar, per copy 30c, quarterly, many prizes. Rogers, Arkansas.

PEON free to European fans: ask Lee Riddle, PN1. USN, Fleet A.W.T.U., Pacific, c/o Fleet P.O., San Francisco, Cal.
Bruce Lane, 1630 Old Shakopee Rd.E, Minneapolis, Minn., USA wants poetry collections of C.A. Smith and SLANT 1&2.
Professional bookbinding from 12/6 a volume, Fred Robinson, 37 Willows Ave., Cardiff.

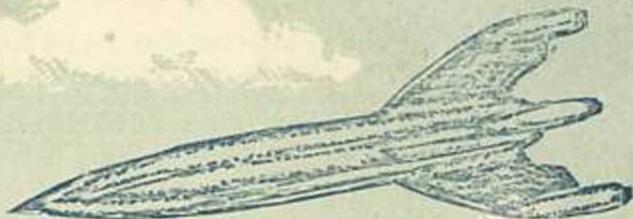
PROXYBOO SERVICES 1. **CLIPPINGS BUREAU**, for rejected authors and columnised fans. Nail and hair clippings of prominent editors and columnists available. We regret that stocks of F.C. (INCINERATIONS) Davis are momentarily exhausted.

2. **'BNF' EGOBOOEXTRACTOR Service.** This machine sucks every drop of egoboo from fanmags, letters etc. The useless husks may then be thrown away and the dried egoboo preserved in doubleproof containers.

3. **CENTRAL ENGRAM BANK**, for victims of Mr. Hubbard's insidious attempt at the removal of competition. We carry an enormous stock of assorted engrams, guaranteed to restore inspiration to the most hopelessly cleared author.

THIS IS A

CONVENTIONAL SPACESHIP



It is on its way to the World SF Convention, London, 10th — 13th May.
You have always wanted to visit London. THIS is your opportunity.
This summer Britain is At Home to the World.
The Festival Exhibition alone will cost £12,000,000.
Not to be outdone,

The Convention Committee have booked the famous Bull & Mouth
One of the Nova pubs, and obviously ideal for talking and eating.
The first by CLARKE, ACKERMAN, TEMPLE, CARNELL, GILLINGS
And other leading lights too luminous to mention
The second at a banquet and running buffet
(Which you will be allowed to catch.)

However we think it only fair to warn you
That among the innocent visitors from America, France, Sweden etc.
Will be the editors of this magazine.
MAY WE SEE YOU?

Join the Convention Society anyway for news, programme, etc.
Send 2 6d or 50c. to Charles Duncombe, 'White Horse,' Fetter
Lane, London EC4.

YOUR SUBSCRIPTION EXPIRES WITH ISSUE NO. 8
This is issue number 6ve.