

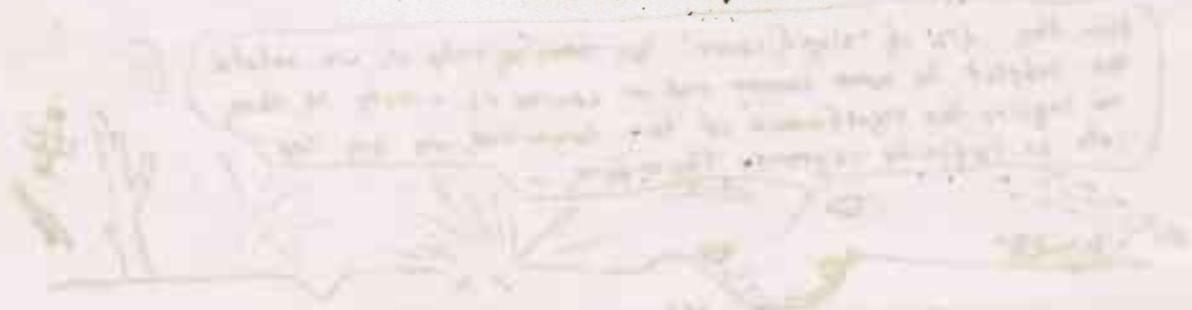
Speer's

▲ SUSTAINING PROGRAM ▲

SPRING/42



Come on, fellows -
LA in '42!



COMMENTARY, ALPHA AND BETA IN THE EIGHTEENTH MAILING

Our 4½-year-old baby seems to be doing very nicely. Because my envelope was held up for dues, I got the post-mailing and it unseparated, and it made a handsome bundle. (Draughon's Business College would hate me if I ended the paragraph there, because we were told not to hyphenate at the end of the last full line of a paragraph. I don't follow that rule slavishly, but hyphenating the last word of a paragraph does look kinda bad.)

Our opposition to the admission of associate members into the FAPA continues. It complicates matters badly, and we don't see just what great benefit to the active FAPA members will result from this change. It gives us, at the maximum, \$15 more per year in the treasury, and each of us active members has to turn out ten more copies of his publication, at his own expense, which will amount to practically as much as that much increase in our own dues. No objection to the other amendment, about shifting a duty from the Editor to the Sectry. Milt's suggestion for compressing Ramblings et al is disappointing; he should know that I haven't the time to type twice everything I put into my pubs. Occasionally I do draft an article ahead of time, usually in shorthand, on a scratchpad at the office. But usually the result is that the article is longer than it would have been otherwise. Try as we will, we can't resist making this tangent shot on Milt's closing comments on the unions question: Is it equally significant that every dictator has destroyed or emasculated religion as one of the first steps in grasping power? (Mussolini's accord with the Pope is of course a debatable point here.) The same is probably true also of Masons and other secret societies. Any cause in which some people believe very strongly is an obstacle to the establishment of a totalitarian state. I remember noticing one time that my high school superintendent spoke of the Kiwanis Club with a subdued fervor that reminded me of my own attachment to the Boy Scouts. Nothing of that kind can be tolerated in a nation devoted to one ideal.

In Nucleus we like: The Daffy Poetics (those that we don't remember reading before). The two filler quotes, particularly the one from "-ardy". Spencer's almost-definition of fans as those who are abnormal in that particular way which finds expression in a strong interest in science-fiction; it's the best short definition of what is a fan that I've seen. The interesting food for speculation in Chauvenet's chilling statement, "it is easy to name twenty fans without whom there would be no fandom as we know it". We disagree with Chauvenet's assertion that fans don't differ from ajjays and school journalists in the publication of amateur periodicals; anybody who has read an ajjay mailing or the run of high school and college papers (there are a few exceptions) can see a world of difference. ... Those FEM covers reproduce very nicely in half-tone; are those photos reproduced photographically, or by litho or something else? Next to that we liked the Spotlight best in the FAPA FFF. And dear me, Dan Burford's volunteered for the army; I'll bet he was raving bloody murder against militarism before Joe and Adolf had their falling-out.... In the R & C, we don't quite get the point of Heck's comment on the two views of Miske. We liked Cooperation at It's Best best in this issue, but we don't like that apostrophe in "Its". Beta, Notes and Queries. Heck, HC, I'm disappointed in you for missing that hiss in the first installment of SS Lensman; tho I was ready to crawl all over you if you objected to it, for there are times when hisses are quite in order. So this AC or DC current thing, back in the at-present-unwordable reaches of my mind is a justification for this sort of language, that I'll be trotting out one of those days.... Farsaci's poem is rather uninteresting to one who doesn't live in Rochester; nor is it published in distinguished company, on a page with someone who in broken English rehashes "Two Thousand Years of German Aggression", and another who misquotes the Declaration of Independence

and talks about incentive to drift, and some rather imaginative cartoons.

Commenting

on Horizons is as usual a ~~good~~ order. We hope the publication of Each in His Own Tongue doesn't imply ~~agreement~~ with it by Harry. The view expressed is a rather common one, that atheists and deists merely disagree over words, but anyone who has watched for it in a philosophical argument will note at almost every point a great gulf ^{between} the mechanist and the animist (the one who believes in the reality of things of the spirit). The last stanza, with the line "A picket frozen on duty" rather definitely dates the poem as written before the first World War; right, Harry? When Dan McPhail rejoins, suggest that he list the contents of the first few mailings; he has a record of them. You don't need anything to suspend that participle from, Hank, because it isn't a participle--it's a gerund, and the prep phrase, "before being" modifies "to overcome" which modifies "difficulties". See Harry's comments on Whacky; is it possible that the dope types directly onto the back of his hekto carbon sheet in making hekto master sheets? Wouldn't a sheet of onion skin paper (the even stencil interleaving won't hurt the impression on the master) simplify things, H? "All men are born equal" strikes us as being, like "Ignorantia juris neminem excusat", a good provisional rule for a race that can't safely follow a contrary course, but one that is essentially incorrect, and should be changed when the time comes; we take it to mean "All men have equal rights from birth". The Bandarlog, durny, are the monkeys of Kipling's *Mowgli* stories, and their Road Song is a beautiful expression of self-pride; four lines are "Wouldn't you like if your tail were so, Curved in the shape of a cupid's bow? Now we're going to-- Never mind. Brother, thy tail hangs down behind." For poetic merit, tho, we like Kipling's "What of the hunting, hunter bold?" better. In addressing letters to fans, I generally omit the "Dear" in the salutation, and use the solitary nickname which is the key for my alphabetically-filed carbon copies: "Joe", "Rob", "Dick", "Doc", "Doctor", "Kuslan", "Ted", "TeD", etc. Fred Senour doesn't have a point in inquiring how we'd feel if we suddenly could no longer engage in fan activity. We'd feel lost, but so would the philatelist, the radio bug, the sportsman, the ornithologist, and others in a similar situation. Alpha in this issue, Looking Behind Us; Beta, On Dit.... The cover cartoon on Jinx is lovely. Of the other material, the incident of the English proffess (fem of prof) and Nepenthe was interesting, but the page we liked best was the Dissertation upon Nothing. Jinx should read someday the real dissertation upon nothing with which I occupied about two-thirds of the page in a letter to Olon once; it was fully equal to that "This looked like a poem" in Escape, and much longer. HJ should think twice before running down Emerson. He was one of the greatest intellects America has produced. Unfortunately almost all of the greatest exercises of his intellect were based upon premises and data which are absurd in the light of our mechanistic way of thinking. However, my Lit prof kind of set me back on my heels when he said to the class, "I trust that you're all adult enough now to realize that your own point of view isn't necessarily the correct one." Milt, and I think someone else, had something to say on the same lines in the 18th Mailing. Washington Jorry-Warts know Tom Slate, who is very intelligent and rejects mechanism. As for Thoreau, there are some amusing tales about him--like the time he seceded from the Union-- , but he wasn't the crackpot he has been made to seem. The data from the psychology experiments is interesting. (If some Latin student criticizes my singular verb there, I'll smash him flatter'n a fritter!) (And that, children, is what Tucker was talking about when he said that (as far as he could tell) any given paragraf in Suskro refers to nothing at all.)... In Sound Off!, 4e's comments on killing in self-defense are interesting. Believe it or don't, Tom Slate would disagree with him! To Joe: "Forever" is ordinarily one word; "for ever" carries a slitley different meaning; in this case, where there was no reason for Ferry to emphasize the adverb, I think it was bad diction to use the separated form. That no fans are known who are rich proves nothing; consider the proportion of rich people to the whole population, and also

the number of fans in proportion to ditto; or rather, just the number of fans; the fans/population ratio isn't needed for the formula. Too bad it has to be Balloon-Pants Acky who calls attention to the term "spine" applied to a magazine, for HC Koenig is much in need of that word, as evidenced by his "Of Books and Things" in this mailing. I think the 235 after U is supposed to be a superscript, J; if it's a subscript it means "so many parts of" like H₂O; but the 235 in this case means the 235th isotope of Uranium or somesuch, doesn't it? The hyphen in "U-235" mite mess up things in a piece of chemical algebra, n'est-ce possible? The true greatness of stf is not necessarily measured by the greatness of CL Moore, SG Weinbaum, etc; its potentialities, and the fact that so few authors whom the world calls great have yet entered fully into the field, should also be considered. The question of how to swear when you don't believe in anything is annoying. Swearing by science in various forms strikes us as inadequate, for I personally don't believe in Science with anything like the fervor that William Jennings Bryan believed in God and the Devil with. In the matter of swearing, I think it's best to take the language about as it is; or rather, leave it alone. With the boys at work I may occasionally say "The Hell you are" for humorous effect in a conversation; elsewhere "The Devil!" is the Thule of my profanity as a rule. This restraint, makes it possible to show beyond question that I feel strongly about something when I say, for example, "For God's sake, don't let Louis get any damn fool ideas about enlisting." We don't think Joe's argument on the last page is waterproof. Studiosness and much reading do not necessarily keep a person from acquiring normal social ability in his teens; there are people who exhibit both--I think Singleton was one. I think I myself could have done it if I'd had the benefit of just the right push at a few key points in my teens.... HJ's fan fiction in Stf Hash is on a much-worked theme, but enjoyable.... Last Testament furnishes beautiful proof that thought does not consist of strings of words. For here are strings of words which roughly lie around the contours of streams of thought, but not sufficiently, in many cases, to show us just what the thoughts are about--we're reminded of the Invisible Man, in the recent movie, in the rain and the smoke, and also of that swell story in the Clayton Astounding where a guy made an invisible monster partly visible by throwing a box of face powder over him. Boy, how we do wander! Lee should arrange his material to more definitely indicate where an article is supposed to end. The note about an autobiography being as final as a last will and testament is interesting. But FooFoo forbid! As for the declamation on poetry, this is all very good groping after the essence of poetry, if that is not nonexistent, but one ought always to keep in mind that what he digs up must fit all that is rightly called poetry and not other things. Which is why we think that the essence of poetry, or of science-fiction, or of what makes a fan, is a will-o'-the-wisp; there is no single element. Wynburn's poem in this issue is good, but Chauvenet's is excellent. And, to misquote the heroine of a Horse's Tale, by Mark Twain, I think this paragraph is getting too long and so I will start another.

We had something quite penetrating and discerning to say about the poetic fragment from Lowndes' weaker days, but it has slipped our mind. We only hope that the epic we're working on on and off won't sound like this to objective ears. Tho we take some heart from the fact that the very artificial Byhrtnuth and the Blackness was not too catcallishly received; Singleton actually said he sort of liked it.

Guteto's an-alysis of Basic English seems quite valid. We were interested in Basic English at the time we were doing a term paper on artificial languages for the same reason that we chiefly enjoy foreign languages: for the new slants they give us on the characteristics of language in general. In the Esperanto lesson on one of the ad pages, we notice that in Esperanto the singular and plural pronouns are the same in the second person. While this is generally true of the conventional address in natural languages, it is a pernicious thing (time out while we look up pernicious to be sure we're not stretching its meaning too much).

The necessity of a distinction between singular and plural in the second person is shown by the cumbersome devices accepted in various languages to get around the loss of the true singular: "vous autres", "vosotros", and "you all", and doubtless the Germans have a device for this purpose also, to make it clear when plural is definitely meant. Incidentally, we want to remark here the parallel form "who all" when it is desired to indicate that "who" is plural. Referring to Guteto #3, I am not so sure of Esperanto's peculiar superiority as an instrument of mental training.... 4e's open letter read, noted, and filed.... Stf at a Glance best-liked in the California Mercury. News of plans for Twilight simply makes us tired, since we know how little chance there is that the particular plans announced there will be carried out. When will these guys get the habit of producing first and talking afterward?

There are many lovely bits in Yhos. Widner standing in the corner and getting the spider's opinions on things stfnal appealed to me. There are some weaknesses in the argument about war, mainly because Widner is not as thoroughgoing a mechanist as he sets out to be, but I'd like to take up that subject at leisure sometime in Ramblings.... The Gallery of the Gods is very colorful, and the text amusing no little. Elarcy, do you want me to scrape off the hektocompound that came with my copy and send it back to you?... Milton's comptrollergeneral-like announcements go somewhat beyond what is properly the judicial sphere, but we think it a logical and advisable extension of the vice-president's duties. Now grapples Harry Jarner with the question of what laureates we should have. The existing laureates can be interpreted so as to apply to distinct types of excellence (mechanical, literary, etc), but I agree that some changes should be made. But I have no ideas beyond those put forward when I was laureate chairman.... The idea of just publishing letters they've written back and forth to each other doesn't work out well in Phanny; the letters are strained, because they knew they were writing for publication; and much of their discussions about Phanny were summed up in the editorial. Re benefits Communism and Nazism have brot their respective countries, at least you can say that Nazism put Germany on its feet industrially and moralely, which becomes more significant when you look at France and Great Britain during the same period. I'll be glad to hear your discussion of propoganda; it's a more involved subject than people generally realize.... Notice several side-comments by Sw in the SFCList, but I prefer the quieter humor like his question mark after s in the data on Whacky.... Evans' sad story of himself was quite enjoyable. This That and T'Other showed some need of disciplining his writing style; but that will come with practice.

Another Swisher Another Sykora Another Widner

We saw nonstop paragraphing in an ad of the Methodist Publishing House.

Tucker McPhail Wilson Pohl?

"Before the unimaginable power of those full-driven generators, the outer screens flared and went down like the doctrine of substance before Locke, Berkeley, and Hume."

Who wants to form a last man club?

Wow, what went with my science-fiction mags?

You mean those old papers and things out in the garage?

I gave them to the Kiwanis Club for paper pulp for national defense.



SCIENTIFICOMICS

We have learned from one who follows it regularly that Odd Bodkins is not fantasy after all; that Odd is a lad who is convinced he is a superman, and a combination of coincidences has everybody else believing the same thing, but it's after all all coincidence. That leaves the way open then to conclude this series of special articles with a discussion of the last one on our list.

ON SUPERMAN

It stinks.

That's the end of the article, but we continue writing here so that you wouldn't know at a glance how short the article on Superman was. We recall how the Short-Short-Shortest Weird Tale was spoiled because you could see at a glance that there was room for only a word or two after the introduction, since it was published on the bottom of the last page of whatever it was published in. The Phantograph, maybe?

Casting about for a Rejected to publish this time, I recall discovering from Swisher's files that my article on the doodling of space-ships has been published, when I was counting on it for a Rejected for this rag. Speaking of Sciential, which I will be in a minute, when we dropped in on Studley on the return leg of the Spiritrip, he turned over to Jinx for Stf Hash a lot of stencils and also some uncut material, which had been intended for the aforementioned publication. Among these stencils were some of an article by Joe, apparently written very soon after he became active, which he prevailed on Jinx to promise to suppress, much to our disgust. Joe had actually wadded the stencils and thrown them away (on Mrs Studley's floor), but I retrieved them and gave them to Jenkins.

ture/

Nothing is ever the same in two different circumstances, so we must deal with struc/

REJECTED --SCIENTIAL

The I didn't come right out and say so, this was written "for publication" in Hoguet's mag, but if it ever even saw a second issue, I don't know of it, and if it did, I'll wager three Buddy Deering coloring prints that this wasn't published in it:

As for political dis-

cussions among fans, I'd like first to mention that fans interested in such things tolerate some pretty low-grade fan literature that is more closely related to science-fiction, perhaps; example No. 1: Bob and Kosc; example No. 2: endless discussions of whether there should be more science or less science in science-fiction. In return, all we ask (and by "we" I refer to fans like myself, Ackerman, and Rothman, and speak for the Communists only if they agree with what I'm saying) [Note: this wasn't supposed to mean I spoke for Forry and Milty whether they agreed or not, but indicated that I was pretty sure they did feel this way about it.] is that political discussions be tolerated when they are confined to a certain limited number of publications the which, if you buy them, you know you will find politics, sociology, etc, discussed in; such fanmags as Voice of the Inqui-Station, the Fantast, Ramblings, and so on; --and in some other publications be allowed occasional remarks on matters political, economic, and social which are closely related to science-fiction, such as "What will the map of the world look like in 1945?" or "Then everyone has to work only a couple of hours a day, machines doing the rest, what adjustments will have to be made in our system of distributing work and goods?" or "That is the effect on public opinion toward science of such movies as 'The Return of Dr X'?" In return, the liberals agree to do their part in building up the non-political-economic-sociological side of fan interest and activities, and the Communists have decided to confine their propaganda to private correspondence.

ITEMS FROM MY SCRAPBOOKS

The ever-popular dinosaur crops up again in another cartoon, not particularly funny, that I stuck in my scrapbook in a weak moment. Says one museum attendant to another, "This new polish is fine ... Takes at least two million years off its age ... Doesn't it?"

I may as well confess, since it wasn't popular anyway, that the question contest I included in the Bal Masque wasn't a completely original idea with me. At a party back home one time we got sheets of paper with ten questions and a row of numbers at the bottom. The second question is typical: "If X comes before M in the alphabet write Z under figures 3 and 10. If it comes after M write T instead." The line at the bottom, when properly completed, read "Eats are on the way".

A clipping from Believe It or Not, wherein Ripley shows the close resemblance--differences are no greater than time works in any unlettered language--between the Greek alphabet and a Mayan epic poem which describes in great detail the sinking of the land of Mu. I quoted it all in a letter to Tremaine, in the Science Discussions days I believe, but it wasn't printed. Sreally quite amazing if true.

"Oh, where's my cracked ice and ginger ale?"

Says the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table: "I think there is one habit ... worse than that of punning. It is the gradual substitution of cant or slang terms for words which truly characterize their objects.... These expressions come to be algebraic symbols of minds which have grown too weak or indolent to discriminate. They are the blank checks of intellectual bankruptcy;--you may fill them up with what idea you like; it makes no difference, for there are no funds in the treasury upon which they are drawn.... But ... let us discriminate, and be shy of absolute proscription. I am omniverbivorous by nature and training." And:

"The great moralist says: 'To trifle with the vocabulary which is the vehicle of social intercourse is to tamper with the currency of human intelligence. He who would violate the sanctity of his mother tongue would invade the recesses of the parental till without remorse, and repeat the banquet of Saturn without an indigestion.'" Jell,

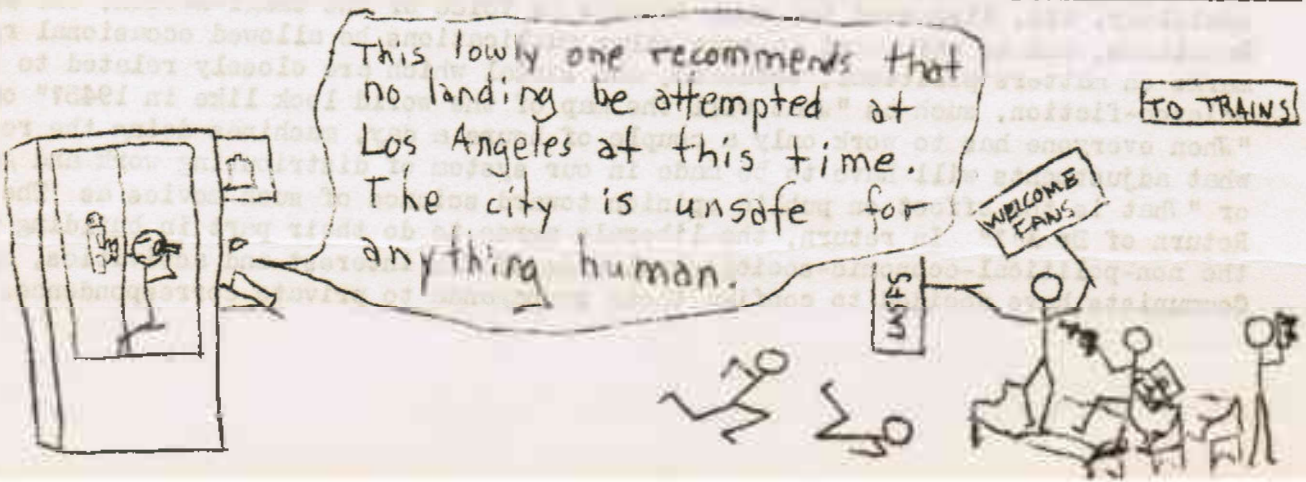
boys, reckon we oughta turn Ackerman over to the police?

Holmes is very quotable,

tho. Substitute "fan" for "poet" in the following:

"What is a poet's fame?--
Sad hints about his reason,
And sadder praise from sarreteers,
To be returned in season."

What story was the "Sky Song of the Rocketeers" included in?



THEY DID NOT BE

Something I intended doing while in Boston was to send a letter somewhat like the following. I didn't have time for it there, scarcely thot of it, but I may pull something like this yet sometime when I'm away from the capital:
 Dere Army Department, Dere sirs I have a ida for wining the war and you can have it if you thank it is eny good i dont want no mony for it as i am a patrotic AMERICAN and wont too do my part to lick those dirty yelow japs. Hear is the ida. why dont you put a solid line of eletric sys a long the cost of java and conect them up too powerful runs so thy wold fire whin a inemy ship came in fornt of them (it would be a good ida to arange five or 6 guns in a bundel too al shoot at onct so in this way one time wold be enuf too be shurs of sinkin the inemy ship. This way java woud be safe and you cold wipe out the hole jap flet. Now I want to say i am dis gusted with the way the british keep runing a way. wy dont you sen reinforcements to generl Mc arthur so he can wipe the japs out of the Pil-ipeines and then go up and blow tokyo of the map. I will be glad to com to was-hington to discus my ida with yor army enggineers if you will pay my expenses. yours Truly a loyal AMERICAN, John A Bristol. P.S. plese act fast. maybe you shold send a radio messag to java teling thim my ida otherwise it may be two late.
 JAB

Here's a fragmentary note over whose significance I've often racked my brain. I was apparently jotting down an idea for a cartoon to go in SP, but I didn't indicate the text, and all I have is the picture, which apparently shows a modern man leading a horse, confronting a cave man who makes a gesture of rejection. What the joke intended was, I quite forget.

Written English molds the spoken tongue, while in French the spoken word's supreme.

Two that König didn't pick up:

Lowndes, in an ZAPA Critic's Report: "... nothing as enervating as a healthy controversy."

And for an infinitive split wide open, Joe Gilbert (in Sound Off!, I believe): "Which seems to me to, in itself, rather bear out the comments made upon your handwriting in the first Star."

Thus, "resign", "resignation"; and "Qu'est-ce que c'est que ça?"

CALL IT WHAT YOU WISH

Old Married Man Widner told us this about a year ago; you can believe it or not-- I don't: "She suddenly stood up and went to the door and flung it open. Drooling acid, she said, 'When you don't utterly disgust me you bore me to tears. Here's your hat and there's the door, and if I never see you again, that will be exactly twenty-seven minutes too soon.' At that I stopped dead on the sill. 'Jet back, beautiful: did you just happen to say twenty-seven minutes, or did you get it out of a story?' 'No,' she said, 'I-- are you reading Second Stage Lenaman, too? I've read everything Smith has written.' 'Lady,' I said, 'I've not only read Smith; I met him at a convention last year, and I've got a line on the mystery of the Aristians.' 'Well, for goodness' sake,' she said, shoving me back to the sofa, 'tell me all about it. Have you met any of the other authors, too? what--'."

You find it on the most unsuspected people. Harry Jenkins' forefingers are as long as his midfingers.

John B Michel has become a devout Hindu.

The page before you is

lithographed.

DEAR CAMPBELL

--Continued

Apparently I have already written you about the first two Unknowns, for the un-reviewed numbers I have on hand begin with May #39, tho to be sure there are disturbingly frequently gaps in my file of Unk, more than I realized.

The torn first page of Returned from Hell recalls when I read the last half or third of the story, by fastfading daylight, in the windwhipped rumble seat of my brother's car as we came home a hundred miles from a family outing in Oklahoma. Steve Fisher's story, frankly, stank. I don't remember now exactly why, but I remember that impression, and I think it was because there was too little to the story. Very much in the pulp class, even to strip scenes... Divide and Rule concluded satisfactorily, tho de Camp serials usually shoot the works in the first installment, and that was the case here.

The June number I reflected getting entirely, and I picked up the July number much later in a second hand mag shop. All I read in it was Nothing in the Rules, which was so-so for L Sprague. Unknown at that time hadn't really gotten going.

Bad illustrations kept me from reading anything in the August number for some time. Finally went over Don't Dream, a fairly good one with a nice idea at the end; Forsaking All Others, very pastel but nice if you fitted yourself into the spirit of it; the Misguided Halo, okay but unlasting; and Two Sought Adventure. This latter, the only one of the Fafhrd-Mouser series I've read, was as wearisome as Prester John, but it was interesting to notice that it involves the comfortable, quiet, happy land, copied from Cheucer's medieval England, which has become almost as standardized in fantasy as the Gernsback future-world became in science-fiction.

None

but Lucifer is an excellent novel. It was super-excellent at the time it was written; now, despite your claims that it speakily predicted the war (along with at least half of our countrymen), events have somewhat outrun it. It remains a disturbing suggestion, tho, that perhaps this is the worst of all possible worlds. At least, it is not easy to imagine something that would surely make it worse; nor, for that matter (since Satan's rule was built into the very natural laws of the universe), something that would surely make it better. Samuel Clemens said that one could be half happy, or worse all the way to 100% miserable, but never more than half happy; I would dispute the reasoning that lay behind that. At any rate, I am not inclined to think that the structure of the Universe has any particular reference to human happiness, but rather "happiness" has been shaped by circumstances to make a creature willing to struggle to survive, and only in the dislocations of human society in its advances beyond the stage where survival of Homo sapiens was assured, is there room for great variance in Menschenglück from individual to individual... Tho I applauded the idea of Huxley's series, Caliph of Yafri was the only one I got around to reading. It was a little yawful, and the language of it didn't translate very well the original as described in the Author's Note.

The idea that you put forth, half seriously it seems, in the Elder Gods, is one that seems to have a good deal of currency in intellectual circles. Something to the effect that the psychic combination of individuals striving after the good may actually give birth to a deity --and realize Ingersoll's sarcastic reversal of Robert Burns. (You know: An honest God's the noblest work of man.) As a mechanist, I deny it; if I ever stopped being a mechanist, I might go for the idea... The Enchanted Week End must have been generally adored, but I didn't like it. The illustrations soured me, for one thing. For another, I didn't like the author's attitude toward his chief character... Dreams May Come

a queer thing, but of course the theory behind it is untenable. Even the several different possible life-paths may have ended at the river's edge on that night, there were yet others that didn't; if there were different pasts for her in 1938, there were different presents for her at the time of her death.... A God in a Garden had good illustration and atmosphere; the plot was just a slight variation on an old theme.. Anything had a bad anticlimax, entirely out of harmony with the body of the story.

Sons of the Bear-God stank, too. Page had a magnificent canvas to work on, possibilities beyond those that Harold Lamb has developed so wonderfully. But Sons of the Bear-God stinks....

The December cover, for *Lost Darkness Fall*, was the best of the illustration-covers you had. The interiors were also super-excellent; I don't see why they couldn't have been used in the book. About *Lost Darkness Fall* I'll say nothing here; I've sung its praises elsewhere.... *Time-Travel Happens!* is a truly amazing thing. If only we could be sure of its reliability, we could develop many useful laws about the nature of time. Maybe it'll happen again sometime; even maybe a car full of fans may ride into 1787 someday. The book review of *The Story of Prophecy* makes interesting reading, too.... Johnny on the Spot somehow was handled so I didn't tumble. Nice bit.... I notice in --And Having Writ, you say *Unknown* uses any type of story as long as it fulfills the requirement "it must entertain". Bosh and twaddle, sir; you know that's not your yardstick for picking stories for *Unknown*. You know there are lots of very entertaining stories that would be completely unsuited for *Unknown*.

January, 1940.

had an attractive cover, but somehow, of the contents I read only *It Happens Twice At Least* (which is very interesting, if true) and *On the Knees of the Gods*, which serial I never finished because it was a mere potboiler after it got going.

Death's Deputy was a good story, and contrary to what some letter-writer said, is properly fantasy, but I don't see that Hubbard, in the end, connected up Destruction and his deputies. I mean, he didn't show how he worked thru them. So people get killed all around McLean --but Elron never tells how it happens. Why did Destruction need a deputy in the first place, and incidentally, how did he act on him? The climactic twist at the very end of the tale deserves praise, tho I had to read back in the story for a while before I caught on.... *Call of Duty* was amusing.... *The Psychomorph* another tale with a swell ending.... *When It Was Moonlight* most unusual; not often do you find this kind of fiction about an historical character in fantasiana. The story lost unity a little by referring to two of Foe's stories, the *Premature Burial* and the *Black Cat*; a bit confusing.

The *Reign of Wizardry* is another serial I started and abandoned, for reasons similar to those for which I shunned *God-Knees*.... *Philtered Power*, read while standing in line for *Gone with the Wind*, was weak in the If-paragraphs at the beginning, which became tiresome ere they were done, but the story ended up pretty well.. The *Black Farm* also sped up toward the end, and turned out to be very good.... The *Living-Ghost* scarcely fantasy.... *Gateway* had beautiful suggestions in it, but too little of them.... *Derm Fool* a new idea, handled sweetly.

He Shuttles was pretty well worked out, tho I don't think the conclusion was entirely necessary logically. The most extraordinary thing about the story was the perfect way in which the artist captured the idea of smoke curling downward. When I said "conclusion" just then, I wasn't referring to the author's forenote and afternote in the first person. They were beauties.

The *Roaring Trumpet* shows de Camp bringing in more of his unnecessary objectionable passages, but spite of that small flaw, it rates very high among the stories you've published, both for the time-travel concept, and Yngvi. Then,

too. I've always wanted to hear more about the Ragnarök.... Mad Hatter, the only other story I read in this number, doesn't seem to call for comment.

June #40 seems to be missing from my files. Yes, I know it is; I never got it. So to the first number in the new dress, which has seemed generally satisfactory, especially since you dropped the illegible script for the title of the feature novel and put the name in plain print up at the top of the list of stories on the cover. By the way, there is one disadvantage of this new set-up, tho; it means three different blurbs for most stories, blurbs saying about the same thing, but varying exasperatingly in minor details. And anyway, blurbs have always been a weakness of yours, the worst being those that are stated as tho they were laying down some universal law, but which laws have little application outside of the special circumstances of the story, and probably are not generally valid.... Fear was lovely, as I've said at greater length elsewhere.... Fisherman's Luck was lousy. In the first place, the rod wasn't used enuf times to give grounds for your blurb, and in the second place, the whole plot was without point.... The Flayed Wolf was neat, tho I read it more or less backward, not thinking it was worth read^{ing} entire, so starting by reading the end of the story.

The Math of Magic lacked the newness of Roaring Trumpet, but was worth reading. Noticed a slip in it: de Camp was so interested in calling attention to the verb "to hight" that he had Shea use it incorrectly, forgetting that Shea's translation to another universe gives him perfect command of the language spoken there.... It was a maddeningly effective piece, with a conclusion that whipped you around and slammed you up against a tragedy just as you tho everything was going to end happily.... All Roads was okay, but completely given away by its blurbs.

The Devil Makes the Law was very good, but would have been better had Heinlein not thrown in the rather petty propaganda for his personal opinions on current affairs, like his objections to commission government, his favor for negroes, his distrust of monopolies, and so on. I like the all-across-the-page line, and am sorry the large size forced you to discontinue it.... Oh, a word about your editorial this time. Your decrying of the verb "to be" is interesting particularly when one recalls that according to some students of language, "to be" is the only true verb. I reckon Korzybski and Company are driving at what you were calling for.

Unfortunately I read much of the October number on the train or in railway stations and didn't enjoy it as much as I should have, perhaps. The Wheels of If seems like the sort of thing I should like a great deal, but all I recall especially appealing to me was the Scandinavian-spelled English. Oh yes, and the descriptions of the geography of the Middle East.... The Haters good enuf for three pages, not for more.... Moore's rendition of the Garden Story was surprisingly effective, tho I read it in very uncomfortable positions in the St Louis Union Station and a spaghetti house across the plaza.... The Devil's Rescue and Chickasha/Okla is about all I remember of that.... Yarn, Dark Places too unpleasant.... The Tommyknocker was a stinky piece of hack work that didn't deserve to be; picked up a little at the end. Very loose logic on the thing.

I read only sections of Typewriter in the Sky; it looks to me like a straight adventure yarn with some weak fantasy thrown in, much less than the synopsis with Part II tries to make out. Only really worthwhile thing I found in it was God in a dirty bathrobe.... The Gods Gil Made were cute.... Cartwright's Camera, especially the end of it, was pretty good, tho it rested on a theory of time that I reject.... Are You There? I read only recently; it turned out to be very enjoyable.

Williamson's werewolf story is ultra. It's the best thing he's ever done.

and offhand I can't think of anyone who's matched it for horror power.... Threshold is good, except for its acceptance of that stupid thing that normal-sight people say, that color-blind people see gray instead of colors. I never knew a color-blind person of whom that was true.

The Mislaidd Charm was hilariously funny; and I was afraid it was going to be a hack piece. Authors are making their characters professional authors an awful lot lately, tho... Tho the philosophical reasoning behind the theory it accepts is pretty weak, the Ultimate Egoist was very good. Drip was a character to be remembered.... A word about the poems you've had from time to time. They have generally been excellent. The ones I remember are Dawn of Reason, Lowndes' stanzas about his beloved, and Look About You, which was the best of all. The one now before me, Fiction, is fair, but reminds me too much of --was it Howard s?-- super-super thing in Weird Tales some seasons back, the one with the line "But I have seen black cities rise on a lonely night-time shore", which completely overshadows it.... Crossroads was swell, but I wish it had been worked up into a full-length novel.... Doubled and Redoubled was pretty interesting. I seem to remember finding a flaw in the time-theory, but don't recollect it now.... Shottle Bop has been raved over; I thot the scene in the Bop was above good; after that the story was pretty routine.... Carillon of Skulls another story with nothing to it.... Oscar was too obvious.... The Professor's Hobby very effective, in the unmatching of the tone of most of the story with the final act.

Castle of Iron the sorriest of the Shea series. I liked the brief Xanadu scene, but the setting of the main part of the story was unfamiliar, I'm sure, to nearly all of us readers, and dC never did properly describe it. He also became much more inconsistent in the theories behind the series.... Heinlein's They was a beautiful piece of work. Most marvellous was the last page of it where, by implication, he gave a complete description of the general structure of the civilization in which They live. And I liked very much, too, the hope that was left, that someday, sooner or later, the human would realize he was the Entity; that eventually, in infinite time, They are bound to make one mistake too many.... A Length of Rope was rotten. Likewise the Forbidden Trail.

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I do not care for your editorial articles on various types of medieval supernatural beings.... The Fountain was excellent from beginning to end.... Not According to Dante was as stinky as its illustration.... The Crest of the Wave was another stinker, tho not quite as bad.... Shape of Desire a good idea, that could have been worked up into something better.... Yesterday Was Monday was a howler. Utterly illogical, of course, in its hairline division of the days at midnite, but very funny. And the suggestion that the whole universe exists just because certain Ones may be amused has a deal of power to it.. Joshua Fair.

The Case of the Friendly Corpse was another story which quite effectively changed completely in tone in the last part of it. In the earlier portion, while it is fairly enjoyable, the only outstanding thing is the death of Harold Shea. But the concluding incidents lift the story entirely out of the ordinary. You don't often find this moralistic treatment undertaken seriously in these days, but Hibbard uses it very successfully. To shift to a trivial point, I notice one of the pages for this novel has "The Fountain" at the top of the page instead of "The Case of the Friendly Corpse".... The Road Beyond was a little sticky.... Solution to the question in the Devil We Know was anticlimactic.... Armageddon a neat little bit.... The Golden Egg was a little disappointing. Not altogether consistent, either, in the Egg's power to sink thru the soil, but having to swing back a portion of Elron's skull to get in there.... Even the Angels was cute, with the documentary style of writing used successfully.

As with Astounding, the first large-size Unknown

didn't have a very good lineup of material. Well, it was fair. Land of Unreason was a little below par, partly from a lack of freshness. Another defect was your sloppy job of cutting it, which became apparent in many places, for example, in the reference to the wand's power in connection with the incident of the cloudless rain, which wasn't included in the story at all.... No News Today was overdone.... A Good Knight's work was a wow. The dialect used could have ruined a story, but Bloc handled it, and the narrator's manner of thinking, beautifully.... Prescience reminds me of many stories and plays in which the hard-headed materialist is shown to be a fool, but the stories and plays cheat by accepting anti-materialistic ideas, which I consider of very doubtful validity.... Finger! Finger! effective.... Borrowed Glory did not surprise me, but was enjoyable anyway.... I'm afraid de Camp pretty well knocked the props out from under Boucher, tho some flaws could be picked in dC's arguments. We dislike to believe in Nostradamus or any other prophets, tho, because if they're believable, then Time must be imagined as one-dimensional.... Smoke Ghost was swell, and Cartier's illustration for it was perfect.... A Gnome There Was was a little boring for the most part, and I thot I found an illogicality in it, I believe in the king's flinging of the eggs, but I've no time nor disposition to run the flaw down.

Bit of Tapestry was a good story, tho just why some of the things were indicated to be important, I couldn't see. The Sisters' battle against the Planners is a nice concept, and the end of the story is well done.... Occupation: Demigod was a trifle.... Brat also of no note.... Smalbug so-so; he was a better character than the story was a story.... With a Blunt Instrument stank.... Hereafter, Inc, very nice, and quite logical.... Czech Interlude just another ghostory.... de Camp doesn't do as well in the type of "modern mythology" (to use Campbell's term) that puts a supernatural element in the everyday world, as he does in the type in which a modern man goes into a supernatural world. Mr Arson was definitely below standard.

In the Undesired Princess, de Camp came up again, but definitely. Of course, he was being a little unfair with Aristotle, since-- I think I've said that before. It is remarkable how far logic, in very recent years, has advanced beyond that which held sway, practically unchanged, for milleniums. The best parts of this story are those in which, applying new principles, the hero breaks down problems that worried into their graves thinkers of elder ages.... Etaoin Shrdlu was beautiful.... The Shoes didn't deserve publishing.... Design for Dreaming was passably good. However, the nitemares the villain was beginning to send the hero at the end of the story shouldn't have been so very effective, since the hero actually wasn't the villain's psychological type at all.

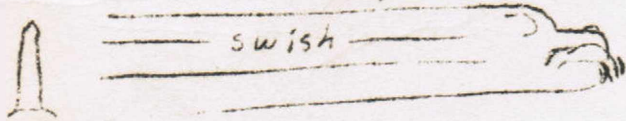
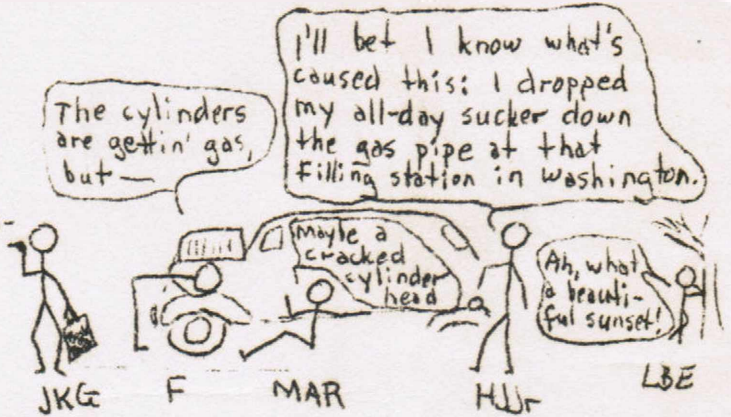
To the current number, now. Prelude to Armageddon looks a lot like Cartmill's Tapestry story, with the behind-the-scenes stated a little more explicitly now, and perhaps less forcefully.... Jesus Shoes another nothingness that held no surprise.... The Compleat Werewolf was misnamed, but it's a welcome addition to the fiction on this subject. Making it all lead up to spy-busting was a little weak, I think; particularly since the main things that spies must dig for are probably not the new inventions at all, but simply gathering and correlating data which is common knowledge in the locality, like the location of munitions plants, number of troops, weather conditions, ktp.... The Room told too little of the wondrous aspects of the room.... Boucher's book review was good reading.... Jane Rice is showing more versatility, and Pobby is all right. The author does seem a little too conscious of her own cleverness at times, and the supernatural ideas in the story don't fit themselves easily into an orderly, logical system, like the best Unknown writers would do it.

Boy, this is a load off my mind!

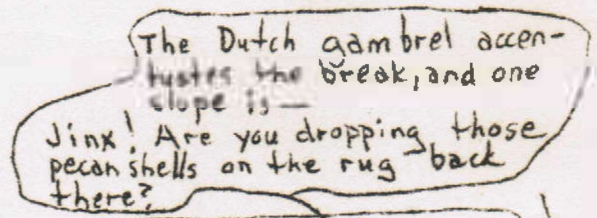
DARK FOREBODINGS OF A BOSKONE TRIP

(Few of which, fortunately, came true. -JFS 3/4/42)

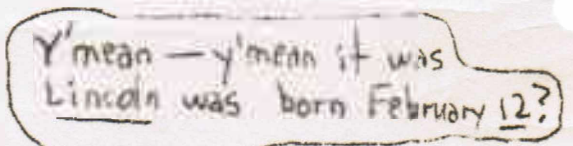
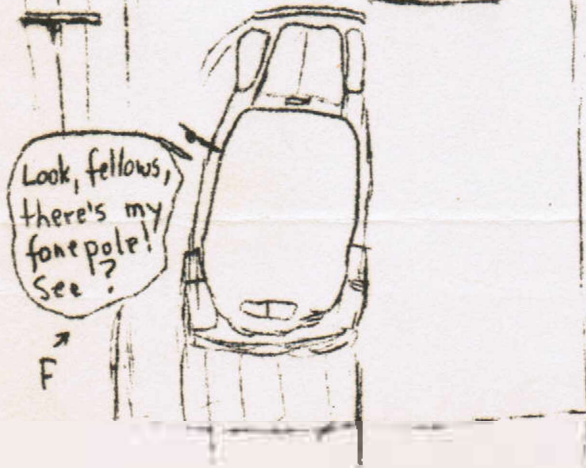
Here we go out of DC, F Speer, Joseph C Gilbert, H Jenkins Jr, Lee B Eastman, Milt and his records (only going as far as Philadelphia)*, all in the Spirit of Foo Foo; and only an hour later than we expected to.



* Actually, Milt wasn't along at all -- F.3/4



↑ passenger picked up at a travel bureau in Philadelphia. He wishes now he hadn't.



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