

This Uninteresting McCann Business

Since both Ted Carnell and I spotted McCann early on, fresh evidence was seen to the best advantage in its proper sequence. However: The first McCann article appeared in June '37, when there was a series of articles by Campbell running on a different topic altogether, which, since then there would have been no word of him becoming Editor, looked like continuing indefinitely. Reasoning - if JWC had an article on "Stress-Fluid" ready, how was he going to get it in print? Answer, pseudonym, which might well come in useful in future for the same reason.

It did come in useful. Six months later JWC became Editor and the series stopped just when he was getting set with his favourite subject - atomic power. This has been carried on since, in editorials, McCann articles, and fillers.

Consider these fillers - they're interesting. Knowing Campbell as a scientific sort of bloke, I expect most fans just put down all fillers on various scientific subjects, and especially atomics, to JWC. Then some reader demanded that whoever wrote the very good fillers should get a credit-line. What do do? -McCann's name appeared here and there after the longer ones. Useful chap, McCann - whenever there was an unfilled quarter page in AST, an up-to-the-minute filler by him arrived at the office.

You will recall the series of long letters Campbell wrote to Brass Tacks through '36 & '37, on astronomy and atomic physics. This was carried on most blatantly by McCann - huge letters, some of them like young articles - from '38 onwards, and it's significant that the McCann letters didn't have to start until after Campbell had arranged to become Editor, while his articles began when Campbell was still writing.

Now the tone and style of both letters and articles is noteworthy, since it's exactly the very concise and logical method of scientific writing which Campbell has been using these many years. Of course, having got the bee in my bonnet, I may be biassed, but that's what I think.

And Campbell's attitude to McCann. I noticed several times how he talked of him - very informally. Sometimes he said plainly "McCann was wrong last month"; he apologised for mistakes etc. just as he would for his own, not at all in the tone he used for explaining, say, how Heinlein's "Blowups Happen" was out-of-date before it appeared.

I think one of my first clues was the fact that both Campbell and McCann lived in Orange, N.J. (and one or two of McCann's letters have had no address at all). If I were to use a pseudonym I think I'd name an address moderately near at hand, where letters could be collected. Then also, both of them spoke of McCann being conveniently in the AST offices several times, and reading MSS etc. which gave him lines for his articles. Me, I am very suspicious of Arthur McCann. DW.

Just to remind you that this sheet is compiled by Don J. Doughty at 31, Bexwell Road, Downham Market, Norfolk; kindly duplicated and distributed by JMR. More letters required, tho' you haven't done so badly this month; and remember, the main topic is ASTOUNDING Science-Fiction.

REVIEW

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As nothing was said against this department last month, though, to be truthful, only one person mentioned it, I s'pose you won't mindet appearing again in this issue's line-up.

Roger's cover for "Magic City" is artistically superb, tho' the STF seems to be subdued by the artistry, but a very welcome change from the purely STF painting. This cover novellet of Bond's is superior to most of the stuff he has been turning out lately, a really enjoyable tale of a semi-savage America, placed in the far future, with a religion and set of superstitions based on the remnants of a forgotten civilization - a delightful story. P. Schuyler Miller is responsible for the second 'let - "Trouble on Tantalus" - a vivid story after the same style as his "Pleasure Trove". Heinlein is whady, but logical, in his "-And He Built a Crooked House" - the adventures of a three-dimensional model of a 4-dimensional house when an earthquake hit it! Our quota of whackiness for the month is completed by de Camp with a crazy time travel tale - "The Best-Laid Scheme". Sturgeon has improved this month, and tells of the spaceship that was "Completely Automatic". At the bottom of the list - "Castaway" by RMWilliams. And the serial, "Sixth Column", continues on its powerful way. The Klystron is subject of Short's article, while McCann reminds us of Mars' canali. Binder returns to illustrate "Castaway" and "Completely Automatic" - good. H and R Isip are in the mood for the 'lets; Schneeman's no worse; but Cartier!!! JWC makes his yearly "Invitation" to authors.

RAMBLING - Mostly by other people this month - thanks pals!

HOLMES (R): "I don't consider my opinion of AST to be of any value to anyone (I wouldn't like to misquote you, Ron) except myself, the Editor and the particular authors." And later: "'Tin Tax' -- I suppose some fool has christened it TIM or something by now (?) - was, for a first issue, Good."! A staunch supporter of Hubert Rogers is R.E.Orme: "Can you imagine Paul doing a cover like the Oct. '39 AST? If he tried he would probably draw something like a Venus flytrap, giving people the wrong impression. In any case Grey or Gray was never a favourite colour of Paul's, his impressions of spaceships, for instance, run to a riot of colours, putting the late Richtofen's Flying Circus to shame." But R.E. has it in for JWC too! "Ever read "Branches of Time" in a 1935 WONDER? (August '35) The title is self-explanatory. In fact, the same basic ideas are used as in Sells' "Other Tracks" of '38. Who said Mutant?" Prelude to a discussion by George Medhurst: "Well, I hope it doesn't seem like blasphemy to you if I say that ASTOUNDING ceased to stir my depths some considerable time ago, to be more precise, somewhere between Clayton days and the Campbell Golden Age". K.Bulmer: "I was busily chewing over "The Stars Look Down" (What a grand yarn) and thinking nothing of London's traffic, I nearly made corned beef of myself under the grinding wheels of a bus. Or another time when I stood in front of the hand-opened type of draw on the Underground, until the train started again, waiting for them to open of themselves, as the majority do now. What a mug, doubtless you will say. I blame it all onto Science-Fiction." Scotsman J.Morgan is of the opinion that: "TIN TACKS will prosper, as, such a farming has been needed for a long time, that is, one that is devoted entirely to one SF magazine. However, I think it would be a good idea to include comments on UNKNOWN, as the two mags have much in common." No more room this month, lads; 'pologies to those left out.