

THE BRITISH

# SCIENTIFICTION

FANTASY REVIEW

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Vol. 1. No. 5

OCTOBER, 1937

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# SCIENTIFCTION

## THE BRITISH FANTASY REVIEW

Editor: WALTER H. GILLINGS

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Vol. 1. No. 5

October, 1937

## WHICH SHALL IT BE?

By The Editor

THE fate of **Tales of Wonder**, that unique magazine which has caused such a stir amongst fantasy fans and no little interest amongst ordinary readers, is still in the balance. Enthusiastic fans who are anxious to learn if they are to see another issue will doubtless be wondering why it must take so long to decide whether one is justified. But the delay is all to the good, for the longer the magazine is available to potential readers the more successful the experiment is likely to be, so far as sales are concerned.

It is probable, however, that before very long the Great Decision will have been made, though what the verdict will be I dare not venture to forecast, for fear of bolstering up false hopes. But I will go so far as to say that, whatever the sales may have been, **Tales of Wonder** is unquestionably a success as far as the fans are concerned. Never has there been a British magazine which so completely fulfilled their requirements, despite its deliberate appeal to readers other than themselves.

In due course, therefore, we hope to be able to announce that a second issue of **Tales of Wonder** will be available within the next few months; though this is rather the expression of a natural desire than an intelligent prognostication. Meanwhile, let me again appeal to you to do all you can to help return a favourable verdict by recommending the magazine to your friends and gaining new converts to science fiction. Further, at the risk of burdening you, may I once more seek your assistance in interesting these new readers in **Scientifiction**?

It is my desire—and, I trust, that of all its present subscribers—that whatever the outcome of other more ambitious experiments in the growing field of British fantasy, **Scientifiction** shall continue, in order to foster and encourage them. Its future, however, is still uncertain, and until twice as many subscribers as it now has can give it the weight of their support, it is likely to remain so. But if every one of its appreciative readers were each to secure for it another subscriber, it would ensure the continuance of this magazine, and enable it to develop into something which would interest a far greater body of readers, apart from the comparative few who are interested in its present contents.

We have made progress; there's no doubt about that. More and more delighted fans are joining **Scientifiction's** circle, which is wider than that of any magazine of its kind, and more enthusiastic in its praises. But that enthusiasm, encouraging though it may be (as well as appreciated), must take a more tangible form if it is to go on expressing itself in these pages. It must be communicated to others, so that they may contribute their interest and support to this worth-while venture and enable it to succeed where others may fail.

Won't you help make the future of British science fiction, already promising, doubly sure?

**Don't miss the important announcement to be made in our next issue concerning the future of TALES OF WONDER!**

# TRANSATLANTIC TOPICS

By JULIUS SCHWARTZ

There is none better qualified to give our readers a peep behind the scenes of American science fiction than Julius Schwartz, who is in close touch with its best-known authors and editors.

## NEW YORK

NO DOUBT you've pondered over those initials appearing under scientifilm and book reviews in **Thrilling Wonder**? Then let it be known that 'M.W.' who wrote the reviews of "Things to Come," "Rockets Through Space," etc., is none other than Mort Weisinger, associate-editor, while 'E.B.' who reviewed "Revolution in Phys'cs," is Eando Binder. John W. Campbell did "Men of Mathematics" as 'J.W.C.' while Manly Wade Wellman, as 'M.W.W.' looked after "The Man Who Worked Miracles." Henry Kuttner, who has crashed into **Thrilling Wonder** with "When the Earth Lived" and "Beyond Annihilation," did the scientifilm reviews of "Devil Doll" and "Eternal Mask" as 'H.K.' Dr. John D. Clark, well-known as writer of the Atlantis letters in **Astounding**, as well as author of "Minus Planet," reviewed the Weinbaum Memorial Volume as 'J.D.C.'

## Pseudonymymania

Now it seems evident no more issues of **Flash Gordon Magazine** will appear, it is safe to reveal that James Edison Northfield, author of the feature novel in the one and only issue, is the pseudonym for John H. Compton, well-known over here for his pulp detective stories . . . Speaking of pseudonyms, watch for one to be used by Arthur J. Burks, "million-words-a-year" man, in an early issue of **Astounding**. Unfortunately, in this case, I'm forbidden to divulge the alter ego; but if it helps, Burks has used the same name for weird fiction in the past, when he had two stories in the same issue . . . My lips are sealed, too, in the case of two new names which will shortly appear in **Astounding** and **Thrilling Wonder**. Thornton Ayre makes his bow in the former with "Penal World," while Polton Cross will have "World Without Chance" in the latter. Both are pseudonyms; only one is a new author . . .

## All-Star Assembly

One of the greatest gatherings of science fiction notables ever as-

sembled was seen in New York recently, when Jack Williamson, of New Mexico, and his Pennsylvanian pal, Edmond Hamilton, visited the big city, and Mort Weisinger of **Thrilling Wonder** threw a party in their honour. Among those also present were John W. Campbell, Eando Binder, Manly Wade Wellman, Frank Belknap Long, Otis Adelbert Kline, Dr. John D. Clark, Sprague de Camp, new **Astounding** author, and Seabury Quinn, weird story writer. Recreations ranged from discussion of super-science and Communism to playing Monopoly

## "Zarnak" to Go?

Indications are that **Thrilling Wonder** will at last heed readers' vigorous objections to "Zarnak" by allowing the scientific cartoon to do a disappearing act . . . Artist A. Sigmond, who drew those symbolic covers for **Amazing** four years ago (remember the pink dragons?), lives in Holland . . . J. Munson, whose sole artistic effort was the illustrating of Stanton A. Coblentz's "Man from To-morrow" in **Amazing Quarterly** about the same time, died before his drawings appeared in print . . . Howard V. Brown, **Astounding** cover-artist, used to portray future inventions on the covers of Gernsback's "Electrical Experimenter" twenty years ago . . . Hans Waldemar Wessolowski (plain Wesso to you), receives hundreds of fan letters—and ignores them all . . .

## Editor Merritt

A. (for Alexander) Merritt is working on a new novel in his spare moments; and they're mighty spare, too, since for years he's been busy holding the post of Associate Editor on "American Weekly," the magazine with the biggest circulation in U.S.A. . . . Ed Earl Repp, popular science fiction author of years ago, is now writing scenarios for Western pictures in Hollywood . . . New **Flash Gordon** movie-serial now in production is titled "Flash Gordon's Trip to Mars" . . .

## Fantasy Book Reviews

### THE DELIGHTS OF BURROUGHS

LOST ON VENUS, by Edgar Rice Burroughs (Methuen, 7/6)

EVERY science fiction fan, almost without exception, must have thrilled to the vigorous Martian romances of this popular author long before he stumbled across the American magazines. I, for one, must confess that the first piece of fantasy I devoured in my early youth was the serial version of his "At the Earth's Core," as presented by a penny dreadful. Though better known generally for his famous "Tarzan" series, Burroughs ranks with Wells and Verne in his capacity to interest the ordinary reader in fantastic literature, even if his method of approach is different; the fact that his science fiction books have run into many editions during the past eighteen years is sufficient evidence of this.

His latest book to appear in England continues to relate the adventures of Carson Napier on the cloud-wrapped planet "Amtor," his earlier exploits having been told in "Pirates of Venus," published here some time ago. Both books appeared in America two or three years back, and the two stories were serialised in our own "Passing Show" as long ago as 1933-4, embellished by the magnificent drawings of that inspired artist, Fortunino Matania, against which the jacket of this book makes a very poor show.

Without preamble, except for a short introduction by the narrator (with whom Napier is communicating from Venus by telepathy), the sequel proceeds to take up the story where the previous book left off. The hero—whose agility and stamina remind us of our old friend, John Carter, and his battles on "Barsoom"—has been captured by the Thorists, a band of Venusian revolutionaries, while the lovely Duare, princess of Vepaja, an ancient empire of Amtor, has been carried off by the Klan-gar, or bird-men.

#### City of Scientists

Napier is taken by his captors to a city of Noobol, the unexplored country of Venus, and imprisoned, only to escape and rediscover Duare. Together they set out through the

forests towards the island kingdom where first they met, when Napier landed on Venus in his rocket-torpedo; and we follow them through many deadly perils, including the most ferocious monsters which Venusian zoology can offer, the Kloobnorgan (ape-men), and other delightful creatures, all of which they survive.

At length they run into Skor, King of Morov, who lures them to his grim fortress, manned by corpses he has brought back to life. Again the man from Earth escapes, this time with another Venusian beauty, and after encountering further perils eventually reaches Havatoo, City of Scientists, where only the perfect are allowed to live. Despite his physical attributes, our hero, having been subjected to rigorous examination by the governing body, is promptly sentenced to death as culturally unfit.

But finding that he has astronomical knowledge beyond their ken, the Sanjong decide to live and let live and Napier survives once again, to initiate the scientists into the secrets of aviation. So, at last, he goes to seek out Duare, held prisoner by Skor in the City of the Dead, from which they make a successful bid for freedom in the first Venusian aeroplane.

When thought variants pall and magazine science fiction seems "not what it used to be," it does one good to hark back to a book such as this, with its hair-breadth escapes, fights to the death and unpretentious thrills which delighted us of yore, presented in the typical Burroughs manner.

W.H.G.

\* \*

MARS BREAKS THROUGH, by Prof. A. M. Low (Joseph, 7/6)

CLOSELY following his story of a trip through space in a run-away rocket-ship comes a more mature novel by Professor Low, which during the past year has been running as a serial in "Armchair Science" under the title, "The

Great Murchison Mystery." It is, indeed, a tale of mystery, and from first to last the reader is confronted with a series of baffling incidents; but to us the story is most interesting as showing the effects of interplanetary communication upon finance, armaments and international relations.

It tells how Dr. Verity, a scientist, gains contact with Mars while administering hypnotic-sleep treatment to a world-famous financier, and at the same time experimenting in electrical thought-waves. Over the thought-beam comes the message: "I can bring peace to your planet . . . There need be no war!" at a time when Europe is on the brink of a war which threatens to destroy civilisation. But the Doctor's patient, Murchison, intervenes; somehow contrives to exert a strange influence over the scientist, and after forcing a world-wide slump in armament shares, causes a sensation by declaring that he can end all war.

#### Why . . . ? What . . . ?

He demonstrates to the League of Nations his ability to render futile all known weapons of warfare, then causes a further and bigger sensation by announcing that he is in communication with Mars. On the ground that Earth will benefit from regular communication with the Red Planet, he calls upon all countries to spend millions of pounds on a scheme to establish elaborate transmitting stations throughout Europe. Several signal towers are built; but what is their true purpose . . . ? And why does Dr. Verity's daughter suddenly break her engagement to Murchison's secretary and become engaged to the financier, only to disappear?

Eventually she is discovered in hospital in a state of semi-consciousness, muttering a strange name—Zandra, whereupon Murchison promptly removes her to the Doctor's home and keeps her a virtual prisoner. It is not until her erstwhile lover breaks in and rescues her that we get a clue to the solution of the mysteries surrounding the laboratory. But the climax comes when they set the Thought-Wave Machine in operation and Mars breaks through for the second time,

to the accompaniment of shrieking dynamos and flashing lights; and the great Murchison mystery and its attendant puzzles are satisfactorily explained.

D.W.F.M.

\* \*

#### ZERO TO EIGHTY, by Akkad Pseudoman (E. F. Northrup)

(New Jersey Scientific Pub. Co., \$3)

THIS book is interesting chiefly as a blend of fact and fiction containing an unusual amount of the former ingredient; also as a revelation of the character of its author—scientist, artist and lover of Nature, a type all too rare in these days of specialisation. It is the imaginary autobiography of an old man of eighty (hence the odd title), who in 1961 was the first human being to circumnavigate the Moon in a space-vessel.

During his early life in the country, young Akkad became intensely interested in Nature and decided to make a name for himself as a scientist. The discovery of a convenient gold mine provided the means whereby he could obtain a thorough training in electrical engineering, and the device which eventually made the space voyage possible was a giant magnetic gun, 200 kilometres long. Here the author strains our imagination rather severely, for it is unlikely the most fabulous gold mine could provide for such a monster, which makes Wells' Space Gun look like a pea-shooter.

However, by mortgaging his gun before it is built, Akkad raises the necessary cash and goes shooting round the Moon with the aid of a little rocket power, just beating a Russian lunar expedition by a matter of hours. The voyage, like all such voyages, is uneventful, and he returns to find himself a world hero. The book is illustrated with photographs of actual magnetic guns and there is a 40-page technical supplement for those who feel inclined to go into the matter of high frequency polyphase fields more deeply. The thoughtful reader will also find much to interest him in the many philosophical diversions, but whether the type of fan so luridly drawn by Mr. Russell will enjoy the book is open to grave doubt.

A.C.C.

# TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF FANTASY

Most science fiction fans pride themselves on their encyclopedic knowledge of the subject. Here are thirty questions by which you can test your knowledge of fantasy in all its forms. See how many of them you can answer. The correct answers are given on page 10.

1—Who started the first science fiction magazine?

2—Name three fantastic novels written by the creator of Sherlock Holmes.

3—What is the full name of artist Paul?

4—Which of these authors are British?—Edmond Hamilton, W. P. Cockcroft, Bernard Brown, Laurence Manning, H. O. Dickinson.

5—Who was the first editor of **As-tounding Stories**?

6—Name two books recently published in England which originally appeared in **Wonder Stories** as serials.

7—What two magazines combined to form **Wonder Stories**?

8—What American professor writes science fiction under the name of John Taine?

9—Name two famous German fantasy films, and their producer.

10—What was "Britain's Only Science Story Weekly"?

11—Who was the "father" of American science fiction?

12—Name the authors of these stories—"The Human Termites," "When Worlds Collide," "The Mightiest Machine," "Menace from the Moon."

13—What well-known British mystery author wrote several science fiction stories, published in America?

14—Give the titles of the "Sky-lark" stories and name of their author.

15—What name did Edgar Rice Burroughs give his imaginary world at Earth's core?

16—What American author is best known for satirical science fiction?

17—Where was the first British Chapter of the Science Fiction League formed?

18—Name science fiction novels written by these authors—Michael Arlen, Aldous Huxley, Susan Ertz.

19—Who wrote a play about the creation of synthetic beings, and what word did he use to describe them?

20—Name a former managing editor of a science fiction magazine who wrote a book about space travel.

21—Give the full name of an American fantasy magazine which saw only two issues.

22—Who wrote a series of stories about two electrons and what names did he give them?

23—Give the titles of three novels by H. G. Wells dealing with the distant future.

24—What magazine called itself "The Magazine of Prophetic Fiction"?

25—Who is the woman science fiction author who uses a man's name?

26—What was Stanley G. Weinbaum's first story, and its sequel?

27—What was the original title of **Amazing Detective Tales**?

28—Which of these are science fiction artists?—Leo Morey, Francis Flagg, C. A. Brandt, Lumen Winter, Howard V. Brown.

29—In which magazines did these stories appear?—"The Ark of the Covenant," "He Who Shrank," "The Man from To-morrow," "Colossus."

30—Name three high officials of a British scientific Society who are also identified with science fiction.

**JOIN The Science Fiction Association**, the world's largest, most progressive non-commercial organisation of fantasy fans. Details gladly supplied by the Secretary, **THE SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION**, 5 Florist-street, Leeds, 3.

# MESSAGES FROM SPACE

Relayed by "The Moon Man"

**C**OINCIDENT with formation of London branch, election of SFA Council is proceeding. Members must select seven from a dozen leading fans, these to have last word in running the organisation or ensuring that others run it properly . . . First Bibliography of British fantasy, listing some 200 books, issued by SFA recently, will prove boon to collectors. First trial-issue of **Amateur Science Stories**, consisting of members' own efforts, will appear shortly . . . Maurice K. Hanson, Editor **Novae Terrae**, SFA organ, deserted Nuneaton to swell ranks of London fans . . . Among new members is I. O. Evans, author of illustrated book depicting "The World of Tomorrow," lecturer on interplanetary travel and life in the future, who is writing a science fiction novel . . . Los Angeles branch, including Forrest J. Ackerman, America's S.f. Fan No. 1, heard two-hour talk by Dr. David H. Keller on every aspect of science fiction; also addressed by Mort Weisinger, who revealed **Thrilling Wonder's** stable secrets . . .

Anxious to assist development of science fiction in England, Dr. Keller responded to appeals of Walter H. Gillings, Editor **Tales of Wonder**, offering to arrange for reprinting any of his early stories. Future issues (?), therefore, may feature such classics as "Stenographer's Hands," "The Yeast Men" and "Revolt of the Pedestrians." "Anything I can help you with, I will," the Doctor avers . . . Neil R. Jones, famed for his Prof. Jameson stories, also offers aid in return for British encouragement. Says he: "I have always been well commended by readers in England and the colonies. Writing for an appreciative audience makes quite a difference to me" . . .

## READ, WATCH, LISTEN!

"When London Fell," fantastic thriller by W. J. Passingham, in which prehistoric monsters emerge from hidden world beneath the metropolis, now running in **Passing Show** . . . Simultaneously, **Modern Wonder** serial, "The Lost Kingdom," by Ralph Stranger and Gerald Bowman, depicts perils of submarine explorers in cavern beneath Antarctic . . . "The Wild Goose Chase," by Rex Warner (Boriswood, 8/6), is satire depicting scientific city of hermaphrodites . . . "Lost Atlantis," by James Bramwell (Cobden-Sanderson, 7/6), weighs up evidence for the submerged continent . . . Hero of "Some New Planet," new novel by Pamela Frankau (Bodley Head, 7/6), goes backward in time into world of his own past . . . Characters in "I Have Been Here Before," new play by J. B. Priestley, are victims of recurring existence, bound to the Wheel of Time . . . "Brum—To Come," radio burlesque from Midland Regional, gave sound-glimpse of Birmingham in distant future . . . H. G. Wells' latest novel, "Brynild," disappoints after "Star Begotten." Says a reviewer: "Withdrawing his eyes from the contemplation of space . . . he is not here concerned with the wars of the future, the invasion of Martians, but the Shape of one Woman of To-day."

## MORE NEW AUTHORS

Following example of fans, British fantasy authors are breaking down barriers, meeting face to face . . . High jinks at Liverpool recently, when Editor Gillings spent holiday fortnight with author Eric F. Russell, visited Leslie J. Johnson, his collaborator, met H. O. Dickinson and P. E. Cleator, old **Wonder** contributors; also looked up John Russell Fearn at Blackpool, where Fearn and Russell met for first time . . . Coached by Fearn, Thornton Ayre, another Blackpool author, burst into print with "Penal World" in current (October) **Astounding** . . . Latest thought variant of Fearn's accepted by **Astounding** is "Dark Eternity," dealing with results of annihilation of thought . . . C. F. Hall, Lincolnshire BIS member, for years a reader of scientifiiction, had his first story accepted by **Amazing**. Titled "Forgotten Interlude," it tells of another Earth in another Space-Time . . .

Eric F. Russell's next in **Astounding** is "Mana," short story showing how man's intelligence is passed on to the ants who succeed him . . . Busy digging up data on anything likely to keep Science guessing, Russell's now having the time of his life bearing torch of America's Fortean Society in this country . . .

# THE MAN WITH THE IDEAS

## Why John Russell Fearn Takes Liberties With Science: Imagination Matters Most, He Says

This month you are introduced to the much-maligned British author who, despite the criticism levelled at his work by fault-finding readers, has gained for himself one of the most prominent positions in the science-fiction field.

**M**Y first impression on meeting John Russell Fearn, most successful—and most criticised—of England's fantasy authors, originator of some of the most amazing conceptions in the realm of scientific-fiction, was that in many ways he resembled that "wizard scientist of the future" who plays so large a part in our literature. Short, slim, sharp-featured, with an expansive brow emphasising the point of his chin, his bright, piercing eyes give him a look of extreme alertness; long, sensitive fingers go to heighten the illusion. But instead of radiating thought-waves, as one might expect him to do, he speaks in a quiet tone, rapidly, in a broad Lancashire accent.

This is the man who, at the age of 29, has by hard work and intense concentration earned a place among the leading contributors to the American science fiction magazines, in which during the past four years he has had many remarkable stories published. Most of these have been feature novels or novelettes, and almost all based upon some striking new idea.

So daring have been some of his original conceptions that they have strained the credulity of even the most imaginative readers, who have many times called him to task for failing to pay sufficient regard to the limitations of present-day science. But he has seemed to thrive on criticism, however severe it has been, and gone on producing more and more fantastic stories on a tremendous scale. Until it seems he must have reached the bounds of human imagination . . .

### His First Effort

Basking in the sunshine at Blackpool, where he lives with his mother, to whom he owes much for help and encouragement, Fearn told me how he had contrived to realise an early ambition to become a fantasy author. Like many another, he

started his scribbling while still at school, and it was not long before he realised he was gifted with an unusually vivid imagination. Possibly the reading of all the juvenile science fiction he could lay hands on directed his mind into these channels, but his first effort, at the age of ten, was a crude interplanetary story called "The Planet Tracker."

Some years later, when his father tried to curb his literary lapses by putting him to work in the cotton world, young Fearn still found time to continue his scribbling, turning out thousands of words on odd scraps of paper, choosing wildly fantastic subjects devoid of rhyme or reason. When the family moved from Manchester to Blackpool, he became in turn confectioner's assistant, auctioneer's assistant, solicitor's clerk, and for a time was employed in the local amusement park. But still he went on writing, becoming more proficient and submitting his work for publication, though without much success.

Then, in 1931, he came across **Amazing Stories**, and saw in this the opportunity for which he had been looking—an outlet for his fanciful notions. Much encouraged, he wrote "The Intelligence Gigantic," in which he envisaged the creation of a synthetic being endowed with superhuman powers. With high hopes, he sent it to **Amazing**, but it was not until a year had passed that he heard of its acceptance, and it was another year before he saw his first story in print in the summer of 1933.

### Thought Variant Success

Meanwhile, he had decided to concentrate on writing for America and turned out another and longer story, "Liners of Time," depicting transport into the future on a grand scale. This was also accepted by **Amazing**, but long before it was published as a serial in 1935, he had



written its sequel, "Zagribut," and had it accepted, though it has still yet to see print.

"Though these three stories were fantastic enough, I still felt I had not expressed myself exactly as I wanted," Fearn went on. "Ideas teemed in my mind, but most of them seemed so outlandish, even for the market I had tapped, that I shirked putting them on paper. Then came the day when **Astounding Stories** was revived and 'thought variant' stories were introduced, quite out of the ordinary run of science fiction, full of new, audacious ideas. Here, I thought, was my big chance. I set out to write only thought variants, and succeeded every time except one."

His first success in this new field was "The Man Who Stopped the Dust" (**Astounding**, March '34), which brought many compliments from readers and is still considered his best story. But the second, "The Brain of Light" (**Astounding**, May '34), brought forth the first of the oft-repeated complaints that he had forsaken science for sheer imagination. "I admit that was so," he conceded, "but I got away with it just the same—and anyway, there was a new idea behind it . . ."

### "The Cover Copper"

It was about this time that the appearance of **Scoops**, England's juvenile science fiction weekly, caused Fearn to turn his attention nearer home. For his success in America had not satisfied the desire he always had to see British publishers pay more heed to this medium, and he was anxious to assist in the experiment. He appeared only once in this paper, however, with "Invaders from Time." It was while he was writing a series of stories entitled "The Men Who Stopped War" that it abruptly ceased publication.

But he was by then well established in U.S. as a leading author of thought variants (he was introduced to **Scoops** readers, strangely enough, as "one of the accepted masters of American science fiction"); and he followed up his earlier successes with many more stories in **Astounding**, nearly all of which provided cover illustrations and earned him the title of "The

Cover Copper" amongst transatlantic fans.

A short story, "He Never Slept" (June, '34), was closely followed by "Before Earth Came" (July, '34), in which he advanced an entirely new conception of the creation of the Solar System. "For this I received a deluge of criticism; but it was a grand idea, though I say it myself, and I doubt if I shall ever get another like it again . . . For which many of my readers may be devoutly thankful!"

### "Wild Stuff . . ."

After this came "Earth's Mausoleum" (May, '35), in which he offered an explanation of the Moon's bright streaks, depicted the destruction of the Sun and creation of a new one; then "The Blue Infinity" (September, '35), in which he adopted the simple expedient of moving Earth to Alpha Centauri in order to save it from deadly danger, thence into another universe altogether! "Wild stuff, this," Fearn confessed; "perhaps the most fantastic idea I ever perpetrated. But if you analyse the science in the story you'll find I didn't spend two months of careful research for nothing . . ."

He frankly admitted that he knew little science, but gets it all from the public library, where he spent weeks studying the theories of Jeans, Eddington and Einstein before attempting his next and most famous work, "Mathematica." In this he conceived the whole Universe as a series of mathematical equations against a background of figurative abstract ether. When published in **Astounding** (February '36), it caused a furore both amongst his critics and his admirers, which repeated itself three months later when it was followed by a sequel, "Mathematica Plus."

"Here's something the critics would like to have known at the time. Believe it or not, I got the idea for 'Mathematica' while under gas at the dentist's!" Fearn laughed carelessly as he went on: "No, I don't mind their criticisms in the least, though they're pretty fierce at times. The real test of popularity is the decision of the editor, and it doesn't matter how hard a few individual readers hit me as long as I can please him.

### Fiction Before Fact

"They complain that I ignore science completely. Well, to a certain extent, they're right. Science fiction, as I see it, entails both science and fiction, and if one strives for absolute scientific accuracy the result is too much like a text-book. I admit quite openly that I take liberties with science, but only so as to get a twist in the story which I could not get if I stuck to facts all the time. . . I've always understood imagination was the author's greatest asset; that's why I try to exert mine to the full—though I hope some of the things I've pictured never come to pass!"

One of Fearn's most scientifically accurate stories according to him, was "Subconscious" (**Amazing**, August '36), in which he showed how it was possible for two Martian minds to control the destiny of humankind. This was written some years ago, and marked his last appearance in **Amazing** to date, though "Climatic Control," "The Immortals" and "Nemesis" have yet to follow "Zagribut." The rest of his twelve **Astounding** stories are "Deserted Universe" (September '36), "Dynasty of the Small" (November '36), "Metamorphosis" (January '37), and "Worlds Within" (March '37).

He had none of his work in **Wonder Stories** until it became **Thrilling Wonder**, which has published his "Brain of Venus" (February '37) and "Menace from the Microcosm" (June '37). Since then he has appeared in the British **Tales of Wonder** with "Seeds from Space" and "Superhuman," the latter being written under the name of Geoffrey Armstrong. Both these stories, too, were written several years ago; he has a great deal of unpublished work on his hands, since he turns out manuscripts with such speed and regularity that the limited market cannot absorb them all. This is one reason why of recent months he has been entering other fields, such as **Weird Tales** and **Thrilling Mystery**.

But he has not abandoned science fiction, and has many more exciting fantasies in store for his readers, in addition to those now being considered by U.S. editors, and "Lords of 9016," due to appear in **Thrilling Wonder**. Meanwhile, he is at present appearing in a new role in the British **Modern Wonder**, introducing readers to the wonders of alien planets as he relates the experiences of the first space travellers in a series of feature articles entitled "The Chronicles of a Space Voyager."

W.H.G.

(In our next issue—an interview with Benson Herbert)

### FANTASY TEST (See Page Six)

HERE are the correct answers to the questions in the fantasy knowledge test. We leave it to you to decide whether you consider yourself well "up" in your subject; but if you have answered at least 25 of the questions correctly you must be a very keen student of science fiction.

1, Hugo Gernsback. 2, "The Lost World," "The Poison Belt," "The Maracot Deep." 3, Frank Rudolph Paul. 4, Cockcroft, Brown, Dickinson. 5, Harry Bates. 6, "The Green Man of Kilsona," "Crisis!—1992." 7, **Science Wonder Stories** and **Air Wonder Stories**. 8, Eric Temple Bell. 9, "Metropolis," "The Girl in the Moon," Fritz Lang. 10, **Scoops**. 11, Edgar Allan Poe. 12, David H. Keller, M.D., Edwin Balmer and Philip Wylie, John W. Campbell, Jr., Bo-

hun Lynch. 13, J. M. Walsh. 14, "The Skylark of Space," "Skylark Three," "Skylark of Valeron," Edward E. Smith, Ph.D. 15, Pellucidar. 16, Stanton A. Coblentz. 17, Leeds. 18, "Man's Mortality," "Brave New World," "Woman Alive." 19, Karel Capek, Robots. 20, David Lasser. 21, **Miracle, Science & Fantasy Stories**. 22, Joe W. Skidmore, "Posi" and "Nega." 23, "A Story of the Days to Come," "The Time Machine," "When the Sleeper Wakes." 24, **Wonder Stories**. 25, Leslie F. Stone. 26, "A Martian Odyssey," "Valley of Dreams." 27, **Scientific Detective Monthly**. 28, Morey, Winter, Brown. 29, **Air Wonder Stories**, **Amazing Stories**, **Amazing Stories Quarterly**, **Astounding Stories**. 30, Prof A. M. Low, D.Sc., P. E. Cleator, Leslie J. Johnson.

# FLUTTER OF THE FANS

## Readers Reply To New Author's Scathing Criticisms

**E**NTHUSIASTIC fans on both sides of the Atlantic continue to write in praise of **Tales of Wonder**, the British science fiction magazine, and to express appreciation of **Scientifiction**. Here is a further selection of comments from many letters received:—

There is no doubt that **Tales of Wonder** represents the greatest step yet taken towards establishing a regular magazine publishing British science fiction to suit British tastes. Its well-drawn cover, neat contents page, enthusiastic editorial and, above all, its stories, blended together to make a really worth-while publication. To us fans who, though despising it, have become inured to American science fiction, the quieter atmosphere of this magazine came as a welcome change . . . In my opinion, and that of most members of the SFA, it is a magnificent effort, and we all look forward with pleasure to further issues.—D. W. F. Mayer, Secretary, Science Fiction Association, Leeds.

**Tales of Wonder**, on the whole, is very good as an introduction to science fiction. To a hardened fan like myself the ideas are not very startling, but it compares very favourably with the American magazines and the general level of the writing was above the American level . . . The best story in the issue was "The Prr-r-eet," which was plausibly written. I would like to see Russell develop some ideas like Stuart (Campbell), Weinbaum or Clark Ashton Smith . . . Congratulations on **Scientifiction**. I always read it with as much interest as I do a story. I see from D. R. Smith's article that there are some people who think as I do.—Dr. W. A. Gibson, West Lothian.

### From U.S.A.

**Tales of Wonder** is a wonderful effort. I only hope it receives the support it deserves; if so, then its success is assured. The whole magazine was good. The only thing missing is illustrations, but this doesn't detract from it at all. "Invaders from the Atom" was the best

story in the issue . . . **Scientifiction**, too, is a swell magazine. But one thing which strikes me as odd is Eric F. Russell's hearty dig at science fiction fans, whom he thinks are a bunch of kids who aren't dry behind the ears yet. Not being a real fan, he can't understand their point of view, and being a science fiction author doesn't make him an Einstein; his science is proof enough of this. So he is striking rather near home when he talks about 'moronic children.'—O. F. Wiggins, Editor, **Science Fiction Fan**, Denver, Colorado.

**Scientifiction** is just what I have been waiting for since I first began to read science fiction many years ago. Looking over every new issue I become more and more enthused with the progress of English science fiction. We'll go further, though; I'm confident of that! . . . I have just finished reading "The Prr-r-eet" in **Tales of Wonder**. It is really an excellent story; the humorous writing was superb. I would class this far above the great majority of American stories.—D. Webster, Aberdeen.

I was delighted with the successful way in which **Tales of Wonder** blended adventure and science. I enjoyed most "The Prr-r-eet" and "The Perfect Creature," and should like to read more stories of this type in the American magazines. I sincerely hope **Tales of Wonder** will mark the long-delayed beginning of science fiction in Britain. I myself know quite a few people who are eagerly awaiting a periodical British magazine.—E. G. Morgan, Glasgow.

### Too Many Grouches?

I can't understand why science fiction fans are always quarrelling amongst themselves. One has only to open a fan magazine to find them hurling cynical, spiteful criticisms at those who do not hold their pet beliefs. The recent tirades apparently directed at **Astounding Stories** are examples. If these authors don't like thought variants or anything connected with U.S.A., don't allow them to clutter up the

first British fan magazine with their grouches. If our freethinking Mr. Russell is horrified by the "callow youths" who make up probably 90 per cent. of the science fiction reading audience, why give him every issue of the magazine in which to say so?—R. A. Cass, Hull.

**Scientifiction** is by far one of the best fan magazines I have seen. It easily surpasses most, if not all, the American fan magazines. Being a collector, as well as a reader, of weird and fantastic fiction, the "Messages from Space" relayed by "The Moon Man" and the book reviews are of particular interest . . . I like the way you give all essential information for the collector.—H. C. Koenig, New York.

Congratulations on the first British science fiction magazine, **Tales of Wonder**. To say the least, it's simply fine! All the stories were great, though it was obvious that all the authors were writing so that they weren't too advanced for newcomers to science fiction . . . The publishers are to be complimented on such a venture. I hope they go

on to success after success.—Bert Lewis, Preston.

A regular reader of the three American science fiction magazines, I was delighted to see a British publication enter this field . . . I hope **Scientifiction** makes an effort to get **Tales of Wonder** published regularly. The only alternative I can hope for is that **Scientifiction** becomes so successful that it will be able to put the accent on the **fiction**.—T. Moulton, Blackpool.

These interviews with fantasy authors are something to look forward to. The interview with Olaf Stapledon was the best so far. What about S. Fowler Wright, J. M. Walsh, even H. G. Wells himself? . . . I think Eric F. Russell is a sure selection for popularity, don't you? That humorous two-gun style of his should silence the yelping of the ardent science hounds.—C. R. Forster, Northumberland.

"Moon Man" flashes concentrated news in a fine manner . . . The book reviews are a godsend; they tell us of books we would probably have missed but for them.—P. G. Sherry, Glasgow.

## The Most Amazing Thing in Science-Fiction . . .

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# V. H. JOHNSON

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# SCIENCE FICTION'S STORY

## The First Cover Contest

By "FANTASIA"

TOWARDS the end of 1926, when **Amazing Stories** had been running some months and was making good progress (it was claimed that 150,000 copies were being printed), Editor Gernsback encouraged the writing of science fiction by inviting readers to submit their own stories for publication. Announcing the first of his unique "cover contests," in which all were invited to write a story round a bizarre cover illustration by artist Paul, he declared: "Here is a great chance for you to become an author."

The meaning of the picture, which showed a group of alien beings gazing at an ocean liner hanging from a huge globe floating in space, was obscure enough to defy the powers of the wildest imagination; three prizes, amounting to 500 dollars, were offered for the best stories explaining it. Over 300 manuscripts were submitted, and it was not until six months later that the result of the contest was made known.

First prize went to "The Visitation," by Cyril G. Wates, who afterwards reappeared several times in **Amazing's** pages. Third prize-winner was Clare Winger Harris, who later became one of the most popular women authors in science fiction. Among four other entrants whose stories received "honourable mention," and were published in a subsequent issue, were Cecil B. White, author of "The Retreat to Mars," and explorer A. Hyatt Verrill, who had contributed four leading stories to earlier issues and was destined to write many more.

### The Die-Hards

Clearly, Gernsback's idea in running this contest was to tap hidden sources of scientifiction and ensure himself of a plentiful supply of stories for the new magazine. Though by that time several new authors were appearing regularly and reprints were becoming less prominent, while more and more novel, intriguing tales were being published.

There were many whose titles were to become familiar to fans in later years through constant mention in the "Discussions" columns, though there are few to-day—at least, in England—who have actually read them. Such famous stories, for instance, as "Station X," by G. McLeod Winsor, "The Red Dust," by Murray Leinster, and "A Columbus of Space," by Garrett P. Serviss, whose "Second Deluge" also appeared, to be reprinted in **Amazing Stories Quarterly** seven years later. Fitz-James O'Brien's "Diamond Lens" was another classic which in later years was reprinted, not once, but several times.

Soon after Verrill made his appearance with "Beyond the Pole," following it up with "Through the Crater's Rim" and "The Man Who Could Vanish," another author destined to write many fine stories—Dr. Miles J. Breuer—made his bow with "The Man With the Strange Head." Otis Adelbert Kline also contributed "The Malignant Entity" and "The Radio Ghost," while some time later the first of Bob Olsen's "Fourth-Dimensional" stories appeared.

But despite the increasing tendency towards brand-new stories, the old masters were not forgotten. At the same time that Verrill and Breuer were introducing their new ideas, H. G. Wells' "First Men in the Moon" was being serialised, to be followed soon afterwards by "The War of the Worlds" and "The Time Machine." Edgar Rice Burroughs' "Land That Time Forgot" was also printed in serial form, while short stories by Wells, Verne and Edgar Allan Poe regularly filled odd pages.

### A Bouquet for Verne

Other notable stories which appeared during the first eighteen months of **Amazing's** career were "The Green Splotches," by T. S. Stribling, "Blasphemer's Plateau," by Alexander Snyder, "The Colour Out of Space," by H. P. Lovecraft, "The People of the Pit," by A. Merritt, and—most notable of all—Mer-

ritt's "Moon Pool," which was serialised early in the second volume. Other well-known authors represented were Ellis Parker Butler, Harry Stephen Keeler, Kurt Siodmak and Prof. Julian Huxley.

Gernsback himself contributed a couple of short stories between writing editorials on "Interplanetary Travel," "The Mystery of Time" and "Plausibility in Scientifiction." Recording his "Idle Thoughts of a Busy Editor," he revealed that he had made scientifiction his hobby since he was eight years old, so that "I probably know as much about it as anyone." Yet he found his new magazine "the most difficult paper it has been my good luck to edit. The strange fact is that there are no two readers who like the same thing.

It is astonishing that 50 per cent. of the readers heartily dislike one story, whereas the other 50 per cent. laud the same story to the skies . . "

A queer lot, these science fiction fans—even in those days, as can be seen from a glance at the letters they sent to the bewildered Editor. One reader was so impressed by Prof. Serviss's account of the "Second Deluge" that he addressed a note to the leading character in the story asking him to "send me plans for a small Ark which I would like to build to take care of my wife and seven children," while another wrote giving his opinion that "Mr. Jules Verne is a very promising writer"!

(In our next issue—The One and Only Annual)

## B.I.S. NOT TO AIM SO HIGH

THE British Interplanetary Society, most of whose members are science fiction fans, has decided it is aiming too high in selecting the Moon as first step towards its goal of space-conquest. Its October meeting was devoted to a heated debate on the motion: "That the venue of the Society shall be moved from the Moon to New York." Despite the protests of the more ambitious idealists, the motion was carried.

Introducing the motion, Prof. A. M. Low, Society's president, said it might be easier to convince the public of their earnest if they restricted their aim to stratosphere flight for the present. The time would come when money would be needed for experiments. Dare any man of financial reputation lend his name to such a project as a trip to the Moon, even if he believed in it? On the other hand, some would contend it was just as easy to fly to the Moon as New York, so why not go the whole hog instead of delaying the achievement of space-flight?

Movers of the proposition were Edward J. Carnell, well-known science fictionist, and R. A. Smith. Mr. Carnell emphasised that though they had read many stories of space-travel and were "space-travel minded," the man-in-the-street was totally disinterested. Imagine the effect on the general public if the papers came out with glaring head-

lines: "Rocket Ship Leaves for the Moon To-morrow!" All sorts of people would try to bring pressure to bear on the Government to prevent such an attempt.

### "Colonists of To-morrow"

Against the motion were Research Director J. H. Edwards and Arthur C. Clarke, fantasy fan. In support of his appeal to members to aim at the Moon, Mr. Edwards said it would cost no more to visit the satellite than to rocket to New York; the single trip could be done for £20,000 in either case. Refuting the suggestion that colonisation of another world would add to strife upon Earth, he declared: "It is to us, the colonists of to-morrow, the future holds forth its promise."

Amongst others who urged the Society to plumb the depths of space straightway was Walter H. Gillings, who maintained that when the time came there would be men prepared to sacrifice their lives in making the lunar voyage, even if a return trip was impossible. The two-way trip would be the second step leading to the eventual fulfilment of interplanetary travel and destiny of mankind.

The motion was carried by 16 votes to 13. Prof. Low afterwards explained that this did not affect the real object of the Society, to hasten the day when space would be conquered.

## SFA LONDON BRANCH FORMED

LONDON members of the Science Fiction Association turned up in full force to launch their new branch at a meeting held at Catford on Sunday, October 3rd. The attendance was the biggest of any assembly of fantasy fans ever organised in this country, and remarkable enthusiasm was demonstrated.

A letter of good wishes from officials at Leeds headquarters emphasised the delights and advantages obtained by fans getting together to discuss their unusual ideas; expressed the assurance that the new branch, comprising some of the most active fans in Britain, would be a phenomenal success.

Ken G. Chapman, who presided, was elected chairman of the branch, with Eric Williams as secretary. It was agreed that meetings should be held every month at a place to be arranged; that members' activities should include science fiction writing and study of scientific subjects. William Temple, fantasy author, was elected chairman of Writers' Circle; a Science Committee was also appointed.

### Showing Them How

Interesting addresses were given by leading fans present. Edward J. Carnell mentioned some of the pitfalls American fan organisations had encountered and which had to be avoided in England; declared we could learn nothing from U.S. fans except their mistakes. The SFA had made them sit up and take notice and set them an example of how to run such an organisation. They had to be careful, however, that those who were more interested in science did not fall out with those devoted to science fiction, as had happened in America.

William Temple traced the development of the fantasy film since 1894, when a pioneer of the cinema tried to screen Wells' "Time Machine." As one who had studied the subject thoroughly, he held out little hope of future developments in this field on the ground that serious scientific films were not box-office successes.

### "Useless" Rocket Tests

Arthur C. Clarke, BIS treasurer, outlined the activities of this body

since it was transferred to London from Liverpool ten months ago. To those who inquired what work had been done he would reply: "If you mean sending penny rockets up in the air and getting into trouble with the forces of law and order—none." Much theoretical work had been done by the Technical Committee which was essential if they were not to waste time and money on useless experiments. He urged all fantasy fans to join the Society, since interplanetary travel was the main theme of science fiction and they would be helping to bring nearer the day when space was crossed.

Walter H. Gillings, Editor **Tales of Wonder**, recounted his efforts to interest publishers in scientifiction during the past seven years; told of various excuses editors found for rejecting his suggestions, one being that a science fiction magazine would not attract a big enough public. First admission that there was a public for science fiction came from Editor of **Scoops**, schoolboy weekly, who found that many of its readers were men; but owing to the stigma placed upon it at the start, the paper failed in spite of improvements.

### More Tales of Wonder?

The speaker described how he gradually gained contact with Britain's science fiction authors and, discovering that Newnes were examining the chances of a fantasy magazine, put them in touch with the authors. For over a year the project was considered in great detail, but eventually abandoned on various grounds. Odhams Press, owners of **Passing Show**, also expressed interest in a suggested periodical to be called "To-morrow, Magazine of the Future," but decided against it after 18 months. Finally, World's Work gave him the job of editing a trial issue, and out of a mass of manuscripts he selected the material which became **Tales of Wonder**.

The magazine had been well received both by British and American fans, and although it had not yet been decided whether the experiment was successful, he hoped that a further issue would materialise in due course.

## ADVERTISEMENTS

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**E**NGLISH, American magazines, books, periodicals of every description bought, sold, exchanged: **Wonder, Amazing, Astounding**, science, aviation, radio, fiction, humour, boxing; 4/- dozen, post free. Lists 2d. Anything bought; highest prices.—G. A. FINAL, 15 Nashleigh-hill, Chesham.

**F**ANS! Are you interested in Space Travel? Of course you are! Then join the **British Interplanetary Society** and help make your dreams come true. Write for full particulars to the Secretary, Miss E. HUGGETT, 92 Larkwood-road, South Chingford, E.4.

**I**F YOU have not yet secured your copy of **Tales of Wonder**, the British science fiction magazine, make sure of getting it now. Price 1/- at all bookstalls and newsagents, or 1/2 post free direct from the publishers: **THE WINDMILL PRESS**, Kingswood, Surrey.

**T**O AMERICAN fans: Copies of **Tales of Wonder**, the British science fiction magazine, mailed to you for 1/2 (about 30 cents), post free. Don't miss this unique service! —V. H. JOHNSON, 46 Mill-lane, Liverpool, 13, England.

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**N**EW readers of **Scientifiction** may obtain copies of the first four issues, containing interviews with John Beynon Harris, Festus Pragnell, Olaf Stapledon and Eric Frank Russell, at 7d. per copy post free.—**Scientifiction**, 15 Shere-road, Ilford.

**C**HARLES FORT, perhaps the most astute mind of this century, died on May 3rd, 1932. But his work did not die with him. It has been, and is being carried on by a large and influential group of enthusiastic followers.

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Latest News:

### CAMPBELL TO EDIT "ASTOUNDING"

Cablegram received on going to press from Willis Conover, our American Correspondent, states that F. Orlin Tremaine, Editor, **Astounding Stories**, has resigned, and John W. Campbell, Junr., popular author who also writes under name of Don A. Stuart, has been appointed in his stead.

Ex-editor Tremaine has been with the magazine since the days when it was owned by the Clayton group; was appointed Editor when it was re-issued by Street and Smith in 1933.

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