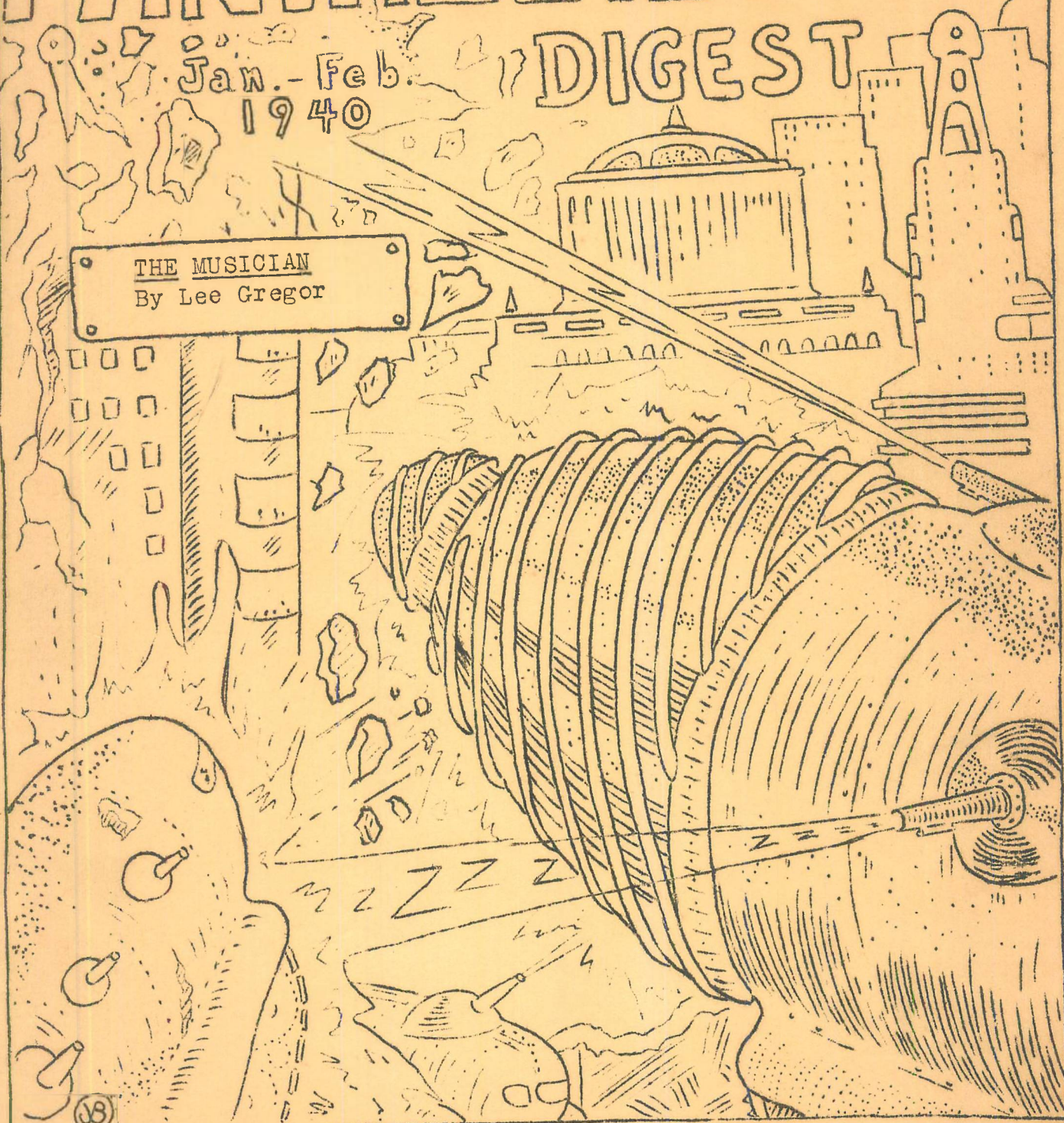


FANTASCIENCE

Jan. - Feb.
1940

DIGEST

THE MUSICIAN
By Lee Gregor



Second Anniversary Issue

Charles D. Hornig
Harry Warner, Jr.
Ralph Milne Farley

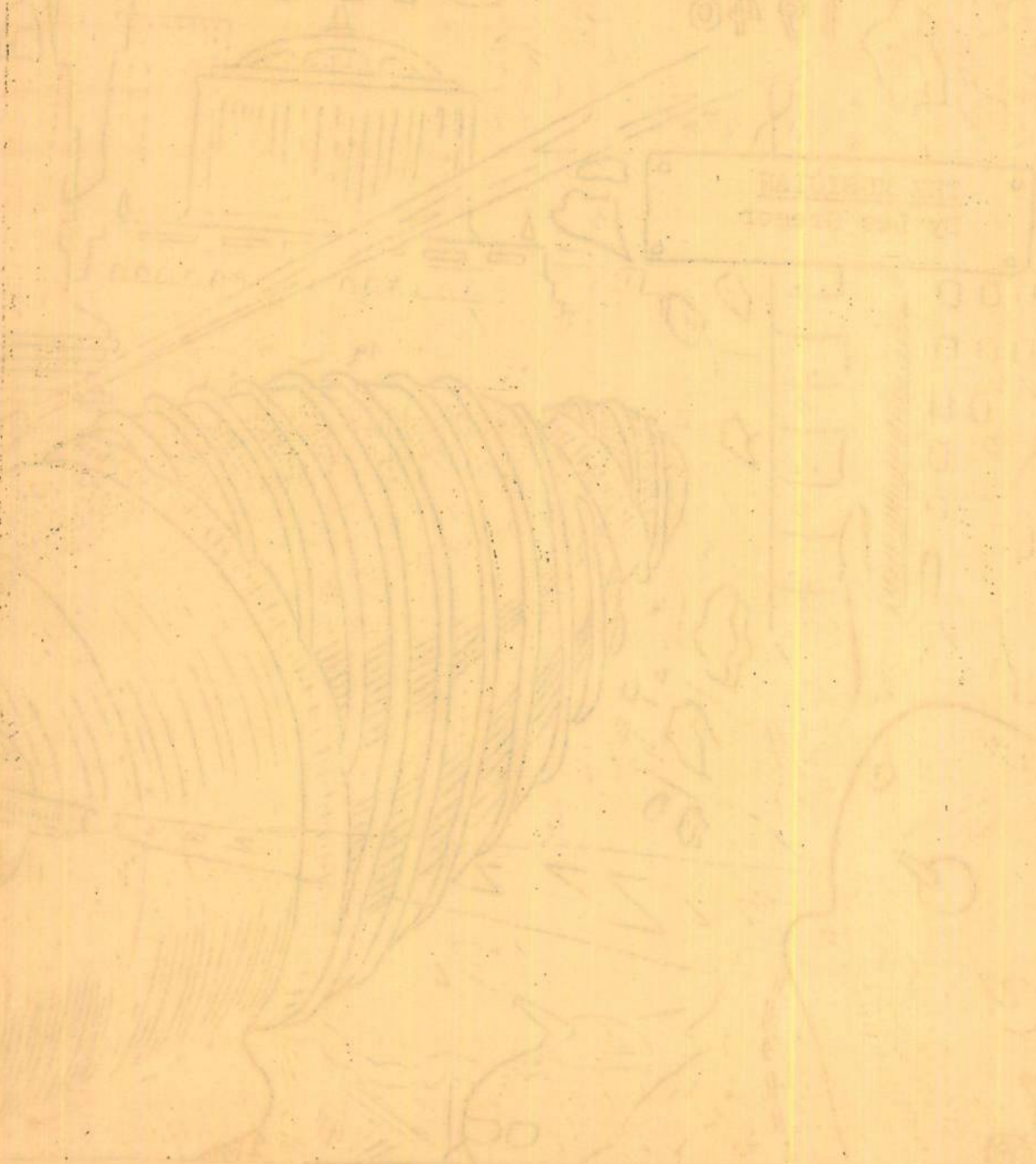
Frederic Arnold Kummer, Jr.
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Milton A. Rothman

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Fred W. Fischer

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Cover, illustrating a scene from Lee Gregor's pathetic tragedy, "The Musician," by John V. Baltadonis.
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THE MUSICIAN

By Lee Gregor

Five years, now, and it had been the same all the time. On top was the grey mist, the damp warmth, the grey and the wet mingled with everything. Underneath, the grey concrete corridors, sweating with dampness, the crowded barracks, the smelly machines, the unceasing close association with men and machines until you could not tell which was man and which was machine. And through everything, top and bottom, was the pounding and the droning of war noises that never stopped.

He was Lieutenant J-74k-MK, now. Five years ago -- or was it a million years -- he had been a name. But in war, when men are machines, and machines are more noble than man, for they do not will death, it is more convenient to give men numbers, according to division, squadron, company. He had been Private B-348k-MH at the beginning, but then there are vacancies, and you get moved up. So now he was Lieutenant, pilot of mole D-431 of the 45th mole squadron.

Him a soldier! How he'd laughed. But it wasn't very funny now. No, after five years it wasn't very funny. He had wanted to be a musician. Well, there he was, sitting in a tiny underground hall on Venus, pounding on the electronic organ at an initiation rally.

All the time they came -- the young fellows -- the boys who thought they were soldiers -- filled with the romantic slop of propaganda. They came, load after load, and they laughed and they sang, and he would play the music for the songs on the electronic organ. He, was going to be a musician. Oh yes, he was going to be a musician.



"Off in Space, there's a place called Venus.

'Neath its mists, pretty girls will meet us....."

And so on.

It was a very funny song. The new recruits laughed. One batch after another -- month after month -- they sang the same songs there in the little underground hall, with the moisture hanging from the grey concrete. They sang and they laughed, and they were new. After they were no longer new their laughter was of a different sort.

Hit it up! Hit it up, Lieutenant! With all stops out, and feet prancing on the pedals. Play the vulgar songs and the banal marches so that the kids can have a good time before they drink more deeply of the war. Pound it out! The more noise the better. Make a lot of noise; make more noise than the war, and then maybe you won't hear the war.

And the General up there. The Old Man, himself, spouting off the same pep talk he'd given the kids for the past two years. What a magnificent talk! What a marvelous, patriotism-inspiring, blood-tingling oration! Lieutenant J wished the words would stick in the General's throat and choke the beast to death. Because when you hear the man say the same words, make the same motions, the catches, the breaks -- over and over again -- then it sounds different.

When you do anything over and over, for hundreds of times -- it makes a difference. And it makes the war show itself for what it is. No matter how magnificent causes and reasons and rationalizations sound when you first go out, the monotony and the greyness and the wetness quickly enough reduce it to what it really is -- the sordid grabbings of imperialist powers -- from any side -- for any cause.

So there he was -- up there on Venus, under the clouds, fighting the rebellionists. Maybe they had cause to rebel. It wasn't for him to think.

And sometimes, while he sat there at the organ, feet and hands mechanically moving up and down, he'd have a strange feeling that something was going to happen. There would be an emptiness inside him filling up with a pressure that came close to exploding. There was something inside that wanted to come out and force his hands to play music that really meant something, instead of the staccato quickstep and the sentimental ballads that was all he knew. But nothing ever happened. Nothing ever happened, and he went on according to the routine. You couldn't change the routine.

Only sometimes he wondered why he had that empty feeling inside, and sometimes he felt like

something important was going to happen, but nothing ever did.

He couldn't know what he wanted. He had never known any good music -- there had never been any written, and if there had, the wars had spoiled it all.

It was one day during the period of time -- the exact day never mattered -- that the summons came from the General. The Old Man himself -- what could he want? What was so unusual and important that the O.M. contacted the Lieutenant personally? Whatever it was, it was fatality; the General would command, and he would perform.

"It's a test job," the O.M. said, as Lieutenant J stood at ease after saluting. The Lieutenant's face turned to rock. Test jobs were nice if you were tired of living.

"We have a neutron blast projector. Something new." The General's old-young eyes stared fixedly at Lieutenant J. "Ion blasts are deflected by magnetic fields. Neutron blasts are not. But, for the same reason, you can't push neutrons up to high velocities by magnetic fields, like you do ions. The problem: to generate high velocity neutrons in appreciable quantities. We've done it, and the results are more than appreciable.

"We have a new mole. It has heavy armor, sonic nullifiers, and induction beam converters that will handle any power they can throw short of almost enough to fuse half the planet. The new mole has the neutron blast. The power plant is enough for a battleship. The entire machine is so strong that you have almost an even chance of coming back.

"Here are your orders." He handed Lieutenant J a paper. "You

will destroy that base and return. That is all."

"Me -- do that with one mole? It must be very powerful."

A buzzer drummed its song on the General's desk. He flipped a switch and listened to the voice that came from the speaker.

"I'll be right over," he said.

He rose, and made ready to go, then suddenly recalled Lieutenant J standing there. "You have four hours before the test starts. Suppose you come with me."

"Where?"

"At the far end of passage AB-24, where digging is still under way, a buried space ship has been found. It is very old. It may be so old that it actually comes from the civilization that existed before the War of the Beginning."

"Really?" Lieutenant J was not enthusiastic. Even if it were a relic, so rare, of that civilization that had existed on Earth before the war that had destroyed everything, 15,000 years ago, he failed to become interested.

He had suddenly become very tired. He was going to go out on a test job, and he would probably never come back, so who cared about pre-civilization space ships? He would never come back, and he didn't care. Perhaps that was what he had wanted all the time. That emptiness that wouldn't be filled, the harrowing of the war noises, the lassitude that crept over him -- he was tired, and all he wanted to do was to sit for a million years and not move, and not have to do anything but sit. Perhaps that was the solution -- go out and not come back. It was easier than keeping on with the routine when he was so tired and he couldn't find out what that was he

wanted.

The car that had carried him and the General to the end of the new passage ground to a halt. The O.M. stalked past the guards and surveyed the uncovered roundness of the metal hulk. How long ago was it that it had crashed? And now it was there, buried under yards and yards of rock and dirt.

Lieutenant J followed the General into the ship. The crash could not have been very heavy. Most of the machinery within was still intact. There were vague shapes on the floor, shrouded in dust, but of unmistakable outline. Bodies might go in 15,000 years, but bones still remained.

The General disappeared into the dusk of the rear chamber, his flashlight prowling around the engine. Lieutenant J went forward, peering half-heartedly at the furnishings and mechanisms, his mind neither here nor there, but in an empty state without thought. Why bother thinking? Everything would be over soon, and he wouldn't have to wonder anymore what had been left out of him.

A device caught his eye, and he walked over to it. The thing was a pair of spools, with a tape running between them and through some mechanism. The shape was different, but Lieutenant J knew what a tape running through a machine was for. He had listened to music from a device like that, long ago. But he had gotten tired of it. There had been no good music. Nothing satisfying, like meat and wine. Just spices and sweets.

He idly wondered what sort of music they had before The Beginning. He took a testing instrument from his side pouch and made contact with the leads from the machine with the tape and spools. He read his instrument, removed it, and clamped battery leads to the

machine. The starter was snapped, and the motot ground. It was dry after so many years, so he supplied oil.

Then the music started, and everything else stopped.

That was some music. It snapped him to attention with four sharp chords, twice repeated, and then it flowed up and down, and it roared and it whispered, and it held all the power of the universe within its form.

That was good music. How he knew it was good music, he couldn't tell, for he had never heard good music before. Good music had never been written in his world, when the sum total of his civilization was destruction. But he, somehow, had known he would recognize it when he heard it. Now he was hearing it, and it couldn't be anything else. It was the meat and wine -- it roared through him and filled up the empty space.

Who wrote the music? Who cared? What did it matter that a deaf madman named Beethoven had conceived it and called it the Symphony number Five? Names meant nothing, and it told no story.

There were other spools. There was slow, massive music of harmonies that shook the walls. There was quiet music that held a peace that transcended understanding. There was exciting music that brought the emotions to a boil and set the breath quickening.

He sat and listened, and the world was forgotten, and all the problems were solved, and all sorrows were nothing. Then he began to feel that something start to happen, and he knew that this time if he sat at his organ that thing would happen, and the music that he would make would be what he had wanted all that time.

(next column)

The tape stopped, and he stood up. He must go to his organ. He had to play. He had to make that marvelous music himself. He couldn't wait any longer, for all the time that was the thing that kept almost happening, and never did. Now it would, and he hungered for it.

The General came back. "What was all that noise?"

It wrenched Lieutenant J back from the other world. It wrenched him back so abruptly and cruelly that he could not believe it. The soaring wave crashed upon the rock, and its dissolution was too much to bear.

"Come on," the General turned to go. "It's time to start the test."

Lieutenant J left the wreck and moved off with the General. He didn't want to go. He didn't want to go with the General; he wanted to stay and play his organ and make for himself that marvelous music that he had just heard, but he had to go, and that was all there was to it.

He entered the mole and the vibration started as it went forward, and he felt the monstroud power of the machine in the wheel he held and saw it in the lines of the metal. Forces blasted and gears churned, and the mole beat for itself a tunnel through the rock of Venus. Ahead he was to go for ten miles, with a gradual slope to the east, and when he got there he would rise up in the midst of the enemy post, and he would wipe it out. At least, that is what it said on the orders.

The roars and the grinding and the pounding filled the mole, but in his head, and in all the emptiness of his body that it had filled, the music still went on and on.

But there was something wrong now. There was still something wrong, only it was different now from what had been wrong before.

What is the matter with me, he asked himself, while the mole burrowed in a universe of noise. I wanted to be a musician, but there was no good music to play, and I didn't know what good music was, and I didn't care whether I lived or died., for I had no purpose. I felt empty, and sometimes I thought that I was going to discover what good music was, but nothing ever happened, for I was not great enough. I had no purpose, and I didn't care whether or not I came back from the test job.

But now I know what good music is. I heard it in the machine, and all of a sudden I am filled. I am satisfied, and living can mean something now, for in that music there is something that can be life itself.

Now I know what is wrong. Before I didn't care. Now I care. Now I care whether I come back from the test or not, but I know I won't, for you never come back.

You never come back. The machinery rattled it out. The motors hummed it forth. The generators whined the song.

Then he was underneath the enemy, and their detectors sounded him out, and their forces beat into the ground. His ears and his bones ached from the sonic waves; the humped metal around him grew hot from the induction beam. Relays thumped, and the mole shrieked as the neutralizers gobbled up, and dissipated the energy.

The time was come now, and his hands reached out to the levers that jutted from the machines. Jerking and grinding, the mole slowly edged to face upwards. It was near the surface, and then it

was through, breaking the ground to meet a hell of explosives and forces. The fury of the enemy was concentrated on him, but his armor held.

Now the neutron blast. The new beam that could not be deflected, and that had the power of a battleship behind it. It screamed out like an incandescent knife, and it cut through buildings and forts and tanks, and the little, shouting people that ran from its path. The people did not even flare as the beam struck them.

Why was he shooting at these people? He had nothing against them. But he was too tired to wonder more than vaguely. The squat torpedo that was his mole made a molten lake of the enemy camp, and his job was nearly finished.

The enemy had a new weapon, too. It exploded on, beneath, all around the mole. The concussion beat Lieutenant J to his knees, the force lifted the mole onto its tail end. The neutron blast in the nose of the mole cut into the planet; the mole fell as the rock was torn from its path.

Now it was the end, and Lieutenant J knew it, as the noise pounded at him. The screaming noise of the inferno without mingled with the music that was in his head. It roared and it roared, and it asked the question of life and it answered the question and it gave peace and excitement and love and joy and sorrow, and it mounted up higher and higher, until the outside noise and the inside noise was one, and the cylinder of the mole merged with the molten inside of the planet that came spurting up the tube to meet it.

* * * * *

SCIENTIFICTIONAL REPTILES

By R. R. Winterbotham



There are, broadly speaking, a number of distinct species of the class scientifictus fanatics, which I have collected over a number of years. Not all are pests, and only a few are poisonous. Many serve a very good purpose. They are distinguished by reading habits, structure, and cerebral make-up which I have endeavored to list in a few of the outstanding types.

Order I, Crocodilla. Omnivorous reading habits, usually feeding lying on their dorsal surface, or propped on pillows. Their hind limbs are adapted only for walking to the nearest neighbor and borrowing his books and are almost useless for returning books. The order gets its name from its habit of grinning broadly and snapping its jaws at the sight of someone else's books. Sub-order--Alligator--reads in the bathtub, getting books all wet and soapy.

Order II, Squamata. This type is a snake because he publicly assails your favorite author and avidly reads with great gusto of that same author's works in private. He has been known to run down two or three good magazines, simply because his one and only effort at fiction, entitled, "The Ether Boys on the Moon," was turned down by the editors. Sub-orders include such lizards, skinks and chameleons that change color, shed tails, ears, etc., in the presence of notables at fan meetings to attract attention.

Order III, Chelonia. This reptile is enclosed in a shell of bony plates, which are impossible to penetrate with any argument. A typical example is our very good friend Isaac Asimov, whom we hope

is listening, because he doesn't like our efforts to bring the women--God bless 'em--into our stories. Sub-order includes the Tortoise, editors who do not buy our stuff. (We hope this class becomes extinct.)

Order IV, Thermorpha. This class, including myself, is known only in fossils which have appeared in the public prints. Has been discovered several times and immediately forgotten. Sometimes slow on the scent of a story, but like the mud turtle, likes his environment.

Order V, Pterosauria. Really beautiful creatures on the surface. They have indiscriminate tastes, ranging from Ignatius Connelly to "Superman", but are unable to distinguish scientific accuracy for pure fantasy and who believe in everything they read in that book about Atlantis. In their brain the optic lobes are widely separated from the cerebellum, indicating that what they read is rarely understood. Sub-order, The Spoofers, who read avidly and refuse to believe it.

Order VI, Qhidia. Many members of this class are poisonous. When they read a story they like, they immediately write one like it and when it is turned down, accuse you of having pull with the editor. More or less parasitic, when not poisonous.

Order VII, Dinosauria. Not as extinct as many people imagine. Quite harmless. Often cry: "Wow--Gee--What a pip of a story!" May be distinguished from the crocadilla because he buys his own. Probably
(Continued on Page 11)

THE NEXT TREND

By Milton A. Rothman

The history loving type of science fiction fan has reveled in the joy of analyzing science fiction history, and dividing it up into periods and trends. There was the period when fans did nothing but read the science fiction magazines. Then there came a period of the prehistoric fan magazines, led by the SCIENCE FICTION DIGEST. Then the period when fans forgot that the professional magazines existed, and concentrated on the fan magazines. This overlapped with the start of the fan feuds, which, curiously, was coincident with the beginning of the convention period.

And that last leads up to the new trend. Up to now, all of fan work has been done by correspondence. It was a marvelous thing when a fan from one city got to see the face of a fan in another city. Never will I forget that momentous day, long ago, when Mort Weisinger and Charlie Hornig popped in on me, one sweltering July afternoon, on their way to the Chicago World's Fair. That was the very first time an outside fan had ever shown himself in Philadelphia. And it was likewise a historic event when Donald A. Wollheim came to see me, some months afterwards, for that was the first time there had ever been a prearranged visit between New York and Philadelphia.

Gradually travel has increased. The ISA used to make a practice of going in mobs to visit fans of nearby villages. Then annual conventions started the influx to New York every year. While I lived in Philadelphia, I only had to make the trip to New York. Now that I am in Washington, I have two trips to make every year, solely

because of fan activities.

In the meantime, fans have been touring the country, mostly by automobile. Charlie Hornig's record will probably never be exceeded in this respect, but Dick Wilson's crowd made a pretty nice trip, getting out to Chicago from New York. And the Chicago boys, Reinsberg, Korshak, etc., has come east twice in four months. Once to New York and once to Philadelphia.

Texas came to New York in July, stopping in Oklahoma for Walter Sullivan. California was there. And next summer, from every corner of the compass, fandom will congregate for the convention there.

Everywhere, as fans are growing up and, either coming in to more monetary means, or finding what a wonderful mode of transportation the thumb is, they are learning the ways of travel, and are beginning to get around to see each other, instead of being content with correspondence.

It is obvious that this should happen, for science fiction's fans must, by their very nature, be more severely afflicted with the wanderlust that any other people.

So the thought came to me as I sat at the dinner table in Harry Warner's house, located among the lovely hills of Western Maryland. (They call them mountains, but you can't fool us westerners. I hail from the wilds of West Philadelphia.) Harry Warner seems to be rather

fortunately situated. He hasn't stirred out of the town once, but everybody who makes a trip anywhere seems to pass through Hagerstown, and thus through Harry's house. California, Chicago, Texas, anybody that goes further west than Ohio.

Anyhow, as I was saying, the thought came to me that the rising trend in fandom is travel, instead of correspondences. I see a time when science fiction fans will be swarming all over the countryside visiting one another. They will come in carloads, in trainloads, over hill and dale, making the Grand Canyon ring with the reverberation of their strange cries.

I foresee science fiction fans making a living by operating special busses for the purpose of carrying delegates from one convention to another. The trailer business will boom, for fans will discover that it's more fun to live in a trailer and go around visiting their erstwhile correspondents than to sit prosaically at home and be content with writing letters. It will be easy to do this when the time comes that all fans have hit the market and make their money by writing stories. All authors live in trailers.

Airplanes will zoom through space carrying commuters from the Queens SFL to the Los Angeles SFL. I can even foresee the time when fan feuds have become so intense that their leaders will travel around in armored cars. One sees the other approaching, insignia raised on high. Armor tight, gas masks adjusted, cannon pointed, and when the smoke clears away there will be a few less fan magazines on the market.

Oh, I can foresee lots of things to come in the future, but it gets rather nauseating, so I shan't go any farther. Anyway --- I'll be seeing you!

HOW ABOUT ESPERANTISM?

By Charles D. Hornig

The adherents of every political "ism" believe that their particular theory is the one to save the world--Fascism, Communism, Nazism, etc. In the big three (actually two), above mentioned "isms" that are so much in the headlines today, the followers want to rid the objectors in some forceful or violent manner. There are probably many good points to all popular "isms", but they are all to be condemned on the one ground that they do not permit freedom--of thought or action.

Let me offer for consideration an "ism" that you may not have heard much about--Esperantism. It may seem funny to you that there can be many millions of Esperantists throughout the world, and yet they never get into the headlines. This is because Esperantism is non-political and does not seek to overthrow governments or political doctrines--yet it is a world force to bring about peace amongst the nations.

Esperanto and Esperantism has a definite place in the world of science fiction, because it concerns the future of Mankind--a sane future where science can scar unbridled in a world of understanding--where science will mean progress instead of retrogression in the hands of the war-lords, and the dreams of the science fiction ideal--

--next page--

SCIENTIFIC FICTIONAL REPTILES

--concluded--

the greatest of all scientific fanatical reptiles. Their chief criticism is: "You killed the villain twice, try not to do it again." This very prevalent order should be protected by law.

ists, can become reality.

Fascism wants to oust all objectors--not so Esperantism. Nazism wants to concentrate all those not in favor--not so Esperantism. Communism wants to butcher its enemies--not so Esperantism. Esperantism is nothing but an indirect effort for peace through comprehension between peoples of different tongues, nations, and political systems--by means of a simple, auxiliary language, Esperanto.

Esperanto-land is a world

without censorship, where there is no language barrier--where brotherly love is a reality because people can understand their neighbors beyond the national boundary. There is no lack of understanding where there is Esperanto. There is no hatred where there is understanding. There is no war where there is no hatred. Figure it out for yourself. The only true and lasting peace can come through understanding. The only real understanding can come through a second tongue for all--Esperanto; simple, complete, beautiful!

UNCROWNED MASTERS

By SAM MOSKOWITZ

Science fiction is full of authors--authors in every sense of the word--men who have written pieces which fans fondly call "classics" of science fiction--of fantasy, but their names are seldom referred to when one discusses the masters of science fiction. A. Merritt, Edward E. Smith, Stanley G. Weinbaum, Murray Leinster, Homer Eon Flint, George Allan England, John W. Campbell, Jr. (Don A. Stuart). These and many others fans will freely confess are entirely worthy of the title of "master" of science fiction. And I do not aim to blast any such claim.

But still, there have been stories written which are classics, but the fans never rave over them. Stories, some of which overshadowed the best that Merritt, Smith, Weinbaum, etc., have been able to produce. Yet the authors who created them are not termed "great", not called "masters", in fact, they are barely referred to at all. They simply blend with the mass of fantasy producers; good, bad, and indifferent.

Why is this? What quality have the so-called "masters" that their contemporaries did not possess? What is it that has raised their works, or if not their works, at least their names above those of men who are, in many cases, equal in craftsmanship to most of those above-mentioned?

As I see it, this is the answer. Or I should say selection of answers. First, the acknowledged masters might have caused a sensation with his first story. Their first story was of such amazing excellence that one could no more ignore them than he could ignore a red light if he were driving a car. This is certainly truthful in the case of Stanley G. Weinbaum ("The Martian Odyssey") and Edward E. Smith ("The Skylark of Space"), and a great many others.

Secondly, the author may have popular appeal. His style of writing suited the largest possible percentage of the science fiction reading audience. Weinbaum, Campbell, etc., are certainly in this

class.

Thirdly, the author may have a unique style of writing, or an exquisite command of prose, that made anything he wrote enjoyable, if only for the composition. That would be another factor that would tend to elevate him to a position of prominence. David H. Keller, M.D., is a good example of this.

Some authors there are that fill all three of my requirements; Stanley G. Weinbaum, A. Merritt, and John W. Campbell, to name a few. There's no doubt about it. As authors these fellows are tops. They hit the top because they had everything.

But Edward E. Smith, Homer Eon Flint, Murray Leinster, George Allan England, Austin Hall, Garrett Smith, and numerous others, are certainly not the proud owners of all three of these traits. Most of them have but one, a few two, but none can say that they possess all three.

Edward E. Smith's popularity is little more than good luck. I do not mean to criticise his writing ability when I say this. He is a damned good writer, but he would never have achieved his vaunted position of prominence if his "Skylark of Space" had appeared in 1933 instead of in 1928. Smith's "Skylark of Space" was the first science fiction of the super-super type. Smith wasn't afraid to let his imagination wander; he really let himself go and produced the first story of super-fleets and cosmic tremendousness. He reached out, far beyond the stifling confines of our solar system, out past the milky way, accomplishing incredible feats of science. "The Skylark of Space" is not the best of its type. "Skylark Three" was a superior story, and, although Dr. Smith may not know it, "Spacehounds of the IPC" is considered the best of his stories by many.

Personally, I consider it so myself. However, this is slightly irrelevant to the article.

Now that the introduction and various explanations are done away with, I'll continue with the subject of my article, "Uncrowned Masters".

These authors I am about to present, for some reason or another, have never attained the recognition as Weinbaum, Merritt, etc., have. Some because they haven't written enough. Others because they are not versatile enough. Most because they fulfill only one of the three requirements listed at the beginning of this article.

First of all, there is W.K. Sonneman. From the day I read his first story, "Masterminds of Venus", I knew that here was a writer among writers. A "master" of science fiction. I actually believe that Sonneman is every bit as good a writer as Weinbaum, with possibilities of becoming even better. One cannot express the delight at reading a story like "Greta, Queen of Queens" in a day when fans believe that no more great stories are to be had. Sonneman, to my knowledge, has written but three stories. The other was titled "The Council of Drones", and all three appeared in the Sloane-edited AMAZING-STORIES. Weinbaum had everything and so has Sonneman. Sonneman has popular appeal, a beautiful--almost poetic--style, and his first story certainly did cause a minor sensation when it appeared in AMAZING in 1934. Had Teck Publications continued publishing AMAZING, Sonneman would have undoubtedly been recognized as the master-writer that he is. Sloane, in his blurb for the last Sonneman story that appeared, admitted that he could find no adjectives to describe the story other than that he was "deeply impressed". If you

understand Sloane you must know that this remark was the greatest compliment he could pay. Sloane was noted for letting exceptional stories stand on their merits. Sloane was the type of editor who would conservatively announce a new H.G. Wells' novel, especially written for AMAZING STORIES, if such a thing did happen, in eight point type in reply to a letter in DISCUSSIONS. Where is Sonneman today? Is it possible that he is still writing and his work does not fit the policies of the various magazines--the policies of editors two or three years in the editing game? Not impossible, but I doubt it. I can't imagine any editor being that hide-bound. ((I can --RAM)) Still, I sound a clarion call for Sonneman. I know a great writer when I read him, and this writer is great.

John Beynon Harriss is really an author of the top-most rung. He can give any science fiction writer a run for talent. His "Venus Adventure" is the best story of the colonization of other planets ever written, with the possible exception of Edmond Hamilton's inspired "War of Two Worlds". But certainly the latter does not excell it. If this were the only good story that Harris has ever written, we might dismiss him with a shrug and mutter, "Once to every hawk." However, such is definitely not the case. Who can forget the superb poignancy of "The Man From Beyond"? Of the recations of a space adventurer asleep for millions of years on Venus and awakening to find the earth dead, barren, pitted--and his reaction? A story among stories is this one! You read an endless number of "human" robot stories today, but the very first of the type was "The Most Machine," written by Harris, which appeared in the April, 1932 issue of AMAZING STORIES. It can still serve as an example to writers of similar stories. And it was Harris who introduced one of the

first of the people from different ages meeting and battling the future type of story, which Hamilton has been rehashing so monotonously recently. "Wanderers of Time" is certainly the best of that type of yarn thus far. Look it up in the March, 1933 WONDER STORIES, and see if you don't agree with me. John Beynon, as he calls himself now, has written a few others; some duds, none actually poor, but these four exceptional yarns he has had published in the USA brand him as a writer far superior to the run-of-the-mill.

Stephen G. Hale is another. He wrote two of the most human, appealing, science fiction yarns I have ever read, then apparently retired from the writing game. I know he is still alive, for he is an art instructor in Philadelphia, but he doesn't write for publication any longer--and he should. "The Laughing Death" and "Worlds Adrift" -- how can I ever forget them? Whenever I think of great science fiction stories, I think of Hale's last man on earth combing the sky in desperation, searching, searching for a sign of life; a communication from the other half of what was once earth. A story of a planet severed in two by the misuse of an invention. There is writing, vivid writing -- and another uncrowned master.

The name K.F. Ziska can't mean very much to you. He's only written two stories that have appeared in science fiction magazines. They both appeared in ASTOUNDING under Tremaine and were titled "Suucubus" and "Man of Ages". Both short stories--both great stories. The plots of both were unusual and different, but they were certainly not original. One can easily see where Ziska had obtained his inspiration, but as Campbell might say, "Does the plot really matter when the writ-

ing is no damned good, and the characterization all that could be desired?" If they're done like Ziska's two short stories, then Campbell is as right as a man can be. "Suocubus", a tale of a plant cultivated by the genius of a biologist that took partially human form and lured the man to his death. Not so original? No, but you haven't read the story Ziska wrote and the manner in which he wrote it. "Man of Ages", a direct take-off of Wylie's superb "Glad-iator", but incomparably done. The tale of a super-man whom nothing could destroy and his battle for death. If you want to know where Siegal and Shuster got the inspiration for their sensational "Super-Man" comic strip, read this story!

I deliberated long before including the about-to-be-mentioned author in my list. I considered him a remarkable author when I first read an immortal tale of an immortal person, "The Eternal Man". Was this story good? Well, it was first chosen for reprinting in STARTLING STORIES' "Hall of Fame" department. Can you imagine the story of a man made immortal by an elixer he invented--immortal and paralyzed! And he has as a companion an immortal rat he experimented with. The story of how the Eternal Man is placed in a museum and how the rat visits him, until it is finally mangled underfoot is a little gem. "There was a sequel to this story called "The Eternal Man Revives," and in many ways it was as good as the original, containing many sensational ideas. In a few places the story was handled a little clumsily, for the emotional reactions would have taxed a far greater writer than D.D. Sharp; but he came through all right. And to prove that this was not the last great story in him, D.D. Sharp has appeared with "Faster than Light" in a recent issue of MARVEL SCIENCE STORIES. This is without doubt one of the most beautiful love stories I have

ever read. It is a tale of an old man chasing the kidnapper of his betrothed, and the kidnapper twenty light years away! And always light, too slow in these cosmic distances, bears back a vision of a girl, still beautiful--but twenty light years away. The pathetic chase and the realization that he would always be twenty years too late make this a great story. And the words: "It would be senseless, I knew, chasing on and on after yesterdays..." -- those words are real. That's great fiction, the kind we like to read, but seldom do. That was the story that clinched me on Sharp.

There is one man who is an acknowledged master in the field of weird fiction, but who goes unheralded in the science fiction field. That man is Clark Ashton Smith. Always recognized as a "master" through his works in WEIRD TALES, he has not been directly associated with science fiction despite the fact that almost half of his published works show a definite leaning in the direction of science-fantasy. Smith is a master of words. He knows many and knows how to use them properly. Probably you would not be impressed if I simply recounted to you many of the masterful science-fantasies he has had printed in WEIRD TALES. I'll give examples of the ones he has had published in the science fiction magazines and I'll prove to you that Smith is one of the greatest creators of original science fiction of them all.

"The Master of the Asteroid". Who that has read it can forget it? The man in the space-ship stranded on a tiny asteroid...no hope of escape...the tiny, fragile inhabitants of the asteroid that came daily to proffer themselves and offer obeisance to their imprisoned God...how they laid fruits before the space ship, and the fruits disappeared nightly, devoured by some strange beast--and finally the

strange thing pierces the hull of the ship and comes for him..... Beautiful, tragic, soul-shaking, and written only as the near-genius of Smith could write it. Then there is "The Visitors from Mlok", and how they transport an earthman from this planet to their world... how they change his sensory reactions so that their world, abominably disgusting to him in his natural state, is a world of unparalleled beauty to him now. He returns to earth and his once dependable sense organs carry back the once familiar and desirable scenes as hideous, nauseating horrors. Do I need to recount the qualities of "The Singing Flame", which Smith claimed to be his best work, and its sequel, "Beyond the Singing Flame"?.....Then there is "Flight into Super-Time", a story of a man afloat in the fourth dimension, time. He drifts from world to world, trusting to the vagaries of fate. The strange experiences he encounters, never knowing whether next time there will be another world for him, but death in the embrace of a raging sun, all combine to make this a classic short.

W.K. Sonneman, John Beynon Harris, D.D. Sharp, Stephen G. Hale, K.F. Ziska, and Clark Ashton Smith --- a list of deserving, but uncrowned, greats. All of them possessors of fine ability of portrayal of human emotions; the most essential factor in fiction. Story upon immortal story they have written. Are they all destined to oblivion? I think not. If not now, perhaps some day in the future, scientifictionists and mayhaps even the world will awake to the brilliance of their writings. And these are not all. Laurence Manning, Chester D. Guthbert, Thos. S. Gardner, Clare Winger Harris, Francis Flagg, W. Alexander, Will H. Gray, Phillip Jacques Bartel, and many, many others have left a trail of brilliance, cleverness, and entertainment value. They should not be left to obscurity.

Arise and demand their return. If they are no longer as fine as of old, let us be shown so that we can believe and understand. But while a string of semi-classics paves their path, they cannot ever be denied or cast aside. They will return!

C A N Y O U A N S W E R T H E S E ?

Conducted by Robert A. Madle

First off, thanks fellows for the response. I now have quite a few sets of questions ready for future issues of FD. Due to the fact that Arthur L. Widner, Jr., submitted his list of questions before anyone else, his appears this issue. You know; first come, first served. However, the answers to the previous set of questions are just about due, so here they are!

1) Nat Schachner was the author of the first "thought-variant", "Ancestral Voices", and it appeared in the December, 1933 issue of ASTOUNDING STORIES.

2) Hoy Ping Pong is, of course, a pseudonym for Bob Tucker, well-known sf fan.

3) The cover story of the October, 1929 AIR WONDER STORIES was "Through the Air Tunnel" by Harl Vincent.

4) "Dream's End" by A. Connell

5) Dane Milton is the pseudonym for Milton Kaletsky.

6) "The Price of Peace" -- November, 1933 AMAZING STORIES.

7) Phillip Jacques Bartel and H.W. Guernsey.

8) "Warriors of Space" by J.R. Marshall -- it was a sequel to "The World in the Balance".

9) Harold Hersey

10) "Anything Can Happen" by Peter Gordon.

Of those who replied, Robert W. Lowndes received the highest rating--95%. Doc made one little

And now we come to Widner's questions.

- fantasy writer had a very fanta^s-
tic fantasy printed in ESQUIRE,
and what was its title?

20) What story had the cover of the issue of AMAZING in which "The Colour Out of Space" was published?

I am not in need of any more questions at the present time, but as soon as the present supply runs low, you'll hear about it! Don't forget to send me your answers -- hereafter I intend to publish all of the results -- so you'll see your name in print -- chee! won't that be swell!

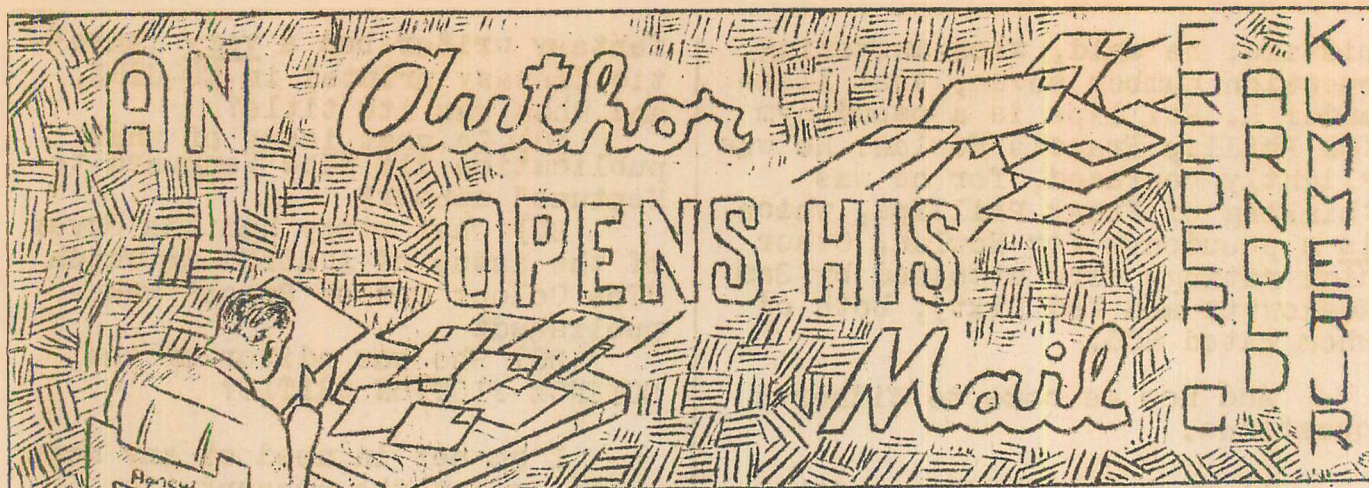
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EST.--



The most important moment of the day for an author is the time of the arrival of the morning mail. This usually shapes his mood for the day. The mail in my own neighborhood arrives late...about nine-thirty...and I find it impossible to do any work before it comes. Once I've looked over it, answered letters, learned the fate of several stories, I can start the day's work, grimly, or happily, according to the mail I have received.

The morning's sheaf of letters is usually divided into three classes. First, bills, and personal correspondence. These are of no interest except to me, and, perhaps, my creditors. Secondly, there is correspondence pertaining to work...checks, rejected scripts, letters from editors. And thirdly, there are the letters from fans.

The business letters are, of course, the most important. And checks are, naturally, the most welcome. But when you see the postman bearing a large brown envelope, script size, there comes a sinking feeling in the pit of the stomach and the family decide not to cross your path this day. Jaw set, you open the envelope and read the editor's letter. "Not enough action. Stop trying to write masterpieces." or "We just bought a yarn using this idea. Sorry." The author's frown deepens, and he mentally composes an indignant

letter to the editor in defense of his yarn. Discretion, however, prevails and these letters are never written. If you are the fortunate recipient of a check, however, you plunge into work with a broad grin, thinking, "There's nothing to it. Now if I can just get this one done and sold this month, I can buy....."

Letters from editors requesting stories, making suggestions, asking for this or that, are in the main, encouraging. These are answered promptly, and worded carefully to create just the right impression. If it's a request for a story, you don't want to sound too anxious (even though the sheriff is camping on the front step) nor yet too casual. In the end your answer probably sounds like Pollyanna accepting an invitation to dinner, but you send it off anyhow, and hope the editor doesn't think you've lost a little grey matter out of the small amount you do have.

Then comes the fan mail. You open these at arm's length, ready for anything. In the past, I had thought of fan mail as the plaudits of an enthusiastic public. Plaudits are few and far between. Write a masterpiece and the fans nod approval...but wouldn't consider writing to tell you they enjoyed it. Write a run-of-the-mine yarn and they can't send enough letters to tell you what they think

of it. Thus, "your story, _____, stunk. The only good yarn you ever wrote was ???????, in Suchandsuch magazine. That was a gem." Note that the above correspondent didn't trouble to write me when ?????? appeared, even though he thought it a gem. But he devoted two pages to telling me what's wrong with story _____. Case records show that story _____ was sold to a top-notch magazine at the usual cent a word, while story ??????, after being rejected by everyone else was finally bought by a fly-by-night concern at half-rates on publication. So even if I agreed with the vituperate writer of the letter, I would be foolish to write yarns of the ??????? class at half-a-cent on publication (if then) when I might receive better rates with less effort from a better house. The fact that Suchandsuch Magazine is now defunct is added proof.

Fan letters are often less coherent than the above. Many of them are from persons who object to your scientific theories. These may be headed off by simply quoting your references, with page number and edition, as, "Sir James Jeans, 'The Mysterious Universe, page ?.' I once received a six-page treatise from a gentleman in the west who was attempting to prove to me that there was no such thing as the fourth dimension. He enclosed pictures and diagrams. I gave up after the first paragraph, thanked him, and referred him to Einstein. For all I know he may have been right, but it was too deep for me. And once I received a letter from a person in a rural district who claimed to be a witness to the most astounding heavenly disturbances and wanted my opinion of them. If what he saw had actually occurred, it would put the most lurid s-f writer to shame. Unfortunately his handwriting was so unintelligible that I could not figure out his address. Which is a pity, since I would like to meet

him.

Offtimes one receives letters asking why certain stories are given such corny names or why they are so garbled. These, one refers to the editors, some of whom feel that the only way to convince the publisher they're on the job is by rewriting and renaming the stories they buy. Authors come closest to suicide when they read such "edited" yarns. The expressions of which you are the most fond, the nicest bits of literary effort are invariably cut. I wish that space permitted me to give a few classic examples of why my hair shows signs of turning grey.

Getting back to the self-appointed critics, I usually find that they are disappointed authors, who, unable to sell yarns of their own, take it out on persons who are successful in selling their output. Once they make a sale or two, receive a few letters of their own, they cease to hurl their thunderbolts. An author is tempted to reply to some iconoclastic adolescent who has been heckling him, "If you don't like it, write one yourself." Unfortunately, since the letter writer is one of your customers, you can only reply with honeyed words, promise to try and do better, and beg for a second chance. This makes an iconoclast swell with ego and he becomes your friend for life. It is often good to ask the heckler for his advice. This also increases his self-esteem.

Many letters in an author's mail accuse him of selling himself for gold, of not turning to the great work of which he is capable. I thought so once, myself. So I began turning out very well-written pieces, character studies, ironic tales, laid on the various planets. No great inventions, no monsters...and no sales. I dreamed of the problems of people on other

worlds, their loves, their hates, their twisted psychology. I still read over these yarns and admire their nice writing. But sell them? Never in a million years. The editors were delighted at them...but afraid to run them. Their large groups of juvenile readers...and we have to face the fact that a large proportion of our readers are in the ten and twelve year old brackets...would not stand for it. Thus you might write a story, say, of the slums of some great city of Mars, with an earthman gone native, drink-sodden, a derelict,....and in the story he might see an earthgril in danger, his earthblood would assert itself, he might rise to great heights, spurred on by the realization that he was a terrestrial, and save the girl at the cost of his life. Such a yarn might pack great power, be a literary gem...but it wouldn't sell. No great machines, no titanic forces, no bizarre phenomena...no sale.

But don't think from the above that an s-f author's life is all gall and wormwood. Many good stories do sell, even though there are fifty standard ones for each outstanding one. And don't think we hate fan mail. We love it, even if we do get out share of brickbats. If it swells a fan's ego to pick flaws in our yarns, it swells our ego equally to prove we're right. My idea in this article is to show an author as a human being, with likes, dislikes, bills to pay, a job to be done. So the next time you decide to write to a name under a story, remember that the name is a very human being who is, as Kipling wrote, "most remarkable like you." And if you're ever in Baltimore, stop by...you'll find I'm more of a fan than a writer at all times.

A CRITIQUE OF FANTASCIENCE DIGEST

By Alexander M. Phillips

Until my recent introduction to FANTASCIENCE DIGEST, two issues of which I had the opportunity to examine, I had never seen a fan magazine. For this reason it may be presumptuous for me to attempt a criticism of this type of magazine. On the other hand, my opinions may possibly have some value, inasmuch as my viewpoint should be a fresh one.

The first point I inquired about was the purpose of the fan magazine---its reasons for existence. An examination of FANTASCIENCE DIGEST immediately suggests several such purposes. To list a few: The fan magazine can report news of editors, writers, fans and fan activities, and magazines in the field it covers: it can give interesting histories of those magazines; histories of fans and authors; analyses of authors' styles, and of their methods of work; discussions of the editorial policies of the magazines in which it is interested; and criticisms of both authors and magazines. It can present timely articles on subjects within its field, as the report of the moon-trip exhibit of the Fels Planetarium, by Milton A. Rothman; it can give quizzes; and it can offer considerable space for discussions of these subjects.

FANTASCIENCE DIGEST, in my opinion, deals excellently with this list almost in entirety. "Science Fiction Spotlight" splendidly illustrates what I think should be the core of a fan magazine---the interesting news that the fan

snappy, columnar/reporting of interesting current news which the average reader can obtain nowhere else. That is the niche which none but the fan magazine may fill, and all else in the magazine, I feel, should be built around it.

One part of this list which does not seem fully developed is that of which Milton A. Rothman's 'moon-trip' article is an example. I feel sure that this type of article could be carried every issue---there is sufficient material at the Fels Planetarium and the Franklin Institute alone to supply subjects for report. And all science fiction activity is not concentrated in this institution. It is within reason that it could become one of the most important features of the magazine. Possibly short s articles, from scientific workers and instructors at our local colleges, could be obtained, giving information of this sort which is not generally available. The field here is very wide.

And here is a suggestion I should like to make: why not ask the readers for selections of science fiction which they think show literary value; short excerpts from published stories which they regard as really well-written, demonstrating not the scientific, but the literary ability of the author? It might be necessary to obtain permission to republish from the copyright holders, but, for a few lines, or a paragraph at most, I am sure this would be given.

As regards fiction in the fan magazine, I am indifferent. The publication of fiction is, after all, the least important of the fan magazine's activities. On the other hand, fan magazine fiction should be non-formula, if any fictionn is. Also, the fan magazine can act as a testing field for writers, beginners and professionals alike. Personally, I enjoyed both "Dawn of Death" and "Space Log Y 486 G," although Jack Speer's objection to this last story is certainly well grounded logically.

The arrangement of the contents page of Vol. 2, No. 5 issue is superior, in my opinion, to that of Vol. 2, No. 4 issue---it is much clearer, and more easily read.

Cover illustrations, I feel, and always will feel, should refer to some text in the magazine. Fan magazines are not the only offenders in this respect.

And that about sums it up. A little longer than I expected, but it does cover my opinion in full.

COMING SOON

"DREAM'S END"
-a beautiful fantasy-
By A.M. Phillips

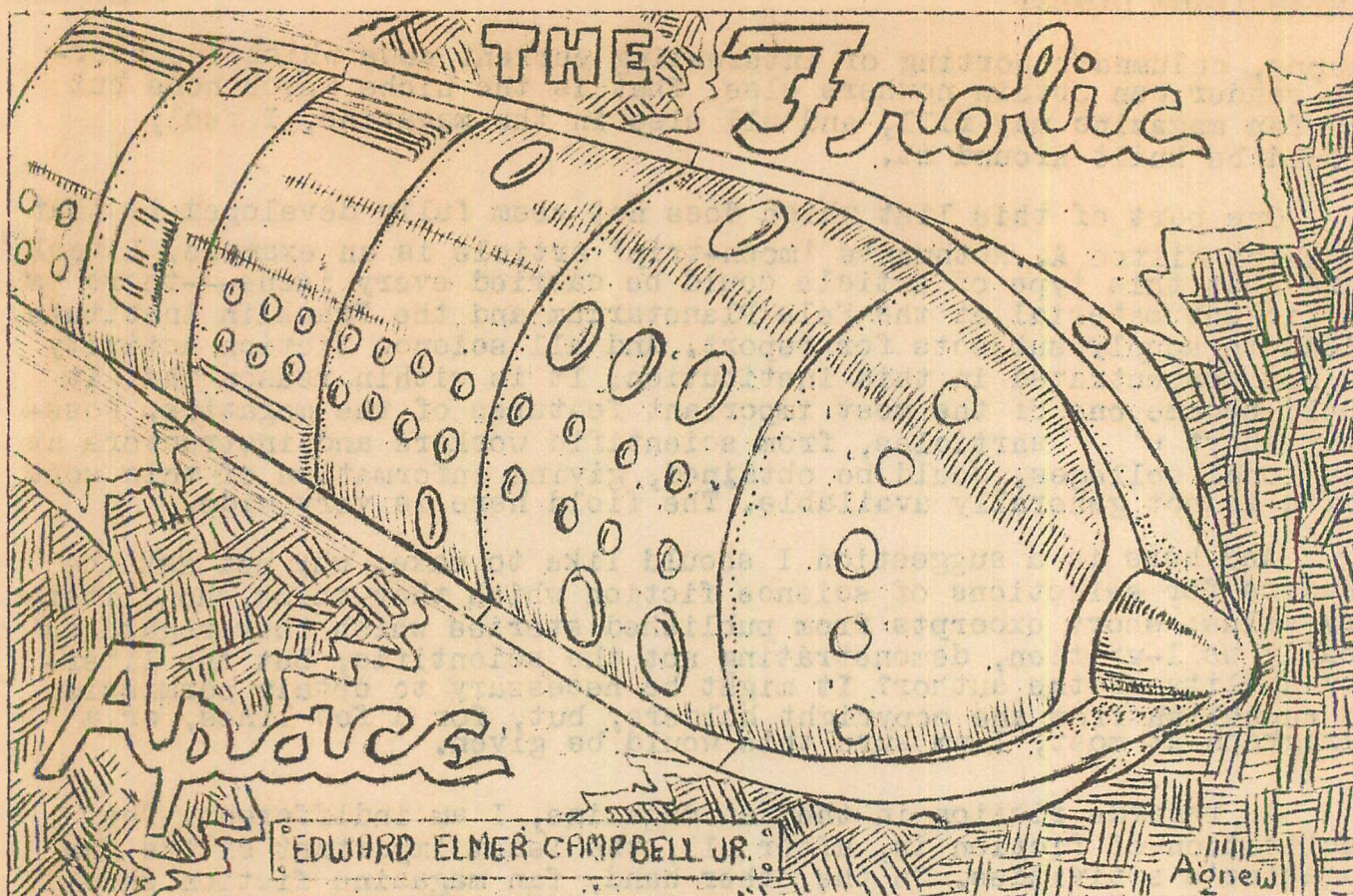
"AN OLD-TIMER RETURNS"
-an article-
By Julius Unger

"A TALE OF THEN"
-a what-not-
By Dick Wilson

"FABLE AND FANTASCIENCE"
-an article-
By Fred W. Fischer

"TEN YEARS AGO IN SCIENCE FICTION"
-you demanded its return!-
By Robert W. Lowndes

Plus Many Others



PART 1 - IN A QUANDRY OR DIRE-STRAITED DILEMMA

Richard Seaton and Martin Crane were busy in their laboratory that fateful June morning. They were always busy in their laboratory, whether the morning be fateful, the month be June, or the morning; for they were two of the world's greatest engineers -- as they modestly put it, the two greatest.

They were, at the time our story begins, engaged in developing a gamma-beta-zeta ray of the twenty-third level, capable of exploring the sixteenth dimension. Seaton, with the aid of a short ferrule which he used to emphasize his major points, was delivering a lecture to Crane at the moment.

"Within this sub-helix," he remarked, indicating it with a tap, "we have a centrifugal perambulating pinwheel exerting a centripetal, monagamous force upon a paraboloid parboiled ratchet-shifting mixmaster! Also, you will note

that the baffle-flares of the ganglion wires extend from the super-charger to the six-point-zero-zero-zero-zero hexameter, which is thickly coated with potassium of permanganate in order to allow triassic traction on the epiglottis."

Crane nodded, his brown eyes thoughtfully following the ever-moving pointer, and Seaton allowed himself a deep breath before continuing:

"Now! Combine this verifuge with this homosphere of hyperpelosity, and subtract six mm. of hydrochloric bisulfide of nitrate, and what have you got?"

Crane brightened perceptibly. "I'll bite. What have you got?"

"Gosh!" Dick ejaculated in disappointment, "I thought you'd know!"

"Well, I don't," Crane res-

ponded, "so just what is your gadget?"

"I don't know yet. I'm working on that now."

"Why don't you adjust that vaporizer there and convert it into a thermo-couple dish-washer?" suggested Crane, always the practical one of the two.

Seaton shook his head dispiritedly.

"It's a bit too heavy for that. Weighs six tons, you know."

"Well, how about a handy-dandy egg-beater, then?"

Dick snapped his fingers excitedly, and his large white teeth flashed as he smiled.

"By George, I think you've got something there, Mart! I'll try it out at home on the range."

"Oh, have you got a range?"

"No, but with my new automatic range-finder I thought-----"

"Always the dreamer," commented Martin Crane sarcastically, as he turned to his own experiment disgustedly. He was designing a super-electric blast furnace capable of generating a temperature of 1,000,000,001 degrees, and was perspiring slightly. "It always exasperates me how that one degree crept into the construction of my 1,000,000,001 degree furnace," he commented. "Just a few minutes ago I was busy bursting an atom into five separate and distinct parts, and at that crucial point I started worrying about that first degree."

"The first degree is always the hardest," admitted Seaton consolingly, "no matter what people say about the third degree." He wandered over to his desk, which

was piled high with a litter of note-paper he had used to figure the seventeen integers necessary for breaking down a tenth-place fraction. More than a litter, in fact. It was a lot.

At this moment the televisor on the laboratory wall pealed forth its summons.

"Hey, you!" It barked in its tinny, mechanical voice, "Why don't you answer the phone?"

Crane had once built a mechanical robot, that being the only practical kind to build, and when the robot had lost its voice due to an attack of tonsillitis, Crane had installed the voice in the televisor. The smart remarks emitted thenceforth by the robot-speaker had given the boys no end of fun, except for one frightful occasion when the robot had remarked to a visiting preacher inspecting the laboratory, "Say, you! Yes, the drunk guy without a tie! Why don't you get the lead out of your pants and answer the damned 'phone?"

So now Seaton shuddered as he rose to switch on the vision screen. He shuddered not at the memory of that fearful moment just described, however, but with a premonition of disaster. Instantly he watched a dark and saturnine visage appear on the ground mica-glass of the view-plate. It was the face of his dreaded enemy, Blacky Duquesne!

The villain looked from Dick to Crane, leering horribly.

"Hellow, you two master-minds," he addressed them sarcastically, rolling his eyes rapidly about the laboratory to see if any secrets were lying about waiting to be discovered, "I hate to interrupt your scientific session, but I have a message to deliver."

Seaton shook his fist at the caller. "Well, spit it out!"

DuQuesne's expression became even more sardonic and sinister. Then, quite suddenly, he spit it out. It was a badly damaged piece of Spearmint gum.

"Hokay!" he snapped tensely. "You asked for it."

"You ebon-souled villain," Seaton growled, and then barked, "Well, what's your dire threat?"

DuQuesne stared at him evilly, his eyebrows arched in devilish fashion.

"I bring a message from the High Muckamuck of Macaroon," he hissed.

Crane hurried over to stand beside his partner.

"The High Muckamuck of Macaroon?" he queried in horror. "Has a fearful war, then, come at last?"

Blacky smiled. "It indeed has, my buttercup. His majesty needs to annihilate another race to keep in practise, and you earthmen are SUCH annoying specimens of humanity."

Seaton stood with every muscle tense. He was seething with rage, his face purple and his eyes almost emitting sparks, his teeth clenched until the muscles of his jaws stood out in bands and lumps. His right hand, white-knuckled, gripped the butt of his pistol, while under his left the switch of the vision screen slowly bent under the intensity of his unconscious muscular effort. *

"DuQuesne," he gritted, his voice husky with fury, "do you

forget that you, too, were once an earth-man before you turned traitor to your race and became the agent for a foreign power?"

"If you HAVE forgotten," added Crane in a level, deadly voice entirely unlike his usual tone, "I shall have to take my hairbrush to your backsides."

DuQuesne growled, and his stomach echoed the sentiment.

"I am Dr. Marc C. DuQuesne, and you can't frighten me with anything so childish as a hairbrush. It takes a good hearty slap on the wrist to jar my equanimity!"

Seaton regarded him with rising anger. "Will you pardon me a moment while I murmur an aside to my companion?" he asked politely.

"Certainly," responded the irresponsible Blacky, "but if it's to tell him to slap a tracer beam on me, it won't do any good. I'm way out in the Milky Way, and I'm so full of milk that your tracer beam might end up on a Jersey cow as easily as on me."

"It wasn't that," denied Dick, foiled. Carefully he unfoiled the foil and placed it in a glass jar containing some other foil he was saving for the Red Cross. "When is this war to begin?"

"On Junly the 36th," responded DuQuesne, slowly fading from the screen and leaving only an after-impression of a nose, a thumb, and four waving fingers. "I'll be slaying you, chums."

Seaton was thunderstruck. "Whew!" he cried to Crane. "Junly 36th. My gosh, that's only five years off. Do you realize that we have to work very fast?"

* AMAZING STORIES, August 1928, Volume 3, Number 5, p. 408, 4th paragraph. (This will be the first and last footnote in this blamed epic. It's so much trouble not getting special permission of the authors.)

"Well, anyway, we've got the macaroons where we want them," announced Mart, slowly.

"Good! Where's that?"

"Five million light-years away."

Dick nodded. "Right, The High Muckamuck of Macaroon has enough weapons at his disposal to blast us to smithereens."

"Well, I'd rather be a live Macaroon than a blasted smithereen," remarked Mart Crane, "so suppose we go into action, locate Du-Queene, and put him out of action before he can again betray the human race? He's a dire traitor, a vile blot, a nasty man!"

"Quick, call the girls and tell them we're making a flight. We must hunt him down before he can become nefarious."

It wasn't, however, necessary to call the girls, because just then the laboratory door burst open and two lovely young ladies catapulted into the room, laughing merrily. Seaton repaired the door frame and examined the catapult while Crane explained the situation to their fiancées.

"We must do something quickly!" he finished in short pants. Very demure he looked in them, too.

"What must who do quick?" boomed a voice from the doorway, and the four lovers whirled to confront the man standing there. A lithely-built, muscular fellow clad in spaceman's leather, worn but serviceable. His moody, morose face, dark complected and scarred with a hundred old wounds, was lighted with the pallor of steel-colored eyes. One brown hand lay lightly on a heat-gun, the blast of whose deadly violence could have mowed down a charging army like wheat ripe for the scythe. "I'm

armed," he continued shortly, his cold, pale eyes boring into those of Seaton who stepped forward to meet him. "My gun burns as straight as any in the land. What's your plan?"

"Before we tell you anything," snapped Seaton, "what means this trespass?"

"Press Pass? Press pass?" queried the stranger. "I am not a reporter. I, sir---" he drew himself proudly erect "---I am Northwest Smith!"

"Was your mother scared by a compass?" asked Crane curiously.

Northwest Smith chose to ignore him.

I intercepted Blacky DuQueene's message to your laboratory," he said, "far out in space."

"In a space-ship?" inquired Dorothy, Seaton's betrothed.

"Certainly!" snapped Smith. "Did you think I was on foot? Anyway, I wish to cooperate with you people in ending the menace of the High Muckamuck of Macaroon. I am prepared to resist this invader until I had shed the last drop of blood in your bodies!"

"I'm all transfused," murmured Crane. "You mean you want to help us?"

"I do!" Northwest's cold eyes glittered. "I'm just a glitter-bug," he hastily apologized. Then more seriously, "I can help plenty, too. I've got a girl-friend, Jirel of Joiry, who thinks I'm the stuff. Just ask her. Boy, is she a red-headed mama!"

Margaret, Crane's fiancée, stepped forward at this juncture.

"I wish to step forward at this juncture," she requested, her

dark eyes snapping her fingers to attract attention. "I believe that before we get the solar system organized to repel this threatened invasion, we should get the earth itself organized. We must send emissaries to all principal places of habitation, to explain the situation and work out some means of defense. Why not make Northwest our emissary? He seems to be able to go in two directions at once."

"A splendid idea!" cried Smith, his gray eyes shining. "I shall organize the inner and outer worlds. First I'll have David Innes round up his Pellucidarians. The people of the interior are so low-down they can serve as the first line of defense and any losses they may sustain will not be noticed--outside."

"Fine!" Dick added enthusiastically. "I think you've got something there, N.W. We can clean out a lot of these antisocial populations first. You can also contact The Lost World, The Land That Time Forgot, and The Mysterious Island of Captain Nemo. They'll never be missed, either. Don't forget, too, the various inhabitants of Maracot Deep, Smudgely Shoals, and Forty Fathoms, as well as any other peoples you might dig up by referring to works on Mi and Atlantis as written by Doyle, Binder, Lovecraft, and a few thousand other authors."

Martin Crane placed a lean hand on the bronzed shoulder of the space-man.

"Will you notify Tarzan for me?" he inquired. "I always like to have the jungle people behind me -- away behind me."

"Surely," responded Smith. "I'll bet he can line up the jungle people from the banks of Ezelewadi to the steaming, miasmatic swamps of the Nyamba Iambic country. You remember that time Tarzan stopped The Insect Invasion spon-

sored by Ray Cummings? Wow! What a battle that was!"

"That was The Jungle Rebellion," corrected Dorothy. "Anyway, get Tarzan for me -- I mean for us," she amended hastily as Seaton whirled to stare at her rather suspiciously, "and meanwhile, we'll jump into the Frolic I and be off to see The Master Mind of Mars. He'll be able to help us."

Northwest Smith nodded grimly and hurled his cloak about him.

"To victory!" he saluted, and scurried out the doorway, tripping momentarily over either the door-jamb, his flopping cloak, or both, as he made his exit.

"We're off to see the Master the Master Mind of Mars!" chanted Dorothy, starting for the door, her arm around Margaret. "Haul out the Frolic I boys!"

"Why the Frolic I?" inquired Dick. "Why not the Frolic III? She's got heavier armaments and is sixty miles longer on the beam."9

Crane, always the practical mind of the quartet, shook his head.

"Nope, it'll have to be the Frolic I. I've installed inertialess super-drive on her, just like the one of the Frolic III, along with a solar storage battery like on the Frolic II -- or was it III? Anyway, since the Frolic I is lighter than the Frolic III or the Frolic II, and inasmuch as the Frolic II takes more juice to attain maximum speed than the Frolic I, and since the Frolic III requires ten times the fuel of the Frolic II or fifteen times the amount necessitated by the Frolic I, we'll find neither of them suitable for our purpose. Besides, with the speed generated

by the inertialess super-drive I installed on her like the one on Frolic III-----"

"This is where I came in," commented Margaret from the doorway. "You can repeat yourself on the way to the landing field, Mart, honey."

The four of them carefully locked the laboratory and started for the place designated, where reposed their three spaceships, huge liners, all.

Crane and Seaton had been working on a device to shrink the molecules of the ships so as to reduce them to any desired size, since it was believed they would be convenient if carried as watch-charms when not in use. But the problem of molecular shrinkage eluded their mighty brains.

Crane had one day run around in the rain in his best suit, attempting to solve the problem. The suit had become altered from a full-length Kollege Kut to a Buster Brown shorts-with-coat ensemble, but he still was unable to apply THAT principle to the spaceships, even if he had allowed his suit to dunk in a rainstorm for days.

Richard Seaton had been contemplating a jaunt beyond Betelgeuse to interview the exceptionally wise Hypotheticalarians upon this research, but the calamity forced upon them by the High Muckamuck of Macaroon now put an end to such a week-end excursion.

"We must away," he decided as he and his companions entered the Frolic I and closed the port behind them. "We must confer with Ras Thavas and Kar Komak and the Jeddak of Helium, not to forget, Ulysses Paxton and the Prince of Peril and The Radio Man. Chop! Chop!" (Which means in Chinese: Quick! Quick!)

"Well, all right!" exclaimed the girls in chorus. "Chop! chop! Call Shiro, our general factotum (in reality a Japanese scientist in disguise) and let us scam."

Crane wandered to the control room and pulled the televisor switch. Upon the screen floated the smiling, yellow face of Shiro, surrounded by his pots and pans.

"We're taking off, Shiro," Crane warned him. "Grab your hat, boy!"

"We're off!" cried Richard Seaton, kissing Dorothy enthusiastically. "Ho for the Red Planet, The Planet of Peril! An epic has begun -- a Martian Odyssey! Dejah Thoris, here we come!"

(To be continued. We will leave our characters at this moment, because Dorothy had just given Seaton a resounding sock in the puss, and domestic arguments are always so embarrassing to strangers. Don't miss the next installment, in which Margaret is kidnapped by the great White Apes of Barsoom and rescued by Hawk Carse, a handsome stranger who complicates matters for our friend, Mart. What will Mart do? What does Margaret do? It sure is an exciting installment. Every time I think of it I get so excited I could just bite my nails and scream!)

IF YOUR NAME APPEARS HERE, YOUR SUBSCRIPTION EXPIRES WITH THIS ISSUE: Harold F. Benson; Jack Donovan; Russell J. Hodgkins; Damon Knight; Erle Korshak; Jack Chapman Miske; Daniel McPhail; Ray Pauley; Melvin C. Schmidt; Jack Speer; Arthur Widner, Jr.; C. J. Wilhelm; R. R. Winterbotham; and Tim Wright.

Join the Illini Fantasy Fictioneers, and help sponsor the Chicago World Science Fiction Convention. Details obtainable from Richard I. Meyer, 3156 Cambridge Ave., Chic.

• SCIENCE FICTION •

Spotlight

ROBERT A. MADLE

MARK REINSBERG

What is undoubtedly the most important occurrence of the past month was the dismissal of Farnsworth Wright as editor of Weird Tales. Yes, the man who piloted WT through thick and thin, who made the magazine what it is today, who discovered and developed such writers as Robert Bloch, C.L. Moore, Henry Kuttner, and many others, was fired unceremoniously. The new editor is Dorothy McIlwraith, who edits the other magazines published by the present publishers of Weird Tales.

At last! It is believed that the solution to the partially-solved Weinbaum trilogy is at hand. It is true that all three stories ("Dawn of Flame," "Black Flame," and "The New Adam") were once one tremendous novel. A reading of "The New Adam" indicates that this story came first in order, followed by "Dawn of Flame", and concluded by "The Black Flame". Readers of all three stories cannot help but arrive at the conclusion that the three stories are connected. And that just about winds up the Weinbaum "trilogy". However, news of another (perhaps more than one) unpublished manuscript is at hand. So be on the lookout for "The Mad Brain", and others, eventually to be published somewhere.

Incidentally, sales on "The

New Adam" have been pitifully small among fans; the fans who demanded the book and finally got it. Get your copy now; it is an epic which belongs on every fan's shelf.

After all said and done, Charles D. Hornig's Science Fiction Quarterly may never be published. Hornig says, "Whether or not the Quarterly will be published will depend entirely upon the drawing power of the advertisements placed in the March issues of Science Fiction and Future Fiction."

Incidentally, Hornig is now living in Los Angeles, and will be the first stf editor to carry on his work via long distance. He also intends to operate a manuscript-criticism bureau for authors.

Two novelettes head the March issue of Astounding; "Cold" by Nat Schachner, and the return of Johnny Black in "The Emancipated" by L. Sprague de Camp. Johnny meets up with McGinty, the talking ape, and then the fun starts. . . . Alexander M. Phillips' "Chapter from the Beginning", and "In the Good Old Summertime" and "The Dwindling Sphere" round out the short stories. The former is by Miller and the latter

is by Willard E. Hawkins."

Unknown for April will have a complete novel by Rene Lafayette, "The Indigestible Triton". The novelette will be "He Shuttles" by H.W. Guernsey, and there will be short stories by Henry Kuttner and Theodore Sturgeon. Of course, Jack Williamson's "The Reign of Wizardry" is continued. Cartier, of course, will do the cover, and a new artist named Flessel will be featured.

The May, 1940 Science Fiction will contain the following: "The Voice Commands" by Dennis Clive; "Castaways in Space" by Amelia Reynolds Long; "Proxies on Venus" by Nelson S. Bond; "The Mad Virus" by Paul Edmonds (Henry Kuttner); "Doom from the Void" by John Coleridge; "The Price of Escape" by Henry J. Kostkos. Russell J. Hodgkins, well known Los Angeles fan, has an article, "Continental Engineers" and "The Fantasy Fan" will be lengthened considerably.

Neil R. Jones has "Liquid Hell" in the June Future Fiction. Duane W. Rimel appears with "The City Under the Sea" and Ross Rocklynne has "Prophecy of Doom". Other material by Leslie F. Stone, Isaac Asimov, etc. This issue will introduce a new department; "Fan Mag Digest" and James V. Taurasi has a department; "Fantasy Times".

David Vern, Assistant Editor of Amazing and Fantastic Adventures, claims that the story, "Dr. Varsag's Experiment", which appeared in the January Amazing, was based on actual fact. He will present the strange, but true, tale in an early issue of Ad Astra. . . . W. Kolliker is the full name of Astounding's artist. . . . Amelia Reynolds Long was among the winners in a newspaper contest re-

cently. . . . Alexander M. Phillips is an occasional contributor to the various nature magazines such as Bird Lore, etc. . . . Rumors are floating about of a new magazine at Ziff-Davis. . . . Frederik Pohl sold an unsolicited poem to T. O'Connor Sloane almost immediately. In fact, Pohl had the acceptance slip three hours after commencement of writing! . . . However, it was returned when Amazing was sold to Ziff-Davis. . . . Pohl also has the slowness record. He wrote a poem, "Elegy to a Dead Planet, Luna" in February 1935, received an acceptance in May 1936, and it finally appeared in the October 1937 Amazing. . . . Pohl is going to start something like Campbell's "Analytical Laboratory" in Astonishing Stories. . . . Ross Rocklynne is in the hospital, seriously ill according to a reputable report. . . . The New York fans are planning a Science Fiction Conference, to be held soon.

Three members of the Futurian Society of New York will have stories in the April Astonishing; Dick Wilson has sold "Murder from Mars", and the other two are Cyril Kornbluth and Isaac Asimov. Kornbluth has also sold "Interplanetary Sea Avengers" to Pohl for Super Science Stories. . . . Mary Gnaedinger tells of a woman reporter from the New Yorker interviewing her, and borrowing her fan magazines. It appears that something is in the wind. By the way, Merritt's "Thru the Dragon Glass" will be reprinted in Famous Fantastic Mysteries in the near future.

Milt Rothman (Lee Gregor) says he will not be doing much writing in the future. . . . The original title of Phillips' "The Space Flame" in the current Planet Stories was "Earthworms of Space". . . . Phil Nowland's "Space Guards" will cop the cover of an early Astounding. . . . As usual, there is a rumor of a new science fiction magazine going the rounds.

V E N E M O U S R E P T I L E

By Ralph Milne Farley

I am writing this, lying flat in bed, quite ill. Cradled on a table beside me is a coiled serpent, ever alert, ever ready to strike. Its name is "telephone". There is no escaping it. Even when I close my eyes, I know that it is still there, poised. The fact that, like a rattle-snake, it will warn me before striking, merely increases my terror.

Far away in space is some as yet unknown malevolent human being whose mere recital of a magic incantation will rouse the reptile into action. Just think! The mere breathing of the mystic words and number, "South Milwaukee 286" will spell my doom!

Is there no escape? The agile mind in my listless body runs frantically over all that I have learned of magic lore. I seem to remember that a sorcerer's own charm can sometimes be flung back in his own teeth with prophylactic effect.

So, suddenly reaching out with my fever-wasted right arm, I seize the creature by the neck, drag him from his cradle, and shout at him: "Two-eight-six."

The effect is electrical. From distant cavernous space comes the answer -- a gasp of surprise.

But the monster's mystic mistress is equal to the emergency. Her sweet voice murmurs far away: "Line is busy." Click!

Thwarted, I replace the shiny black body in its cradle.

Br-r-r-r-r! What I feared has now at last come. But better this actuality than the constant shuddering dread which has obsessed me for so long. Again I grab the creature by the neck, and hold it poised above me.

"Mr. Farley," speaks a stern voice, which I recognized as that of Mr. Baldwin, the telephone's master-of-all-masters, "you have got fresh with the operator just once too often. We are discontinuing your service."

Exhausted, yet triumphant, I sink back amid the pillows. My counter-charm has won! I am free! Free!

TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF A SCIENCE FICTION COLLECTORBy Fred W. Fischer

Collectors fall into two groups. Those who can go on a brief but costly spending spree and accumulate a large assortment of wanted items, and those who can acquire only a few selections after years of laborious effort. I, frankly, am most distinctly a member of this latter vast majority.

Now in visualising a collector, most of us picture some paunchy, overstuffed old millionaire puttering about in a private museum full of old masters, scarabs, etchings or other objects. But not I. Instead I see an impecunious young fellow of about eighteen, who haunts the bookstalls and second-hand marts of the nation, and who occasionally utters wild inward cries of ecstasy when he discovers something of extraordinary interest -- which item he almost invariably put in the lay-by until his finances have somewhat improved.

A rather peculiar picture of a bona-fide collector, you might well say; but to me he is the authentic type. He is, in other words, the average science fiction collector. He is willing to give his finest shirt for a hard-to-get item, willing to miss a meal than the latest DYNASCIENCE, willing to stoop to the dreadful depth of library theft to acquire a certain volume unobtainable elsewhere.

This last statement I make with deep, bitter personal animosity toward some local science fiction fan, identity unknown to me. He is a knave of the worst sort. I'll prove it!

For years there has reposed in the local library a book written by Ella Scrymsour entitled "The Perfect World" -- a book representing the tops in hodge-podge imaginative fiction. Its plot is comprehensive and all-inclusive, the author quite evidently attempting to cover all the glittering facets and angles of science and weird fiction in one fell swoop. The book begins as a love story, diverts into a weird tale, switches from ghosts to goblins inhabiting the interior of the earth, and winds up as a saga of interplanetary travel after the world has been destroyed in a particularly titanic and complete catastrophe. The characters eventually reach Jupiter, as I remember, and from that point on the plot deals with Utopia.

At any rate this book was never popular, evidently, with any person except myself, for the library card was inscribed front and back with my name and mine alone. I had been dickering with the head-librarian for the purchase of this volume, but had gotten nowhere. In desperation, I decided to sign up for the book and report it lost, being willing to pay the exorbitant price the library always charges for lost books. Determined to employ this deception I at once made my way to the "stacks" where "The Perfect World" had long been buried.

The book was gone! This other fellow -- this devil in human form -- had chanced upon the treasure and his method of acquisition had been direct and forceful. Oh, yes, the card-file listed the volume as present and accounted for, but it didn't take any little bird to tell me

that some so-and-so had already departed with the goods. My crime, therefore, was never committed, and if any of my readers happens to have a copy of a certain work by Ella Scrymsour -- why, I'd like to get my hands on it, and no embarrassing questions asked.

People is the craziest monkeys. They collect more junk than a packrat with an over-active thyroid. They amass matchboxes, money, and old music; they mount butterflies, stuff birds, and pickle snakes; they accumulate slogans, sophistry, and stamps. Speaking of stamps, they're not satisfied in merely collecting stamps, but specialize in certain sorts of stamps -- precancels, Latvian, Lithuanian, Labradorian, and old U.S.

Some people even collect books. Here again the ugly spectre of specialization rears its head. Some people, be it whispered, collect solely scientification.

Unless I'm mistaken, I've gotten back on the track, so here I go again.

Nobody can hope to have a complete collection of scientification. This type of literature is common in all languages and always has been. THE ARABIAN NIGHTS offer many plots to scientification writers. The myths of ancient Greece and the fables of Aesop were crammed with scientification. The Bible offers scientification in symbolic form. In fact, the legends of every nation which ever existed since the dawn of history were permeated with this breath of imagination we now refer to generally as science fiction.

Since completeness, then, is impossible, most of us just gather up all that we can on the subject and let it go at that, although there are of course a few hardy souls who will never be happy until they've completed files of

WEIRD TAKES or AMAZING or whatnot.

There isn't as much fun to be had from hit-or-miss "I'll take anything" collecting. The real thrill comes after the long chase and the hard capture. If you want to really enjoy scientification collecting, make your goal a certain item practically unobtainable and try getting it.

I was omniverous for a while, piling up stacks of magazines and books by the score. Then one day I remembered that as a boy I'd read a story in the ARGOSY ALL-STORY. I'd never really forgotten the story -- just the title and the author or authoress. I thought it might be interesting to try and obtain this particular story with only the single clue to aid me.

So I concentrated on remembering as much as I could of the story, but found that besides recalling its eery mystery I could remember only the cover illustration. This gave me another clue. If it had deserved a cover, it must have been a serial. In attempting to remember what the cover looked like I could think only of a girl's face, surrounded by what I took to be either bubbles or balloons (in my mind's eye). So I wrote the editor of ARGOSY, asking if a story had ever been published with such a cover.

He couldn't tell me, quite naturally. I'd reached the spot, I thought dejectedly, from which I could go no further. SPOT! That was it. I was sure. I wrote and asked the editor if he had published a story called SPOT or SPOTS. Once again, he didn't know. Finally I concentrated on different kinds of spots and got THE BLIND SPOT. The editor supplied the names of the authors, but not the story. It had been sold out for years.

The search became more ardu-

ous than ever. For ten years I trailed that serial over the country, from the rock-bound coasts of Maine to the shores of sunny California. I corresponded with interesting fellows during the search, and found their letters more entertaining than most books. Finally -- oh, happy day! -- I acquired all but the last installment of 'THE BLIND SPOT.

All but the last! And like a fool I sat down and read what I had, immediately.

My friends, that way lies madness!

I was in a perfect frenzy to know how the doggoned story ended, and it looked as if I might have to wait another ten years to find out. A southern gentleman in New Orleans heard of my sad plight, however, and out of the goodness of his heart mailed me the last installment.

Well, sir, I was in a run down, weakened, nervous condition. The doctors had despaired of ever curing me. But the medicine arrived and I took it in a single dose; it really fixed me up. I now sleep like a baby, almost. Babies don't snore.

Another story I had difficulty in obtaining was PALOS OF THE DOG-STAR PACK. My adventure with this epic ran about as follows:

1. I had four parts and needed one.

2. Mr. A needs one part, so I swap him that part for the first installment of THE GIRL OF THE GOLDEN ATOM.

3. Mr. B sends me the part of PALOS which I have always wanted.

4. I write to Mr. B. I cry on his shoulder, figuratively speaking, and tell him that I'm still short one part (let's call it part three.).

5. Mr. C, needing part one of

PALOS, writes to me offering the last part of DRAFT OF ETERNITY in exchange. Needing this particular item to make Victor Rousseau's novel complete, I accept.

6. Mr. B digs up part three of PALOS and shoots it to me, feeling that my happiness should now be complete.

7. I still haven't got the entire PALOS OF THE DOG-STAR PACK.

I had no trouble getting the two other tales in this trilogy, though. I've had at different times no less than five duplicates of MOUTHPIECE OF ZITU and JASON, SON OF JASON.

That's the way it goes in this collecting game -- just one heartbreak after another. It tears down a man's morale, let me tell you.

But FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES has come to me rescue, and it is quite probable that if I wait long enough I shall at long last be able to get the complete PALOS OF THE DOG-STAR PACK. And had I known ten or more years ago that merely by waiting for this magazine to appear on the newsstands, I could eventually obtain THE BLIND SPOT, I would have spared no end of suffering and writer's cramp. Of course, I wouldn't have met all the interesting people with whom I now correspond, nor have known the thrill of possession which comes only to science fiction collectors who, after hunting like the dickens, spot their quarry and make the kill.

Among the other trials of the collector there is always that feeling of suspense when the money is in the mails and the order waits delivery.

At such times, I invariably get sea-sick. I wash back and forth between waves of wonder and anxiety. "Will he send it?" "Is the guy reliable?" "What if it

gets lost?" "Is it insured?" "What if the binding cords come loose?" "Is it addressed properly?" This goes on for days, until the time arrives when the package should -- but doesn't. Then: "I've been gyped!" "It should have been here yesterday! No, yesterday was Sunday." "Oh, the horror of it all!" And so on, ad nauseam, alka seltzer.

The order generally does reach the collector, however. The crooked or gyp-dealers in science-fiction are so few they can probably be counted on the fingers of one hand. It is really remarkable how honest the fans are with each other, and it is even more remarkable how much trouble most of them will undergo to aid a luckless searcher in getting some wanted item.

A fellow in North Carolina, for example, once went to the immense task of making me a copy of a list containing all stories which have appeared in Munsey publications since 1910, both alphabetically and by years and authors, just because there were a few stories I could get dated. Without the dates they were pretty hard to find.

To supply you with a single wanted issue of a magazine, many collectors will go to the trouble of listing their entire collections in order that you may check their lists for that particular copy.

Yes, collectors are a friendly bunch of fellows; every time one of them comes through with something I've long wanted, I have a wild urge to jump on a train and head for his hide-out in order to thank him personally for rendering me such a signal service.

Before I end this article in a flurry of lefts and rights to the keys of the old Royal, let me give collectors a tip. It's this:

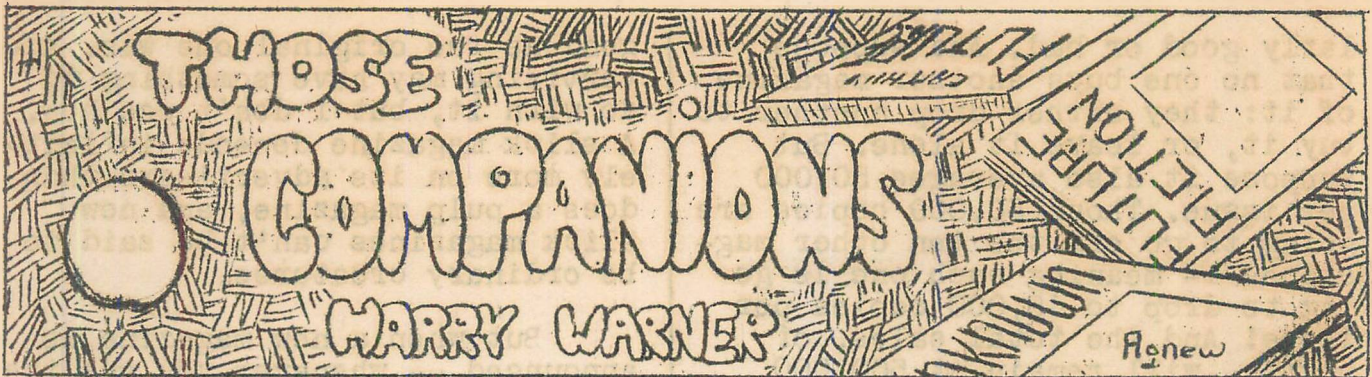
the best way to get something you want, is to offer to sell something. There were quite a few stories I did not have complete at one time. I sent a little notice to the correspondence corner of AMAZING STORIES, stating that I had for sale practically all science fiction back to 1910. In a month I had received over fifty inquiries from fans, as well as offers to trade and long lists of articles they had to offer. So I repeat, try to sell your collection if you want to complete it! (Paranetically, AMAZING STORIES deserves a big hand for the very real service they render in the department just mentioned.)

If you have read this far, thank you! If not, I do not intend to weep and gnash my teeth in baffled rage. Instead, I shall load my shotgun and lay in wait for that OTHER collector who took away my PERFECT WORLD. The chase will be long, but some day I will lay him by the heels. Only this accomplishment and the eventual republication of PALOS OF THE DOG-STAR PACK will make me a completely happy man, resting on my -- uh -- laurels.

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--*-*-*
Subscribe to the PSFS NEWS and be in on everything that happens in the Quaker City. Jack Agnew, 2308 E. Belgrade, Philadelphia, Pa.



Ever since Standard Publications issued Startling Stories, we have been deluged, to say the least, with new science fiction and fantasy magazines. And one odd thing about it is the fact that at least half of these new ones have been "companions". The new ones -- Marvel, Science Fiction, Astonishing, and so on -- have, almost from their beginnings, planned on having a companion.

Now, is this a good thing? I say no, and I think most fans agree with me. Agreed, then, that it isn't good, the fact remains that all of the magazines persist in having companions. Why? I ask. And I don't know the answer.

Consider the case of a fantasy magazine--any one--that has had a fairly successful life up until now. Its circulation is increasing. There are at present about ten fantasy publications on the market, and for a magazine to be successful against those means that it must be good. Now, just why should it start up a companion magazine? One that will be almost identical with its parent? The only cases of companion magazines that I can recall having been really different are Fantastic Adventures and Unknown.

Companion magazines do nothing but add to the number of magazines on the market; even when they're different, they almost never serve a useful purpose. The parent magazine continues to get the better stories. Again, why should the companions be started?

One thing's sure: a companion magazine doesn't induce ten or fifteen thousand people to start reading science fiction. Maybe Startling Stories did -- but that came at a time when only four magazines were appearing on the market devoted to fantasy. It was a noticeable new one; now a new one isn't to be seen among the other ten. So it doesn't get more people to read science fiction, and so help the parent magazine's circulation. Nor any other magazines' circulations, either. It will hinder, more likely.

Because with ten fantasy magazines, almost no one buys all. I doubt if there are one hundred individuals purchasing every fantasy magazine that appears today. At least, here's one who doesn't: it's too easy to get most in the second-hand bookshops, trade for them, or do without. And I should also venture to say that not more than a few thousand people, at most, buy as many as half-dozen fantasy magazines regularly. And all the other hundred thousand, to be conservative, buy from four or five magazines regularly to a copy of Astounding every six months.

Now we're getting someplace. I don't know the total circulation of fantasy magazines today, but for convenience I'll say it's 500,000 copies--that is, that many counting the sales of one issue of all ten or twelve magazines: averaging, of course, about 50,000 each. Now: put an eleventh magazine on the market, not particu-

larly good or bad. And suppose that no one buys another magazine of it: they either drop another to buy it, or leave it alone. But suppose it also averages 50,000 per issue. Those 50,000 copies are going to go off the ten other magazines -- meaning each one is going to drop to 45,000 copies per issue! And the total sales, of course, will remain at 500,000 figuring it that way.

Naturally, things don't work out quite in that manner. Probably a companion magazine -- still figuring on a basis of 500,000 copies sold -- will sell 25,000 of those without hurting the sales of the other magazines. That is, if it's liked, half of its buyers will merely start to get another magazine.

But they all won't. There are still 25,000 to account for -- and those 25,000 are very likely to stop buying some other fantasy magazine. So that each fantasy magazine's circulation is going to be hurt 2,500 copies. It's a lead-pipe cinch that one fair-to-middlin' magazine isn't going to convert 2500 people to science fiction.

All those figures are problematical. They're all high, and it may not work out in just that way. And 2500 copies drop in circulation doesn't hurt too much -- but it will if it's continued a few issues, and multiplied each time a new companion comes out.

Thus, I can't see the least reason for starting up companion magazines at the drop of a hat. If a magazine's circulation is getting good, why start a new one? It won't help the sales of the parent any, and the new one will probably lose money for a while until it builds up a following. An editor can't handle two magazines with the ease of one; therefore, neither is likely to be as

good as the original one was. Advertising may have something to do with it, but I don't see how. A slick magazine depends infinitely more on its advertisers than does a pulp magazine, and new slick magazines can't be said to be ordinary creatures.

But when a new magazine is announced -- whenever you see the announcement in a fan magazine -- there's nearly always a tag to it saying that "if the first issue's a success, there will be at least one companion magazine." Looking forward to companions before the original magazines appears!

Maybe I've overlooked some vital factor in writing this article that would explain everything. If so, I wish that Weisinger, Hornig, or someone would set me straight. Because if they can't, I'll be sure magazine publishers are nuts! Else, why not build up the circulation of one magazine to a good height, and improve it -- rather than start a companion and degrade both? Maybe if more publishers would look toward quality rather than quantity, we'd have what we should have -- about five fantasy magazines that are GOOD!?

EDITOR'S NOTE: We suspect that Harry Warner is a little off in regards to companions. However, we don't know where he made his mistake, if he did make one, so would some obliging editor compose a reply to this pertinent article and clear everything up?

The H. P. Lovecraft Memorial Volume has now been printed. It is a magnificent volume, containing hundreds of pages of Lovecraft's masterpieces of weird fiction. Price is \$5 per copy from August W. Derleth, Sauk City, Wisconsin.

Tell your freinds about FANTASCIENCE DIGEST.



Dear Mr. Madle!—We Have a copy of your July-August-September 1939 issue of FANTASCIENCE DIGEST. We find, on page 12, a reference to Street & Smith which is untrue, and, being so, is libelous.

We wish to say most emphatically that this corporation is not in the hands of receivers, is not up for sale. We have no financial difficulties, owe no money to banks, and pay our bills promptly, day by day.

If the author of the scurrilous article, Donald A. Wollheim, was sufficiently well-informed in regard to the American publishing industry, he would know that there is not the slightest basis in fact for his libelous reference to Street & Smith.

We are informed that it is a criminal offense to make libelous statements that are calculated to injure the financial standing of any person or corporation.

We are going to give you an opportunity to retract the statement objected to, which retraction must be full and complete, without reservation.

Kindly let us hear from you as to what you intend to do.—H.W. Ralston, Vice-President, Street & Smith Publications, Inc.

As I mentioned in my answer to the above letter, FANTASCIENCE DIGEST herewith retracts the statement objected to, and is sorry ever to have published it. Obviously, Mr. Ralston is more aware of the financial business of S&S than is Mr. Wollheim, and his word is enough for me—(Editor)

HAROLD F. BENSON: About your magazine: less fiction, more articles, such as those by Fischer, more news of coming stories in the pro magazines. Put more stress on the "Weird angle", that is, more of the "fantasy" type and cut some of the "science". And I repeat, less fiction.

Apparently Mr. Benson doesn't care for amateur fiction. However, if he'll read Lee Gregor's "The Musician" in the current issue and Alexander M. Phillips' "Dream's End" in a forthcoming issue, I'm positive he'll change his mind. FD will continue to publish at least one short story each issue, but rest assured it'll be the best obtainable by amateur magazines. As to the weird angle, news and items of this type is very difficult to obtain, although we always have previews of WT. Perhaps Mr. Benson would care to submit something of the "fantasy" type?—The Editor.

HENRY D. GOLDMAN: Your mag is certainly one of the top-ranking fan mags going today. Even though it is usually late, it's worth waiting for. Outside of enlarging the readers' department, I can't think of anything to improve it.

ARTHUR L. WIDNER, JR: The issue was very good, and I'm looking forward to the second anniversary number. I rate the contents as follows:

Dawn of Death. Not bad, although the ending was easily foreseen, it was different. —8

Plausibility or Super-Science?
I agree with the writer. ---7

It's Astounding! Warner,
that's all. ---7

Argosy: 1938. Very comprehensive. ---7

What Future for the Fan Magazine? A little pessimistic. ---6

Case History. A little old. ---6
Science Fiction Spotlight.

Very good; indispensable. ---8

Retelling the Old Timers. No wonder you made Fischer one of the staff. He's indispensable, too. ---7

Can You Answer These? I tried but couldn't make a hundred. ---7

Author's Dream (5) Fair. ---5

The Reader Comments. ---6

Why Ghouls Leave Home. Somewhat forced in spots, and rambling. More or less a series of bright cracks, some of which were rather funny. ---5

And that's that.

TED DIKTY: Having neglected commenting on previous issues of Fantascience Digest -- sheer laziness on my part, I fear -- I think I'd better strike when the iron is hot. The mag came this morning and my letter will probably be mailed tomorrow morn.

Liked the yellow covers. They're colorful, but do not detract from the printing. Cover rates a 7.

"Dawn of Death"; only 6, but if the pro mags were rated, some of their fiction wouldn't even get that!

Burke's article, while it did not present any new ideas, gets a 6 because I agree with it. As he says, human beings will always be more interested in human beings than in super-scientific machinery. All the stories in my ten favorite sf novels are chiefly human interest yarns. Even those two scientifically extravagant yarns, "Spacehounds of IPC" and the "Stone from the Green Star" had a highly human side to them.

Wollheim certainly paints a black picture in regards to the

future of science fiction. I do not believe anything of the sort will happen. Perhaps Don himself has changed his mind by this time, seeing as how the war has been on for three months and no mag has dropped out and, what is more, the total has reached fifteen mags. Aside from that, it is a well-written article. 7

"Argosy; 1938"; "Mackley" (and I know who he is, having been the first one to accept material from him under that name) has a fairly readable review. I don't care much for reviews anymore, they being mere repetition of well-known facts. However, the writing saved this one. Give it 6. Incidentally, he's right in saying William Grey Beyer is another Weinbaum. Who wants to disagree?

"Spotlight" is always good. 8

Having read the "Darkness and Dawn" trilogy very recently, I did not get quite the same pleasure I would have ordinarily. But I must say it was a well-written and accurate review of the book. 7

For once, Bradbury has written a flopperoo. Slightly too ghoulish for my taste and not humorous enough. 4

"Case History" rates 7 as most of the info is new to me.

Warner -- 6.

Mimeographing and format is tops. 9

Luck to Fantascience Digest!

SAM MOSKOWITZ: The July-August-September issue of Fantascience Digest was up to the old standard except for one thing. There wasn't any particular feature that stood head and shoulders above everything else. "Dawn of Death" contained a nice note of tragedy. Gosh! how I like tragedy. No story is a great story without an unhappy ending, to my mind, and I'm not being sarcastic. However Fischer's yarn rates only fair...Burke's article OK, but I'm having a tough time figuring out the relation of the quoted poetry to the rest of the article...Cloukey satisfactory.

My, my -- what won't Wollheim try next? Now he's going to be a prophet. A mighty dismal one and one who regrets making a certain statement about S&S by this time, I bethcha my boots....Mackley interesting...."The Spotlight" is very good....Fischer is quite a good reviewer. But I wonder how popular such reviews are?....Bradbury could be funnier....Warner's article quite good....and Agnew deserves a good deal of praise for a very commendable effort on the cover.

Incidentally, the Los Angeles circular is a bunch of lies. I already have signed statements from Korshak & Reinsberg saying that the manner in which the questions were asked by the LASFL'ers was unfair, and that they misinterpreted the meanings, that they were contacted, that they did make affirmative statements.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Moskowitz is referring to a certain circular distributed by the LASFL which asked several questions pertaining to the actions of the Michelists at the recent Philly Conference. Incidentally, it might interest some to learn that most of the Michelists have denounced their communistic ideals and have decided to become Technocrats. And some the Los Angeles Technocrats have become Futurians. Isn't it Amazing?

RAY J. SIENKIEWICZ: The illustrations in the last issue of FD were very good.

"Science Fiction Spotlight" is the best feature of FD.

"Retelling the Old Timers" comes next. In fact, all reviews are tops with me and that's why I also liked "Argosy: 1938", "It's Astounding", and "Case History".

ROBERT W. LOWNDES: The new issue of FD just arrived and contents noted with pleasure. Commenting generally, may I congratulate you on a particularly neat layout, including the cover? And, while you have my sympathy at having

been clipped, it did have one good result: the thinner paper. By all means, keep this: it is far better than the heavy stuff you used before.

As before, you stand sadly in the need of even right-hand edges. I might suggest that your contents page would give a better appearance if you used about two-thirds for the listings and the other one-third for statistics. It is difficult to grasp at sight when spread all across the page this way.

Now for the ratings:

Cover	8
Contents Page	6
Illustration for story	7
Dawn of Death	3
Plausibility or Spuper-Science	10
Author's Dream (50	5
Future for Fan Magazines	10
Argosy: 1938	8
Science Fiction Spotlight	10
Review	10
Questions -- too easy --	6
Why Ghouls Leave Home	8
Case History	8
It's Astounding!	9
Reader's Comments	10
Mimeographing	10
General Appearance	9

Average: About 8.0 which is above average.

Comment in particular: How odd that Donald's article should have been written just a few days before the outbreak of the war. Already, a few of these predictions have come true: ((Which ones, Doc?--The Editor)) others, however, seem to have stated the reverse of reality. Professional magazines appear (with the exception of Marvel and Dynamic) to be stronger than ever. But the writer cannot help but comparing this burst of vigour with the deceptive-appearing face of the consumptive.

Fred Fischer shows some interesting thoughts, but, as Speer remarks, most of them are new only to FF. However, he does show ability to put words together.

'Moskowitz' first article is surprisingly good. Alas, poor Samuel: we knew him well!

"Why Ghouls Leave Home." -B-
Moses Gable should have been "Goble" for obvious reasons.

[illegible]

1. Science Fiction Spotlight
2. The Reader Comments
3. Cover Illustration
4. Retelling the Old Timers
5. It's Astounding
6. What Future for the Fan Mag
7. Case History
8. Can You Answer These?
9. Why Ghouls Leave Home
10. Plausibility or Super-Science
11. Argosy: 1938
12. Dawn of Death
13. Author's Dream

Incidentally, John Giunta requests all fans to comment on his department, in AMAZING MYSTERS FUNDIES and to send copies of their magazines for reviewing in this department. Address: 215 Fourth Avenue, New York, New York -- RAM

Congratulations!

from



SAM MOSKOWITZ



Congratulations to Fantascience
Digest. May it Have many more
Anniversaries.

From a Fellow Fan --

Jack Johnson

Keep Soaring!

The Fantasy Herald

Congratulations on Doing

A Swell Job --

Julius Unger

"Fantasy Fiction Field"

--/--/--/--

CONGRAGULATIONS

from

THE PHILADELPHIA SCIENCE

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Milton A. Rothman
Tex Singleton
Oswald Train
Philip Young
Thomas Whiteside

/**/**/**/**/**/**

BEST REGARDS

to

Fantascience Digest

from

The Fantasy Stylus

Edited By

Virgil Travis
M.I.T. Dorms
Cambridge, Mass.

BEST OF LUCK

from

"The Outsider"

H.C. Koenig

SPACEWAYS

and

Harry Warner, Jr.

extend congragulations to

FANTASCIENCE DIGEST

on its

2nd Anniversary

John W. Baltadonis

Editor;

THE SCIENCE FICTION COLLECTOR

Wishes The Best of Luck

to

FANTASCIENCE DIGEST

MAY YOU HAVE MANY MORE

ANNIVERSARIES *

Best wishes from:

Milton A. Rothman

and

"Lee Gregor" --

All Best to Fantascience

Digest.

--FJA--

Predicting Continued Success

For You, Claire Voyant.

CONGRAGULATIONS! Weaver Wright

Al via dauranta sukceso!

---Morojo

Happy Footure8-Pogo-

CONGRAGULATIONS!

from

"The Eternal Wanderer"

OSWALD TRAIN

CONGRATS, CHUM!

--Bob Tucker--

Gratulon je via dua datreveno,

Erdstelulov

To a Fan what Am: RAM.

From Jack Erman

From a fan who takes quite an

intrest in your DIGEST-ion,

Al K. Selzer.

Have U learnd Esperanto yet? Can
U talk in the Tongue of Tomoro?
Have you read 'The Time Machine',
'A Princess of Mars' or original
stf in the Universalanguage?
Don't delay--start today! Good
going, FD. Mirta Forsto

Stfans, let's get a rocket to
the moon! Join the American Rock-
et Society. Keep 'em coming, FD.

--4SJ--

--*-*-*
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Has Been Generous in Bringing News of Us to the Fans, and
We Wish Its Editors Continued Success.

--*-*-*