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U. S. A.

"THE LAST AND WORST MEN"

(With apologies to Claf Stapledon)

CHAPTER IX:

The culture of the Last Men, after rising steadily for many centuries, was greatly influenced in its later stages by the discovery by a group of excavators in what once was the American continent of a steel film on which was recorded in miniature the pages of an incredibly ancient volume. This priceless manuscript was deciphered by experts, and was found to be a most astounding document from an elder civilisation. The book described many wonders and marvels, and was regarded with awe and reverence. It was translated and published in millions, and so influential were its revelations that this ancient record became the nucleus of a new religion.

The scripture - now adopted as the official Bible of mankind - was entitled "Amazing Stories", and it would seem that its contents had been compiled by one known as "Palmer", with the assistance of his disciples, "Ziff" and "Davis". The followers of the Amazing gospel, however, became divided into two sects: those who maintained that Palmer was the true Messiah, while Ziff and Davis were his comrades; and those who said that Ziff and Davis were the real Holy-Ones, and that Palmer was merely their mouth-piece. Even then, conflict might have been avoided had not one fanatical Palmer-worshipper pointed out that the word "Ziff", when reversed, formed "Ffiz", which was Martian for adonidis, and was therefore a blasphemy and could not possibly have sacred connections. This ingenious but over-zealous religionist was promptly torn to pieces by a frenzied mob of Ziff-Davis followers, who immediately seized power, enforced martial law, and brutally suppressed the Palmer cult.

This state of affairs might eventually have led to spiritual decadence in the race but for the astuteness and genius of one aged philosopher who, after reading carefully the Book of the Amazing Bible called "Discussions", came to the conclusion that the Palmer, the Ziff and the Davis were really all three slaves to the whim of the Hack. And thus was conceived the concept of the Hack which had such far-reaching effects upon the social system of the Last Men. In order that he might not be apprehended and executed for heresy, the aged savant fled to the south pole with a group of followers, male and female, and there formed a Hack Colony. And, as generations passed, the teachings of the first Hack-worshipper became an ingrained part of the Colony's moral and aesthetic code. All that was Hack was glorified and praised; from birth boys were taught to idealise and revere the Daughters of Mad Scientists, and girls - to worship Newspaper Reporters. The forces of evil, it was taught, always materialised themselves in the form of Alien Beings who Wanted to Destroy the World.

It was indeed unfortunate for the Colony that the remainder of the race, by now dogmatically pro-Ziff-Davis, decided to permit colonisation of the poles by Martian immigrants. The Hackites, strongly prejudiced against all alien immigration because of their religion, regarded with disfavour this Martian concession

and the climax came when an irate Martian slew a Mad Scientist who had wanted to inject Castor Oil into his Umpa-dumpa. The Mad Scientist's Daughter, grief-stricken, became a national heroine and, like a certain maid of Orleans millions of years before, organised a mass attack upon the Martian colonists.

The Martians promptly appealed to the Ziff-Davis worshippers for aid but, unfortunately, the latter were powerless to assist; for the Governing Council, with true religious fervour, had scrapped all their orthodox weapons and had substituted in their place blue rays, red rays, green rays, electronic rays, atomic rays, beta rays, gamma rays, and many other kinds of rays as ordained in the Amazing Bible. The fact that these rays would not work had been of little importance hitherto, for they had never been put into practical use. But when the Martian crisis demanded immediate military potency and the rays were found to be ineffective, a curious psychological reaction disturbed the mentality of the Ziff-Davis devotees.

Doubting the truth of their own religion for the first time in centuries, they committed suicide en masse to find out for certain whether or not there was any life after death in the Celestial City -- Pandom.

Meanwhile the forces of the Hackites had completely overwhelmed the peace-loving Martians, exterminating them ruthlessly till none were left. Then, to their great astonishment, they found themselves the sole human inhabitants of the world, and rejoicingly set out to rebuild it and make it a Hack paradise. The Mad Scientist's Daughter was ordained the Highest and Most Holy Person in the Land, and was the living symbol of all that was the ultimate of moral and aesthetic perfection and virtue. And Hackite culture became sophisticated and florid in keeping with the new creed.

So positive and dogmatic was the religion of these latter-day humans, so binding and unifying, that Utopia might have been achieved from sheer force of co-operation, had not something happened which completely disintegrated the beliefs and ideals of this fervently Hack-theistic community. It was so unexpected and unprecedented -- this iconoclastic disaster -- that the nation was frozen into a kind of mental stupor.

For the Most Holy Person in the Land - the Daughter of the Mad Scientist - gave birth to a Martian baby.

Society experienced a black-out. That the figure-head of their religion should so defy and blaspheme the very basic principles of the Hackite cult was a bitter blow to all followers of the faith. Gone was morality and perfection, gone was all that was good in life, for the powers of evil had literally subdued and besmirched the personified criterion of righteousness itself. Now that idealism and reverence were proven fallacious and futile, man reverted to a crude animalism that was the perfect antithesis of his earlier fervour and high morality.

But, in the extreme north of what had once been America, a small, clear-sighted group perceived the disorder of things and, with something akin to philosophical intuition, divined the motivating factor. And it came to them, in a blinding flash of spiritual revelation, that a new order of culture was in the making.

The old Hack society had vanished -- disrupted internally by its own excessive moral rigidity -- but its very annihilation was in itself the first pre-natal groping of the new, unborn state; a state in which Hackism was to be deplored - not cherished, a state incorporating a holy doctrine to which Hackism was noxious anathema.

And they called their religion "Lovecraft", partly because the love craft of the Mad Scientist's Daughter, as evinced by her giving birth to a Martian, had been responsible for the decay of the old Hack state; but chiefly because they knew that the very name - Lovecraft - stood for all that was perfect and spiritually satisfying, a name that automatically relegated to the level of utter scorn all that was of the Hack dominion.

And so, at long last, after countless millenia of blind striving and triumph over adversity, man achieved Utopia.

Thus endeth the story of the Last Men.

BY

DAVE McILWAIN

"MACHINES, MEN AND METHODS"

Of course, you people who pen-push for a couple of hours a day and spend the rest of the time sipping China tea and discussing the symmetry of the female species' lower appendages, will no doubt be wondering how the heck this libellous prose got into print. But you others - ah yes! you others - who with me in spirit if not in the flesh have suffered the almost unendurable torment of grinding cog-wheels, clanking pistons, hissing air-pumps and, O most satanic of man-made noises, squealing seize-ups (that's gotcher), will hail with delight this attempt to put this so-called Machine Age in its proper place. Namely, the garbage can.

To quote from Mr. Rathbone's article, "Now a machine operator knows all the cogs and wheels of his pet baby - he has to watch them going round and round day by day." No cilt that just ducky? Watching 'em go round and round I mean. Round and round - round and round - round and round - then when you get home and finally go to bed you close your eyes -- six-foot sparks zip across+ darkness - and gradually before your closed eyes a pale image of those cogs and wheels appear, impressed upon your mind during 8 or 9 hours of continual staring. And they're going round and round - round and round - round and round sort of intellectually stimulating I suppose, Mr. Rathbone? Get away with you!

True it is that every machine operator has spare time but that is also true of every other worker who is affected by the Factory Acts, Shop Acts, etc., and, mark this well, that diabolical whimsy of employers, Overtime, is still widely practised in most industries. The only difference between the present and the good old days is that today the machine operator works 8 hours regular and 4 hours overtime, whereas yesterday the hand operator did 12 hours a day at a quarter of the wages. But with money worth four times as much Machines have nothing to do with it, you see; only the Acts.

And another thing - contradicting Mr. Rathbone, machines are not eliminating specialisation but are steadily increasing it. I've seen a box-making factory in action. At the end of a long

line of different machines was a stack of corrugated strawboard. It didn't take long for that pile of corrugated strawboard to pass through each of these machines, but when it had each sheet was a large box, having been cut, scored, punched, printed 6 sides in 2 colours, and folded and stapled together into box-shape. The machines needed only the boards to be fed into them by a couple of girls and they did the rest.

Eliminate specialisation? No, sir! As a matter of cold fact, it is recognised that machines are the result of specialisation, and not the source of it. And Mr. Rathbone tries to defend Old Man Clockwork as the master of specialisation!

Perhaps an explanation of the foregoing paragraph would be useful here. Well, chums, it's like this 'ere. Supposing you and a few other nuts were cast away on a desert island, (by an Ifrit for convenience' sake) and, after blackening the pore Demon's soul for forgetting the beer, to say nothing of some wimin and a couple of song-papers, you found you had plenty to do to keep body and soul together and stomach and back-bone apart - what would you do? (Don't send me a post-card - I'm going to tell you) Now, you wouldn't each do your own fishing, spud-scraping, hut-building and cooking, would you? You'd set one person to fish, and another to collect fuel, and another to bug-hunt and so on, thus reducing the implements necessary by the number of persons cast away, and saving the time which would be wasted by each person wandering all over the locality to do all his different jobs. See?

Well, it's the same way in industry, and is rapidly becoming more so. Instead of each craftsman making a match-box they now have one to make the insides, one to make the outsides, and a third party to stick the gummy labels on, thus saving tools and time, and generously providing a free meal to the third party.

You get the idea, anyway.

Well, it finally occurred to someone that he could make a machine to stick them there labels on ten times as quickly, more precisely, and without the gum gluing up old Tinrib's floating kidney, on account it hadn't got any.

The idea spread, and to put it succinctly:- In every branch of industry possible, manufacturing operations are being broken up and simplified to a degree so that a battery of machines can turn the goods out at a much faster and cheaper rate, because each machine repeats its own simple operation at a rapid speed and passes the goods on to the next mechanical gent, thus economising in tools and saving the really enormous amount of time wasted by the human craftsman in changing from one operation of manufacture to another. So you can see that machines, far from eliminating specialisation, are the direct outcome of that method of Production.

Naturally machines are unable to assemble intricate machinery and so in those industries where assembly is the main stage of production human labour is employed, although the principle of divided labour is still the same.

Such a place is Ford's. And despite all the advantages that Division of Labour brings with it, i.e., speedier production, cheaper products and shorter hours, it is a fact that when carried too far it can result in men screwing on a nut, bolting on a mud-

guard or performing a similarly extremely simple operation for the rest of their lives.

And this dismal thought is not dispelled by the even more dismal thought that much of the advantage of Division of Labour is lost to us through the weakness of our economic system.

We can definitely say therefore, that although Mass Production and its progeny, the machines, have resulted in the reduction of many men to the literal status of robots and in the disappearance of prideful craftsmanship:- that state of affairs is due only to this chaotic day and age, and the same principles of production in an economically and socially sane world would result in a substantial decrease in necessary working hours, and a revival of that pride in manual crafts which is being mangled on driving pistons and drowned in floods of machine oil.

But, mark you, that will be part of the far, far future, until when I look forward to operating daily a chipped, filthy, oily, perambulating heap of scrap iron that looks less like its universe-destroying c.r. cousins than a Corporation dust-cart.

Bang --- Crash --- Whistle --- Pop --- Hiss-s-s-s-s-s ---
Thee-e-e-e-e-ee - Twang - Clang, Clang, Clang - Clang - Zips-s-s -
Kerplunk.

Machine Age, Mr. Rathbone?

Bah! Cogwheels to you, Sir!

BY

ERIC C HOPKINS

Just Like A Science-Fiction Story!

I recently re-read four issues of SCIENCE WONDER STORIES (December 1929 - March 1930) which I read for the first time practically five years ago and which I have scarcely glanced at in the interval. It was an interesting experiment and I rather expected to find my opinions greatly changed, but it was not so. After five years of Joe Skidmore, Nat Schachner, Henry Kuttner and Thornton Ayre I naturally valued the good stories more than I did originally but I was also able to realise more fully the deficiencies of the poor ones.

I was interested most, however, by occasional peculiar traits and characteristics common to the majority of the stories. Chief among these was the sugar-coated science sermon. Gernsback, of course, excelled himself on this subject and one can imagine him smiling smugly at his likeness in the form of an extra-terrestrial scientist described by Walter Katel in "The World of a Hundred Men": "There came a man who was a profound student of the various sciences. This man finally withdrew from scientific work and became a fiction writer. His fiction, however, was always semi-scientific in nature; and it was recorded that through his fiction he taught more science to a larger class of people than ever schools did."

In justification of this sugar-coated science the stories reeked of facts, bare and austere. Explanations of Bode's Law, the origin of the asteroids, emaculated relativity, treatises on atomic structure jostled each other at column's length, all in the space of a few pages. Then in the next issue they all cropped up again. In such an atmosphere one can understand Henrik

Dahl Juve writing of his hero in "Streamers of Death", "At once he understood that there were no red rays in the light. He explained the reason for the ghastly colouring to his parents and then hurried to where his aeroplane reposed in its hanger." See how the odious prig puts before all else his desire to enlighten others from his superior store of knowledge, derived, no doubt, from studiously reading scientific fiction.

Perhaps the most surprising thing, however, about the four issues was the frequency with which the authors explained their heroes' predicaments by suggesting that they were in a science-fiction story. I give extracts from three stories that I happened to read in succession:

Miles J. Breuer's "The Fitzgerald Contraction": "Oh, I know. You have read lots of stories in the science-fiction magazines. But we're talking about the real probability in the real universe" implying, though, just the opposite.

Dr. Keller's "The Conquerors": "For years I have read all the scientific fiction I could lay my hands on. Some is good, and some is not so good, and some is rather poor.... Right now we are in a science-fiction novel. We are doing more than writing it; we are living it."

Francis Flagg's "The Land of the Bipos": "I read a story once - in one of those science-fiction magazines it was - about a trip to another world. The inhabitants of it were like plants" thereby identifying it with the world the speaker happened to be in at that time.

By this means authors added a specious conviction to their stories; it was a trick of literary infinite regress. It is not particularly to be condemned, one of the minor traits of science-fiction that one finds on reading old stories.

In concluding this mountain-out-of-a-molehill article I cannot refrain from quoting two further extracts from "Streamers of Death", one of colossal naivety, and the other obviously written in 1929 rather than 1959:

- "Dumar realised huge sums of money from his inventions but
- (1) he used practically all his wealth in erecting great hospitals for the poor. In some ways he was peculiar....."
 - "He went back to the kitchen where he searched the refrigerator for a midnight lunch, and finished off with a big apple."

Incidentally, I might add that at least five stories were worth re-reading, which, in view of the fact that there were only twenty stories in the four issues, is a very respectable average.

BY

MAURICE K. HANSON

"LANGWIDGE"

There are two kinds of language at present used by S.F. fans, viz: "bad" and "American", the most able exponent of the former having long since gone to his fathers (where he was so good they stopped using coal and kept hot air furnaces), and the defender and champion of the latter having also acquired extinction by attempting to say "Oh yeah?" when eating a bowl of tripe.

"Bad" langwidge has many branches and off-shoots seemingly designed to trap the unwary, but after a dose of Freddy Kummer mixed with a small amount of Schachner and salted to taste, the inexperienced S.F. fan is sure to gain some fluency. The most delicate test for this consists of placing a live chicken on the table and delivering oneself of the strongest expletives possible. If the chicken lies down and dies with its feet in the air you have passed the test, but if the said fowl just dies on its side more practise will be required. Unless special material for very drastic use is required the chicken should not be placed on the polished dining-room table.

"American" langwidge, as most of you bright ones will gather, comes from America. This/he probably means the language/ consists of a series of phrases meaning little or nothing - many compounded from English, others seemingly descended (very much so) from ancient Pushtu (sic). For instance, the word "swell" in the American langwidge does not mean 'to bluge', e.g. - fat man, nor does it describe a member of the aristocracy, e.g. - toff. It is a form used to convey amazement and surprised delight. To take another example, "Racket" does not mean unnecessary noise(always!) though it does mean a system whereby helpless fans are swindled right and left by xxxx (censored) and xxx (censored) and xxx (censored). Also the luscious word "dames" implies.....but we'll leave that one out.

As many newly initiated fans are aware, in England it is the custom to laud and proclaim any fan who boasts a full command of both "bad" and "American" langwidges for literary purposes. And towards this end are the following breathing exercises designed. (Note: these exercises have a practical use, in that houses can be demolished for very little cost and re-assembled three miles away with just a little more effort.)

First, we require a table and chair, and having observed that there is nothing up my sleeve, you dazedly watch my wonderful exercises with fervent admiration (I am sure.)

I place the table and chair at about the space of my height from one another, then I lever myself, face upwards, so that my head rests on the table while my feet are laid on the back of the chair. Now I make myself rigid. I breath in, remembering all the things I could say about some S.F. authors, then, when a light piece of literature such as Einstein's "Theory of Relativity" is placed on my tummy I breath out, touching lightly on the ancestry of various S.F. editors with a few prepatory notes as to their ultimate fate and stressing the value of certain of their anatomical details for purposes of torture.

Now you do it, varying the type of literature till you get to such heavy stuff as "Astounding Stories" and "Tales for Tiny Toddlers" and increasing the power of your imprecations and incantations as you do so. I have a feeling some of you will treat this exercise frivolously, varying it by a few jerks of the gastric regions thus producing a bouncing motion of the literature but I would assure these malcontents that this is a very weighty matter, and such motions are apt to cause stammering or hiccups.

The second and last exercise is far more simple. Hol-ler - I mean yell out at the nearest street corner one of John F.

Burke's beautiful articles, stressing all the consonants and omitting none of the nasty words. As this is apt to cause some serious attention on the part of passers-by, if you intermingle it with some observations on politics you are sure to pass as Mr. Chamberlain or someone equally important. Walter Hammond say - or Shirley Temple and you may even gain a large audience listening to your profound remarks.

And so I wish you all good luck with your language proficiency. Where am I going? Me, I'm departing for the reference library to peruse the Oxford English Dictionary!

BY JAMES RATHBONE

"FANOPOLIS IV." Voice of Fanopolis.

He had a confused impression of being slapped on the back by ten thousand prize fighters and his right hand felt as though a bone-dissolving ray had been turned on it. I'm potently protesting he was carried along on this wave of greeting and good spirits and deposited gently on the shore of intimacy and understanding. Vaguely he knew that he was now fully accepted.

Gradually the tide of welcome subsided and the Neophyte had an opportunity to take stock of his new companions. They were a diverse lot - young and old, strong and weak, dark and fair - but all had something in common. He sought in his mind for a clue to this, but abandoned it in order to concentrate on the questions pouring onto him.

They would like, it seemed, to know everything knowable about him. Macinpain, in fact, produced a huge note-book headed "Practical Psychology", and began asking questions of quite a personal character. Yorick Popkins produced another note-book and started to ask him what was his Favourite Story of the Month but was promptly sat on by D. R. Black. Thereupon Ego remembered the attack on Poldegggar's 37th and sat on Black. Others joined in, and while they formed a scrum in the centre of the hall Barke and Macinpain drew the Neophyte aside.

Ten minutes later they had abandoned their attempt to make him a member of the newly formed Pan-Panning Society and the mess in the middle had cleared up. It seemed clear that the Music Night was definitely over now, for portable desks and typewriters were being hauled out, and soon the hall was a hive of industry. While some typed or read, others wandered round and looked over their shoulders. Diffidently the Neophyte asked Barke if this was not rather bad form.

"Good Lord, no!" exclaimed the latter. "It might have been considered so in the early days, but now we realise that curiosity is the most vital force in man and allow of its satiation. And then, of course, it adds to the fun. The glorious uncertainty of slanging somebody in a letter without knowing whether he is reading it over your shoulder or not is one of the things that make life worth living. Come along, let's see what's happening."

The Neophyte was not at all sure that Barke's feelings on the subject were shared by the rest, but he followed warily. Barke led the way to a spot behind one busy typist and motioned

for silence. Awkwardly the Neophyte read over his shoulder:-

"Dear Mr. Hambell, I regret to inform you that the last issue of ASTOUNDING was utterly hopeless. That you have the nerve to ask 20 cents for such damnable bilge inspires admiration. The only story worth reading was de Tramp's 'Mohawk from Mars'. Your affectionate customer, C. NIC.

They moved away to a place behind another critic. "Dear Editor, The July Astounding was superb! The cover was the best yet. The decorations were the best yet. The Editorial was the best yet. Everything was the best yet. Yours, etc. P.S. I'm an awful liar.

The next person they encountered was diligently engaged in entering particulars of Amazing Stories into a huge filing-index. Apparently he was a very enthusiastic fan, for he was also making percentage ratings of the stories by some ingenious means of awarding 5% to each of twenty qualities. Barke and the Neophyte endeavoured for a while to follow his mental and arithmetical reasonings but soon discovered that the latter were quite as incomprehensible as the former.

They became aware that they were not alone in their inspection when two brawny hands appeared and seized the neck of the computer who had just added 17% and 23% together to make 105%. "Ego", murmured Barke, "simply can't stand for any violation of his beloved mathematics. Ergo, the thuggee. But he won't really hurt him - he's a very soft-hearted fellow."

They stood behind the next person for quite a while before the Neophyte realised what was wrong. Then, like a douche of icy water, it burst upon him that this fan was writing a letter by hand! Excitedly he pointed out to Barke the extraordinary phenomenon.

Barke smiled. "Yes", he answered, "this is Pie-can Rose-in-bloom, generally known as Pike. While a baby he was dropped on the head by a robot and ever since machines have been anathema to him. He was nearly banished from Fanopolis once for a battle with the Grizzly Bayer, but, bless you, he's more of a fan than any of the Council so they can't do much about it. His only fault is his incurable optimism. He concludes letters to science-fiction fans with the words "Good Reading".

But the letters seem pretty dull today. Come along and let's see the fanmag section."

In the far end of the hall were situated ominous, squat contraptions that seemed quite capable of pouring forth the most deadly rays if they tried. Closer inspection, however, showed that these were nothing more than rotary duplicators, happily intermingled with hekto sets and printing outfits. A busy hum of work pervaded the atmosphere and all the workers seemed very sociable.

Their sociability did not affect their intolerance of interruption, as Barke and the Neophyte soon found. When ever they came too near a press they were insultingly commanded to "vamoose", "vanish", "buzz off" or "hit the horizon", depending on the nationality of the worker. One sweating American, busy at something called "Le Zombic", muttered that he'd had one cartoon pinched by Fantaspoet for the PANTAST already, and he knew how Barke got his material for Sally, so would they please sheer off?

Barke remembered his position as guide and refrained from violence but could not resist pouring a tube of mimeo ink down Sucker's neck as he bent over the stencil. While Sucker clutched at his back and made the air hideous with his cries, Barke clutched the Neophyte's arm and made for the door.

"I sometimes wish they had never resurrected that buzzard," he panted when they reached the open air again. "And now for the sights of Fanopolis. Macinpain and Fantaspoe should be here waiting for us. Ah, there they are. But what in..." he whistled thoughtfully.

The two in question calmly slid down an overgrown Bolish Beacon together with a third person whom the Neophyte did not recognise. "'Sallright", remarked Fantaspoe jauntily, 'dear old Professor Sweet-and-Low claimed the other day that he'd invented a "friction-eliminator" so Rave here, and Louis Lankus and myself were just testing it. If the absence of a rear portion to Louis' pants is anything to judge by the dear old doc has been blethering again. Or maybe linking the positive and negative leads together didn't do the generator any good. Anyway, we're ready to go now.'

BY

FANTASTIC

SO THIS IS ENGLAND?

-or-

Pong Prefers Patagonia.

"'Ay there, blighter, where in 'Ales d'ya think yer going in such a rush? C'mon now, speak up or I'll report ye!"

"Please sir," replied a much bewildered Pong, "I am only looking for a species of animal called a "science fiction fan", but there is so much damnable fog dashing around this foreign country of yours that one is simply overwhelmed. Why, right now, copper, I don't know whether I'm in London or out in that place youse guys call the Moore's!"

"'Ay? What's that, you young scalawag? Oh, yez be from America, be yez? 'Ell, that explains it then. No wonder you acted like a...like a...what is it ye Americans call it... 'a screw lost'? I suppose you remembered to check your license at the dock?"

"License, cossack, what license?"

"Well, blimey! The little beggar doesn't know he needs a license to practise sciencefictionomy over 'ere. Deah, deah, those Americans are SO ignorant! And I don't suppose yez even bothered to get a permit to walk in the early fog?"

"Permit to walk in the early fog? Cripes, flatfoot, what kinda place is this? Do I have to have permission to walk around in your old fogs?"

"O' course ye do, young whippersnapper. Now, we 'ave permits for early fogs, and permits for late fogs, but then yez can save toime by getting a permit for an all-day fog! And quit+ calling me them names! I am a Bobby!"

"Bobby? Bobby what? You have to have a last name, gunshoe. But then, you English are iggerunt critters anyhow. Why, copper, you don't even talk good English! Tch, tch, tch! Well, I cawnt stand here all day blabbin' to you slue-foot, I simply cawnt. I gotta find a science fiction fan!"

"'Ay there!" the disappearing traffic-snarler yelled after Pong, "light ye tail-light, American, or somebody'll run into ye!"

"Now if that don't beat all hades!" Pong snorted aloud. "These British shore are iggerunt. They think that over in America Indians run wild and scalp everybody west of the Mississippi, that gangsters run everything east of the same river, and that we have lights on our tails! SOME country! The science fiction fans here can go heck! I'm going home where it's civilised and quiet!"

BY

RVTUCKER

My Task: the Task of Man

I am a man. I acknowledge a full share of those limitations which make man less than he might be or could be. Yet, with the race of man, I can declare myself heir to those potentialities of greatness which enable man to sustain himself on the flood of time. I am even more: I am man. In a universe where no mote of matter exists independent of the being of every similar mote in that universe, the fruits of no entity accrue to itself alone. Every man is the keeper of his brother, responsible both for and to him. No one exists without the pall of the deeds and being of his fellows.

Being thus declared, you shall understand the meaning of the task I speak of, nor censor me for its ambition. For it is given man to venture where angels fear to tread.

A house divided against itself cannot stand. No more can a nation or a race of nations divided against itself stand. My first task, the one precluding all others, must be to make the nations of earth one. The day which sees the brotherhood of man united under one flag shall see a rejuvenation of the human race.+ It must also be my duty to abolish all such evils as feeble-mindedness, corruption in government, poverty and disease. To show me the way I shall call not the political demagogues, but the wisest men of the planet; men trained in the tasks appointed them. When these things have been accomplished, it will then be time for me to formulate a philosophy which may guide my further labours, so that I shall know upon the attainment of what goal my efforts are to be expended. If I judge the present inclinations and temper of man aright, that goal will be the conquest of all knowledge. If the fruit be still forbidden, it may yet be striven for, although the fullness of it shall not be obtained.

Nor shall I fail, as I gather the wisdom of the future in the generations of my posterity, to apply it for the benefit of humanity, through the administration of those who prove their wisdom most worthy of the task. The weather and climate shall yield to my control and hidden resources be made known for my use. Then, truly, the son of man shall inherit the earth. But I shall not stop here, for the stars beckon outward, and in the furthest reaches of the universe my foot shall eventually be set in the eternal quest for truth.

BY

FRANK SKERBECK

Two fantasies by DRSMITH next month!!

COMING - BURKE, ROBB, WARNER, MICHEL, GOTTLIFFE, RAINBONE!

AUGUST 'OLIDAY.

Readers are the best judges of the aptitude of the above title. Hitherto FANTAST has been the essence of punctuality but the usual distractions of summer time, coupled with a belatedly sudden arrival of summer weather, has made this issue even later than the fortnight we announced.

Despite the sustaining efforts of McIlwain and Hanson, this particular issue does not seem, to our mind, to be up to par. In declaring this, we carefully forestall whatever brickbats may come in on that score and at the same time resolve that such will not happen again.

Probably the greatest void is left by the non-appearance of Smith, who had material in all of our last three issues. This omission is merely temporary, for the next issue will contain two new Smithologies - "It's a Devil" and "The Benefactor". Also in our next will be a very entertaining 'short' by John F. Burke, finally capping the conscription question and, with luck, a rather good article on Messiahs by Osmond Robb. In addition, we have on hand really good verse by Rathbone, Michel, Gottliffe and Harry Warner, an article by Julian Parr and a neat short story by an American fan. Worthy of especial note is the first of a series of book reviews by Charles Rowlands. Rowlands is an enthusiastic collector and will bring to your attention off-trail fantasies you might otherwise quite easily miss.

We should like to express our thanks to those stalwarts who have tried so hard to "boost" Fantast. Chief among these are Arthur Clarke, William Temple, Ted Carnell, John F. Burke and Louis Kuslan, but to the anonymous others also, we are deeply grateful.

There was a slight rise in the number of voters this month, thirteen commenting as compared with eleven last month. It seems, however, by reason of the paucity of ratings of the fourth issue, that some of these are dropping off. We hope this is false.

The positions were as follows:- 1st. "Folly"--8.875. 2nd. "Fanopolis 2"--8.75 (a rise of .97). 3rd. "On Words..."--8.25. 4th. "The Introvert"--7.96. 6th. "Visit to a Factory"--6.46. 5th. "This Man and Machine Business"--6.625. 7th. Cover--5.44. 8th. "On Conscription"--4.54. Average for the issue--7.10 (as opposed to 6.63 last month).

So we improved! The issue, though, was not as well balanced as the second. Notice the drop of 1.50 between "The Introvert" and its closest rival, and the further drop between Rathbone's article and Kay's. With regard to the latter, from three people (no names!) it received one mark, which should be a record. Even discounting these, though, it was the least liked article. "Fanopolis" was awarded five tens by well-meaning people, or two more than even "Folly" got... The rest were unexceptional.

Before closing, we should like to offer our condolences to Roland Forster who was badly injured in a road accident while on holiday. Best of luck, Roland, and don't try conclusions with a brewer's dray in future. Remember, beer is best...

Our Elephants, I fear, have gone off on a

F O L L Y

F A N T A S T B protracted bun-bend !!

Back next month.

FANTAST is not a news magazine, but we are nevertheless grateful to Standard Magazines for this advance information

"Here's up-to-the-minute information regarding our companion science fiction magazines, THRILLING WONDER STORIES and STARTLING STORIES.+++For THRILLING WONDER STORIES we've just finished scheduling a line-up of complete novels for the coming year, where in the most popular authors in science fiction will be represented. Important novels by such writers as Manly Wade Wellman, Frederic Arnold Kummer, Jr., Clifford D. Simak, Carl Jacobi and Jack Williamson. And don't forget--each of these novels will be published in our special scientifiiction section, illustrated profusely by such artists as Brown, Finlay, Vesso and Paul.+++New sequels are coming up! Remember THE MAN WITHOUT A WORLD, by the sons of Edgar Rice Burroughs, John Coleman and Hulbert, which was published in our Tenth Anniversary Issue? They've written an excellent sequel to their first yarn, THE LIGHTNING MEN, and it will be featured in a very early issue. Gordon A. Giles will continue his "Via" series. And, if you want the series continued, Kelvin Kent will follow up with the further adventures of Pete Manx, time-traveler.+++Speaking of series, we're soon planning to publish Robert Arthur's streamlined interplanetary story, SONG AT TWILIGHT, featuring the first in the exploits of the Andy Hardy family of the future.++++Recall the unique cover of the Tenth Anniversary Issue? At that time Ray Cummings wrote an interesting article explaining its possible interpretation. Well, Ray has since done much better. He's written a special story based on that cover, SHADOW GOLD, and it's slated for early publication. Watch for it. Surply we also recall SHADOW GOLD, October 1936?+ + + + + You won't want to miss the January number of STARTLING STORIES. If you're a Hamilton fan, you'll find the issue doubly attractive for the book-length novel is THE THREE PLANETEERS, written, of course, by Hamilton. It's one of the most dramatic novels we've published in a long while, and Virgil Finlay's masterful illustrations do the story justice. Cover for the January issue will be by Brown.+++There are things happening at STRANGE STORIES, too. Good things. And we'll have a report on them for you in the near future.

Leo Margulies 22 West 48th Street, New York City, N.Y., U.S.A.

Pencilled profusion from Michelist dilettante, "Doc" Lowndes:

"Turner's cover is most excellent and admirably symbolic of your content, well executed and conceived. Am delighted to observe that the righthand margins are even and that the mimeographing is uniformly legible.+++Now for the content: "Dark Horizon" is entirely well done and the same may be said for Gottliffe's poetry. "Things Are Not What They Seem" suffers from a somewhat school-essayish composition, while "Oceana" mixes the informative and poetic styles to the injury of both and the general effect. "The Author & the Idea" just missed being good doggerel, lacking in smoothness. "Necronomicon, A Chapter From" I regret to say, is a failure for me. You see, this "dark book" business is really a very quiet, subtle type of humour -- in which the joke is on the victim, most jokes are and to mix it with the broader, belly-

laugh, slapstickish type is to spoil the former without adding anything. "Fanopolis" is excellent, as is your editorial & "Fantast's Folly".+++Personally, I am against purely scientific articles in "Fantast". They are out of place no matter how well done. Others think so too, therefore---no science Poetry (or verse, or doggerel) with fantastic (or fan-tastic) overtones (or undertones) certainly belongs. As for fan fiction - isn't that dependent upon the number of MSS written up to your standard? Providing they're well done and fantastic, I should say two every issue is fine. Or one, plus serial?+++May I inject a word on pacifism? We must draw distinctions here. So we mean by "pacifist" one who believes in peace at any price, or one who believes in striving for peace, but who will support a just war ("just war" - a war of any nation or people to preserve their independence and culture: "unjust war" - a war for the purpose of conquest or exploitation of other nations or peoples). A pacifist is simply one who will not support violence as a means of settling controversy If we mean the first type of pacifist, then it can be safely said that this person increases the danger of war, for to vacillate, surrender, appease or refuse to resist any given danger is to increase that danger. On the other hand, that pacifist who is constantly fighting (or striving) for a just peace, but who will not hesitate to support a just war and makes no secret of this attitude, is actually aiding in decreasing the danger of war, for to take a firm stand, to resist intelligently any given danger is to decrease that danger. We must not, however, be misled by labels. Too many people, seeing a label placed upon a given situation, are immediately either for or against, according to the label, without examining the situation to determine whether or not this label is a correct description or a disguise. This inability on the part of many to distinguish is of inestimable value to the enemy in any case. A man running away may be in cowardly non-resistance, or he may be doing the most intelligent thing under the circumstances. Conversely, a man sticking by his guns, refusing to budge, may be resisting valiantly or may be throwing himself and his abilities away like an utter fool. An excellent example of labels used as a disguise occurred recently in fandom at what was called the "World SF Convention". Under the label of "Americanism" six prominent fans were refused admittance by those fans in charge. The label was supposed to mean "protection of the American ideals of tolerance, fair play, equal rights to all under the law, etc" from enemies of those ideals. Actually it was a case of cowardly suppression, on the part of the fans in charge, of the six fans whom the committee did not dare face publicly because of their own guilty consciences. They themselves having violated grossly all these "American" practises they claimed to hold so dear."

RWLowndes

1197th Co. CCC, Portland, Conn, U.S.A.

Personal, but of wide interest, is this letter from FANTASY:

"Your high opinion of "Child of Power" was particularly encouraging as though I, too, rated this story as one of the best of its kind I had ever read, I was quite expecting to find readers objecting to it as containing insufficient action or scientific interest. No doubt it will come in for a certain amount of criti-

cism but your emphatic approval of it, together with other letters we have already had in praise of it will strengthen our confidence in the choice of such outstanding stories as this.+++Incidentally, the illustration to "Child of Power" which you so much admired was by Drigin, whose work, I agree, does vary in quality but who, at his best, takes quite a lot of beating. We still prefer Turner and Blow/+++We will bear in mind your warning not to overdo the invasion-from-space theme but, so long as the present dearth of really well-written science-fiction stories continues, the choice of editors will remain sadly limited. We may know what we want, but to get competent authors to deliver it is an altogether different matter."

C Stanhope Sprigg-Tower House, Southampton Street, Strand, LONDON.

Gunner Hanson (Militiaman 10020491) leaves his searchlight for a moment (thereby imperilling the shores of Empire) to annoy a hard-working editor:

"The latest issue of Sally was cheerfully addressed to me as Maurice K(iller) Hanson by your pacifistic colleagues in Liverpool and the sight aroused a pang of envy in me. How nice to be a conscientious objector, I thought. For then the whole question of force or no force is settled once and for all. They have chosen, and their peace of mind must be wholly delightful, and they are fully entitled to it. Moreover, if they aren't cheeky to the tribunal they stand a good chance of avoiding six months' incarceration with the flower of democratic youth.+++In spite of my envy it does seem to me that there are circumstances in which force is necessary and army service is a direct corollary of this conclusion. I am not sure that one is justified in taking orders from Mr. Chamberlain's Government, as one must eventually do, but, at least, another rifle in trained hands will be useful on the side of the proletariat when the revolution comes.+++Should there be any fan who is expecting to do military service before long, the likelihood is that he will have to put up with moderately abundant tho' usually poorly cooked food, a vast amount of physical discomfort, a lot of quite vigorous exertion, fairly rigorous discipline, a variety of deprivations of liberty both serious and petty (such as walking about with hands in pockets), a fair amount of boredom and incalculable amounts of cleaning, polishing and just waiting about.

M K Hanson

C Troop, 133 Battery, 21st Searchlight Depot, R.A.
D Camp, Blandford, Dorset.

If there's one thing England can be proud of, it is the affection which her American daughter has towards her:

"You English are a race of expanded Egos. You won't admit that you make mistakes and therefore you can't profit by them. The only reason you look down upon us Americans is because we won't agree with you and acknowledge that the English rule the world. Should we do that we would be tops among nations. But somehow our individualities would not allow us to acknowledge any nation is right all the time. Not even our own. Unless we have definite proof, and the way England has been back-sliding and running away lately doesn't give us any proof that the British Lion is to be feared. Rather, I think, she has turned into a big, fat house-cat that will lick any hand that will say you are pretty nice. She

wants praise, and will go to any length to get it, even to the extent of backing down to a smaller, weaker, contemptible nation that is ruled by a mad-man. WOW!!!

Rita Carmelle 6659 S. Ingleside Avenue, Chicago, Ill., U.S.A.

"How raw our Militiamen look! Poor suckers, three--quarters of them don't know what it's all about and when they do it'll be too late. Meanwhile, there's fun and games. The loathsome hypocrisy of it all! Hardening young muscles to be ripped out by high explosive - expanding young lungs to be rotted by poison-gas. And they call it National Fitness! The pity of it is that for a certain kind of undisciplined weakling the training is beneficial in itself - but what about the aims of the training? How few of them can see past their noses - beyond the immediate pleasure of mixing with jolly comrades and tinkering with ingenious mechanisms - beyond that prologue to the horror of the tragedy that follows. Glorified Boy Scouts the conscripts are just now -- sickened butchers they'll be too soon.+++ "Horizon" is a thought-provoking fragment, that calls for fuller development of its gloomy theme. I do not think I should weep like Mr. Williams over the ruthlessness of the conquering birds. Man's path to supremacy over the lower animals is bloody enough; in all conscience. Think of the multifarious species that have become nearly or totally extinct as the results of human interference; the harmless dodo of Mauritius, butchered in great numbers by ignorant sailors; the once numerous herds of bison and buffalo, now shrunk to comparative handfuls..... See de Camp's "Living Fossil" for a biologist's view of this sorry state of affairs. And do you think that the mentality of a bird would be so much akin to our own that it would take pleasure in the erection of monuments - a typically human piece of foolish vanity? "Oceana" is another atmospheric piece and, considering its brevity, unexpectedly powerful. The notion of the sea as a living monster is new to me and well put over, with an admirable avoidance of clichés. As for its ultimate summons to doomed mankind - that's a tremendous idea, and should be worked into a story before somebody steals it.

Osmond P. H. Robb 107 Montgomery Street, Edinburgh, Scotland.

A letter from Pie-can (see "Panopolis" - no disrespect intended!)

"Well! having got over my B-- B-- (C, as you say) exam., here I am back again and full of zest, perhaps!+++ Was surprised to learn that Harold Kay was the militarist in the woodpile. Just before getting Fay I had received a letter from him and replied to it mentioning that I was going down to London, but I sealed the envelope with a P.P.U. sticker, so? Haven't heard from him since. +++I am fairly sure that conscription will be extended as soon as facilities are available and can tell you where all this is leading in one word - FASCISM. Probably a nice, refined British variety, but still fascism.+++Disagree entirely with Harold Kay (of course). His drivel shows that he has not the faintest idea of Pacifism and, like many others of his ilk, ventures to place all that he may dislike in the other camp. As witness the fact that the Peace Pledge Union is at the moment subsidised by Moscow gold, whilst its members are Hitler's agents in Britain - according to your shade of "popular" newspaper.+++Just an aside - you deserve 12 out of 10 for the lettering on the cover and arrangement of same praise Harry and also for the blurb at the base. It was so

nice of you to mention me! /Grrr!7

J M Rosenblum

4 Grange Terrace, Chapelton, Leeds 7

And, of course, DRSmith!

"Once more I waded right into the pleasant task of discussing the latest Fantast. The cover is undoubtedly the best yet, though I'm afraid I don't see the connection between the drawing and the title. A little too deep for me. The lettering is more attractive, I can't quite make up my mind whether I entirely liked the omission of capitals, but the massive characters look less amateurish than the thin ones of previous issues. And it is a delightful crack of yours at the bottom.+++William's story was a very good one in many respects, the idea in particular being attractive, but it seems to me that it could have been more effectively told. In a narration of such a vast tragedy the intrusion of the rather petty details of personal emotions and mental comparisons prevents the reader getting the requisite atmosphere of dread. I think it might have been better told in the third person, and certainly the last paragraph softened the climax unnecessarily. Also, to one who is not familiar with London, the account of the wandering through the strangely altered streets was not particularly interesting. Also, through all the story there is no mention of what light he saw the city in, whether the dull, monotonous light of a gloomy winter's day or the sparkling, clear air of a summer evening after rain.+++These are small things, but they count. As minor details I will mention that the hero saw a deuce of a lot in the light of a match, (and here again there is no mention of the effect produced by such dim radiance) and that taloned wings are things of the past, not the future. Nevertheless I think it a praiseworthy effort.+++"Prelude for Murder" suffers for two reasons in my mind. The first is that to my ear the meter limps a little in places. The second is that my irresponsible and unworthy subconscious insists on rhyming the last two lines together, thereby ruining the effect. /Recapitulation:

"...You say this was before the Flood,

But.....what if I am in the Mud?"

It got us, too, but we hoped our readers would be more seriously inclined!7 Also the form bears some resemblance to a ballade, and I expected another verse and an envoi. It seems too much of a tumti-tumti-tumti-tum poem altogether for its morbid subject. The form of the second is more thrilling but the subject is ridiculous. What prevents anyone singing at his work? Why is it so terrible to have to do anything useful? Pokey.+++Wasn't it Dunsany's Mr. Jorkens who fled from some pursuing trees? I was impressed when I read it, considerably more than by Gottliffe's effort, at the end of which I was left wondering why he blamed the tree for anything. It would have been more in keeping with the general impression I received if he had had to chuck the spade at a pink elephant.+++"The Author and the Idea" was quite a relief after the somewhat morbid nature of the preceding contents. In spite of the rather well-worn character of the plaint it escaped being dull, and one does not expect technical perfection from a humorous poem.+++There is at least one blatant example of poor grammar in "Oceanna". "I knew now" should be either "I knew then" or "I know now", the latter, which would have been the best, involving the other two verbs being placed in the past definite instead of the pluper-

fect. I'm surprised at you letting a thing like that get by the editorial blue-pencil.+++ "The Chapter from the Necronomicon" (was the spelling in the heading intentional?) was an amusing burlesque the ending being particularly funny, though it might have had more snap to it. The humour seemed to creak a little in places, but still.....+++ "Fanopolis" continues on its happy way, and I have no hesitation in awarding the usual full marks for this instalment.++ +Your full-page editorial was certainly more than a mere stop-gap. To answer questions, I do not want purely scientific articles unless they are very unique or have some special claim for consideration, I don't mind verse in the present quantities, (that'll make you whistle), and I have no particular preferences for the amount of fiction except that I'd sooner read a good essay than a poor story.+++ "Fantast's Folly" continues to be an extremely entertaining and instructive feature. Mr. Kay's fire-breathing letter made an excellent start, and I admire the skilful way in which you parried his rather clumsy slashes. Hanson's letter is a pleasure to read, my own beautiful name occurring three wonderful times! That quatrain he admires so much he had the pleasure of reading over a year ago - I know now how much attention he pays to my letters. But I must not say things like that, or he'll wave his searchlight at me. Clarke is another good letter writer as well as an excellent, shrewd critic of essays. I am surprised at Burke+ casting such futile wishes at me. They are futile, for, as those who in moments of hallucination have made anid of me will tell you, not only are my feet of clay, but most of the rest of me as well. Mr. Rathbone came perilously near the truth in his comments on my essay. I did not actually write for the sake of writing, I definitely wanted to say what I did, but equally it is true that importunate editors caused me to drive my muse with a whip rather than coax her tenderly as I prefer.

DRSmith 13 Church Road, Hartshill, Nuneaton, Warwks.

And finally:

Six handkerchiefs bedeck my bed,
 'Cos by tomorrow I'll be dead,
 - Nor seek for sign with wick and tallow -
 My inspiration's lying fallow.
 My laughter with my heart has gone--
 I've no machines to gaze upon;
 And in the blasted night it seems
 A petrol engine haunts my dreams
 Adown the corridor of days,
 Achanting various technic lays...
 Because I would prefer machines
 To dear old Granny's knitting-pins.
 Oh woe! Oh weep!
 Nor let me sleep
 Until my cruel tormentor cries
 "Oh, J.P.R., I've gone too far -
 I've made mistakes of whopping size!
 And yet (he-he!) I really must
 Express my mirth before I bust...
 I'm wondering how in earth's creation
 You lost your big imagination...

By James P.
Rathbone, and
dedicated:
"My dear de-
cluded D.R.S.,
to you in de-
cision".