F A N T A S Y C O M M E N T A T O R

...covering the field of imaginative literature...

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C O N T E N T S

EDITORIAL:

This-'n'-That	A. Langley Searles	236

ARTICLES:

The Superman in Modern English Fiction	Richard Witter	237
Omega---and Olaf Stapledon	Thyril L. Ladd	251
Some Strange Stories	Harold Wakefield	253
The Immortal Storm (part 3)	Sam Moskowitz	261

VERSE:

The World	Christina G. Rossetti	260

REGULAR FEATURES:

Book Reviews:		
Lewis' Tales of the Grotesque	Matthew H. Onderdonk	249
Carr's Burning Court	Harry Warner, Jr.	252
Tips on Tales	Thyril L. Ladd	258
Thumbing the Munsey Files	William H. Evans	259
Open House	Our readers	267

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This-'n'-That

Spring has rolled around again, and it is time for our annual glance at Arkham House productions. In this column a year ago we gave a list of those volumes that were scheduled to appear. All but the last four thereon have actually done so, and three of these are expected in 1946; Shambleau and Others, by C. L. Moore, will not be published by Arkham House, but there is reason to expect that it will be issued under another aegis. Here, however, are those books expected within the coming year, in the probable order of appearance:

The Doll and One Other, by Algernon Blackwood	$ 1.50
The House on the Borderland and Other Novels, by Wm. Hope Hodgson	5.00
Fearful Pleasures, by A. M. Coppard	3.00
Revelations in Black, by Carl Jacobi	3.00
Skull-Face and Others, by Robert E. Howard	5.00
West India Lights, by Henry S. Whitehead	3.00
This Mortal Coil, by Lady Cynthia Asquith	3.00
Dark Carnival, by Ray Bradbury	3.00
Slan, by A. E. Van Vogt	2.50
Night's Black Agents, Fritz Leiber, Jr.	3.00
The Travelling Grave and Other Stories, by L. P. Hartley	3.00
Carnacki, the Ghost-Finder, by William Hope Hodgson	2.50
Dark of the Moon: Poems of Fantasy and the Macabre, by A.W. Derleth	2.50

The first title above is already available; the next three are anticipated by the summer of this year; the half-dozen then following by fall; and the final trio are scheduled for appearance in the winter of 1946-7.

Among the anthologies that have appeared since our last issue are the following: Who Knocks?, edited by August Derleth (Rinehart, $2½); And the Darkness Falls, edited by Boris Karloff (World, $2¾); Rue Morgue No. 1, edited by Rex Stout and Louis Greenfield (Creative Age, $2¾); and The Best of Science Fiction, edited by Groff Conklin and bearing an introduction by John W. Campbell, Jr. (Crown, $3). The first two and the last bear our unqualified approval---especially the fine collection assembled by Mr. Conklin; Rue Morgue No. 1, however, is definitely an item to steer clear of, for it is predominately an assembly of mediocre mystery stories, with a couple of markedly inferior yarns from Weird Tales (one by Seabury Quinn!) tossed in.

Three science-fiction novels have recently appeared, of which the most noted is perhaps Franz Werfel's Star of the Unborn (Viking, $3). In this, the author's last work, we are subjected to a sort of utopian travelogue through the world of 100,000 A.D. Werfel toys with many themes, but manages to develop few of them; as a result the book's dramatic high points are few, and in totality the structure verges on the pedestrian. More interesting than this are two volumes put out by the Buffalo Book Co.: John Taine's Time Stream and The Skylark of Space by E. E. Smith, novels which appeared originally in pre-1930 issues of science-fiction magazines, and which have not since been available. These are priced at $3 apiece, and may be obtained by remitting to the publishers at 271 Doyle Ave., Providence 6, R. I. Fantasy Commentator recommends both.

In the realm of pure fantasy we have Frank Tashlin's Bear that Wasn't (Dutton, $1¼), a delightful tale that is simply a must; Peabody's Mermaid, by Guy and Constance Jones (Random, $2½), an equally charming tale spiced with humor and just a dash of allegorical satire; Jerome Dreifuss' Furlough from Heaven, wherein a survey of our civilization is conducted by the shade of Leonardo da Vinci (Crown, $2½); Frank Baker's Embers (Coward-McCann, $2½), which tells of an Englishman who lives happily with his five cats and whose real company is the dream of the woman he loved and lost; and The Pale Blonde of Sands Street, by William

(concluded on page 252)

The Superman in Modern English Fiction

by
Richard Witter

Introduction

Supermen---what are they: mutations, freaks, or the successful results of scientific experiments? Since the appearance of the first modern story concerning them at the turn of the century, many authors have dealt with possibilities implied by these questions. The fictional beings resulting have thus assumed various forms and been endowed with diverse powers superior to those of the normal homo sapiens.

However, they all fall into two broad classifications. The first includes what I shall henceforth term "singular supermen": those unique individuals possessing no fellows who share their abnormal characteristics. In the second category, on the other hand, are the ones who are members of larger groups; these will be referred to hereafter as "racial supermen." A further dividing line has proved helpful in treating the theme: "subjective" and "objective" supermen. By the former, I refer to those who are largely dominated by their surroundings---in short, ones which succumb to the inertia of the world about them; those of the latter, on the contrary, attempt to mold their envirionments to suit their own personal needs and wishes, seldom seeking escape from antagonistic reaction.

Certain cases must naturally be omitted from consideration, if only in order to keep this article within the bounds of manageable length. Among such exclusions are robots, whether mere mechanical gadgets or machines operated by intelligence (as Binder's Adam Link); extra-terrestrial creatures, either in human form or otherwise; visitors to this world from the past or future (e.g., the ones in Out of the Silence) that have attained a high degree of racial advancement; superbeings not belonging to the genus homo sapiens (for example, Stapledon's Sirius); men who can fly, walk on water, or perform similar feats---which thus excludes Eric Knight's Sam Small and "The Tramp" of L. Ron Hubbard. Since their appearance in science-fiction's history, such fabulous characters as Buck Rogers, Hawk Carse and Kimbal Kinnison have grown in stature to the point where they are considered virtually superhuman; this is not a true interpretation of fact, however, as they are merely human beings slightly above normal for their respective times, and consequently warrant no mention here. Lastly, one variety has been deliberately omitted---or included only in those cases where superhuman powers are possessed in addition to the chief claim for fame. This claim rests on immortality, a theme found in such works as Phra the Phoenician, After the Afternoon and "The Man Who Awoke" series. These and other similar items form the basis for a future companion article to be titled "The Immortal Man in Modern English Fiction."

Book One: The Singular Superman

I
Birth or Creation

Simplest of all raisons d'etre for a superman is that of simply having him arrive unexplained on the scene. This device is utilized in Fearn's "Mental Ultimate," Weinbaum's New Adam and the Englishman's Gladiator, The Fiery Gate of Ronald Fraser. One is tempted to relegate them to a natural mutant origin.

Such mutants, while probably easiest to postulate, are also the most plausible. For these reasons mutations of various kinds are often encountered among singular superman, though only rarely are they specifically stated to be of natural origin. Two examples are "But Without Horns," where heterogeneous rays bombarding the planet are assigned responsibility, and "The World of A," in which

A. E. Van Vogt presents a natural mutant born with a double brain.

Unnatural mutants are all found in Gladiator, Thus Far, "The Nth Man," "The Adaptive Ultimate," "Big Man" and "Superhuman." They are the results of prenatal injections, continued in some instances postnatally. Some unnatural mutants have also been obtained by the effects of applied radiation. For example, Bork, of Taine's "Seeds of Life," is an ordinary workaday laboratory assistant until accidental exposure to a twenty million volt X-ray tube converts him into the super-brilliant Manuel de Soto.

The largest non-mutant class is that of supermen artificially created by human hands. "The Intelligence Gigantic" is brought into being by playing intensified rays on the component parts of a human body. In a matter of hours the intelligence gains full stature of maturity with the ability to use all portions of his brain---the same brain possessed by every normal person, but who is capable of utilizing only one-fifth of it. "The Atavar" of H. L. Gold is molded completely before life is brought to the body; as in the former case, rays are chiefly responsible. The same author's excellent mystery novelette "Problem in Murder" contains the identical basic theme---but since here the potentially perfect man remains merely an unanimated lump of flesh, this story is excluded from close consideration. "The Iron God" reverts back to "The Intelligence Gigantic" in that its chief character is treated through infancy, though the cells have been provided by a normal union of man and woman. Rays plus many other miscellaneous ingredients determine the make-up of this being, who is gigantic both in size and mental stature. Hermes, in "The Smallest God," comes into being when the results of an unsuccessful atom-smashing experiment bring life to a little rubber statuette that has held down papers on a scientist's desk. This bizarre accident produces a genius whose creation is wholly unanticipated.

An outré being indeed is George Witherspoon, protagonist of "The Rebel Soul" and "Into the Infinite," who is hurled into the depths of space and time to attain his supernatural powers. Precisely how this little expedition is accomplished, and how it benefits Witherspoon is extremely vague in the stories, but as they are mainly pure fantasy any great amount of detailed concrete explanation would probably seem out of place. Another unusual superman is Dake Bradfield, "The Man from Hell," who is quite similar to George Witherspoon. The testing of an atomic bomb that he has invented and been slain for possession of brings him back to life in superhuman form. The bomb thus gains for him titanic physical stamina and an enriching association with minds that have continued actively alive for countless years after their bodies have died.

Extenuating envirionment is the last of the methods used for producing supermen. The basis for Fearn's "Golden Amazon" series is a human, Earth-born baby that is spacewrecked on Venus and reared there without being shielded from Cosmic radiation by the Heaviside Layer of this planet. There results a woman of herculean strength. Superman, of juvenile comic-strip fame that has made him virtually a national institution, is a product of similar circumstances, except that he has been born and brought up on an alien world possessing great gravitational pull; this envirionment gives him tremendous muscular power upon his return to Earth. Aarn, of John W. Campbell's "Mightiest Machine," is another such character. Lastly and leastly comes M. P. Shiel's Isle of Lies, whose being is elevated in stature by psychological training and the primal envirionment of a desert island. Such an explanation is wholly improbable---but since most of Shiel's material is highly improbable anyway this criticism is perhaps redundant.

II
The Physical Superman

Physical supermen are all of the subjective type, having the shortcoming of average mentality. Thus they seek only to escape from the fear, hate and

persecution heaped upon him by lesser peoples. Lacking in most cases the necessary mentality to overcome such antagonism, their lives are a continuous search for internal and external peace. Here, as in almost every instance of the singular superman, the plots encountered are little more than fictional biographies, with their subjects in the limelight at all times.

The general pattern followed is that of normal birth, attempts to forget their abnormality through leading a routine, commonplace life, and finally death---met either at their own hands or at the collective ones of normal people surrounding them---to escape from their troubled lives. Death is the ultimate solution, the answer to all problems.

Typical of this pattern is Fred Orwell, fruiterer and grocer of The Fiery Gate. A part-time superman, his gargantuan strength exists only during extreme emotional stress. Under usual circumstances he is merely an average citizen in a war-torn country. As his abnormality is of a temporary nature, he escapes to a partial degree the persecution inflicted upon the others, succeeding far better in his attempts to lead an ordinary life. The novel's title is derived from its final chapter, wherein he meets his doom plunging through the brick wall of a burning and bomb-racked building in an effort to reach his wife.

A similar instance is presented by the hackneyed "Short Wave Superman" of Robert Leslie Bellem. This time, however, the desired results are accomplished through saturation of an average human being with ultra-short waves. According to the author this process has an only temporary effect (lasting but twenty-four hours) so that the hero's status as a superman is questionable. The plot deals rather tritely with an alien sabateur in wartime, and is of no interest beyond the methods it uses for instillation of superhuman qualities.

Superman himself has hardly any plot surrounding his varied activities after the origin of his abnormal powers has been related. In brief, he attempts to lead an outwardly normal life, while behind the scenes he reverts to the role of a futuristic Robin Hood, aiding those in distress and fighting against crime. After perusing a few episodes in his career the reader is likely to invoke Mark Twain's adage, "Where everything is possible, nothing is interesting." Superman has done far more harm than good to the field. The juvenile casting of such characters as he, Buck Rogers and Flash Gordon has caused the general public to relegate all flights of fantasy to the adolescent level---an opinion certainly not being contradicted by such current publications as Thrilling Wonder Stories, Amazing Stories or Fantastic Adventures. The present attention being given the field as a result of the atomic bomb is serving in numerous ways to rectify this fallacy.

The chief character of Philip Wylie's Gladiator, born a physical superman, bears the brunt of hate and persecution from earliest infancy. Football star, circus strong man, world war hero, Hugo Danner finds that the world has no place for his extraordinary talents. Only seldom is his fruitless existence of turmoil and strife brightened by partial understanding from sensitive human beings. Finally, in mental chaos, he cries aloud from a mountain summit to whatever god there may be for a solution to his problems. This arrives in the guise of a bolt of lightning, and he is allowed to seek in death the internal peace that he has vainly striven for throughout life.

As long as she remains on Venus, the planet of her upbringing, the Golden Amazon escapes most of the troubles that have befallen her fictional counterparts; having left it, however, events follow the expected course. The plots she enlivens are of the inconsequential "pulp" variety, dealing with frustration of an attempted conquest of Earth ("The Golden Amazon"); thwarting a planned destruction of the same world ("The Golden Amazon Returns"); some purposeless meanderings about the planet Mercury of her twin offspring ("Children of the Golden Amazon"); and so on, with minor variations.

Two minor variations on the physical superman theme have appeared in

recent times. Robert Bloch's "Stuporman" utilizes a novel dream-sequence to approach the subject; not even the most novel twist imaginable, however, could triumph over the air of hackneyed pseudo-sophistication this short story affects. A more entertaining tale is "The Terrible Sense" of Thomas McClary. Here a deaf man is given, by an ingeneous surgical operation, the audio-nervous system of a bat. This successfully restores his hearing, but also initiates a change of his entire organism. Only accidental destruction of this acquired supernormal faculty prevents his almost-complete transformation into a bat from occurring.

(Since the publication of Wells' "New Accelerator" numerous tales have postulated methods of speeding up human faculties. The products of these experiments are not physical superman but simply accelerated normal humans, and will therefore receive no detailed description here. Examples of these are found in Coblentz's "Triple Geared," Gardner's "Year in a Day," Claudy's "Swift Beast," and "The Superman of Dr. Jukes" by George Weiss. Of late the "pulps" have added a new twist by making super athletes via this method. These super sportsmen, in all cases except the last named, boxers, include Tracy's "Super Athlete," Repp's "Gland Superman," Wellman's "Einstein Slugger," Gleason's "Super Accelerator" and "The Scientific Miler of Bowler U." by Donald Bern.

(Another bogus superman is created in "The Invincible Crime Buster" of Henry Gade, this time by surrounding a normal individual with an aura of impenetrable force. This type---of which innumerable examples have appeared---is also quite obviously beyond the pale of our discussion.)

III
The Mental Superman

In these higher types of supermen the objective variety makes appearance in the more advanced forms, but the lower forms remain subjective in most cases. The general plot is still nearly the same for the latter, but in the higher types its resolution assumes two distinct courses. For the majority the solution remains death, but an alternative one is suggested---victory for the superman with the world under his control. However, even with a twofold denouement possible the mortality rate for supermen runs very high.

The very statement that Hannibal Lepsius of The Isle of Lies is superhuman is controversial, but enough facts support it to make consideration of the novel necessary. Here is the exception to the general rule that the lowest supermen are subjective, for Lepsius---although of the lowest order possible---is still partially objective in type. Throughout the entire period of adolescence he has been taught to believe in his great inferiority to mankind in general. Escaping from his island prison he finds the exact reverse to be true, that he is in fact superior. And so with supreme contempt for man he goes through life shaping political destinies from behind the scenes from a great palace on a solitary island where he reigns supreme. His machinations to overthrow completely the existing French government are finally halted by a vial of acid thrown into his eyes by a woman he had scorned.

Mental superman and abject physical weakling is Edmond Hall of The New Adam, who has the fortune of being born with a double mind. As all his abnormalities are not immediately apparent he is able to escape mass persecution, but from those close to him hate and persecution arrives with a double vengeance. A slave to the beauty of his wife, Hall succumbs to enervation in attempting to keep pace with the exacting demands of her passionate love. An end comes to his relatively uneventful life as he allows himself to be slain by his mate's rejected suitor. Considering the magnificent intellect Weinbaum has bestowed upon him the means leading to Hall's downfall seem rather illogical.

Van Vogt's "World of A" presents another multiple-minded being. However in this, his last superman novel to date, the author has attempted a story

of universe-encompassing scope which leaves the reader confused rather than awed. After a beautifully executed background and a well-developed opening two-thirds, Van Vogt proceeds to awe himself with the possibility of expanding his stage to embrace an entire cosmos. As a result the novel becomes dull and uninteresting, and, considering the excellent earlier work of this author, flawed to a disappointing extent. Its impossibly complex plot boils down to something like this: With the help of a warlike member of an intergalactic community, a certain group of men are attempting domination of Earth. They plan the distortion and eventually complete overthrow of the games-machine, which is theoretically all-perfect and which was designed to select all officials for Earth and Venus on the basis of merit. Opposition to their plan comes from a mutant that appeared hundreds of years ago and made numerous copies of himself. Gilbert Gosseyn is a copy of this original mutant; "X," a member of the rebelling forces who is working against them from the inside, is himself another copy; and the key to the entire mystery is "the master chessman" whose identity is never revealed. Although the games-machine is destroyed according to plan, the rebels are frustrated in the end by the invisible master chessman, and Gosseyn, the only copy of the superman left alive, sets about to repair the great damage done to the Earth. The supposedly staggering implication of all this---viz., that the galactic struggle for power is itself but a tiny segment in an even mightier drama---never receives adequate expression or development. "The World of A" is likwise marred by a characteristic found in nearly all of Van Vogt's plots: after starting in medias res with both the hero and the reader completely befuddled, and proceeding at a relatively leisurely pace in opening chapters, the author proceeds to pack a solution into an ending so abbreviated that half of the possibilities he has evoked remain unexplained.

Victor Stott, of Beresford's Hampdenshire Wonder, is a magnificent intelligence that never develops beyond the period of adolescence. In his all too short lifetime he assimilates most of the the collected knowledge of mankind and finds in all of it the recurring fallacy of limited thinking. Almost completely emotionless, he succeeds in arousing the superstitious fear and hate of the ignorant countryfolk residing near him. This culminates in the mysterious murder that ends prematurely the life of a truly great brain, for had Stott lived to attain adulthood the advances possible would have been almost unimaginable.

Manuel de Soto, the laboratory giant in "Seeds of Life,"makes gigantic strides in advancing the human race. Supremely contemptuous of the world's financial lusts, he turns from inorganic research to the climaxing experiment of his life. But at the most crucial point of his experiments he is again exposed to the same radiation that rendered him superhuman. A retrogression occurs, and he loses control of his experiments in the creation of artificial life, finally being destroyed by a monstrosity he himself had brought into being.

Like Manuel de Soto, the Intelligence Gigantic is of the objective type, and capitalizes easily upon the fear and hate surrounding him. All but completely invincible because of his titanic mentality, he achieves control of the world within a relatively short time after his creation. Monumental advances are achieved, but the common man is completely oppressed. Emotionless and artificial being that he is, the Intelligence Gigantic makes no provision for the emotional happiness of others. His downfall and the obliteration of his works occur at the hands of his creator, and after a period of brief stagnation the world proceeds forward once more in its usual erratic way.

"The Mental Ultimate" is exactly what the title suggests---the ultimate in human mentality. Time, space, everything in the cosmos lie unriddled within his brain; everything, indeed, except the question of his own existence. Even death has been forestalled. But nature compensates for everything, and as centuries pass by he diminishes in stature until finally, long after Earth has ceased to exist, he becomes a pure mentality divorced from all body. Gradually even

the atoms of his brain close in upon themselves as did those of his body, and he reaches oblivion. Nowhere in the realms of the superhuman does any mentality match that which Fearn bequeathed to the Mental Ultimate.

IV
The "Perfect" Superman

"Perfect" supermen are those who are both physically and mentally superior to the normal human; this type cannot help being objective.

Like Hugo Danner, "The Avatar" tries his hand in every field, but unlike the Gladiator he achieves success in all, for he has the mentality to match his perfect physique. He emotionlessly engineers complete overthrow of all existing national governments, planning to reign supreme over the world himself. On the eve of this intended conquest, however, he is slain by the disillusioned and forgotten scientist responsible for his creation.

George Witherspoon is of much the same world-shaking intent. Russian count, German baron, nobleman in every lane, he is all yet none of them, working with evil intent for the ultimate destruction of all existing world orders. As the Rebel Soul, sweeping beyond the confines of a human body, he is invulnerable, invincible. Through the influence of his perfect mate Roselle, whose power for accomplishing good is equal to his for evil, he finally fights and destroys the Rebel Soul within him, becoming once again a normal human being.

"The Man from Hell" presents a superman reborn through atomic energy, though his new life has but a few weeks' duration. Returning with revenge in his heart he kills two of the men responsible for his death, and overcomes a plot for world domination by his murderers.

Orr Galvin of Thus Far possesses a mind almost equal to the Mental Ultimate's, and a perfect body to match it. But the spice of man's life is the constant search for the unknown, the unknown that for perfect Orr Galvin does not exist. Incapable of meeting death either by violence or age, his mind is perverted by the constant ennui of life into committing a series of horrible murders. As a last resort he resigns himself to a collective body of the world's greatest scientists, hoping to find, if possible, a method of escaping existence. His wish is at last granted, for he is resolved into a euthanasia lasting for all eternity.

The extent of the superhuman qualities of John Miller are never fully revealed as "But Without Horns" never presents a clear view of him, never refers to him except in an indirect fashion. However, it can be easily seen that they are fully equal to Orr Galvin's. Page's plot revolves about the futilly heroic attempts of three men to frustrate his domination of the globe. The world slowly changes into a utopian state without anyone save these three realizing that it is under a directing influence. The novel speeds to its climax as the three seek out and eventually find this superman extraordinary, intent on killing him.

> The three wedged into the apartment of John Miller. They raced forward. One of them shouted. Or perhaps it was all three of them together. It was despair, and rage, and rare courage. Humans, going into battle.
>
> The door vibrated and closed.
>
> It closed, and no guns spoke. Silence---and the door did not open. Time passed---and the door did not open.
>
> When, finally, the knob turned, it was slowly. The movement of the door, swinging wide, was a deliberate thing; ceremonious.
>
> ...The three men moved down the steps softly, pride in the carriage of their heads. Three men going downstairs, happy in the service of their master, the service of John

Miller; carrying down with them the hope of the human race---
the spirit of all the centuries that might have come.
Three slaves.

V

The Macrocosmic Superman

Since Homer Eon Flint originated the giant superman with "The Nth Man" numerous copies of his conception have appeared, nearly all of them distinctly inferior to the original. In order that giants like these be classed as superhuman they must possess mentalities to match their stature---for without such a characteristic they would be simply overgrown but otherwise normal humans, and consequently fall outside the pale of this discussion. Examples of the latter type are of course lamentably common, and range in quality from Wells' Food of the Gods down to Rocklynne's Intactic "Big Man."

Every example of the superhuman titan is of the singular variety, no one having as yet described a race of titan supermen. As has been previously noted all such beings are of normal human birth, their growth having been stimulated artificially by various methods. The opposition they face throughout life is naturally widespread, but at the same time their inherent size is itself beneficial in dealing with this. Nevertheless this advantage does not enable the typical macrocosmic superman to ward off early extinction, though a few of his kind do manage to remain in quiet seclusion during their last days.

The original "Nth Man" is the result of a father's experiments upon his son, at first on a desolate Pacific isle, and later in the adjacent ocean itself. At this superman's first appearance amid civilization he overthrows the one-man rule that has been set up in America by a financial tycoon, returning then to whence he came to watch over the land he has liberated.

Another giant-from-the-sea plot appears in Gold's "Out of the Depths." The creature here belongs to a species of ancient terrestrial piscine stock. Despite his benevolent intent he is slain before he has succeeded in staving off an impending invasion of the planet. Earth, however, manages to muddle through unaided. Synthetic giants, created for the purpose of being radio-controlled by a lost race of Peruvian Incas with aspirations of ruling the world, are presented to the unwary reader in Peter Horn's banal short story "Giants out of the Sun." Their status as superman, considering their mental level, is however admittedly open to question.

The protagonist of the hackneyed "Iron God" of Williamson has been artificially created by a scientist who hopes to lead the world away from wars and petty strife by its use. But the gigantic intelligence so produced sees no hope for accomplishing this goal so long as humans cling to their habitual prejudices and hates, and prefers personal death to the deaths of those that would have to be put out of the way in order to remodel the world. Like the Nth Man, the Iron God has been made in an effort to solve the world's problems; again, however, the copy is much inferior to the original.

Fearn's "Superhuman" is one of the few worthy efforts in the macrocosmic superman category, and in some respects it is the best. Brought into existence purely as a theoretical experiment, this being exceeds the wildest dreams of his creator, attaining a structure that towers hundreds of feet into the air. In his loneliness he repeats upon an infant girl the same experimental procedure that led to his own creation. As the two attain maturity together they resolve to conquer the world, reduce its inhabitants to the state of vassaldom, and to mate that their kind may be perpetuated, envisioning a race of superhuman giants which will eventually take over sole residence of the planet. This plot harks back to that of "The Avatar," even to the ending when the giant is destroyed by his own father on the eve of the intended conquest. "Superhuman" is second only to "The Nth Man."

VI
The Microcosmic Superman

Although this class is in every way the exact antecedent of that preceding it, the listing of specific antitheses is made somewhat out of place by the fact that, if we keep to our prescribed limitations and omit consideration of feys, fairies, elves and similar little people, there is but one singular miniature superman deserving citation.

Hermes, of Rocklynne's "Smallest God," has come into being through accidental means. He is an exact complement, in reduced size, of his macrocosmic cousins previously discussed; great muscular power, supreme intelligence and the ability to communicate with other minds telepathically are among his attributes. After becoming involved in an interesting series of adventures, this mighty mite finally achieves the goal of his existence when his intellect is transferred to a perfect, artificially-created, human body. Although this novelette makes no pretensions of being outstanding, it nevertheless provides reading fare that is lightly and pleasantly entertaining.

VII
The Evolution Superman

It was Edmond Hamilton who first conceived the idea that the process of evolution, as observed in nature, could be duplicated artificially by fictional laboratory methods. Though producing supermen by such means was probably incidental to his purposes, one resulted in each of his two stories that treated the plot: "The Man Who Evolved" and "A Million Years Ahead." Somewhat later a third variation of the same idea appeared in "The Monstrosity of Evolution" by Thorp McClusky.

In Hamilton's earlier effort a scientist, seeking to learn the ultimate height of man's evolution-scale, invents a machine that accelerates its user at the rate of fifty million years of evolution per fifteen minutes' exposure to its radiation. After the initial quarter-hour the subject's brain and body are seen to evolve equally; at the end of the next the body has begun to atrophy; and after the third the body has shrunk to dimunitive appendages, entirely out of proportion to the size of its huge cranium. At this point the subject is dissuaded with difficulty from halting the process himself, and emerging as despotic ruler of the world. The experiment continues until there remains nothing but a huge palpitating brain, the ultimate goal of homo sapiens. The last step reduces this brain to a seething primal slime whence all life originates.

The author's plaigarism of his own material results in an infinitely inferior story. For a cash recompense an ex-criminal submits himself to the same experiment; this time, however, the process is stopped after a million years of evolution have been accomplished. Upon release from the machine he sets out to conquer the world, his plan being frustrated in typical Wellsian fashion when the supervising scientist submits himself to the same process and overcomes him. Both men are eventually devolved back to their original forms.

The superman produced in the same fashion by McClusky plans to submit everyone in the world to the same process, but is slain by his creator before the scheme can materialize. The author casts interesting sidelights on the process, reasoning that a superman evolved to live millions of years in the future, with diminished stature, expanded cranium and weakened physical structure, could exist under present-day conditions. These and other scientific theorizings seem of more value than the fiction cloaking them.

Lloyd A. Eshbach's "Valley of the Titans" discusses an attempted acceleration of evolutionary processes also, but the unfortunate scientist depicted here succeeds only in producing devolution. The tale, too, seems more concerned with developing a love-interest than in anything else.

VIII
The Adaptive Superman

Created by injection of a newly-discovered serum, Kyra Zelas, a hopeless tuberculosis case, becomes the basis for Weinbaum's "Adaptive Ultimate." She has the ability to adapt her organism to suit almost any prevailing envirionment, even the coloring of her hair and complexion changing naturally with the sun and seasons. An ability to influence anyone about her to carry out her wishes makes her a menace to the world. Fully realizing the extent of her powers, she laughingly taunts the despairing scientists responsible for her creation by plunging a knife into her heart and then withdrawing it from an unscarred bosom. Though anesthetics are impotent, they at last succeed in subduing this superwoman by an atmosphere of carbon dioxide, to which (being a metabolic waste product) even her super-adaptive body cannot adjust itself. An operation successfully carried out while she is still insensible restores her again to normalcy.

It is only by charity that "The Chameleon Man" of William P. McGivern can be included in this discussion, for it deals less with a superman than with a normal human being unwittingly possessed of a body that adapts itself to blend perfectly with its surroundings. Little plot surrounds this intriguing phenomenon, the author failing utterly to capitalize upon the novel variation he evokes.

Interesting though this concept is, these two stories alone have exploited its possibilities. This state of affairs is indeed an unusual exception in the "pulp" field, where a new idea is as a rule promptly given a dozen uninspired elaborations soon after initial appearance. Thus excellent material for a novel is still potentially present.

On this hopeful note closes the section on adaptive supermen and the entire singular superman category alike. From discussion of the stories here it is easily seen that all conform to a single broad plot. Like them, those embodying racial supermen also follow a distinct basic trend.

Book Two: The Racial Superman

I
Birth or Creation

Racial supermen who are natural mutants are included in "Slan," "Minimum Man" and "The Changeling." The entire race of slans descends from original mutant twins of opposite sex. The Changeling is born with his unusual qualities of totipotency inherent within him, though they are recessive until made dominant by necessity. The first minimum men are born asexually and breed henceforth heterosexually; the original pathological birth of course produced twins, necessary if the race were to be perpetuated.

Keller's "Conquerors" and "The Evening Star," and "The Microscopic Giants" of Paul Ernst provide supermen who are the results of their envirionment. Those in the first two of the trio result when the human race separates early in the dawn of history, one portion remaining on the surface and the other carrying on existence beneath it. The latter, unhampered by the ravages of nature and the constant wars of their ferocious cousins, evolve unhampered through thousands of generations; the result is emotionless dwarfs that are glorified intellects with atrophied bodies. Ernst also postulates a racial split early in history, with one branch of the race however penetrating much further toward the Earth's core. There it grows ever more diminutive because of the greater gravitational pull, until protoplasm has assumed a density almost equal to that of stone.

Both McClary's "Short Wave Castle" and Sturgeon's "Microcosmic God" are miniature superbeings produced by advanced evolutionary means. Intense ultraviolet radiation is used by McClary to reduce their life-span from a period of

decades to one of mere weeks. As a result, dozens of generations appear and disappear within the course of a single year. The Neophytes in "Microcosmic God" are produced by very similar means. Still another unusual effort is Neil R. Jones' "Little Hercules," wherein the hero attains his supernormal powers via an atomic compression. Stature is diminished to approximately a fourth of its normal value by this method, whilst bodily strength is increased manyfold.

In Kontrol, "The Supermen," and "The Isotope Men" normal individuals are all subjected to planned scientific experiments. The Isotope Men result from a separation of the human body into its isotopic parts. Two races are thus produced: one composed of the heavier isotopes that supposedly make up 99% of the normal human body, and the second of the so-called "recessive" isotopes that allegedly constitute the remaining one percent. The first provides supermen who possess the benevolent emotions, and the latter subhumans exemplifying nothing but homo sapiens' bestial nature. "The Supermen" are created by no new method, that of tampering with the pineal gland. Kontrol utilizes a modus operandi that is more than a little unconvincing---transplantation of the greatest minds into the most perfect bodies of the world. "Lights and wheels and sparks as long as your arm" are said to accomplish this feat, although everything concerned with the process remains unexplained throughout.

Odd John and his cohorts alone appear sans raison on the scene, no explanation of their origin being set forth by the author.

II
The Racial Superman

All racial supermen possessing great intellects are of the objectiv type, and whether or not a story biographi[illegible] one single individual---as in Odd John---his actions can be taken as typical of the race to which he belongs. Realizing that they exist in a hostile world, these supermen work as a rule in a single unit for a common purpose. As the inevitable problems mount the solution assumes either of two courses: that of racial suicide, or that of assimilation by the normal humans surrounding them. As before, the mortality rate is very high.

"The Supermen" of David H. Speaker are all created simultaneously by an adventurous scientist. Quickly seeking a position of domination, they band together atop a mountain and from there issue decrees to the world. Attacks fall back before their superior weapons, but in the end the scientist devises a method for overcoming them. Here, as in many previous cases, the creator of a superman is responsible also for his death.

Aside from their unique origin the Isotope Men of Nat Schachner have other very unusual attributes of interest. The mentality of a person's dominant half is found to be raised exactly one hundred points on the I.Q. scale by this process. As ever greater numbers subject themselves to it there is discovered the fatal flaw, which causes the total negation of all its supposed benefits. The dominants are filled with insatiable longing for their torn-away recessive portions, while the recessives feel nothing but hate for their isotopic counterparts. This situation leads to the eventual extinction of everyone who has been treated by the process.

Odd John provides one of the most intelligent and carefully thought-out concepts of supermen extant. This is not Stapledon's first use of the theme, however, but rather an extension and further development of ideas expounded in his earlier Last Men in London. The concluding pages of the latter novel relates the development of Humpty, superbeing extraordinary. According to Stapledon's conception, supermen are of normal birth, do not reach maturity until after thirty, and have a life-span that extends over some three hundred years. This story within a story tells of Humpty's struggles to repair his warped and twisted mind that has been ruined by a monstrous upbringing, and to set out for the goal of

his entire life---that of bringing together all the isolated supermen in the world. Realizing as he matures that this is an impossible task, he takes his own life. It remains for Odd John to achieve this goal. John shapes his own adolescence with months in the wilderness to overcome natural physical weakness, and later devotes years of touring the world to locating supermen among its population. All of those who consent combine their talents and found a cooperative colony on a solitary Pacific isle. Marvellous advances result in all fields of creative endeavor until the fearful world intrudes. And after using every means at their disposal to avert the encroachment, all to no avail, the colony chooses racial suicide rather than a spiritually-enervating war that it could easily have won.

III
The "Perfect" Superman

Kontrol is placed under this heading solely because no other classification suits much better the slightly superior mental and physical attributes of its prototypes. Actually these beings are very far from "perfect" racial supermen. After numerous intrigues, Snell's plot settles upon "Lost Island," locale of their colony. Some mediocre manoevering about follows, and finally the entire islet with all its inhabitants is destroyed as the volcano Buk'api erupts.

Slans---mutants with double hearts and tendrils that give them telepathic powers---are beings of great physical strength, high mentality and longevity. The biography of one of their number, Jommy Cross, furnishes a cross-section of the three-cornered struggle between slans and humans for world supremacy. Jommy spends his life fighting not only against human beings but also against the tendrilless slans (a needless plot-complication Van Vogt invents), and searching for the true slans. His search ends as he discovers that the tendrilless slans are in reality true slans whose tendrils have been temporarily eradicated from their heredity. All ends placidly as Jommy discovers that slans have gained control of the planet without the humans realizing the fact.

IV
The Microcosmic Superman

Although fiction boasts no macrocosmic supermen in racial form, the microcosmic variety is represented by no fewer than six stories.

The earliest examples are "The Conquerors" and "The Evening Star" of Dr. David H. Keller. A race resembling very closely in appearance hydrocephalic dwarfs take over most of the southeastern United States, forcing the residents to withdraw. These dwarfs are as far advanced above man as he is above apes. Their actions are racially controlled, and a central governing body containing the greatest minds has totally supreme power. A small captured group of humans is placed within the supermen's colony to preserve the species homo sapiens; this is done in line with the policy of preserving specimens of every creature existing upon the earth for observation and study. Plans for the total destruction of the human race are averted by the supermen's migration to Venus, which is discussed in "The Evening Star." Upon Venus they encounter a race superior to theirs, but their own eventual destruction comes from constant warring with subhuman animals inhabiting the planet. These wars arouse within them the violent emotions that have remained dormant for countless centuries, and it is this which poisons their atrophied bodies and causes their doom.

"The Microscopic Giants" presents another race of inner-world dwellers, of altogether different characteristics, however. Little description of the race is given, and the sketchy plot revolves about their appearance and withdrawal to their underworld homes. The only specific facts learned are that they are of diminutive stature and possess bodies of immense density. Their government and de-

gree of intelligence remain virtually unknown, although the latter can be deduced to be higher than man's by the calibre of the weapons they use. Another race of beings with immense density and titanic strength are found in "Little Hercules," which tells of the problems of a victim of Durna Rangue, a scientific religious cult controlling the earth of that day. The story's concluding paragraphs grant Little Hercules the freedom he has saught throughout his entire captivity.

Marvell's Minimum Man presents a species of foot-high humans with gigantic intelligence and physical stamina, exhibiting as a species the ultimate in specialization. The author emphasizes this point by naming the heads of each field after some character of mythology or real life who was noted for the same speciality. Thus the wise ruler of the colony is called Solomon, the leader of aviation (an art they have mastered completely) Icarus, the general of the army Napoleon, chemical specialists Lavoisier and Priestly---and so on. After living initially in secrecy, the Minimum Men seek recognition, which they win by playing a leading role in the overthrow of the tyrannical government then in power.

A similar specialization is carried to the furthest degree imaginable in "Short Wave Castle," even bodily form being altered to suit the requirements of its owner's profession. Reaching daring heights in the sciences, these supermen seek to escape from their confining envirionment, eliminate the population of the world, and spread themselves over the entire planet. But an anachronism in their midst, the greatest of living violinists, destroys the death machine that was to be their offensive weapon and the entire midget civilization itself as he puts his entire heart and soul into the playing of his Stradivarius, whose tones shatter the protective glass surrounding the supermen's domain.

"Microcosmic God" also presents a picture of confined supermen, the Neoterics. Here, however, we find a race working together for their creator without imperialistic desires. The fears and power-lusts of mankind foment an attack upon the colony, and to protect this an impenetrable shell of force that isolates it forever from the outer world is thrown about the island.

> ...that great grey shell will bear watching. Men die, but races live. Some day the Neoterics, after innumerable generations of inconceivable advancement, will take down their shield and come forth. When I think of that I feel frightened.

V

The Adaptive Superman

"The Changeling" of Van Vogt could well be considered to fit in the "perfect" superman category, the entire race's main claim to superhuman status resting upon its uncanny powers of toti-potency. The power of regenerating any lost or injured member gives these beings virtual immortality. Hounded from place to place by people desiring speciemns of his blood that will endow them with the selfsame attribute, the Changeling is at last taken into a group of organized toti-ptents as leader. Thenceforth all attacks are averted, and work for the ultimate benefit of the human race is carried forward. Presented here is a superbeing who possesses the enviable combination of immortality and adaptability, coupled with a highly advanced physique and mentality. Though this race has been excelled in some of these respects by those possessing no other attributes, the Changeling represents the highest possible reach of all fictional supermen.

Book Three: Criticism upon the Theme

Despite the fact that this concept has been utilized often, it has not been overworked to the degree that one might suspect. Rather, instead, many phases of the theme remain still undeveloped. The limited number of treatments

(continued on page 254)

LEWIS, L. A.

Tales of the Grotesque

London: Philip Allan & Co., Ltd., 1934. 244pp. 19 cm. 1/-.

Synoptic review: This volume is one of the famed "Creeps" series, and easily lives up to its subtitle, "a Collection of Uneasy Tales." The author shows a considerable range of originality in some of his concepts, and, even in the inevitable reworking of more familiar gambits, some evidence of a certain freshness of viewpoint and craftsmanship is seen.

Not that Lewis makes any serious pretensions to a distinct literary style. Most of the writing is rather undistinguished and ordinary. There is no striving for unusual word effects or exotic patterns of atmospheric color: clearly, he has a job to do and that is writing stories. Yet the fact remains that the majority of the ten tale are worthy of a second perusal and several really get under the reader's skin; a couple will not easily be forgotten.

I should hazard a guess that the inspiration for many of these efforts stem from actual nightmares---reminiscent of Edward Lucas White and his remarks in the afterword of his memorable Lukundoo. The internal evidence of the stories all helps to strengthen this assertion: I am sure that no alert reader can avoid coming to a like conclusion, even at a single perusal.

The dream-like quality is first apparent in "Lost Keep," which tells of Peter Hunt's strange inheritance, a tiny scale-model of a medieval castle and a most peculiar lens through which to observe its details. An ancient curse accompanied these articles, a curse which stated that whomsoever solved the riddle of the "lost keep" would find "death in the house of his fathers at the hand of his son." How Peter cleared up the enigma which had baffled his ancestors for untold generations, the strange unearthly realm into which he was drawn, the evil he did and the final fulfullment of the arcane prophecy to the letter all combine to yield a gripping and uncanny fantasy of intriguing interest.

Personally, I have always felt that the most potent weird concept imaginable is that of a recurring dream being later remorselessly confirmed in real life. An excellent example comes to mind in E. F. Benson's exquisitely wrought story "The Face." In the present collection, the outstanding and indeed the most genuinely horrible one is "Hybrid," which makes good use of this idea in a new way. Here the nightmare dream-entity grows more and more substantial and finally becomes reality---taking possession of the unhappy dreamer's body. The wife of the one possessed states its succinctly, thus: "His body is mad, but his mind is sane!" The displaced, sane mind stands outside and looks in horror upon its stolen body as the monstrosity which originally haunted it.

Even as Lovecraft liked to employ the concept of a blasphemous union between human and aquatic elements, so in this story Lewis postulates a combining of the bird world with that of homo sapiens, and with telling effect. Dr. Xavier Cole had committed an unholy deed in an earlier incarnation and had brought out of the limbo of time a nameless abomination which could be appeased only by passing it on to the following generation. It was with acute horror that Cole one day remembered how the priests of old had burned him at the stake, centuries ago, after forcing him to witness the destruction and burial of the monster's initial manifestation.

The author projects this idea to its most incredible extremes and narrowly skirts that knife-edged line between soul-freezing horror and rank nonsense. I believe he manages to remain on the right side of the border, however, and certainly he culminates "Hybrid" with a punch line that should leave the reader pleasantly gasping and delighted.

In a somewhat lighter vein is "Tower of Moab," which can be taken lit-

erally if we choose, or be regarded merely as an indication of the narrator's incipient madness. It relates of an obscure religious sect which years ago in England built an abortive imitation of the Tower of Babel, and of the peculiar and sinister optical effects this structure had on a latter-day travelling salesman. The odd changes observed in the tower's height and the things he saw crawling about its mighty summit and wriggling from beneath its dank base in the dead of the night leave us wondering if it is wise to meddle with the monuments of these defunct and little-known cults.

A murderous demon-infant inhabiting a deserted house in an accursed wood where children were butchered in the past forms the basis for "The Child." This is competently done but hardly outstanding.

Most ordinary of the tales is "The Dirk," which has to do with a fratricide and a haunted murder weapon that achieves vengeance upon the gulity one. Familiar elements dominate the structure of this story entirely.

Told with considerable power is an account of ineffable astral harmonies produced by a strange musician while in a trance-like state. Whenever his fingers stray to the "Chords of Chaos," however, listeners rend each other in savage ecstasy as their ancestral memories of long-dead Atlantean religious orgies are reawakened.

"Revolting" is the only word to describe adequately "The Meerschaum Pipe," which shows how an executed murderer's baleful influence still lingers in his personal effects, and what happens to the unwary individual who blunders in-such a genius loci. This tale is so ghastly and gory as to rank with our familiar tabloid sensations. However, it does have some authentic moments of terror as the growth of the evil influences in the interloper is detailed. The reader senses what is happening with mounting loathing, although the leading character appreciates only dimly his doom until the very ending which, even though you may be prepared for it, still comes as a very nasty experience.

We have two tales of the weird in aviation's domain: "Haunted Air" and "The Iron Swine." These, while interesting enough, strike a relatively minor key. The first describes an accursed ridge where lurks a gelatinous something which flies up to rob passing planes of their control so that they crash to destruction. The other relates of a strange, foreign aircraft imbued with a vicious personality which is indicated by the quaint habit of breaking loose from its chocks while warming up, and slicing to ribbons unlucky pilots on the airstrip.

The sole genuinely occult effort in the collection is the final story, "Animate in Death." In some respects this is reminiscent of Crawford's classic, "The Upper Berth," but it is not nearly so effective precisely because Lewis overworks and overemphasizes the purely physical aspects of horror.

From the foregoing account it will be obvious that in this book we have a variety of fare---some original and striking, some merely pedestrian. Lewis emerges as a writer whose other work will bear close examination. At times he is lurid, but at least one can never accuse him of dullness. He speaks in the modern idiom; his language is often pungent and salty. A lively imagination coupled with a working knowledge of morbid psychology is in evidence, and a streak of the sardonic permeates his work. If Tales of the Grotesque truly reflects his nature, the author must be completely unsentimental and tough-minded in the correct sense of William James' connotation. In any case, he is deserving of attention, from readers and anthologists alike.

---Matthew H. Onderdonk.

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"'You see,' said the new proprietor, 'the family ghost is included in the purchase of this old manor. The owner is supposed to see the ghost three days before his death. They say it may appear as a monk or as a cavalier, or even as that gardner over there.'

"'But, my dear fellow, there is no gardner over there!'"

---Lady Maud Warrender: My Medley.

Omega---and Olaf Stapledon

by
Thyril L. Ladd

No one who has perused even casually Camille Flammarion's Omega: the Last Days of the World and Last and First Men by William Olaf Stapledon can help but be struck by the similarity of conception between the two books.

This similarity is indeed very pronounced. Flammarion relates the entire future history of the world, beginning in the twenty-fifth century, when a great comet threatens the planet with destruction. Though hordes of people are killed, Earth survives the resulting collision, and endures through many centuries. So, too, does Stapledon follow the progress of the world and its peoples. And like him, Flammarion sees man changing in form and mental outlook as he goes down the ages, though of course he postulates somewhat different changes.

While Omega has not been carried to the lengths that has Last and First Men, its conception is by no means narrow or inadequate. To one who has never before encountered the work it may even come as a surprise to learn that this French author's picture of the days to come was first published over half a century ago. Some of the kaleidoscopic vignettes we glimpse are intriguing indeed. We see people of the hundredth century staring in wonder at a museum cabinet where mummified specimens of nineteenth century humans are displayed, amazed that man could ever have descended from such creatures. The slow, gradual death of the earth is shown, erosion levelling its mountains and its seas and rivers seeping little by little into the rocks. Ingenious as ever, man staves off his final end by building glass-enclosed tropical cities, the better to catch and store the energy of the cooled sun's weak rays; and he sustains himself by inventing synthetic foods when all remaining plants die from lack of moisture. But with the inevitable failure of the water supply comes the final cessation of life on the planet, and in the final scenes we view a dismal, desert world, with only two glass cities remaining.

Only one man and one woman are left alive, and meeting, set out in an airship to seek water; but it is not to be found. Finally they arrive at Gizeh, and seat themselves beside the age-rounded terraces of the pyramid there, whose sunken form has been revealed again by the dried-up seas. And in this, the last scene of the book, Flammarion goes a bit occult. The shining shape of the pharaoh Cheops, whose pyramid it was, appears before this last couple. He tells the two that man, in astral form, has been conveyed at death to the planet Jupiter, there to dwell in changed form and attain the perfection that has always been his goal. And thither Cheops sweeps them---and Earth is indeed left dead.

Omega is a beautiful book, possessing some eighty illustrations, large and small, by over a dozen artists. It is interesting also in that it presents many astronomical facts and figures in a manner that is easily understood, and far from boring; Flammarion's account of comets, for example, is one of the clearest essays on the subject that I have ever encountered. The volume is historically informative as well, tracing briefly the events at times during the world's history when humanity was put into a frenzy of fear or religious fervor by a belief that the end of the world was at hand. (It is to such outbursts that Flammarion attributes many of the fine cathedrals that dotted Europe.)

Those readers who have found pleasure in the modern Last and First Men should, to further their interest, read this French astronomer's treatment of a similar subject. Like Stapledon, Flammarion used for his hero the entire human race. Some consideration must be granted, naturally, to Omega's science: since it was written numerous advances have rendered many once-believed hypotheses untrue. But barring such slight antiquities, it is yet worthy of perusal, for it remains unquestionably an effective work---and one upon which, moreover, Stapledon's could conceivably have been based.

CARR, John Dickson

The Burning Court

New York: Harper & Brothers, 1937. 304pp. 19½ cm. $2.00.
London: Hamish Hamilton, 1937. 318pp. 19 cm. 7/6.
London: Hamish Hamilton, 1938. 318pp. 19 cm. 3/6.
New York: Popular Library, no date (1944). 221pp. 16cm. 25¢. (paper covered).

Synoptic review: I am fairly certain that Carr wrote The Burning Court as a satire on the detective story and the legal processes of "justice." No other reason for the fiendish manner in which he rips asunder a proposed perfect solution to murder and body-theft can be discerned. Yet the possibility that this is satire detracts neither from its interest nor its realism.

The plot is rather simple, as murder mysteries go. An old man dies, apparently from natural causes. Poisoning is suspected by a relative when he finds traces of arsenic in the death chamber; but upon opening a sealed crypt for examination of the corpse, the latter has inexplicably disappeared. Meanwhile, the central character in the book, a reader for a publishing firm, brings home for weekend perusal a manuscript discussing famous murder trials of history. He discovers that a celebrated murderess of a century ago is identical in feature, maiden name and eccentricities with his wife. After that, matters become complicated; the police enter the picture, and the author of the manuscript himself arrives on the scene to work out the manner in which the victim could have been poisoned and the body stolen; seemingly supernatural effects which have been in evidence throughout are likewise explained, and assigned purely natural bases. Only in the final two pages does an occult raison d'etre triumph.

Though such inferences are admittedly dangerous, it seems quite possible that this book influenced the novels Unknown Worlds magazine printed during its final year of existence. The device of placing bourgeois, respectable, intelligent men and women of the present time in close contact with the supernatural without removing them from their everyday life had not been done often until The Burning Court. Much would be explained if we could be sure that "Conjure Wife" and "The Strange Profession of Jonathon Hoag" had been written after perusal of Carr's work.

The Burning Court achieves its effects remarkably well without the stock stage properties of the average weird tale. Judged as a detective story, it is cunningly contrived and easy reading---probably nine-tenths of its length is direct conversational quotation. Certainly there has never been anything quite like it for a combination of two apparently irreconcilable literary forms: the detective story, which depends on logic, and the fantasy, with its deus ex machina possibilities.

---Harry Warner, Jr.

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This-'n'-That---concluded from page 236

Chapman White (Viking, $2½), whose plot hinges on the action of a magic coin that permitted its owner to be in two places at once.

If you like tales of the supernatural, try a modern ghost novel, Sarah Mandrake, by Maggie-Owen Wadelton (Boobs-Merrill, $2¾). (The author's real name, incidentally, is Mrs. Maggie Jeanne (Melody) Wadelton.) Moralistic, and not as well written as his earlier novels, is C. S. Lewis' Great Divorce (Macmillan, $1½) which relates of adventures in a spirit world where Heaven and Hell are distinct realities.

The length of Richard Witter's article has resulted in the omission of "Forgotten Creators of Ghosts" and the shortening of "The Immortal Storm"; both will be lengthened in our next number, however. See you then! ---A.L.S.

Some Strange Stories

by
Harold Wakefield

(Author's note: The genesis of this brief article is an old issue of Futurian War Digest, in which, answering J. Michael Rosenblum's request for readers to nominate the strangest stories they had ever read, Francis T. Laney named "The Weird of Avoosl Wuthoqquan" by Clark Ashton Smith, Merritt's "Metal Monster" and Lovecraft's "Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath." Certainly this is an intriguing selection, one to start others searching through their memories for tales containing the same element of strangeness.)

In any roster such as this the names of Lovecraft and Smith would appear; however, assuming that nearly everyone is familiar with the work of these two authors, I shall pass on to those not quite as well known which have lingered in my mind because of some novel idea, bizarre theme or unusual plot-twist.

Algernon Blackwood as one of the great masters of the weird and uncanny naturally has a number of stories that would fall into this category. Two of the strangest, which are probably not as well known as others he has written, are "The Man Whom the Trees Loved" and The Centaur. The latter, a full-length novel, expounds the author's queer belief that the earth itself is a conscious, living entity and that the monsters of fable and mythology are manifestations and projections of its mind. This is one of Blackwood's most serious works and perhaps one of the most subtle weird stories ever written. One is reminded by "The Man Whom the Trees Loved" of Alexander Laing's remark that the stories of Blackwood make nature-lovers very uneasy. Certainly the stealthy, inexorable approach of the trees toward the man they have determined to make their own conveys the feeling of utterly alien forces at work, the motives of which are incomprehensible to mankind in general.

Strange is indeed the adjective which one thinks of when stories by the British author John Metcalfe are mentioned. His "Double Admiral," "Grey House" and "Mr. Meldrum's Mania" are superb examples in point. Oliver Onions' "Rooum" likewise has this same quality.

One of the strangest stories in all literature is "Daughter of Fire" by the half-mad French writer Gerard de Nerval. Stranger still, perhaps, is the life of Nerval himself, which was characterized by the wildest of eccentricities. This author was once known to have led a lobster through the streets of Paris on the ends of ribbons---because, as he said, it knew the secrets of the ocean's depths and did not talk. Nerval finally met his end by hanging himself with a piece of rope which he claimed was the Queen of Sheba's garter.

"Daughter of Fire" tells of the hero's love for a cheap little actress who passes by subtle degrees into the Queen of Sheba and the Egyptian goddess Isis, and has been described by Gautier as "cold reason seated by the bedside of hot fever, hallucination analyzing itself by a supreme phisosopher's effort. An English critic has described Nerval's story as follows:

> What is curious about this narrative is that the opium dreamer has begun to write down his dreams while he was yet within their coils. His genius consisted in a power of materializing vision, and without losing the sense of mystery, or that quality which gives its charm to the intangible. Madness in him had hit, as by lightning, the hidden links of distant and diverging things in somewhat the same fashion as that in which the vision is produced, while the soul, sitting safe within the perilous circle of its own magic, looks out on the panorama which either raises out of the darkness before it or drifts from itself into the darkness.

The interested reader can secure a glimpse of Nerval's eccentric genius by reading his short story "Sylvie," published in the Everyman's Library edition of the book French Short Stories of the 19th and 20th Centuries.

As one of the great masters of fantasy it is only fitting that Walter de la Mare should be mentioned. I nominate "The Vats," that strange, breathless tale wherein the reader seems led to the very threshold of some great secret of life, time, or the infinite itself; with the author's characteristic restraint, the secret is never disclosed.

Strangeness abounds also in such stories as W.F.Harvey's "August Heat," with its masterly handling of the double coincidence theme; H. P. Hartley's "A Visitor from Down Under," in which a B.B.C. broadcast of a children's party with its typical games serves as a background for the appearance of a singularly grisly visitant; and Margaret Irwin's magnificent Still She Wished for Company.

Proof that strangeness and humor do not necessarily conflict is provided by Richard Middleton's "Ghost Ship." The concept of ghosts mingling with the living on perfectly amicable terms---each accepting the other without question or fear---makes an enchanting story. The idea of the ghost ship's captain getting the local village ghosts drunk and recruiting them for his crew touches the sublime in fantastic humor.

At the opposite pole from Middleton's delightful effort is the horror-laden psychological tale by the Russian author Leonid Andreyev, "The Red Laugh."

Few readers of William Hope Hodgson's Carnacki the Ghost-Finder will forget "The Whistling Room." The notion of a room, so impregnated with the malignant spirit of the slain jester that its floor puckers up into a huge pair of lips emitting a gargantuan whistle and capable of hurling men about with murderous force is original in the extreme.

Those lucky enough to possess files of Weird Tales in its golden age will find there strange stories in abundance, ranging from the sombre grandeur of Donald Wandrei's "Red Brain," in which we see the last days of a dying universe, to the delicate, poetical "Wind that Tramps the World" by Frank Owen.

In that same magazine there appeared in 1930 a story that may be remembered by many not because of its merit, but because of its utter absurdity. Such a one is "The Land of Lur" by Earl Leaston Bell. Alliteration is here pushed to such extremes that it first irritates the reader, then enrages him, and finally causes him to laugh heartily. The generally hilarious atmosphere is also enlivened by scraps of inane verse and the invention of such words as ghoupire to describe beings who are half ghoul, half vampire. Truly it is a masterpiece ---though not in the sense that the author intended.

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The Superman in Modern English Fiction---concluded from page 248

of the purely physical superman, for example---not one of which can be considered to be excellent in calibre---points to a section of the field can profitably bear further cultivation. Despite a number of inferior examples that could be cited, the picture as a whole is one showing a comparitively high standard of quality---one almost unequalled by any other fantasy topic, in fact. This is unusual indeed when one reflects that supermen are very much in the public eye, both in fiction and in real life. The most surprising observation of all is that the majority of the better examples encountered have "pulp" magazines as their origin.

Leading the roster is the weird novel "But Without Horns," superb for its general literary quality, unusual treatment of theme, and grandiloquence of finale. Despite its appearance in a "pulp" magazine it shows few of the characterizing cliches that pervade even many of the hard-cover items. In second place is "Seeds of Life," which is also the best example of the purely scientific

superman. Taine's style is brilliant throughout. The best of the book supermen is Odd John, which, while not the author's best work, is still magnificent; as always, Stapledon has mastered the idiom of his creation to perfection. Three great short stories vie for next honors, the first well known as a result of The Pocket Book of Science Fiction, and the other two members of that mysterious group that has come to be generally known as "forgotten classics." "Microcosmic God" is a refreshing effort that can be perused innumerable times without tiring the reader, and all of its praiseworthy qualities are brought into sharp focus by its fine concluding paragraphs. Like "Microcosmic God," "The Mental Ultimate" is excellent throughout, intense and gripping in every sentence. "Short Wave Castle" is another tale with a powerful ending, this time gained by a combination of romanticism and nostalgia. "Slan" appears next in quality, very good in toto but slightly marred by a conventional denoument and several needless complexities of plot. It is one of those novels that possesses such an irresistible appeal that one regrets all the more keenly the few faults that rob it of perfection. Although somewhat cheapened by Snaith's attempt to make it a mystery novel, Thus Far remains one of the best efforts in the field. The Wonder is one of those extremely interesting examples that somehow seem to lack a necessary sparkle of inspiration. The action rides along on an even, undisturbed keel, few climaxes or turbulent scenes being encountered. It is well worth reading, however, and Beresford admittedly keeps to a high literary standard from start to finish. "The Rebel Soul" and "Into the Infinite" are notable as being the first above-average items on the superman theme to be published in the "pulps." The sequel, nevertheless, seems padded and lacks the vigor of the magnificent opening novelette. Last of the outstanding stories in the field are "The Conquerors" and "The Evening Star" of Keller. The fact that the author appears fighting for wordage detracts from their quality somewhat; suitable condensation would have helped to strengthen a really great plot.

Gladiator is perhaps most disappointing of all. After getting off to a promising start (possibly enlivened by an accent on illicit sex) Wylie's prose and plot finally bog down into stereotyped turgidity. A sensationally overdramatic ending caps the affair in a very sad fashion. As Gladiator is the only extant treatment of the purely physical superman on a major scale, it is regrettable indeed that the author could not subjugate his penchant for sensationalism and raise the novel to the prose level of which he was capable. This is not to infer that the work is outrightly poor---for it is not---but numerous possibilities for improvement do exist. Another novel that is disappointing because inherent potentialities are never completely realized is The New Adam. The main fault here is that an original framework has been covered by formularized "pulp" material. Many readers have by the length, scope and generally entertaining qualities of this work been led to overlook its stereotyped development and commonplace prose. However, the careful critic cannot disregard these facts, however much he may lament the author's inability to summon resources of language fresh enough to match the theme he treats. Weinbaum's reputation rests far more securely on the clever interplay of human emotions he has wedded to a unique idea in "The Adaptive Ultimate." Minimum Man is another great novel that could have been greater had not Marvell diluted his prose with so much political allegory; as a result, the book is neither high-grade satire nor high-grade fiction. Yet another example that could have been better is The Fiery Gate. This proceeds along a quiet (and at times almost prosaic) course, the author dilineating separate intimate incidents in the lives of two persons, considering the limitations he has set himself, he is not unsuccessful.. The magnificent backgrounds of "The World of A" and "The Changeling" are both badly marred by the author's attempts to overawe the reader; actually these two stories are above average, though when the possibilities of the material are considered much of the latter seems lost.

"The Atavar" is another unusual item, though it suffers from compression. This is not levelled as a serious criticism, however, since the characteristic stems largely from Gold's cold, analytical writing style. Though flawed by occasional inconsistencies, both "The Smallest God" and "The Terrible Sense" are entertainingly contrived, and make pleasant light reading.

The remaining stories, while enjoyable and diverting for the most part, are of lower quality than those discussed above. "The Nth Man" and "The Intelligence Gigantic" are two examples of this runner-up class; they are readable, but at the same time markedly handicapped by "pulp" characteristics. Similar defects appear in "Little Hercules" and "The Microscopic Giants," though to a lesser extent, the chief fault of this pair being a lack of mature plot-development. "The Man from Hell" contains an excellent plot, but is badly marred throughout. So is "The Iron God," an almost hopelessly hackneyed effort. "Superhuman" could have been excellent, but bears unmistakable signs of hurried composition. Blemished though it is by Schachner's usual habit of painting a villain in the blackest colors and lavishing exaggerated superlatives on his hero, "The Isotope Men" still lingers in the memory because of the unusual idea on which it is based. A story whose plot is similarly dragged down by poor treatment is "The Supermen," though here the idea is by no means as original. Kontrol, written in an almost juvenile manner throughout, never rises above the level of mediocrity. The Isle of Lies and the "Golden Amazon" series are stories that should be given as wide a berth as possible; read them at your own risk!

In a field as heterogeneous as this, few generalizations of importance can be drawn. Operating against attempts in this direction is also the small number of stories to be found in the categories of classification that have been employed---some boasting but a single tale. (The obvious corollary to the latter statement, of course, is that many sections of the field are still very much open to cultivation.) It has already been noted that the fate of the majority of supermen is an early death, which is perhaps a sort of commentary on the cynical beliefs of their progenitors; one may also note the frequency with which the supermen's own creators mete out this fate. While this might possibly arise from the authors' sense of poetic justice, it seems more probable that it is a plausible exigency, only the dabbling scientists themselves being aware of their creations' Achilles heel.

Despite the fact that much classic material first saw print in magazines, there is a certain tragic aspect to the "pulps." Given a fine original idea, this medium will rehash it to its detriment, each reworking being poorer than the one preceeding it. Sometimes---in fact, all too often---a single author is responsible for a series of these reworkings. It seems to be the rule in the realm of supermen, as well as other fictional subjects, that the quality of a work by a given writer is inversely proportional to the number of times he has treated the theme: some authors realize that if attempted carefully it can be done right the first time, but far too many apparently never tire of doing the same task wrong many times. Like the poor, Grub Stroet is always with us.

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Tips on Tales

by
Thyril L. Ladd

Thurber's White Deer (1945): This brief and charming story is, as the blurb on its dust-wrapper indicates, an adult fairy tale. It is smoothly written, and touches of humor are evident throughout. The novel tells of the capturing of a white deer in a magic forest, which deer promptly turns into a princess. Is she truly a princess or but an animal temporarily transformed into a human being? In order to decide this question, the three sons of the king who captured her are sent forth in quest of a magic talisman, and the adventures of each constitutes the bulk of Thurber's story. Among the delightful characters encountered in The White Deer is the Royal Physician. Becoming ill, he attends himself; and as a doctor takes his own pulse and temperature---which, of course, he cannot read, as it would not be proper for a patient to be aware of such data. His conversation with himself is amusing indeed---in the role of a patient he will moan, "I am very ill---I will never walk again!"; only to reply, as doctor, "Now, now, we must have faith in our physician, you know!" ...To add to its attractiveness The White Deer is enchanting illustrated by the author, and contains a double-paged center fold in full color. To New Yorker readers, who are familiar with James Thurber's talents, all this can be anticipated; to others, it can scarcely prove to be anything but a welcome surprise.

Ford Madox Ford's Ladies Whose Bright Eyes (1935): When the heor of this gracefully executed story finds himself, after a railroad accident, transported somehow into the early fourteenth century, he is indeed a bewildered fellow. After having been identified as a holy pilgrim, a messenger from a feudal lord away in the Crusades, he soon becomes entangled in the various intrigues about him. The climax is reached when the two ladies who have become principals in our hero's life in this age don armor, and enter the lists to joust with one another. The novel is written in an appealing style, into which Ford has infused touches of sly humor that are cleverly subdued so that they never become sufficiently flamboyant to destroy the general picture he is intent on sketching. This is a book deserving of a niche in every fan's library: it is a title he is sure to return to, again and again.

(concluded on page 268)

Thumbing the Munsey Files

with William H. Evans

Allstory for April, 1906 has "The Tide of Terror" by Claire Tucker. It depicts what happens when a tide of tremendous proportions---many times normal---strikes the coast of England from the Atlantic. This story is quite well done.

Argosy's first fantasy was published fifty years ago in this period. Nathaniel T. Babcock's "Man in the Brown Beard" appeared in the magazine's February, 1896 issue; I don't remember much about this tale, but it did not impress me. In May, 1906 we have "After the Locomotive Flew Away" by George Carling; a device for "arresting" gravity in any object to which it is connected is used by an inventor here to prevent a rival railroad from indulging in nefarious competition. He lightens locomotives, causes entire bridges to float away, and accomplishes other humerous things until he is successful. In the same issue professor Jonkin reappears with an idea for quick travel via the Jack-and-the-Beanstalk route; what happens as a result is amusingly related in "Quick Transit by Beanstalk, Limited," by Howard R. Garis. Frank L. Pollock's "Finis," which was reprinted in Famous Fantastic Mysteries not long ago, was published in the June, 1906 Argosy. This unusual story presents the interesting theory that there exists at the center of the universe an immense sun whose light has not yet reached us. What happens just before Earth's last sunrise, when the rays of the central sun are about to blot out all life, is very well told.

A new member of the Munsey family made its debut in March, 1906. Scrap Book lived up to its name, reprinting much fantasy from ancient sources. Most of these stories are well known, and hence require no comment. The first number had Poe's "Descent into the Maelström and Irving's "Devil and Tom Walker." The next featured the fine "Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" of Ambrose Bierce. May printed two more: "The Tapestried Chamber" by Walter Scott and "The Man in the Air" by Frederick L. Keates.

1906 found The Monthly Story Magazine---as Blue Book was known in those days---quite packed with fantasy. January contained Bertram Lebhar's story "The Red Devil" and Charles M. Williams' "War on Steel," which concerns a device that renders metal useless, as well as an early aircraft tale, "The Light of the Obelisk" by Harry B. Allyn. March of the same year produced "Five Men from Atlantis" by F. S. Knight-Adkin and Edgar Franklin's pleasant fantasy, "The Man with the Minute Glass."

Travelling forward ten years, we find Allstory in full stride. "Lost ---One Mylodon" by Elmer B. Mason appears in the April 1, 1916 issue, and in the next one the old master Edgar Rice Burroughs starts a three-part serial "Thuvia, Maid of Mars." The April 15th number has Frank Condon's atmospheric tale "Footprints" and the next one "Blood of Sacrifice" by Lillian B. Hunt. Two weeks after this appeared "The Savage and the Savant" by Nalbro Bartley. On June 3 the occult detective Semi Dual begins a three-installment investigation of a mysterious disappearance of securities from a bank vault in "Box 991," which was written, of course, by J. U. Giesy and Junius B. Smith. In the same issue is "The Master Ray" of Leslie Ramon. Wilton, a scientist, invents a device enabling him to control people from a distance. He uses this in an attempt to revenge himself upon a woman who once jilted him, but is foiled. This story is not of particulay high quality. Achmed Abdullah offers in the June 10th issue a little dream fantasy about a college teacher who imagines that he is Attila, and who goes insane; eventually, however, he returns to normalcy after some highly embarrassing adventures. The title is "Professor Barker Harrison---Tartar."

Still a monthly periodical, Argosy has but one fantasy in this period of 1916: Edison Marshall's "Who is Charles Avison?," which has been reprinted from the April issue in a past Famous Fantastic Mysteries. Marshall offers the concept of two earths, on opposite sides of the sun, with identical inhabitants.

Charles Avison (both of him!) start on a space-flight, one being killed en route. This wrenches events out of kilter, for when the Avison from there lands here by mistake, he finds that he has been buried. Finally he sets off for the other earth to return things to "normal." Marshall has hit upon a bizarre idea and he has handled it interestingly.

Although Blue Book lacks fantasy fiction during the first half of 1916 several interesting items crop up a decade later. The January, 1926 number includes "The Black Star" by George L. Knapp, and April's issue has the same author back again with "McKeever's Dinosaur." The latter is a humorous fantasy, and the former tale is about an invading sun---similar to the When Worlds Collide theme---and is quite well done. May features "The Kingbird" by Kenneth Gilbert.

Argosy-Allstory Weekly has Katherine Haviland Taylor's weird, inexplicable little fantasy "The Return" in its April 17, 1926 issue; this story concerns an apparition and the love of a man and woman after death, and is quite good. "The Thing that Hunts in the Night" by Marshall South (May 15) is another theme entirely. This is an adventure yarn about an allegedly haunted lost mine in Mexico, which turns out to be guarded merely by a deformed indian. It conforms perfectly to the usual boy-meets-girl formula, being made readable only by a little atmosphere. With the June 26 number Ralph Milne Farley starts the latest adventures of Miles Cabot in a five-part serial, "The Radio Planet." Cabot returns to Venus, and, landing on the wrong continent, becomes involved in a series of narrow escapes and daring exploits with his old enemies, the Formian Ants. Along with part one of this novel is John Wilstach's "Genius Epidemic." A child genius in a small town dies, and the local doctor extracts some pineal fluid from the body, injecting it into other members of the community. They too become geniuses---and too many geniuses quickly disrupts things, until finally the doctor discovers a cure. The story is very well told.

During the second quarter of 1986 the only fantasy to be found in Argosy is "The Witch-Makers" of Donald Wandrei, which has since been reprinted in Famous Fantastic Mysteries and the author's collection The Eye and the Finger. This interesting story, to be found in the May 2nd issue, concerns the transfer of a man's ego into bodies of several African animals.

The 1936 Blue Book continues "Tarzan and the Immortal Men," while that January Ray Cummings for once remained on earth in the right size and time with his "Man with a Platinum Rib," an above-average futuristic crime tale.

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The World

by

Christina G. Rossetti

By day she woos me, soft, exceeding fair:
  But all night as the moon so changeth she;
  Loathesome and foul with hideous leprosy,
And subtile serpents gliding in her hair.
By day she woos me to the outer air,
  Ripe fruits, sweet flowers, and full satiety:
  But through the night, a beast she grins at me,
A very monster void of love and prayer.
By day she stands a lie: by night she stands
  In all the naked horror of the truth,
With pushing horns and clawed and clutching hands.
Is this a friend indeed, that I should sell
  My soul to her, give her my life and youth,
Till my feet, cloven too, take hold on hell?

The Immortal Storm

A History of Science-Fiction Fandom

by
Sam Moskowitz

(part 3)

IX
The New ISA and The International Observer

In 1932, as a result of letters interchanged in the readers' column of Amazing Stories magazine, a correspondence had sprung up among Carl Johnson, E. C. Love and Walter Kubilus. The three decided to form an organization for the benefit of science-fiction advocates, and, formulating it on the basis of Gernsback's ideal that fans should be science hobbyists (a genesis similar to that of the old Science Correspondence Club), they founded the Edison Science Club. Coincident with this action, The Edison Science Correspondence Club Journal was issued. Elections held in September, 1932 elevated Love to presidency, and gave the posts of vice-president and secretary-treasurer to Johnson and William Palmer respectively. At first the group prospered, but all too soon many felt hampered by the lack of facilities for expansion. So, believing that the organization was simply becoming enmired ever more deeply in a hopeless rut, members Kubilus and Gervais left the parent body and formulated plans for the Cosmos Science Club. When John B. Michel entered the scene he suggested the addition of the word "International" to the new club's title. And he, together with the other two, published a fan magazine, Radiogram, which published a miscellaneous assortment of odds and ends and ran for but two issues. Failing in his attempts to strengthen the Edison Science Club after the defection of Kubilus and Gervais, Love ceded all its rights to the two for their International Cosmos Science Club and publicly announced the fact in a bulletin titled The Ediogram.

Upon learning of the ICSC, William S. Sykora felt that it was an excellent beginning for a type of club he had in mind. He became a member, and noting that progress was at a virtual standstill because of abandonment of its publication and inefficient campaigning for new recruits---the latter reason, ironically enough, having been the main one for its secession from the parent ESC---he arranged with Michel for his own appointment to the chairmanship to a committee possessing virtually dictatorial powers, being even entrusted with the authority to interpret the club's constitution to the membership.

But before describing the first important events of Sykora's fan career, let us consider briefly the man's background. Sykora first appeared on the scene during the latter days of the Scienceers. Indeed, after the dissolution of this group, he approached Glasser and Unger early in 1934 in an unsuccessful attempt to bring about its revival. To understand him best, it must be realized that William Sykora was an old-time science-fictionist. He epitomized the Gernsback ideal that all readers of the genre should consider the advancement of science their serious aim. He had amassed a solid scientific background, and his cellar boasted a well-equipped laboratory. Beside an excellent science-fiction collected rested an imposing assemblage of scientific tomes. Several short articles by him had appeared in the pages of Science and Mechanics, including "A Scientific Paradox," a prize-winning entry in a contest sponsored by this magazine. He garnered yet another prize in a similar contest published in Mechanics and Handicraft. Undoubtedly he was a person of intelligence and capability. The old ISA and its Cosmology had always fascinated him; to his mind, this was the type of organization fandom needed. And when all efforts to revive the Scienceers came to naught, he therefore cast about for means whereby a new group con-

forming to these ideals might be found. In so doing he contacted the International Cosmos Science Club through Michel, his friend.

Realizing immediately the ICSC's potentialities, Sykora lost no time in utilizing his newly-won powers in that organization. On the strength of Michel's association with The Radiogram, he was entrusted with the editorship of The International Observer, the revitalized club's official organ. Perhaps unexpectedly, Michel seemed to have a flare for this type of work. He created for The International Observer the first silk-screened cover ever seen in the fan world. From the first issue these covers, astoundingly well done for an amateur, lent to the magazine a distinctive, pleasing appearance unlike that found in the majority of its fan competitors. This enviable standard was maintained throughout its entire life.

The second issue of this publication presented a constitution, as drawn up by a committee composed of Edward Gervais, Day Gee and Michel. (Gervais will be remembered as an outstanding member of the Terrestrial Fantascience Guild and Gee had been on the roster of Palmer's International Scientific Association.) This constitution was unique in that it represented the first effort of a science-fiction fan club to establish anything resembling the mechanics of democracy. And although democracy often limped badly during the ICSC's history, there was evident at all times some semblance of its presence.

In theory, the club was designed to embrace both science hobbyists and science-fiction fans; this was borne out, furthermore, by the International Observer's byline, "of science and science-fiction." As long as the first president, Edward Gervais, was in office, however, the emphasis was on science, and fiction was almost completely crowded out of the club's periodical. The latter was divided into such sectional headings as "Chemistry," "Physics," "Astronomy" and "Biology," and its articles bore such staid titles as "Neutronium," "Color-Waves," "Diamonds," "A Visit to the Adlar Planetarium," etc. Nevertheless, some topics of fictional interest were introduced from the very first. Michel wrote an interesting column titled "The Science Fiction Critic." A contest for the best original story was announced in the second number of The International Observer, this being open to all members who had paid their dues in full. (This contest was won by Florence Roider, an active member of the Chicago SFL chapter.) A second contest of different nature was announced later.

Sykora' influence was also evident in the inception of a club library, composed of both scientific and fictional volumes, which was kept at his home. It was due in no small measure to him as well that the club's publication maintained a regular, monthly schedule of appearance, and that its membership grew steadily larger.

The International Cosmos Science Club was, of course, no local group. Nevertheless many of its adherents lived in the greater New York area, and so it was hardly surprising that they should affirm their presence by designating themselves a local chapter. This was done on February 3, 1935, at a meeting attended by Sykora, Wollheim, Michel and Herbert Goudket. Thereafter the group met regularly at Sykora's home, and these gatherings often reached peaks of interest that surpassed many of the best SFL chapter meetings.

Aside from the social benefits involved, the chapter undertook many worthwhile activities. The first of these was a series of experiments in amateur rocketry. Four rockets constructed by Sykora were launched on March 10, 1935 in the presence of the New York chapter of the ICSC and representatives of several SFL chapters. While none of these rockets achieved startling success, the subsequent account of the experiments written by Sykora were extremely well done, and drew forth profound respect from all quarters. Motion pictures of these experiments were taken, and were later shown at Queens SFL meetings among other places. It is obvious that despite the club's comparitively small roster it was very active and possessed of great potentialities because of alert leadership.

Attempts were made to get publicity for the organization through the SFL. Gervais' letter to Hornig met, however, with a curt rebuff.

> ...we are not going to ask our readers to join another science fiction organization when the S.F.L. gives and will give everything that can be asked for and is open to all---even those who cannot afford the $1.50 dues of your organization (which makes the ICSC look a bit commercial in nature).
>
> We can see absolutely no advantage in your organization over the S.F.L. If you can show us anything that the ICSC can do that the League cannot, we would be willing to go into this further.

This reply was printed above Hornig's signature in the International Observer; it was not commented upon editorially, and the matter was dropped. But it was the genesis of later discord with the SFL. The ICSC quickly and decisively showed that it could indeed accomplish things that the SFL could not---and the first of these was the rocketry experiment noted above. This achievement was begrudgingly acknowledged in the League's column in Wonder Stories. It became immediately obvious that Hornig had taken the wrong tack. The ICSC at this time was predominately a scientific-minded organization, and could easily have been accorded an official blessing and recommendation as a haven for science-hobbyists. Hornig's rough handling of the group, which he insisted on treating as a competing one, not only showed a lack of mature acumen but proved to have disastrous results.

The election of February 13, 1935 had raised Sykora to presidency, Gervais having been reduced to the vice president's post and Michel and Goudket being given the respective positions of secretary and treasurer. The leaders thus swept into power almost immediately transformed the ICSC into a militant group. As we have seen, Hornig's attitude had certainly not made relations with the SFL any more friendly. On top of this, personal arguments at local New York chapter meetings made them even less so. But they deteriorated into open animosity when Wollheim recounted to members in all its sordid detail the non-payment scandal he had recently uncovered.

The ICSC, which had previously lent but mildly passive aid to the Terrestrial Fantascience Guild, now coöperated completely in an all-out mutual effort to smash the Science Fiction League and Wonder Stories itself. ICSC members mimeographed on club equipment the April, 1935 number of the TFG Bulletin, which contained Wollheim's expose of Gernsback's policies, and helped distribute it as well. They emphasized their own democratic constitution with the slogan "the only members' club"---in contrast, of course, to the League, where members had no appeal from arbitrary decisions of the assistant secretary. They issued a fan magazine titled Flabbergasting Stories, obviously a burlesque of Wonder Stories, which bore the byline "a schrechlich publication." In this appeared humerous barbed allusions to the non-payment practice and references to a "Sexy Science-Fiction Soviet Auxiliary" for frustrated fans, caricaturing the SFL.

Michel's "Science Fiction Critic" column in The International Observer printed decidedly unfavorable reviews of the fiction in Wonder Stories. Editorials urged readers to get the TFG Bulletin and learn of the Gernsback scandal. A new column called "Sun Spots" was initiated by Wollheim, and revealed how Gernsback had aided the dissolution of the old Scienceers, first by attempts to make them become the unwilling nucleus of the American Interplanetary Society, and then by not paying (as promised) for their meeting room at the Museum of Natural History---thus inferring that Gernsback spent most of his spare time in disrupting fan organizations. Simultaneously an attack was launched at the editors of Fantasy Magazine, who were labelled as traitors to the fan field for keeping se-

cret the infamous Gernsback affair and for refusing to print in their magazine anything which reflected unfavorably upon him or Wonder Stories. The intolerance of the Fantasy Magazine group toward newcomers in the field was thus also reaping its harvest of opposition.

With each succeeding issue of The International Observer these attacks increased in volume and effectiveness. Those found in the "Sun Spots" column in particular left no line of fire untried. Wollheim showed a real talent for presenting legitimate news items in such a way that they reflected unfavorably upon Hornig, the Science Fiction League, Wonder Stories and Fantasy Magazine. He was an implacable foe, and had his column received wider circulation it seems quite likely that it could have brought the SFL to its knees without outside aid. Indeed, Wollheim boasted of his knowledge that copies of The International Observer were in the Wonder Stories editorial office, with all comments relevant to the situation encircled. (These very copies are now in the possession of this historian, and have proved invaluable in compiling an account of the affair. Wollheim was not correct, however, in stating that such words as "untrue" and "scandalous" had been pencilled in the margins beside such comments. Moreover, interest had not been confined solely to this feud, for Schwartz had also encircled all statements relative to the Anthony Gilmore exposé as well as Tucker's "Heath.") Michel's column, "The Science Fiction Critic," was likewise active in the battle. In it he once remarked:

> I believe fantasy saw its best days when it [Fantasy Magazine] was the Science Fiction Digest in purpose as well as name. Lately it has become the stamping ground for Charled D. Hornig, managing editor of Wonder Stories, who has taken it over (apparently) and is using it as a medium to advertise his magazine. I think this is an obvious fact.

Letters from an anonymous party terming himself "The Fantasiest" began to circulate among SFL chapter heads, with effective propaganda against the League. Ruppert, a friend of Hornig, once intimated that if he were to reveal to the president of the Authors League all that he knew about Gernsback steps would be immediately taken to put him out of business. At a meeting of the New York chapter Hornig himself was tricked into stating that the SFL's chief purpose was a commercial one.

For a while Hornig refrained from making any public statements. But the relentless pressure could not long be endured. His first defense was in the nature of vaguely phrased references to parties attempting to "undermine" the SFL who, he hoped, "would mend their ways." When this did no good, he threatened to "reorganize" the New York chapter, stating that the poor showing made by some of the top fans in the field there was shameful. The result being but to increase the activity of his opposition, Hornig resorted to a desperate and sensational expedient to quell this dangerous uprising. The September, 1935 number of Wonder Stories carried the following announcement:

THREE MEMBERS EXPELLED

> It grieves us to announce that we have found the first disloyalty in our organization. We have discovered that three of our members, who run what they consider a competing club to the SFL, have done all within their power, through personal letters and published notices, to disrepute the League, Wonder Stories, and the Gernsback outfit by spreading gross untruths and libellous slander to other science-fiction fans and authors. They joined the League only to be able to attack it better. We are extremely sorry that we cannot know every fan's intentions when applications

are received, but we have proved only three-tenths of one per cent wrong in our enrolment, so we hope that the other members will forgive us. These members we expelled on June 12th. Their names are Donald A. Wollheim, John B. Michel, and William S. Sykora---three active fans who just got themselves onto the wrong road.

The attitude of fandom as a whole toward this expulsion was relatively passive. Most readers knew little, if anything, of the grim struggle between the SFL and the ICSC. Some had probably formed an unfavorable opinion of Wollheim through his extremely critical letters published in Wonder Stories' readers column, and therefore dismissed the incident as an unpleasantly justified one. Only a handful was aware, through ICSC-distributed propaganda, of the other side to the matter. At least one important fan, however, Fred Anger, resigned in protest to the action. Among the active fans---outside of the Fantasy Magazine group---sympathy with the outcasts was general.

If the righteousness of their motives were disregarded, there would be no doubt that the three richly deserved to be expelled. But Hornig had blundered again. Wollheim, as we have noted, had made himself unpopular through publication of his letters criticizing (among other things) the magazine's policy of reprinting German science-fiction; his unpopularity was not due to being wrong on these points, but rather to the man's habit of incorporating in each of his letters some personal slurs or innuendos entirely unnecessary to the success of his arguments. (This characteristic was apparent again and again in his later fan life, and often operated to cancel out an entire line of reasoning in minds of readers, losing for Wollheim debates he had easily won if simple logic alone were taken into consideration.) Thus Wollheim could safely have been offered up as a scapegoat, for beyond the publication and editing of the magazine containing the bulk of his attacks Sykora had printed no attack of his own, and Michel had been largely concerned with the Fantasy Magazine group rather than with the SFL. When the comparitively passive Sykora and Michel found themselves in the same boat with Wollheim they saw red, and thenceforward took an unqualifiedly active role in the campaign. Hornig thus succeeded only in uniting a vengeful opposition even more determinedly against him, and the result was to be stark melodrama in the meeting halls of the SFL chapters.

X
Other Happenings of 1935

In Austin, Texas an individual named D. R. Welsh had gone into business, buying and selling science-fiction and fan magazines. This enterprise he conducted under the name of the Science Fiction Syndicate. In order to further his business by arousing interest in the lesser-known fan publications and such obscure professional efforts as the British Scoops, Welch compiled and William L. Crawford published the first list of amateur periodicals of fandom. It was entitled Science Fiction Bibliography, and its resumé omitted very few items of importance. It remains to this day a collectors' item of great interest.

In evaluating The International Observer and the TFG Bulletin Welch remarked that they were "not in themselves worthy of being collected." Learning of this, Wollheim contacted Welch, informing him of the campaign being waged by the TFG and the ICSC, asking him to examine recent issues of the organizations' official organs and to reconsider his opinion of their importance. Whether fear of the TFG's campaigns boycotting unfair dealers had some lent weight to Wollheim's request is not known, but the fact remains that Welch shortly thereafter mimeographed and circulated with copies of his bibliography a one-paged circular which stated, among other things:

The Bulletin is now a magazine in which all science fiction fans will be intensely interested. The April issue contains vital information about the failure of Wonder Stories to pay its authors.

Fans should welcome this magazine which gives them honest and accurate information.

Nor do we discourage fans from joining The International Cosmos Science Club or subscribing to its official publication, The International Observer. This magazine has shown consistent improvement with each issue. Under the guidance of William S. Sykora and Donald Wollheim it should make even greater strides in the future.

Arthur ("Bob") Tucker will be remembered as a contributor to the pages of The Fantasy Fan and Fantasy Magazine, both serious efforts and humorous ones coming from his pen. Of the latter (many of which bore the byline of his alter ego, "Hoy Ping Pong") such extrapolations on science-fiction as his account of a future fan convention held on the planet Pluto proved most popular. His clowning spread to the magazines' reader-columns, where, hitting upon the notion of parodying readers' requests, it reached its acme of notoriety. Readers from time immemorial had complained about paper-quality, type-size, rough edges, quality of illustrations, the magazines' sizes, and so on. Tucker decided to show them how ridiculous and picayune all this was, and with characteristic mock seriousness wrote to the editor of Astounding Stories, demanding that the wire staples which bound the magazine together be removed, as they disgraced the field by indicting its originality. Flavored chewing-gum, he hinted, would be preferable; and for true dignity nothing could surpass the platinum fastener. To carry out his plan, Tucker appointed himself dictator of the Society for the Prevention of Wire Staples in Scientifiction Magazines---or the SPWSSTFM for short.

The very absurdity of the movement caught the fickle juvenile fancy of the fans. A flood of letters pro and con poured in, the mock controversy giving rise to dozens of similar organizations; each and every one of which designated itself by a long set of initials. The primary opposing group was headed by High Cocolorum Donald A. Wollheim; it called itself the IAOPUMUMFSTFPUSA, which stood for International and Allied Organization for the Purpose of Upholding and Maintaining the Use of Metallic Fasteners in Science Fiction Publications of the United States of America. Uncomplimentary remarks were exchanged between the rival groups in their official publications---these being Tucker's renowned D'Journal, whose membership list allegedly included many leading authors and editors, and Wollheim's Polymorphanucleated Leucocyte. The final rounds of the battle were unquestionably Wollheim's, for it was shown that D'Journal had, contrary to its ethical stand, used staples for binding.

Reader-reaction soon turned against the alphabetical societies as the more mature faction of the audience began to assert itself, however. But the horseplay was not destined to peter out out ignominiously, being brought to an abrupt and dramatic conclusion by two letters printed in the January, 1936 issue of Astounding Stories. The first was a letter from one Anne Smidley, notifying the magazine's readers of the death of Bob Tucker, who was operated upon, and "never recovered consciousness." The second was from Tucker himself, ostensibly written before the operation, in which he requested all the alphabetical societies to combine into two opposing groups. Editor Tremaine in a footnote asked readers to "accept his challenge and work for unity."

The entire affair was so prepostorous---imagine taking the organization of such groups seriously!---that readers did not know what to believe. Tucker, the perfect fan fool, dead? It was inconceivable. Some New York skeptics tele-

graphed Tucker's family, receiving a Twain-like reply from Tucker himself to the effect that reports of his death were greatly exaggerated. And slowly it became apparent to fandom that the entire affair had been a hoax. Tucker claimed that it was someone else's idea of a joke, and that he himself knew nothing of it; but Tremaine took an entirely different attitude. He had learned of the hoax before the copies of the magazine carrying it reached the newstands, and, with the natural reaction of a man whose ready sympathy is made light of, he decided that as far as the readers of Astounding Stories were concerned Tucker would stay dead. And indeed it was a long, long time, as eras of fandom are reckoned, before letters bearing Tucker's name were published in Astounding again.

Although Tucker's D'Journal was not his initial entry into the amateur publishing field (he was responsible for The Planetoid, an evanescent periodical appearing in 1932) it remained for some time his most important one, for though Wollheim's "Sun Spots" spoke from time to time of projects he was allegedly planning, little or nothing further was heard of the man until late 1938.

Throughout all the strife of 1935 it is well to keep in mind that Julius Schwartz and Mort Weisinger had kept Fantasy Magazine far in the front of the field, and that "the digest of imaginative literature" remained the dead center of science-fiction fandom. The quality, variety and all-around interest of its features simply could not be matched. Its fiction was very good, and included stories by such top-notch authors as A. Merritt, stories that were obtained at no cost, while professional publications offering tempting word-rates could obtain from Merritt nary a lino. The magazine's art work, done by the clever amateur Clay Ferguson, Jr., was likewise up to the same high standard, and compared favorably with that found in the professional fantasy magazines. With the change in title from Science Fiction Digest (made in January, 1934) the coverage of material had become broader than ever, and naturally had resulted in an even wider reader-appeal. After an elaborately fine second anniversary number, a series of issues dedicated each to a professional fantasy magazine was launched, and these increased Fantasy Magazine's popularity yet more. After three bimonthly numbers the periodical resumed monthly publication in April, 1935, and from then until the third anniversary issue its supremacy was impossible to challenge.

(to be continued)

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Open House

(letters from our readers)

Groff Conklin, editor of The Best of Science Fiction, writes briefly:

...you might keep an eye on Science Illustrated (either the June or the August issue) for my swipe at the supernatural. As you'll see, I'm all for freezing science-fiction's definition more and more rigidly.... My favorite in the genre is Lindsay's Voyage to Arcturus, one of the most extroadinary science-fiction-plus philosophy tales I've ever read---even though it starts off with a seance....

I hope to get out a second anthology, but it'll depend on how long and how well the first one sells. Perhaps by next Spring---or even late this Fall.

Matt Onderdonk, one of our contributing editors, tells of a current cinema offering:

The Boris Karloff picture, Isle of the Dead, which I saw a month or so ago, wasn't too bad. The acting left something to be desired, but the plot was good and the director managed to infuse several creepy episodes of first-rate caliber. I liked the plot of a contest between modern science and the ancient

Greek gods to see which could save the dwellers on the island from the plague: much more could have been done with the idea in really expert hands, though. Near the beginning there was a truly eerie portion when the searchers heard a thin, ghostly voice singing and re-echoing in the caverns of the supposedly deserted island. A couple of moments of genuine terror came, too, when one of the women falls into a cataleptic state and is prematurely buried: her ghastly mewings and scratching from within the tomb were very effective. When the peasant girl wanders into the tomb in the dense darkness and stumbles on the empty coffin, her screech of abysmal fright is something that lifts the audience right out of its collective seat. There is some attempt at characterization in the leading role, and Karloff does well in trying to make an unconvincing character believable. It is too bad that the script-writing and the direction was not as uniformly good throughout as it was in isolated episodes---we might have had a first-rate horror film of classic proportions....

After rereading Out of the Silence slowly and critically I am more and more impressed with its stature as a truly great fantasy novel. Cox develops his theme so skilfully and gradually that it is completely convincing when he really "opens up"! I think I can now see that his mundane opening chapters are wise because they present a normal and completely believable world from which, once accepted, the transition to a special domain comes effortlessly and naturally. His descriptions of the achievements of the lost civilization are so logical, so restrained---yet so completely engrossing! It is depressing to remember how many others have tried to employ this theme with ludicrous and pathetic results. I believe that Lovecraft would have thought highly of this book in spite of the romantic elements. After all, the genuine love-interest is on a classical plane and the ordinary girl's interference in the affair seems cheap and childish by comparison....

From across the pond Frederick C. Brown writes of new British fantasy volumes:

Among the latest titles to appear over here are: Best Ghost Stories edited by Ann Nidler (Faber & Faber); Keir Cross's Angry Planet (PeterLunn), whose subtitle interestingly states: "an authentic first-hand account of a journey to Mars in the space-ship 'Albatross' compiled from notes and records by various members of the expedition, and now assembled, together with illustrations, and edited for publication by John Keir Cross"; Hanley's What Farrar Saw, wherein Britons return to a gypsy-like existence following huge traffic disorganizations throughout the country, with towns in a state of seige by reason of food scarcity; and Roberts' Sunrise in the West, which deals with a mythical ministry allowed to rule part of defeated Germany---with thought-provoking results. I believe the price of each of the latter novels is 8/6, but don't know the publishers. Three interesting reprints have cropped up, too: Rutter's Monster of Mu (James, 6/-); The Witchfinder by S. Fowler Wright (Books of Today, 5/-), which is a small, pocket-sized volume of short stories containing a single fantasy; and Herbert Reid's Green Child (Grey Walls Press, 12/6), in an edition far superior to the original one, having fine illustrations printed in color.....

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Tips on Tales---concluded from page 258

John Buchan's Dancing Floor (1926): The villagers had always hated the chateau, for it had brought them nothing but evil; and now, after remaining tenantless for years, it is opened once more by a young heiress. She has not lived there for long when it is decided that she is an evil witch, and plans to seize and burn her alive on a certain mystic night are laid. How she is saved despite the guards that block every route of escape from her dwelling is suspensefully told; The Dancing Floor is well up to the usual standard of a fine writer.