# FANTASY COMMENTATOR

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

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editor and publisher

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# THIS-'N'-THAT

Recently published books of fantasy fiction not hitherto noted in this column:

Ayme, Marcel: The Fable and the Flesh (Bodley Head, 9/6). Satire of a rural French community. Acceptable.

Bebbington, W.G., ed.: Fancy Free (Allen & Unwin, 3/-). Brief collection of fantastic shorts. Worth the price.

Bernanos, Georges: Under the Sun of Satan (Pantheon, $3). Reprint. Dull.

Binder, Eando: Lords of Creation (Prime, $3). Low-grade, hackneyed s-f.

Bleiler, E.F. & Dikty, T.E., eds: The Best Science-Fiction Stories: 1949 (Fell, $2.95). There are twelve good stories in this collection.

Bond, Nelson S.: Exiles of Time (Prime, $3). Fairly good s-f novel reprinted from the 1940 Blue Book magazine.

---: The Thirty-first of February (Gnome, $3). 13 fantasies, all of them well above the usual pulp average. Get it.

Borodin, George: The Man of Kerioth (Laurie, 10/6). The story of Judas, before and after his death.

Bowen, Marjorie: The Bishop of Hell (Lane, 8/6). 12 excellent weirds.

Brace, Gerald Warren: A Summer's Tale (Norton, $3). A well-written, borderline novel of an imaginary island off the Maine coast.

Bridge, Ann, pseud: And Then You Came (Macmillan, $3½). Metaphysical time-travel to the first century A.D. from modern rural Scotland.

Burke, J. F.: Swift Summer (Laurie, 9/6). Moon rockets.

Campbell, J.W., Jr.: The Incredible Planet (Fantasy Press, $3). Sequels to previously published s-f yarns.

Christie, Robert: Inherit the Night (Farrar, $3). Borderline allegory.

Coblentz, Stanton A., ed.: Unseen Wings (Beechurst, $4½). This anthology of fantastic poetry is not as good as the previous two by Derleth and Widdemer.

Davies, Valentine: It Happens every Spring (Farrar, $2½). Brisk, delightful, if superficial, fantasy based on the popular movie.

de Camp, L. S.: Lest Darkness Fall (Prime, $3). Reprint.

Delmartia, Astron, pseud (J. R. Fearn): The Trembling World (1/6). British s-f pocket book. Very unimpressive.

Desmond, Hugh: The Terrible Awakening (Wright & Brown, 7/6). Cosmic collision involving the earth. So-so.

Ehrlich, Max: The Big Eye (Doubleday, $2½). Almost the same thing. Better.

Farjeon, J.J.: Death of a World (Collins, 8/6). Atomic explosion.

Fearn, John Russell: The Golden Amazon Returns (World's Work, 5/-). She should have stayed where she was.

Friend, Oscar J.: The Kid from Mars (Fell, $2½). Finlay illustrations add to this light, pleasant time-killer.

Fyfe, Hamilton: A History of the Next Hundred Years---Unless (Allen & Unwin, 3/6). A "warning" book.

Girl with the Hungry Eyes, The (Avon $¼). Six short fantasies. Just fair.

Gould, Maggy: The Dowry (Morrow, $2¾). A horror tale of a man who has a curse laid upon him.

Grant, Joan: The Laird and the Lady (Methuen, 12/6). Psychometry and a haunted English castle.

Hamilton, Edmond: The Star Kings (Fell, $2½). Trite s-f adventure novel.

Hanlin, Tom: Miracle at Cardewigg (Random, $2¾, Collancz, 9/-). A miracle.

Haynes, Dorothy K.: Thou Shalt Not Suffer a Witch (Methuen, 9/6). 26 shorts, some borderline, some fantasy, all of them off-trail.

Hearn, Lafcadio: Some Chinese Ghosts (New Collector's, $2). Overpriced rpt.

Heinlein, Robert: The Red Planet (Scribner's, $2½). Juvenile interplanetary.

Hesse, Hermann: Magister Ludi (Holt, $5; Aldus, 15/-). An extremely good novel of Europe in 2000 A.D. Recommended.

Hubbard, L. Ron: The Kingslayer (FPCI, $3). A new novel plus three shorts.

---: The Triton (FPCI, $3). A novel reprinted from Unknown Worlds. Pleasant.

Jaeger, C. K.: The Man in the Top Hat (Grey Walls, 10/6). A silly fantasy.

Keller, David H.: The Homunculus (Prime, $3). Reviewed on page 86.

(continued on page 69)

# CHAUCER AND SCIENCE-FICTION

by
Samuel Sackett

Probably the first fictional work concerning science in what was to become the English language was the "Chanouns Yemannes Tale," one of the Canterbury Tales of Geoffrey Chaucer. Written late in the Canterbury period, around 1399 in all probability, this story may be based on a real experience in the poet's life.

The tale seems to have been an afterthought on Chaucer's part, unscheduled in the original plan, since neither the canon nor his yeoman is mentioned in the General Prolog. The thirty pilgrims to the shrine of St. Thomas a Becket at Canterbury are joined near Boghton by a canon---a "philosopher" or alchemist ---and his servant, or yeoman. This canon is so powerful, his yeoman tells us, that he can turn the town of Canterbury upside down and pave it with silver and gold.

The yeoman has been taken on by the canon as an apprentice, to do such odd jobs as blowing the fire. Although he had been with his master for seven years, the yeoman still knows nothing about the alchemistic art, and, disgruntled, is willing to tell all about behind-the-scenes practices. Even the sharp command of his master does not stop him.

The first part of the canon's yeoman's tale is taken up by a discourse on the methods of alchemists; the second is an account of how a former employer cheated a priest out of forty pounds---a fabulous sum in those days of low living costs, and equivalent to over $6000 in our purchasing power.

This earlier master of the yeoman, also a canon, borrowed some gold of a priest. When he repaid the sum---about a hundred dollars---he offered to show the priest some "philosophy," or alchemy, out of gratitude.

The canon took an ounce of mercury and promised to make it silver by putting it in a fire and adding powder. The alchemist then set the priest blowing the fire and

> Out of his bosom took a bechen [beech-wood] cole,
> In which ful subtilly was maad an hole,
> And ther-in put was of silver lymaille [filings],
> An ounce, and stopped was, with-outen fayle,
> The hole with wex, to kepe the lymail in.

When the silver was melted, he collected it in a mold put in water to cool. Then he repeated the trick twice, fooling the priest the second time by secreting the silver in a hollow stick used to stir the fire, and on the third occasion by secreting the silver in his sleeve.

The priest and canon took these three ounces of silver to a goldsmith, who pronounced them good. Because the priest was such a good friend, the canon sold him the recipe for the powder for only $6000---and then left town.

Besides its interest as showing the antiquity of the gold-brick racket used by more modern bunco men, this tale is full of interesting comments on the state of science in the Fourteenth Century.

The yeoman recounts one experiment performed by his current master. The canon put orpiment (arsenic trisulfide), ground burned bones, iron filings, salt and pepper in an earthenware pot covered with glass. The mixture was heated but nothing happened. Such a failure occasioned a post-mortem examination:

> Som seyde, it was long on [owing to] the fyr-making,
> Som seyde, nay! it was on the blowing;

(Than was I fered, for that was myn office);
'Straw!' quod the thridde, 'ye been lewed and nyce [ignorant and foolish]
It was nat tempred as it oghte be.'
'Nay!' quod the ferthe, 'stint [stop], and herkne me;
By-cause our fyr ne was nat maad of beech,
That is the cause, and other noon no other , so theech!'

Gases and vapors were called "spirits," and the four elemental spirits were mercury, arsenic trisulfide, ammonium chloride and sulfur:

The firste spirit quik-silver called is,
The second orpiment, the thridde, y-wis,
Sal armoniak, and the ferthe brimstoon.

There must have been some complicated series of relationships among these elements: sulfur is referred to as mercury's brother.

In addition to these four elemental spirits, there were seven elemental "bodies," each connected with a planet, or the sun or moon:

Sol gold is, and Luna silver we threpe [assert],
Mars yren, Mercurie quik-silver we clepe [call],
Saturnus leed, and Jupiter is tin,
And Venus coper, by my fader kin!

It must have been easier to learn chemistry then than now; instead of nearly ninety elements there were only eleven, and one of these, mercury, counted twice. Absorption was called "enbibing," and solution seems to have been meant by "encorporing," or incorporation. Hardening was "induration," and washing, "ablution." When one submitted something to chemical change, one "mortified" it. And when success was about to be reached in the search for the philosophor's stone, the ingredients used were supposed to turn a citron color--- a process called "citrinacioun."

These alchemists used such processes as sublimation, calcination, fermentation and cementing. They knew how to amalgamate mercury. There were also processes known as "watres rubifying" and "watres albification," or the reddening and whitening of water.

Among the equipment of the alchemists were "...urinales and... descensories, violes, croslets, and sublymatiories, cucurbites, and alembykes..." These vessels were all made of earthenware or glass. The philosophers also used a bag, apparently made of some cloth, sealed with wax.

Only eigth items of organic nature are mentioned by Chaucer in his lists of materials used. (Included among these are what he calls "dong" and "pisse.") Against this figure there are twenty-seven items of inorganic nature. Among them are sal tartre (potassium carbonate), resalgar (arsenic disulfide), vitriol (sulfuric acid), corosive waters (perhaps hydrochloric acid) and "bodies of mollification" (whatever they were).

Two medieval authorities are quoted, both at some length, so it may be assumed that Chaucer knew quite a lot about this medieval "science." The books are Rosarium Philosophorum, by Arnoldus de Villa Nova, and Theatrum Chemicum (also called Senioris Zadith Tabula Chemica), by a man named Zetzner, who claimed to be a disciple of Plato. Both of these treatises were in Latin, a language with which Chaucer was wholly familiar.

The bitterness with which the story was written, together with the poet's obvious knowledge of and interest in alchemy, has led some modern scholars to feel that Chaucer was swindled in much the same way he describes here.

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# THE LOGIC OF THE KELLER CYCLE

by
Alex Osheroff

It is not unseemly that the inner circle we term fandom, running the gamut from one literary cycle to another within its own close confines, should choose to clasp to its collective bosom yet another idol. Nor, moreover, is it departing from the norm when, with an eye to maturity and an understandable longing for outside acceptance, fandom finally produces a token of an era, the limited edition science-fiction and fantasy volumes.

That the publishers of these volumes must consider sales potential before printing goes without saying; but that they possess altruism coupled with the true spirit of the amateur is also a fact---albeit one sometimes taken for granted. The latter is borne out by the early memorial volumes Dawn of Flame and The Outsider, as well as the more recent Life Everlasting. These books saw the light of day because of amatours' love for the authors and their works and the hope (still small hope at that) that the financial losses of production would not be overly great. Too, it is often shown by the many frills and "extras" with which publishers embellish their books in the interest of turning out something a little better than just another commercial product.

That these publishers, as opposed to their ultimate judges, the purchasers, sometimes follow individual literary dictates and judgements blindly cannot be gainsaid, considering the fact that two or three of them are financially unstable at this writing. Nevertheless, the majority are diligent in searching out and publishing what their readers want. Such efforts are productive of desirable individual works, some of them loosely termed "classic", though most need no excuse of "historical value" to withstand inspection. They are also productive of series or "runs" of volumes by the same author---as Weinbaum, van Vogt and E. E. Smith.

When several volumes by one author are supplemented by a mass of associational material---myriad reviews of the books in fan and professional press, a large amount of critical commentary on the author and his writings, dedicated issues of fan publications, and sometimes raging, heated controversy on the merits of the issues at hand---then we are certainly wont to believe that a cycle has arisen. Equally certainly we cannot mention these distinguishing characteristics without thinking of David H. Keller, M.D.; nor can we look around us today without realizing that another cycle has arisen, or rather rearisen: and that is the Keller cycle.

In regards to precedent, it is interesting to compare the Keller cycle with the Lovecraft cycle. Limited edition books did not establish interest in Howard P. Lovecraft, for Weird Tales readers, early fan journals and Lovecraft's own correspondence circle did that; The Outsider and Beyond the Wall of Sleep served rather as an accelerating impulse, a literary shot in the arm. Even now, interest in this author, only just beginning to wane, is kept from falling rapidly by occasional articles in fan magazines, by the Lovecraftean-slanted Arkham Sampler and The Lovecraft Collector of August Derleth and Ray H. Zorn, and by the imminent appearance of Something About Cats and Selected Letters. Indeed, these two titles may even cause a resurgence in attention.

The general similarity with the case of Dr. Keller is meaningful. From the high acclaim greeting his first contributions to fantasy fiction in 1928-29, David H. Keller rose in five years to the position of "top" author in the field, even beating A. Merritt and equally famous names, and moreover holding his position in readers' polls for two consecutive years.

An easing off period commenced in 1935, and a year later Dr. Keller's first fantasy book appeared, followed closely by three more. This quartet has already been elaborated upon elsewhere, so for our present purposes a short commentary will suffice. La Guerre du Lierre was printed in France during 1936 and comprises three longish short stories: "The Ivy War," "The Stenographer's Hands" and "The Psychophonic Nurse"; it is considered a valuable collector's item in the field because of its historical and literary value as well as its intrinsic rarity. Unlike this is The Waters of Lethe (1937), which, though entertaining, does not rise to the author's usual heights; in the true sense of the word it is less a book than a rather thick pamphlet. It is in The Sign of the Burning Hart and The Devil and the Doctor (1938 and 1940), however, that Dr. Keller's prose does soar to its heights. These two works definitely span the wide literary gap that all too often lies between fans' usual reading fare and the literary world without. Both may be read many times for the sheer beauty that has been captured and held on the printed page. While The Sign of the Burning Hart is still a rarity (both French and American editions total only 350 copies), The Devil and the Doctor is much more readily obtainable. Both lend themselves perfectly to fan missionaries bent on introducing families and friends to the pleasures of fantasy.

This, then, is the logic of precedence. We see not a new cycle, but a renaissance, a rebirth. And the appearance of Life Everlasting, The Homunculus and The Solitary Hunters and The Abyss augurs well for vigorous survival.

It is possible to write about Dr. Keller's literary output. It is also possible to discuss Keller the man apart from his writings. Actually, even an attempt at a comprehensive article cannot be undertaken unless the parts are assembled into a whole and stated as a sort of equation: the man, his works and the combined effects of the two on the often not-too-detached observer.

One must first realize that the man and his writings are virtually the same---and that is a statement to be taken literally. It is readily observable to even the most casually informed reader that in The Devil and the Doctor, for example, Keller has talked about himself, his loved ones and his friends throughout. And the more personal contact one has with Dr. Keller and his countryside surroundings at Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, the more one realizes the surprising extent to which identifications can be carried. However, The Devil and the Doctor is no mere catalog of fictional marionettes of self, relatives, friends, cold impersonal property that is bought and sold for cash and land that is only that, but is the story of actual people imbued with lifelike reality, with warmly acceptable ambitions and emotions, of houses that are homes, and of land that is the good earth. The leading character, Dr. Jacob Hubler, is a human being with both faults and good points, the focal point of successes and defeats alike; he is an honest-to-goodness human being. And---basically and intrinsically, Hubler and Keller are the same. Readers of the more recent Homunculus will find an even more obvious picture of its author in Col. Horatio Bumble; in fact, some critics may well consider the parallel almost too close.

Dr. Keller has truly taken to heart the oft-heard advice "Write about what you know!" His tales mirror self, ancestry (he is the family historian), his friends and patients, and the human and humane values he cherishes. His stories taken as a whole may be read for pure enjoyment, for their innate philosophy, for their picture of humanity. One does not need to know the man to enjoy them. Yet to this writer that extra tang, that certain fillip are missing when one does not.

Keller is a being of many facets, his myriad tales examples of those facets as well as of great versatility. His philosophy has been forged in the battle of life from which he has emerged at times both victor and vanquished, recipient of both success and failure. Because he has set a high goal for himself

the fruits of accomplishment and success seem sweeter, the failures more dejecting, the thoughts of the might-have-been more poignant and wistful.

His philosophy is dual-edged, non-Aristotelian. It is one of love and understanding for a clambering humanity at once encumbered and aided by its manifold complexity of emotions. Yet withal it is cognizant of the basic terror lurking just below life's surface. Dr. Keller's stories show that duality of philosophy; they veer from beauty to horror, and sometimes even show both qualities, each enhancing the other's accent.

As might be expected, such duality exists in Keller the man. Consider an individual who is loving and courteous to his wife, kind to animals, who loves babies, and above all who can express in warm prose a love of beauty. Yet the same man can drench his prose in the most savage sadism! Consider the horrible mass doom of the mobilists in "The Revolt of the Pedestrians" and the dwellers of Atlantis in "The Boneless Horror"; the cruel fates of the protagonists of "Tiger Cat," "Heredity" and "The Thing in the Cellar"; the fiendish torture devices in "The Doorbell"; and the reflection of lifelong mental anguish that is "A Piece of Linoleum."

Another interesting facet of Dr. Keller's fiction is its frequent preoccupation with the ever-present friction existing between male and female. This is most noticeable in his (as yet) unpublished novels The Fighting Woman and The Eternal Conflict. The existence of this motif once led a fan to inquire whether it did not stem from the good doctor's being a mite henpecked. Said Keller himself, half seriously: "Considering the fact that my mother was a woman, my wife is a woman, my three daughters are women, and my Pekinese dog is a bitch, what else could I be?"

On another occasion he had this to say about the sex: "I find women divided into four classes: ladies, women, females and damned females. ... I like them all, have loved a few; I would not say that I am afraid of them, but I have suffered enough at their hands to keep my fingers crossed."

The reactions of the observers to the rebirth of the Keller cycle is interesting in the extreme. As Keller himself has remarked, they fall almost exclusively into two divisions: those who like his work intensely, and those disliking it equally intensely---there are very few who can be indifferent. And as Keller's work crowds more and more into the limelight, the controversy between these two factions waxes ever warmer.

It is difficult to explain the reasons behind this situation to everybody's complete satisfaction. We may postulate, perhaps, that if the author's philosophy of life aligns favorably with that of the individual reader, then he will be partial to Kelleryarns, and that if the two philosophies are sufficiently dissimilar, then the reverse will result. But this does not tell the whole story. And speaking for himself at least, this writer feels that there is something deeper in Dr. Keller's prose, a sort of literary catalyst that works often near-magical effect.

Be the fervid controversy and attempted explanations what they may, no one can deny the great potentialities existing in the fiction of David H. Keller; and those who have always loved his work will tell you these potentialities will not only keep the Keller cycle permanently alive, but will in time bring about its widespread literary acceptance outside of fandom's limited confines.

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This-'n'-That---continued from page 64

Keller, David H.: The Sign of the Burning Hart (NFFF, $1\frac{1}{2}$). A reprint.

Kerby, S.A.: Mr. Kronion (Laurie, 8/6). Zeus in modern dress appears.

(concluded on page 87)

Brodie-Innes, J. W.

The Devil's Mistress

London: William Rider & Son, Ltd., no date (1915). 357pp. 18.5 cm.

Review: Isabel Goudie, forced to marry a dull-witted and not overly clean farmer in order to pay her lawyer-father's debts, soon wearies of his companionship and yearns for something to alleviate the tedious routine of her days. Originally baptized a Catholic, she has also accepted baptism in her husband's church, the Scottish kirk, in which he is an elder. (The time of the novel is Cromwellian England, when religion was a sternly considered matter.) Isabel's dreams are many, and when one day she meets a handsome, suave stranger on a woodland road she immediately falls in love with him. The stranger persuades her to visit a mysterious midnight meeting in the local kirk; and at this meeting, before a congregation of other misled souls, she renounces her second baptism (though not her Catholic first one) and by being pricked on the shoulder is inducted into the devil's coven. The man whom she met and fell in love with is called by some the devil, and by others "the Dark Master." He proceeds immediately to teach her the many secrets which membership in the coven entitle her to know, and is so enamoured of her great beauty that he chooses her to be queen of the coven. He also promises her revenge upon an uncouth neighboring laird whose repeated advances had earned her rebuffs and dislike.

During ensuing chapters nearly every phase of witchcraft and demoniac practice is brought into the story. Isabel learns how to cause a windlestraw to turn into a black charger which will bear her wherever she wills at lightning speed. She learns how to weave a spell over a besom left in bed with her clod-like husband, who thus believes that she has never left his side. She prepares the moon-paste, giving her tremendous powers, and a spirit from Hell is assigned her as a servant. She gains healing powers and damning powers. She meets Robert Gordon, whom popular rumor credits with being a magician who has no shadow, and who possesses a fire elemental that will do his bidding. In every way she becomes a sorceress, and her life is a revelry of wild and exciting adventures.

The ending of the tale is of course somewhat obvious. Isabel nearly always wears a tiny golden crucifix sewn beneath her dress, and by token of this and her Catholic baptism she can alter the otherwise immutable decrees of the Lords of Fate. Yet only once may she so do---and she fears that by such an action her powers of evil and her demon lover will be lost to her forever. Then, in a sudden crisis, she is forced to resort to this power.

The concluding chapters show her seeking absolution for her witchcraft and diabolism from a Catholic priest. He causes the Dark Master to appear before her, not as the man she has loved, but as he really is. And what he is she alone is able to see---for the author cleverly confines himself to hints, thus endowing the scene with tremendous effect. After gaining absolution Isabel is seized by the kirk, accused of renouncing its baptism as well as practicing evil magic. The charges are proved, and she is strangled and her body reduced to ashes.

The Devil's Mistress is in many ways one of the most unusual and interesting novels of black magic and witchcraft that this reviewer has ever read. It is well written throughout and the suspense is handled with especial deftness. In a preface to the book Brodie-Innes claims the tale is a true one; he cites sources of data, mentions supporting documents, and names the location of supposedly clinching proofs. Whatever the reader may choose to believe, he must nevertheless admit that the devices and situations used have an unusually authentic ring. The novel is dedicated to Bram Stoker, for whose help and encouragement Brodie-Innes declares himself much indebted. ---Thyril L. Ladd.

# THE MAN WHO CAME AT MIDNIGHT

by

Ruth M. Eddy

Gaslight flickered eerily through the crack in my bedroom door. It was Hallowe'en, night of the supernatural, and long past midnight. I had drifted off to sleep with visions of hobgoblins and Jack-o'-lanterns drifting through my childish mind. Suddenly, as in a dream, I heard a sepulchral voice saying, "Slithering...sliding...squealing...the rats in the walls!"

Half-asleep, half-awake, I lay in the darkness for a moment, and then shouted for my mother as loudly as I could. She came into my room and spoke softly, "Everything's all right, dear. It's just Mr. Lovecraft telling us about the new story he's writing. Don't be afraid. Go back to sleep." Her warm tones were reassuring, and I was comforted as she leaned down to kiss me.

But sleep was impossible, for little as I was then, I lay listening to the strange-sounding story our nocturnal visitor was reading. As I was to find out years later, not only was Howard Phillips Lovecraft an expert writer of weird, spooky and uncanny tales, but he was also something of an actor. He made his fictional characters come truly alive through reciting his manuscripts aloud. And this he did in the wee sma' hours of the morning as my parents listened attentively.

Lovecraft did not like daylight. He preferred darkness, always. Even when doing creative writing at home, if it was daytime he would draw the heavy curtains and write by artificial light. He did not like to leave his house during the day, but he and my father would often explore dark, unlighted alleys after midnight, walking along wharves and dimly-silhoutted bridges on the edge of the swamplands. It is not hard to imagine H.P.L. postulating unknown entities in these dark places, and from such nocturnal jaunts would often come ideas for his future stories.

In case I could stay awake long enough, I would sometimes listen to these tales, drifting off to sleep however before the story had ended. I grew accustomed to his voice, though I never quite got up enough courage to peek past the bedroom door at the reader himself. Yet in later years, as my father and mother discussed this friend of theirs, I could not help feeling that I had really known him, too.

How Lovecraft loved coal-black cats! He always had one near him. Cats sat in his lap while he wrote and they followed him out on his lone midnight explorings. His beloved black cat played a prominent part in "The Rats in the Walls," and when one day this cat disappeared he became heartsick.

I feel H.P.L. would have been astounded, indeed, had he heard his "Dunwich Horror" broadcast two years ago on Hallowe'en. Never a lover of modern days and ways, using even such a common device as a telephone annoyed this gentleman and scholar of a different world! He preferred writing by hand to typing, and my parents often typed his manuscripts to relieve him of a hated task.

The shy and reticent Howard Lovecraft gained encouragement from my father and mother because of their interest and enthusiasm in his work, and soon after that Hallowe'en night he sold his macabre "Rats in the Walls" to a well-known magazine. Not a Hallowe'en has passed since Lovecraft's death in 1937 without my family gathering for the reading aloud of a weird story by our favorite author---now internationally famous as a writer in the genre---although our eloquence cannot compare with his masterful interpretations.

And even though I never saw Howard Phillips Lovecraft, I shall always remember him as the man who came at midnight!

# THE IMMORTAL STORM

## A HISTORY OF SCIENCE-FICTION FANDOM

by
Sam Moskowitz

(part 16)

### XXXIX
### The Great Drive Toward the Convention

The end of 1938 found the New Fandom faction, headed by Taurasi, Sykora and Moskowitz, approaching their objectives more rapidly than in their most optimistic hopes. Older organizations and publications had been successfully amalgamated into this new one, which was receiving prompt support. Its official organ, New Fandom, had won the admiration of John W. Campbell, Jr., who pledged to the convention the backing of Astounding Science-Fiction. Thrilling Wonder had just climbed on the band wagon. And of course fandom itself had endorsed convention plans by a majority vote at the Philadelphia Conference the previous autumn, an act that automatically rejected the bid by the Futurian group. The reorganized Queens SFL chapter was now one of the largest and most active fan clubs in the country, and as we have seen was serving as a base of operations for New Fandom's convention aspirations. Fantasy News had no near competitors, and fan periodicals generally were swinging into line behind it, the Cosmic Publications group and the manuscript bureau. Obviously, then, the machinery for a successful convention now existed. It was only up to the operators to use it properly.

It should be emphasized that although a convention on a smaller scale held in Newark the previous year had drawn over a hundred attendees, there was otherwise no precedent for what was now being attempted. Facts which everybody today accepts without question could not be taken for granted in 1939. Even the most minor aspects of the affair presented problems for debate and discussion at that time. The thought that such conventions would become annual events was given no thought whatsoever by the sponsors; this one was planned as a "one-shot," and the very year had been chosen because it coincided with that of the World's Fair, and it was hoped that out-of-town fans might be more likely to attend with such a double prospect in view. It is interesting to conjecture on how long it would have taken for a second convention to come about had the first one failed.

One can see that this initial world convention required far greater effort than did its successors, which by and large used the original pattern with comparatively few major modifications. Nothing was mere routine in 1939!

To give fandom at large a sense of solidarity and to give the event a truly national flavor, New Fandom from the outset appointed regional representatives throughout the country to solicit aid and handle convention work in their areas. Soon a cross-section of the most influential names of the day formed a network that resulted in large regional delegations at the affair.

Next, the dates set were the second, third and fourth of July, the hope being that the holiday weekend would bring in more outsiders than it would lose New Yorkers. Events justified this hope.

The problem of deciding upon a convention chairman was discussed. The idea of allowing an important personage to act as master of ceremonies for purposes of prestige was broached and discarded; preference to any one magazine editor, for example, might discourage coöperation from the others and give a general air of partiality. Only a fan could be truly neutral. Ultimately Sam Moskowitz was decided upon as chairman, partly because he was already chairman of the

sponsoring group and partly because the potential volume of his voice made microphone failures no problem.

Another question to be resolved was the locale of the affair. If held on the grounds of the World's Fair itself, officials offered a free hall, a discount of 20-30% on admission tickets if purchased in blocs of five hundred or more, and a day to be called jointly the Science Fiction and Boy Scouts of America Day. This plan was finally discarded because of the necessary daily admission charge and the fact that too many distractions would be harmful. Instead, the sponsors arranged to rent Caravan Hall, whose mid-Manhattan location (110 E. 59th St.) and low cost made it ideal.

Remembering one reason for the success of the Newark convention, Moskowitz decided to institute here, also, the plan of having fan publishers prepare special editions of their journals for contribution to and sale at Caravan Hall. Dozens of titles were announced in short order. A drive for contributions to an auction was begun, and items soon began to pour in from fans and professionals alike. An additional burst of enthusiasm greeted the news that a copy of the famous fantasy film "Metropolis" had been obtained for showing. Arrangements were begun to make a printed souvenir program booklet available for the convention---the first time this had been attempted. This proved very important, especially since advertisements solicited for it provided a new medium of revenue. To add an element of fun to the affair, the Queens SFL organized a softball team and challenged the Philadelphia Science-Fiction Society to a game for fan supremacy on the last day of the convention. Finally, Frank. R. Paul, the famous fantasy artist, was chosen to be guest of honor at the convention banquet.

As these developments transpired they were individually subjected to the most intensive press-agentry possible. Routine-seeming events today, fans a decade ago eagerly scanned the black headlines with which Fantasy News adorned descriptions of these preparations. Right up to convention time, too, New Fandom featured colored, silk-screened covers that were little more than posters advertising the event, and carried behind them extensive and rabid publicity composed by Sam Moskowitz. Large announcements were printed and posted in local libraries and museums, and two sets of circulars giving all information and full travelling instructions were mailed to fans everywhere.

As promised, professional publicity was also forthcoming. Amazing Stories, Astounding Science-Fiction, Thrilling Wonder Stories and Science Fiction all published announcements of varying lengths with full details. In some cases these were beautifully timed to appear just near enough to the affair to boost potential attendance.

Behind-the-scenes activity reached new peaks as the great day grew near. Meetings of the convention committee were held weekly. At every gathering of the Queens SFL chapter, without exception, vigorous and minutely detailed reports were presented. Fan typewriters clattered and pens scratched out personal letters to acquaintances and celebrities, begging them to attend. Rarely had so many worked so selflessly on any fan event.

## XL
## The Character of the Opposition

In order that we may comprehend fully and accurately the fateful events which transpired on the first day of the first world science-fiction convention, as well as the motives inspiring them, we must outline the opposition encountered by the New Fandom convention committee.

Later national gatherings found little but good will and helping hands attending their efforts, but from the beginning those of New Fandom were marked

by strife and desperate measures. The organization's struggle for recognition had aroused such widespread opinion against fan feuding that by adopting this as a plank in its platform New Fandom virtually lifted itself quite a height by its own bootstraps. So successful was the campaign urging editors to bar such fights from fan magazine pages that by the end of 1938 only the Futurian-controlled Sci-Fiction Fan and Science Fiction News Letter continued to print columns of vituperation, most of which was aimed at New Fandom. For a short while it was hoped that when Wollheim sounded his famous "Retreat" (see chapter XXXIV) the Fan would discontinue these efforts---but this was not to be.

Olon F. Wiggins, editor of the Fan and by devious politics president of the FAPA, suddenly launched an anti-convention campaign that for vicious unreasonableness had no parallel before nor any since. Its opening gun was "What's New about New Fandom?," published in the the February, 1939 Science Fiction Fan. In this article he denied that there was anything novel about New Fandom, insisting the latter was not essential to the success of the convention.

> The real purposes of the affair have been overlooked by a majority of fans, very few there are who have fathomed the real truth of the matter. Not through ignorance, perhaps, but rather through their eagerness.... I will not go into the truth of this as I don't wish to disillusion those who haven't woke up as to what is going on. Rather shall I sit back and watch the culmination of this farce.

Wiggins doubted that New Fandom had formed a new base for fan activity, and he refused it any credit for the influx of fans into the field that had been brought about since its inception. New Fandom, he reiterated, had "failed the fans miserably."

> Are its leaders incapable of handling the affair now that they have started it? Present indications point in that direction. The New Fandom group are not the logical sponsors of the convention anyhow. The only logical committee to handle the convention is the one headed by Donald A. Wollheim. ... Before it has gone too far why not put the convention back into the hands of its logical sponsors. The Wollheim-headed group. For a true stf. convention for the real fans and a return to normal.

Whatever Wiggins lost in being cryptic and ungrammatical, he gained in forcefulness: there was no doubt where his sympathies lay!

And this article was but the beginning. He also wrote letters to every important fantasy magazine editor urging that support be withdrawn from New Fandom. One was even published in Amazing Stories' letter column early in 1939. Another was brought by John Campbell to the March 5, 1939 meeting of the Queens SFL. In it Wiggins disparaged the attempt of appealing to a mass audience, saying he doubted if there were more than fifty true fans in existence, and stating that authors, editors and artists of fantasy had no place in such an audience. A rebuttal of these remarks (together with the text of the letter itself) appeared in the March 12, 1939 issue of Fantasy News. Wiggins replied to the rebuttal in April, 1939 Technocrat (which was distributed with his Fan). This reply was more an outburst of temper than a logical answer. Moskowitz and Taurasi were accused of lacking "the necessary intelligence" to write such a rebuttal. Campbell (who refused to withdraw his allegiance to New Fandom) was labelled "either ignorant or not aware of the full facts of the case." Wiggins doubted that the professionals would contribute much of anything to the convention, and then insisted that they were backing it, but because of selfish motives. New Fandom, he in-

timated, had "sold out" to the pros. Fans would rue the day they ever supported such an affair.

At this point Wiggins appeared ready to drop the debate. But the Futurians were not. The March, 1939 Science Fiction Fan found R. W. Lowndes pitching the same brand of ball in an article that bore the same title as Wiggins' original one. He opened with a broadside against Leo Margolies and Standard Magazines, maintaining that Margolies had promised the Michelists that they would receive representation on the convention committee; New Fandom having not given them notice, he accused Campbell, Margolies and Weisinger of having made "no effort to follow their pledges. In the face of double-crossing by Sykora they have remained silent and continue to support one they know to be dishonest." The convention was in incompetent hands, he maintained, but the weight of numbers probably would make it a success. Indeed, he hoped it would not fail, for if it did New Fandom would certainly attribute such an outcome to the "terrible machinations of the Michelists, the reds, the stooges from Moscow who disrupted the proceedings because they could not run them themselves." Lowndes concluded by accusing the editors of "welching," and describing New Fandom as "crooked."

Early in December, 1938 Lowndes had begun issuing from Springdale, Conn. a weekly sheet entitled Le Vombiteur. This hektographed publication ran to two to four pages; its contents made no attempt at being topical, but were rather devoted to whatever struck the writer's fancy. There were exchanges with August Derleth and Jack Speer on fan matters and politics, and a poll of fans' favorite stories. Le Vombiteur was not outstanding and had but small influence upon important fan events of the day, but it did serve the function of directing anti-New Fandom propaganda to whatever readers came its way. More important, it showed that the apparent resignation of the Futurians from activity was nothing more than the veriest camouflage.

As far back as September, 1938 regular meetings of the Futurian Society were being held at the homes of its members. Though small, the society by 1939 was a loyal, well-knit group including Donald Wollheim, Frederick Pohl, Robert W. Lowndes, Cyril Kornbluth, Richard Wilson and the up-and-coming author Isaac Asimov, who served as secretary. The Futurians were the active core of opposition to New Fandom and the allied Fantasy News and Queens SFL. This opposition appeared unified and well-planned. In addition to material in Le Vombiteur, it manifested itself in other ways.

Early in April, 1939 Frederick Pohl announced the formation of the Futurian Federation of the World. This organization, sponsored by the New York Futurians, announced it would publish regularly The Futurian Review and devote itself to correcting past 'mistakes' of such groups as the ISA and New Fandom. Advertising for recruits began, and attempts were made to siphon prospective members from the ranks of New Fandom. This "world" federation received luke-warm support from some young fans (such as James S. Avery and Harry Warner, Jr.), but managed to publish only one issue of their Review before convention time, thereafter completely dropping from sight. These facts lend the distinct impression that the organization was merely one more device trying to reduce the effectiveness of New Fandom and the convention.

When New Fandom announced acquisition of a print of "Metropolis," the Futurian Society immediately circulated an open letter demanding to know if money for the film had been sent to Nazi Germany. They based their demand on a statement in the May, 1938 issue of Sykora's Scientifilmaker which said that he (Sykora) was "carrying on negotiations for the rental of this film from the original makers." As it had been originally made by UFA in 1926, he was of course implying dealings with a German firm. But the nature and wide distribution of this open letter branded it an obvious device to lower the prestige of the convention committee. Actually "Metropolis" had been obtained on loan from the files of the

New York Museum of Modern Art, which owned the print outright.

At the April 2, 1939 meeting of the Queens SFL two Futurians, Richard Wilson and Cyril Kornbluth, were present, and tendered an official offer from the Futurian Society that the two organizations hold a joint meeting for the purpose of promoting harmony. Because of the long-standing differences between the two groups, Queens director Taurasi viewed this attempt at conciliation with suspicion, particularly in the light of the "Metropolis" episode, then but a few weeks old. He feared it might be a trick of the Futurians to infiltrate and disrupt the Queens SFL, having good reason to remember the former's abilities along such lines when he recalled how they engineered his own impeachment back in the days of the Greater New York SFL chapter. Further, since many Futurians were admitted communists and communist-sympathizers, he felt that association with them would be detrimental to his club. He therefore fell back on the Margolies stipulation that Wollheim and Sykora and their followers could not be active in the same SFL chapter, and on this basis requested Kornbluth and Wilson to leave the hall. But the latter two requested the decision on the question to be put to the membership present. Taurasi then ruled that to decide otherwise than he had would involve changing the chapter charter in the light of Margolies' stipulation in granting it; and that initiating such a change would be possible (if at all) only through request of a member present. And neither Kornbluth nor Wilson, of course, were Queens SFL members. No member spoke; everyone was willing to let the decision Taurasi had voiced stand.

Sam Moskowitz stopped Wilson before he left and asked him point-blank if he favored New Fandom's sponsorship of the convention. It was an especially pertinent question, since Wilson was at once a New Fandom member and a Futurian. When he replied in the affirmative Moskowitz asked him to print a statement to that effect in his News Letter to clarify his stand to outsiders. As a result the April 8, 1939 Science Fiction News Letter carried the following remarks by Wilson:

> Sam Moskowitz has asked us to state publicly that we favor New Fandom's sponsorship of the World Science Fiction Convention this July, if we so thought, in order, presumably, to banish any doubt in people's minds. Consider it stated.... New Fandom also wishes it known that the film "Metropolis," which will be shown at the affair, was obtained from an American firm...and that not one pfennig will go to der Vaterland for its rental.... The Marxist Manhattanites, incidentally, are sniggering happily to themselves at NF's move in this direction since "Metropolis" was made in Socialist Germany by a bunch of red-hot Communists and fairly oozes propaganda.

This statement proved of great significance, for from its tone and from the editorial "we" casual readers got the impression that Wilson was speaking for the Futurians in general rather than for himself alone. Many therefore felt the two rival groups were working together.

In later years the Futurians claimed that they had gone out of their way to be neutral, had kept their hands off the convention and allowed New Fandom the utmost leeway---and this despite their feeling the group was unqualified to handle the affair and that they themselves were unjustly treated. Existing evidence shows this claim to be utterly false. Wilson's statement did not check the constant barrage of Futurian anti-New Fandom propaganda, which continued unabated up to the very date of the convention.

In the May, 1939 Science Fiction Fan which was distributed two months after the appearance of the above-quoted Wilson statement (ample time for its

withdrawal from publication had the author so desired) Donald Wollheim's column "Fanfarade" launched yet another attack on the convention and its leaders. After plugging the Futurian Federation of the World Wollheim declared the New Fandom meeting was merely an "advertising convention" presented for the benefit of the professionals alone since there would be no formal business and no motions from the floor. The Futurians, he said, would hold a meeting of their own the day after this "privately-owned editors' advertising convention." Completely ignoring the statements clarifying the status of the "Metropolis" film, he rehashed the issue from the standpoint of the Futurian open letter and quoted Sykora's remarks again as proof positive that the film print was being rented from German sources. Then, forgetting that he had just claimed there would be no motions allowed from the floor at the New Fandom convention, Wollheim contradicted himself by predicting that Sykora would railroad through a motion changing the name of New Fandom to the International Scientific Association, the older group of which he had once been president.

Yet throughout all these attacks New Fandom had hewed closely to their no-feud policy, confining themselves merely to formal explanations of the facts behind the "Metropolis" rental and Wiggins' letter to Campbell. However, the continuous barrage was worrying. New Fandom sponsors were, in effect, pioneers. They were tackling what up to then was the biggest fan job ever attempted. They needed every bit of help they could get, and felt it reasonable to suppose that if some, such as the Futurians, were unwilling to help, they at least would not go out of their way to harm the affair. But the facts show clearly that New Fandom was subjected to a most trying ordeal, and that the nature of the opposition was definitely calculated to be damaging. This should be carefully borne in mind when appraising the situation soon to follow.

## XLI
## The First World Science-Fiction Convention

July 2, 1939, first day of the convention, was a fair day with the temperature in the mid-eighties. At 10:00 A.M. the hall, located on the fourth floor of the building, was opened so that the growing groups of fans in the street below might have a comfortable place to congregate and converse before the program got under way. A refreshment stand selling soft drinks and pie at a nickel per portion was also opened.

Among the things first impressing a fan arrival were the striking modernity of the newly decorated hall; the original colored paintings for covers of fantasy magazines, loaned especially for the occasion, and including a colored Paul original never before published; and the official souvenir booklet with its shining gold cover. The latter, it should be noted, had been printed by the old-time fan Conrad Ruppert. It featured original decorations by Frank R. Paul and two pages of photographs of such well known professionals as Stanley G. Weinbaum, Henry Kuttner, David H. Keller, Otis A. Kline and others.

From the earliest hours it could easily be seen that the convention had been successful in bringing distant fans together. There was a California delegation composed of Forrest Ackerman, Morojo and Bradbury. From Texas had come Dale Hart, Julius Rohl, Allen R. Charpentier and Albert S. Johnston. New and old Chicago fans were represented in Erle Korshak, Mark Reinsberg, William Dillenback and Jack Darrow. A photograph of Darrow and Ackerman, most famous of the letter writers to fantasy magazines, was of course taken for posterity. Several Canadian names lent an international flavor to the convention. Others, too, had travelled long distances to attend. There was Jack Williamson from New Mexico; Ross Rocklynne from Cincinnati; Nelson Bond from Virginia. Among other authors in at-

tendance were Harl Vincent, Ray Cummings, Manly Wade Wellman, Edmond Hamilton, L. Sprague de Camp, Isaac Asimov, Norman L. Knight, Eando Binder, John Victor Peterson, Frederick C. Painton and Malcolm Jameson. In addition to Frank R. Paul, artist Charles Schneeman was in attendance, and the professional fantasy magazine editors were represented by Campbell, Margolies, Weisinger, Hornig and Farnsworth Wright of Weird Tales, who unfortunately arrived after the main sessions had been concluded. Many of the authors, editors and artists brought wives and children with them. Present also were such well-known fantasy fans as David V. Reed, L. A. Eshbach, John D. Clark, David C. Cooke, R. D. Swisher, Milton A. Rothman, Oswald Train, Kenneth Sterling, Charles F. Ksanda, Robert A. Young, Scott Feldman, Julius Schwartz, Vida Jameson, John V. Baltadonis, Walter Sullivan, Gertrude and Louis Kuslan, David A. Kyle, Robert A. Madle, John Giunta, Julius Unger, Richard Wilson, Herbert Goudket, Robert G. Thompson, A. Langley Searles, Arthur Widner and Leon Burg.

Fifteen special convention publications had been issued for the occasion. In addition to the program booklet there were Jack Speer's justly famous Up To Now, a 20,000-word account of fan history to date, the first serious attempt along such lines; Louis Kuslan's Cosmic Tales Special; Morojo's Stephen the Stfan, a booklet containing facsimile signatures of famous science-fictionists as well as blank pages for attendees to solicit autographs of others present; Metropolis, contributed by Ackerman; Wilson's Escape; The Fantasy Collector of Farsaci; Mario Racic's Fantasy in Opera; Van Houten Says; Le Zombie, published by Bob Tucker; Sully Roberds' Science Fiction Abbatoir; The Grab Bag by Ted Dikty; Bob Formanek's Fanta-Verse; We Have a Rendezvous, technocratic propaganda issued by Russell J. Hodgkins; and Daniel McPhail's Stf. and Nonesense. The wide variety of publications was ample evidence of the interest fandom took in the proceedings.

Of the three New Fandom leaders only one was present at the hall during the initial morning session. Moskowitz was arranging last-minute details at his Newark home, and Sykora was likewise at home, busily engaged in binding enough copies of the July New Fandom for convention distribution. So it happened that when the main body of the Futurian group---Wollheim, Lowndes, Pohl, Kornbluth and Gillespie---stepped from the elevator and headed toward the hall Taurasi alone was on hand to confront them and question their right to enter in view of their flagrant anti-convention activities.

Now, prior to the convention the New Fandom heads had discussed what course should be taken if a Futurian delegation did put in an appearance. They felt, first of all, that in view of the Futurians' slurs they might not come at all. But if they did, then the triumvirate felt serious consideration should be given to excluding them. Taurasi, Sykora and Moskowitz reached no definite decision, however, other than that the Futurian group was not to enter the hall unless it first satisfied the convention heads as to its good intentions.

So in the absence of any consultant Taurasi felt it would be wisest to refuse entrance to these Futurians until his confreres arrived. And when Moskowitz made his appearance Taurasi was still arguing with the would-be attendees, none of whom had yet gotten more than ten feet from the elevator door. Wollheim promptly appealed to Moskowitz, maintaining that he had not carried out any strong action against the convention (!), that he had come without propaganda of any sort to distribute, and that the intentions of himself and of his group were merely to mingle with others present and have a good time. Moskowitz then decided to permit the quintet to enter, conditional to his first speaking to Sykora as a matter of courtesy.

(At this point it might be asked why the much larger Futurian group did not simply brush past Taurasi and Moskowitz since, as they later stated, they debated the ethical grounds on which they were being kept out. Aside from the wish to enter properly, readers should be reminded that both Taurasi and Moskowitz

weighed close to 200 pounds, and next to science-fiction Moskowitz's greatest enthusiasm was boxing.)

It was at this juncture that fate played its peculiar hand. Sykora, it so happened, was not destined to arrive until considerably later, and in the normal course of events Moskowitz and Taurasi would simply have waited a reasonable time and then permitted the Futurians to enter. But the next group of fans leaving the elevator included Louis Kuslan, the well-known Connecticut fan. He carried in his hand a little yellow pamphlet titled A Warning!. "Look what John Michel gave me downstairs before," he said as he handed the pamphlet to Moskowitz. Michel, who had joined the other Futurians awaiting entry, said nothing.

The pamphlet was dated July 2, 1939, and its cover also bore the heading "IMPORTANT! Read This Immediately!" It contained four pages of text, and when Moskowitz opened it he found himself reading the following:

BEWARE OF THE DICTATORSHIP

YOU, who are reading this pamphlet, have come to attend the World's Science Fiction Convention. You are to be praised for your attendance and complimented on the type of fiction in which you are interested. But, TODAY BE AWARE OF ANY MOVEMENT TO COERCE OR BULLY YOU INTO SUBMISSION! Remember, this is YOUR convention, for YOU! Be on the alert, lest certain well-organized minorities use you to ratify their carefully conceived plans.

WHY THIS WARNING?

This warning is being given to you by a group of sincere science fiction fans. The reasons for this warning are numerous; THEY ARE BASED UPON EVENTS OF THE PAST---particularly events which took place at the Newark Convention of 1937. At that time the gathering of fans and interested readers was pounded into obedience by the controlling clique. The Newark Convention set up dictatorially, the machinery for the convention which you are now attending. THE NEWARK CONVENTION MUST NOT BE PERMITTED TO REPEAT ITSELF! It remains in your power to see that this convention today will be an example of perfect democracy.

STARTLING FACTS

The Queens Science Fiction League was formed by the Newark Clique, after that convention, in order to make the necessary local organization upon which the dictatorial convention committee could base itself. . . . The editors and those dependent on them for a living, the authors, have made it a duty to attend Queens S.F.L. meetings regularly in order to keep it going and to keep the 1939 convention in hand. At the elections held last meeting, held openly so as to detect any possible opposition, the three dictators were re-elected unanimously in perfect un-democratic harmony.

HIGH HANDED TACTICS

At the same time that the Queens S.F.L. was established, a large number of New York City fans formed the Futurian Society of New York. Contrary to much propaganda, the Futurian Society is not confined to communists, michelists, or other radical elements; it is a democratic club, run in a democratic way, and reflecting science fiction fan activity....

## A LOADED WEAPON

> The World's Science Fiction Convention of 1939 in the hands of such heretofore ruthless scoundrels is a loaded weapon in the hands of such men. This weapon can be aimed at their critics or can be used to blast all fandom. But YOU, the readers of this short article, are the ammunition. It is for YOU to decide whether you shall bow before unfair tactics and and endorse the carefully arranged plans of the Convention Committee. Beware of any crafty speeches or sly appeals. BE ON YOUR GUARD!

The booklet ended after a few more paragraphs of a similar nature, and was signed "The Association for Democracy in Science Fiction Fandom."

Actually the pamphlet had been composed and printed by Futurian David Kyle on the presses of his brother's Monticello, N.Y. newspaper. But this, of course, was not known to Moskowitz until considerably later. At the time, the charge that New Fandom was a puppet in the hands of the professionals, the kind words for the Futurian Society, the cry of dictatorship---these appeared but a repetition of the clichés that had been hurled against convention backers for the past year. And it seemed to Moskowitz, as it probably would have to any reasonable man in his place, that the Futurians had come prepared to agitate against and possibly disrupt the proceedings.

Moskowitz turned to Wollheim and said, "I thought you just stated that you would do nothing to hurt the convention." Wollheim shrugged his shoulders and eyed the pamphlet. "I didn't print them." "But his group was passing them out," Louis Kuslan quickly added.

Now thoroughly worried by the turn of events, Moskowitz went downstairs to see if Sykora had arrived as yet. Failing to find him, he returned barely in time to intercept the building attendant, Maurice J. Meisler, who informed him that he was wanted by policemen waiting on the street level. It appeared that Taurasi, before Moskowitz's arrival, had anticipated difficulty in restraining the Futurians and had called upon official assistance. Moskowitz explained the situation to the officers, saying he believed he could handle it, but asking the police to stop back in an hour or so to check, which they agreed to do.

As he concluded this conversation, his eye was caught by bright colors beneath a near-by radiator. Investigation showed that here were cached several hundred copies of booklets printed by the Futurian Society of New York. In the press of circumstances, with no opportunity to read them carefully, Moskowitz assumed from their origin, authorship and surreptitous concealment that they were further anti-convention propaganda.

(Later examination showed the booklets to be recruiting fodder for the cause of Michelism, their common denominator being more pro-Marx than anti-New Fandom. There were five different titles, as follows: An Amazing Story by Robert Lowndes, a bitter, five-paged condemnation of editor Raymond Palmer because he published anti-Russian and anti-communist stories; Dead End 1938, also written by Lowndes, which discussed whether the dreams expressed in fantastic fiction could ever be broken by economic, social or psychological disaster from a Marxist viewpoint; John Michel's Foundation of the CPASF (a reprint from the April, 1938 Science Fiction Advance); a reprint from New Masses of Upton Sinclair's article, Science Fiction Turns to Life, which is a review of two social satires, Show and Side Show by Joshua Rosett and E. C. Large's Sugar in the Air; and The Purpose of Science Fiction, in which British fan Douglas W. F. Mayer expressed the opinion that science-fiction broadened a fan's horizon, and even if it did not lead him to take up a scientific career, if it could but influence him to follow political movements promoting social reform (such as, of course, the Futurians') it

would be accomplishing its purpose.)

It seemed to Moskowitz at this juncture that the Futurians intended to deluge the convention with unfavorable material. At the same time he still hoped, for the sake of harmony, that this difficulty could be resolved smoothly. When he returned upstairs, therefore, he approached Wollheim and asked: "If we let you in will you promise on your word of honor that you will do nothing in any way to disturb the progress of the convention?" "If we do anything to disturb the convention you can kick us out," Wollheim replied. "We don't want to kick you out," said Moskowitz. "We simply want your honored promise not to harm the convention." But this promise Wollheim adamantly refused to give. Later he claimed he could make no such promise because Moskowitz intended it to be binding on his friends as well as himself. This allegation is untrue, for Moskowitz then spoke to each Futurian member, offering to admit any one who would guarantee his own conduct by so promising. On this basis several were admitted, Richard Wilson, Jack Rubinson, Leslie Ferri, Isaac Asimov and David Kyle among them. But the core of the group---Wollheim, Lowndes, Pohl, Kornbluth and Gillespie---chose to remain without. And when Sykora arrived somewhat later he thoroughly concurred with the action that Moskowitz and Taurasi had taken, declaring that it would be the height of folly to admit any fan who would refuse to promise not to cause trouble.

It is possible that the Futurians refused admittance would have behaved in orderly fashion in the hall and, aside from voicing indignation at their reception, would have entered into the spirit of the gathering. It is conceivable also that the refusal of Wollheim and others to promise good behavior can be laid to personal pride. But to New Fandom leaders, in the light of past experiences, refusal to promise not to cause trouble meant one thing: that this was precisely what the Futurians were going to cause. Sykora, Taurasi and Moskowitz remembered the expulsion of Sykora from the Greater New York SFL; the refusal to admit to membership Osheroff and Moskowitz to the same organization; the subterfuge employed in soliciting signatures to a petition of reprimand regarding the operation of the 1938 Newark convention, as well as the Communist propaganda distributed at that convention; the steady bombardment of abuse that preparations for the 1939 gathering had elicited; and they remembered, too, that all these things had been engineered by Futurians or friends of Futurians. At the convention hall they found the Futurians distributing plainly disruptive literature in advance of the meeting, and apparently armed with a reserve stock of similar material. Faced with these facts, and with a group of fans refusing a simple promise not to cause trouble, what conclusion were they to come to?

In retrospect, we can see their dilemma more clearly. Looking at the circumstances in the most pessimistic light, we can see that the Futurians had everything to gain and little to lose. If allowed to enter, they could have disrupted proceedings, and thus proved their prior claim that New Fandom was incompetent to run a successful convention; if not allowed to enter, they could point to another prior claim of New Fandom's being essentially dictatorial as proved. Indeed, Futurian strategy may have been devised with these possibilities foremost in mind. Whether it was or not, Futurians stood to gain public sympathy as a result of the convention if they played their cards properly no matter what stand New Fandom took.

It is of course impossible to say, even now, if New Fandom's decision was the wisest that could be made. It can still be argued pro and con. At least we can see how it came to be made, and should understand that Moskowitz, Taurasi and Sykora felt themselves to be acting for the good of the greatest number present, and therefore to be adopting the morally right course. It was a course that violated the principles of accepted convention harmony inevitably, however, and as we shall later see one which brought both condemnation and personal difficulties to the formulators.

At later times the excluded Futurians made several attempts to enter the hall, usually in pairs, but were stopped by Taurasi or the attendant Meisler, who had orders not to permit them entrance. Inside the hall, meanwhile, Futurians and their friends who had been admitted circulated about and did their best to rally support for those outside. The ladies present, particularly Morojo and Frances Swisher, attempted every method of reason with the triumvirate, though to no effect. Leslie Perri persuaded Jack Williamson to approach Moskowitz on the matter, and others present subjected Taurasi and Sykora to similar pressure. David Kyle passed about the room, distributing circulars announcing that the Futurians would hold a conference of their own the day after the convention. Debate on the action of New Fandom leaders grew in tempo until by two o'clock, when the convention was scheduled to be called to order, the task seemed an impossible one. The entire attendance was milling about and discussion was rife. Would the convention break up before it had even begun?

At this point Maurice Meisler, the attendant, nudged Moskowitz, who had paused irresolute. "Call the convention to order," he said. "They'll have to come to a decision on whether they stay or go. But if you let things go any further as they are you won't have a convention at all." Moskowitz looked dubious. "Go ahead," urged Meisler. "I've seen this sort of thing happen before. Call it to order and your troubles are over."

Moskowitz ascended the platform and walked to the podium. There, disdaining the microphone, he bellowed: "In the name of New Fandom I call this, the first world science-fiction convention, to order!"

(to be continued)

---oOo---

# BEHOLD THY HOST

by
Genevieve K. Stephens

He fell headlong on the lurching steps,
With hungry fingers clawed the door
That swung ajar. "Crawl in, my friend,
And share my poor abode."
Hands pulled him upward. Muttered he,
"Is God's word broken, then?
I am the Wandering Jew,
Who spat upon the Christ."

"Know then, who lifts thee up,
This is Judas' house:
Behold they host!"

# THE MADMAN

by
Thomas H. Carter

See now! There they go
on busy useless missions,
and only I do know
that they are mad. Laughter
strained through tight teeth
is their world, and after
brief youth creeps swift age.
I have my bright and barren room
which pity has brought me;
let them march to ceaseless doom!
I wandered past the tricky edge
of madness, they said. But I see
where they go, and prefer to listen
to mind's brittle voice whispering to me!

---oOo---

APOLOGIES are due subscribers for the lateness of this issue, which has necessitated combining two issues into this single Summer-Fall, 1949 number. Apologies also for the crowding out of the Bleiler Checklist review. This goes in #24.

# SOME RADIO FANTASY

by
James Harmon

When you think of fantasy on the air-waves, you think immediately of "Lights Out." And when you think of "Lights Out," you probably think of the most famous fantasy ever broadcast. It concerned two gentlemen named Well(e)s, and the combination proved more far-reaching than either of them ever suspected. The trouble was, of course, that most listeners to Orson Welles' adaptation of The War of the Worlds thought they were hearing news reports of an actual Martian invasion. When you recall how many people rushed excitedly out into the crisp November night ready to defend their homes against bug-eyed monsters from another planet, it isn't so hard to understand why sharpers are still selling the Brooklyn Bridge, or why the Shaver mystery reached the heights it did.

"Lights Out" has survived several writers. When Orson Welles left it for greener pastures, Arch Oboler took over. After Oboler came Willis Cooper. Of the three, it is my opinion that Oboler was by far the best; Willis Cooper comes second, and I found Welles a poor third. Currently the program is off the air, but it still seems popular enough to be used in sections of the country as a summer replacement, so I doubt if we have heard the last of it.

One of the most popular stories it ran was "The Chicken Heart." (To my first-hand knowledge it has been broadcast three times.) Here a scientist succeeds in keeping a chicken's heart alive in a glass vessel. One day when on exhibit a careless spectator knocks its case on the floor, breaking the vessel and spilling certain chemicals on it. These latter cause the heart to grow at an accelerated rate. The heart fills the room, then the city, and finally (you guessed it!) the world itself. The scientist and a friend escape in an airplane, but eventually fall into the pulsating heart as the plane runs out of gas.

"Lights Out," of course, is only one of many radio programs featuring fantasy. These go back to the late 'twenties, at least, when "Chandu the Magician" and Alonzo Dean Cole's "Witch's Tale" were popular. These were before my time, I hasten to add, so I cannot describe them. Less well known was "Dracula," which ran in the early 'thirties. This was a series of eight programs dramatizing Bram Stoker's famous novel---which, luckily, fell into eight neat instalments very cleanly. The title-role was played by Brett Morrison, who much later played "the Shadow."

"The Shadow" began as a series of weird stories, but eventually degenerated into just another crime show. This also happened to "Inner Sanctum," by the way. One supposes there was good reason for the change, but on the former program at least the occasional fantasies produced seemed to be more popular.

There are several transcribed programs which are broadcast on different schedules in different sections of the country that are fantasy, too. One, almost a direct copy of "The Shadow," is called "The Destroyer." The Destroyer's means of attaining invisibilty is a tube of special gas he carries (the Shadow, it will be remembered, used hypnotism). "The Haunting Hour," "The Witching Hour" and "Murder at Midnight" (original titles, eh?) are poor mysteries half the time and poorer fantasies the other half. One of the better transcribed shows, to my mind, is "The Hermit of Murmer's Cave"; it has presented some very fine stories, and if the Hermit's hounds can be heard baying in your locality by all means tune in occasionally.

Of the semi-fantasy shows (usually alternating between fantasy and crime stories) are "The Mysterious Traveller" and "Suspense," which may be heard "live" over two different nationwide networks. By stretching definitions a bit

such programs as the Lux and Ford radio theaters, "Screen Guild Players," "Hallmark Playhouse" and the like, all of which broadcast occasional adaptations of fantasy movies, plays and books might even be included in this class.

One of the most entertaining of these semi-fantasy shows is "I Love a Mystery." Originally it was cast as a five-a-week continued serial, then changed to a weekly program, and finally restored to the original formula. Not only were weird mysteries presented regularly, but also such really fine fantasies as "The Decapitation of Jefferson Monk" (later made into a movie under another title), "My Beloved is a Werewolf," "Temple of the Vampires," and so on. This same program was once used as a summer replacement under the title "I Love an Adventure."

Another long-standing program of interest is "Escape," which is still running on CBS. This is always loaded with fantasy; indeed, I remember one season whose last three months were given over entirely to science-fiction. Two-thirds of these shows (by actual count) were based on stories by H.G.Wells, with Rider Haggard and other well-known authors represented as well. I remember two of them in particular. One was based on F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Diamond as Big as the Ritz." It concerned a hyper-rich family that lived on a hidden mountain which was really one huge diamond. The family had made billions for generations merely by chipping off pieces of the diamond and selling them. The estate had been gradually built into a veritable paradise, all carefully hidden and guarded. But when a young man who has been kidnapped to entertain a young lady there falls in love with her, and the two escape, all is discovered. Seeing all is lost when Army bombers appear on the horizon, the family blows the mountain off the face of the earth with an atomic bomb. The other story told of a young poet who got the bright idea of living in a department store. He would simply hide by day and get everything he needed at night. But he found that the store had a colony of people living there secretly, and they of course would not let him escape to tell others of their existence. He fell in love with one of the girls there (who in turn was in love with a night-watchman), and the three plot escape. They are discovered by the colony and turned over to the Dark Ones---people who live at night in funeral homes---who turn the trio into store-window dummies. Quite a fantastic story, well presented.

Weird Tales once godfathered Robert Bloch's "Stay Tuned for Terror," a program now defunct. Apparently the show wasn't particularly successful, for no other professional fantasy magazine ever followed this lead. At this point I might also mention Nelson Omstead's dramatic readings; these are quite good, and feature occasional fantasy.

There has always been much fantasy in children's programs, some of it quite good, some equally bad. The most popular science-fiction theme is that of Superman, who is a sort of fairy-tale Buck Rogers. Buck Rogers, of course, was one of the earliest of these programs, though now off the air. There is also "Mandrake the Magician," who creates illusions by hypnotism. Even the Tom Mix show delves into occasional fantasy, usually in the form of weird mysteries that do not always have mundane explanations. There are other occasional fly-by-night affairs, too, that never last very long or attract much interest.

There is one juvenile program that I think deserves particular praise. It is "Adventure Parade," a five-a-week serial that dramatizes famous classics in five installments. All kinds of classics are presented, of course, but every month or so a science-fiction tale by Wells, Verne or Haggard is given.

At present only ABC's "Quiet Please" is devoted exclusively to fantasy. Many of its stories are written by Willis Cooper, whom I have already mentioned. "Quiet Please," I think, is somewhat better than "Lights Out," chiefly because it on occasion utilizes fantasy humor successfully.

Only one all-fantasy show isn't much---but let's be glad we have it and hope for a better radio future!

# TIPS ON TALES

by

Charles Peter Brady

Richard Marsh's Seen and the Unseen (1900): Today one's reading choice in fantasy seems to be between bad ideas well written and good ideas badly written. Avid propaganda from a dozen or so small publishing houses has swung fan favor toward the latter; so just for variety's sake, let's look at a representative of the former. The Seen and the Unseen is a collection of an even dozen short stories, about half of which can claim connection with the supernatural. One would be tempted to label this the "unseen" half of the book if the ghosts weren't very much in evidence indeed. They openly saw away on fiddles ("The Violin"), commit murder ("The Houseboat"), and are even solid enough to topple healthy football players by blocking and tackling ("The Fifteenth Man"). In fact, that's just the trouble with most of Mr. Marsh's spooks---they're too darned solid. When one modern ghost story writer said that the most effective spectres were those which did not contradict nature but rather joined hands with it, I doubt if he visualized this type, which likes to knock people face down into muddy gutters. After reading about them you uneasily wish they'd content themselves with effetely clanking their chains instead of being so rowdy. In all justice, however, I must admit there is one coy ghost in the book ("The Photographs")----it takes a camera to catch her. But she makes up for lack of action by extremely voluble talking---which may or may not prove that even in the Great Beyond women always get in the last word. One story, "A Pack of Cards," starts out in the supernatural vein, but fritters out as an elaborate hoax in the end. Quite unconvincing. The best item in the collection, "The Tipster," isn't a ghost story at all, by the way, but rather a nice bit of pure fantasy about a chap who could see into the future.... All the prose in The Seen and the Unseen is well constructed, as would be expected by readers of The Beetle, Marsh's most famous story. It is entertaining, too, and you only realize at the finish of the book that the whole thing really wasn't quite worth the time you spent on it.

A. Conan Doyle's Doings of Raffles Haw (1891): I found this early Doyle novel both rewarding and disappointing. It was disappointing because it was too short, and rewarding because what there was of it was pretty good. The central character manages to transmute lead into gold by a method that may have seemed plausible fifty years ago, but which sounds a bit silly nowadays. One can overlook that, however, for Doyle is less concerned with the process itself than with the effect enormous wealth has on the people who know about it. If enough length had been taken for developing that theme, so that the alchemy would fade further into the background, this might have become a minor classic. Even as it is, The Doings of Raffles Haw is a very effective portrayal of conventional high tragedy. Despite all efforts to divert it into worthy, charitable channels, the boundless wealth of Raffles Haw proves always a source of corrupting evil, and in the end drives the inventor to destroy records of his process and commit suicide. Overall, the work is more rewarding than disappointing. And since interest increases as the book moves forward, the reader is left with a pleasant impression. I recommend that you read the book if it ever comes your way.

Murray Leinster's Last Spaceship (1949): I don't think this novel has appeared in magazine form before book publication, and I can't understand why, for it certainly fits current editorial policies perfectly. It omits not one single possible trite plot-element, conversational banality or known fantasy cliché. In fact, the whole thing is written with such pathetically dead-pan seriousness that it is a beautiful parody of a science-fiction novel. Recommended for laughs.

Keller, David Henry

The Homunculus

Philadelphia: Prime Press, 1949. 160pp. 20 cm. $3.00.

Review: The recent reawakening of interest in the works of this author has resulted in the book publication of many of his older stories, and there remain still more scheduled for future appearance. It is not hard to understand Keller's popularity, for a perusal of his productions reveals a writer of high capability and almost amazing versatility. His stories range from the lyrically beautiful Sign of the Burning Hart to the wry, nearly savage bitterness of "A Piece of Linoleum." Between these extremes are found stories of high adventure, such as the plainly-written but fascinating Solitary Hunters, and some truly fine short stories, such as "The Face in the Mirror," a subtle and original variation of the William Wilson theme.

It is not to be inferred, however, that Keller is without fault. At his best, he has turned out tales which have the inevitable perfection of a fine jewel. Unfortunately, much of his output shows that he is not the best judge of the quality of his stories. These at times are but expanded anecdotes, inadequate in either detail, structure or characterization. The story, in other words, has been conceived in an attempt to bring off an ending, and the result is not always successful. On the other hand, Keller has the essential gift of a born storyteller---readability. At his best or worst he is always interesting. What one regrets, therefore, is that he does not always maintain the high level of which he is so plainly capable.

Of particular interest is The Homunculus, the latest volume to bear the Keller by-line. Dated 1947, it is one of his most recent compositions. It is a little hard to review. Keller has never been an author to confine himself to familiarity of either style or concept, and this entertaining novel is one of marked originality. Embodied in it are some of the author's sharpest characterization and smoothest writing. The result can be recommended to almost anybody.

Briefly, The Homunculus concerns the attempt of an elderly doctor to grow a baby in a bottle, as prescribed in the formula set down by Paracelsus for creating synthetic life. The doctor is a retired army colonel named Horatio Bumble, a thoroughly unorthodox but warmly human individual who lives with his charming wife, Helen, in their home in a small Pennsylvania town. The first inkling Helen has of anything extraordinary occurs when the colonel informs her he desires to build a hole. From then until the surprise ending events move swiftly.

Although one is not conscious of it while reading, The Homunculus possesses a plot of rare complication. At almost the same time that he conceived the plan of his experiment, two singular individuals appear in order to aid Colonel Bumble. They are Sarah, the too-perfect servant, and her brother Pete, a wonder-worker of the first order. Possessing a most remarkable background, these two provide all that is requisite for the success of the "bottle baby."

The Homunculus offers a clear illustration of Keller's usual technique ---to create a situation, and then see how it will affect mankind. In this novel, however, emphasis is more on the reaction of humanity to the mass production of babies. Narrated in a bland and straight-faced style, the saga of Bumble becomes a hilarious satire on the eccentricity and stupidity of mankind. In the past, Keller has attempted satire only to have his compassion undermine it; here is a most felicitous blend of satire and sentiment.

Once the news of his experiment becomes generally known, the Colonel and his companions are subjected to various unpleasant but funny consequences, including the arrest of Bumble on an old city ordinance which forbids the burying of garbage. From the jail he is kidnapped by a gangster called Mr. Caruso, whose

deep love for his mother has made him resent Bumble's experiment. It is Caruso's desire to have an operation performed which would leave the colonel mindless. When at last Bumble is rescued, and the news broadcast to the nation, the public refuses to believe that Caruso meant to have only the colonel's brain---it insists that it was another part of Bumble's anatomy entirely that was to have been removed.

One of Keller's most effective broadsides here is aimed at the press of the nation, as represented by Amy Worth, a vindictive sob-sister; Spence, an imaginative feature-writer who conceives the Rubber Woman; and Billie Bell, a sympathetic if gushy columnist. Like his other satire, these parodies hit straight home because they are only slightly exaggerated. For however much one may enjoy Keller's humor, in the final analysis one is left with the conviction that he is a man who knows life and who knows people. Beaneath the surface laughter of The Homunculus there is a bed-rock of truth and honesty. I do not think he harbors many illusions.

The Homunculus is a good example of Keller's deft blending of reality and fantasy. The matter-of-fact innocence of the style prevents questioning as to credibility, although the fantasy element is strong. Numbered among Bumble's friends are such stand-outs as ageless and lovely Lilith, who is all things to all men; and Pete, who might have had an altogether different role in the scheme of things---if he had won a certain election long ago. The plot also includes an interesting if tangential hypothesis on the creation.

It cannot be denied that there are faults in the book. Keller is an uneven writer, and there are evidences of unevenness here. On the other hand, his skill as a story-teller easily pulls him through such lapses and keeps the reader engrossed. In the final judgement, Keller's outstanding characteristics remain his humanity, his honesty, his understanding, and---above all---his narrative ability.

I don't know if The Homunculus is an important contribution to the genre or not. Certainly it is thoroughly worthwhile and entertaining, rich in overtones and implication, by an author of first importance.

---Thomas H. Carter.

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This-'n'-That---continued from page 69

Kline, Otis A.: The Port of Peril (Grandon, $3). Adventure on Venus, from the old Weird Tales serial.

Laski, Marghanita: Toasted English (Houghton-Mifflin, $2½). A hilarious satire on the Edwardian dream.

Leinster, Murray: The Last Space Ship (Fell, $2½). Reviewed on page 85.

Long, Frank B.: John Carstairs: Space Detective (Fell, $2½). Acceptable.

Mackenzie, Compton: Hunting the Fairies (Chatto & Windus, 10/6). Two Americans among "little people" of Scotland.

McCall, Marie: The Evening Wolves (Day, $3). New England witch-craze days.

Margulies, Leo & Friend, Oscar J., eds: From Off This World (Merlin, $2.95). A collection of 18 "Hall of Fame" classics from TWS. Good; recommended.

Mead, Shepherd: The Magnificent MacInnes (Farrar, $2½). Borderline, amusing.

Merritt, A.: The Fox Woman (Avon, $½). A fine collection of Merritt's short stories. A great bargain at this price!

---: The Ship of Ishtar (Bordon, $3½). Finlay-illustrated reprint. Recommended.

Myers, John M.: Silverlock (Dutton, $3). An excursion through letters, wherein a shipwrecked man meets famous characters of literature. Very well done.

Orwell, George, pseud (Eric Blair): Nineteen Eighty-Four (Secker & Warburg, 10/-; Harcourt, $3). The super state of the future, described with realism and immediacy. It is too well written to be called mere satire. A must for a serious reader; too unpleasntly good for a casual fan to miss. Get it.

(concluded on page 92)

# THUMBING THE MUNSEY FILES

with William H. Evans

(continuing the summaries of fantasy stories from Allstory magazine in 1910.)

July "1,000 Times Lighter than Air" by Edgar Franklin (20pp): Stir love, an airship powered by a new light gas, a rustic inventor and some typical Franklin humor, and this is the result. It isn't too bad, either.

Sep. "The Monkey-Man" by Wm. Tillinghast Eldridge (4 parts: 14,15,14,11pp): A voyage to the South Seas to capture a monkey-man reported there develops into shipwreck and mutiny. Said m.-m. is finally found. So-so.

Oct. "The Cave of the Glittering Lamps" by Ludwig Lewisohn (4 parts: 11,12,5, 6pp): A Persian cave-city inhabited by ancient priests is discovered by a party of American adventurers. Of medium quality.

Nov. "The Power King" by Francis Perry Elliott (5 parts: 16,11,13,15,10pp): A radioactive atom-destroying gun is the object of the usual chase and intrigue a la Oppenheim.

"The Silent Sounds" by Epes Winthrop Sargeant (30pp): In Central African ruins---apparently of Atlantian origin---is discovered a machine acting like a disintegrator through projecting supersonic waves. Several nations hear of it, of course, and the resulting intrigue ends when the Eastern Asia battle fleet is defeated by one small ship and the machine itself. Rather good.

Dec. "The Sky Police" by John A. Hofferman (6pp): Sky piracy in 1950 causes a grave international incident; devious methods prevent a war, however.

1911

Jan. "A Place of Monsters" by Thos. P. Byron (9pp): A weird tale of adventurers falling afoul of monsters, Mayas and a "feathered serpent" while pearling in a Central American lake. Good atmosphere.

Apr. "The Stimulator" by Randolph Haynes (7pp): A device to direct the mental force of the wearer so that anyone about him will be friendly. Finally the wearer falls in love---and the machine blows up.

July "The Forest Reaper" by Wm. Tillinghast Eldridge (6 parts: ?,?,13,13,12,12 pp): A madman in the South American interior decides to avenge the death of his brother, who was murdered by natives, by killing them. Finally he falls into his own trap. This is told in diary form; well written.

Sep. "Pelliwink" by Thos. R. Ybarra (5 parts: 20,11,12,12,14pp): The American Dumnovix Smathers goes to Spain in search of Arabian lore. He uncovers a spell for summoning a djinn, who tricks him several times. Things get all tangled up, but finally work out in his favor. Pleasant, interesting.

"A Prehistoric Lullaby" by Daniel Henry Morris (3pp): A love triangle among the cave people.

"The Liberation of the Lost" by Elford Eddy (5pp): An unusual tale about a professor who is blown to Hell---literally---by a new explosive he has accidentally concocted. There he is condemned to repeat his search for the lost formula until eternity. But he succeeds in repeating the former conditions, blows all Hell to pieces, and liberates the lost souls, who thenceforward must drift in the void for eternity.

"The Future Powder" by Jos. H. Ranson (3pp): A powder that enables a financier to get "foresight" and make a stock market killing. Skip it.

Oct. "The Watcher" by Kelsey Percival Kitchel (8pp): Projection of his face to sight of a rival in love first drives him away, andthen, when he is dying, brings him back. So-so.

Dec. "When I Was Dead" by Howard Renwick Cannon (7pp): A man "dies" during an operation, is buried, dug up for medical use, and finally revived.

1912

Feb. "Under the Moons of Mars" by Norman Bean, pseud (Edgar Rice Burroughs)(6-part serial: 13,8,15,17,16pp): The author's first story, published in book form later as A Princess of Mars.

"Manikins of Malice" by Chas. Stephens (36pp): Two men, unknown to each other, are operated upon while in an army hospital. When released it turns out that their brains have been interchanged. Most of the story deals with their efforts to reestablish themselves in the communities where they are knoen---but themselves know no one. A rather early example of the theme, and better developed and handled than most.

Mar. "Unsight---Unseen" by Wm. Tillinghast Eldridge (3 parts: 14,14,11pp): Invisibility is used for investigation of trickery and for pranks. So-so.

Apr. "In Man's Image" by Richard Duffy (32pp): A scientist and his step-daughter, with a trained chimpanzee that is almost human, are isolated on an island in the St. Lawrence. Smuggler appear, and the usual scrapes and adventures ensue. The ape plays a part, though an unimportant one.

May "The Seventh Prelude" by Lillian Bennet-Thompson (8pp): A ghost hoax.

June "The Yap" by Epes Winthrop Sargeant and Charles Jenkins (37pp): Bopp, the "Yap," invents an anti-gravity airship and an earthquake machine, and as a result promptly gets mixed up in high finance, love, the foiling of foreign powers intent on stealing his inventions, and a war. In the end he wins out against all odds. Just medium.

"The Luck Juice" by Jos. H. Ransom (4pp): A drug that enables a person to "hunch" what horse will win in a race, etc., and thus increase his luck. An unusual idea, adequately handled.

Sep. "The Magical Bath-Tub" by J. Earl Clausen (3 parts: 20,20,22pp): A gold wishing ring, once property of a lost Aztec city, is accidentally built into a special gold bathtub, and strange things commence to happen. Efforts of the Aztecs to recover the ring complicate matters. There is some humor present, though it is rather dated.

Oct. "Tarzan of the Apes" by Edgar Rice Burroughs (132pp): The first of this famous series. Either you like them, or you don't; I happen to.

"On the Zodiac Turnpike" by Ella P. Argo (5pp): A strange little fantasy about a madman's delusion. Off-trail and interesting.

Nov. "Stardust" by Stephen Chalmers (2 parts: 26,25pp): A ray from a new element discloses the spirit world. This brings up the question (among others) of whether a spirit can give evidence in court. The story is quite interesting despite its cops-and-robberish tinge.

"The Selfrespectometer" by T. Bell (4pp): A device to measure one's self respect turns out to be a hoax. Skip this one.

1913

Jan. "The Gods of Mars" by Edgar Rice Burroughs (5 parts: 21,32,24,31,20pp): The second of the John Carter stories, in which he returns to Mars, lands in the Barsoomian sanctuary of sanctuaries, overturns the organized religion of the planet, and so on. Good Burroughs, and one of the best of the Martian novels.

Feb. "The Second Man" by Lee Robinet (100pp): see Fantasy Commentator #17.

"The Cardinal's Silk Stockings" by Morris G. Gowen (7pp): A pair of a cardinal's stockings are worn---unknown to him---by a ballet dancer; afterwards, the cardinal wants to dance when wearing them. Humorous.

"The Bride's House" by Eliot Dane (6pp): Tender fantasy of haunting.

Mar. "The Brain Blight" by Jack Harrower (129pp): A story involving three different drugs: a brain blight, that makes a person mad; a will-destroyer,

to make people obey; and the whirling death, which causes mysterious crimes. This is really a detective story with fantasy overtones.

"Siren's Isle" by J. Earl Clausen (2 parts: 12,20pp): An island in the Aegean Sea with groves and marble temples is inhabited by a woman who claims to be a siren, and to have the horn of plenty. A pleasant fantasy with de Campish touches.

June "The Black Comet" by J. Earl Clausen (110pp): A dark star approaches the earth, causing panic, with some people trying to devise ways of saving themselves. Finally, the star misses and goes on its way. This story is better than many another we have read on the same theme.

"The Mastodon-Milk-Man" by C. MacLean Savage (3 parts: 22,20,38pp): Arctic Waters, while exploring inland Labrador, finds frozen mastodon milk which he drinks. He is made unusually strong. Coming back to civilization he has the usual expected adventures. Average.

"Spawn of Infinitude" by Edward S. Pilsworth (10pp): A meteor hits earth, bringing a strange plant, which turns out to be a very bad thing. It is ultimately destroyed. An early example of the theme, but not well done.

July "The Cave Girl" by Edgar Rice Burroughs (3 parts: 19,16,18pp): This time Burroughs goes prehistoric, mixing his animals as only he can do to get copious gore. Yet it toto it is a good adventure novel.

Sep. "The Copper Princess" by P. P. Sheehan (87pp): The mummy of Ita, an Inca princess, comes to life in modern society. Sheehan usually has an interesting story to tell, and this is one of his better ones.

"His Day Back" by Jack Brant (6pp): A ghost story---with no horror.

Oct. "To Slay at Will" by J. Klinck (11pp): An unusual tale of a mysterious device---never explained---which kills insects at a distance.

Nov. "The Man without a Soul" by Edgar Rice Burroughs" (90pp): The original publication of The Monster Men.

"The House of Sorcery" by Jack Harrower (4 parts: 26,29,17,25pp): A good mystery complicated by brain-transfers.

Dec. "The Warlord of Mars" by Edgar Rice Burroughs (4 parts: 24,23,14,28pp): The third---and last---of the John Carter novels. The saga ends by making him master of the entire planet and restoring him to his family. My own favorite of the Martian tales.

"The 'V' Force" by Fred C. Smale (8pp): An odd account of a bar of metal ---received from a Tibetian priest---which attracts living things and sucks out their life force.

1914

Feb. "Under the Andes" by Rex T. Stout (139pp): A hidden Inca civilization is discovered by American explorers, with the usual denouement.

"The Devil and Dr. Foster" by J. Earl Clausen (4 parts: 15,28,19,17pp): Devilish doings in a small town. Well above average.

Mar. "The Woman of the Pyramid" by P. P. Sheehan (93pp): A weird tale of mystic time-travelling to ancient Egypt and of reincarnation. Well worth reading.

(with the March 7, 1914 issue, the first of volume 29, All-Story became a weekly.)

Mar. 7 "The Eternal Lover" by Edgar Rice Burroughs (39pp): reincarnation, suspended animation and time-travel all mixed up in a typical ERB thriller. A cave man is projected into the present by an earthquake, finds his mate of an earlier day reincarnated. Tarzan also appears.

"Pursuit" by Frank Gould Comstock (8pp): Air cops and robbers in 1924.

Mar. 28 "Cloud Climbers" by Julian Henckly (29pp): Spies abound in this air war of the future. Average.

Apr. 14 "Power Unconquerable" by Daniel Henry Morris (5pp): Controlled molecular motion.

"At the Earth's Core" by Edgar Rice Burroughs (4 parts: 20,18,18,22pp): The first of the series about Pellucidar, the prehistoric land existing in the interior of a hollow earth. I liked it.

"Eggs" by T. Bell (6pp): A satirical short story about a 1928 when such natural foods as milk, eggs, etc. are collector's items. Humorous.

"The Ghost Mill" by P. P. Sheehan (58pp): A device set up in a cave is supposedly producing perpetual motion. The location subsequently acquires the reputation of being haunted. Extremely good atmosphere.

Apr. 11 "The Dumb Terror" by Chauncey H. Hotchkiss (70pp): An interesting mystery involving a new, powerful oxidizing agent.

Apr. 18 "False Fortunes" by Frank Conley (3 parts: 20,20,27pp): An old recluse discovers the philosopher's stone. The story is mainly about the rivalry of several groups which are after it. Average.

"Queen of Sheba" by P. P. Sheehan (89pp): One of the author's unusual mystic stories of hypnotism and reincarnation.

May 2 "The Haunted Legacy" by Paul Regard (99pp): The working out of a gypsy curse, with a haunted thaler that materializes at odd times. Good!

May 9 "The Joy of Seeing" by Wm. James Henderson (10pp): A medieval tale of Jean, a blind poet, who sells his soul in exchange for having sight restored; the futilities of human life he sees make him renounce his bargain. For some reason this appealed to me very much.

June 20 "The Frozen Beauty" by Stephen Chalmers (3 parts: 33,30,32pp): Suspended animation and adventure. Nothing special.

July 25 "Votes for Men" by Percy Atkinson (7pp): A satire on matriarchy, 1923, when men have to marry any woman asking them---or be sold at auction!

"They Never Knew" by David A. Curtis (48pp): Hypnotism and bank-robbery.

Aug. 8 "In the Professor's Room" by Redfield Ingalls (9pp): Professor Kittilson invents a device to hear the past of any object. Average.

Aug. 22 "The Invisible Judge" by Jack Harrower (7pp): A good ghost story.

"For Love of the Princess" by Frank Blighton (43pp): The hypnotist Swami Rami again in another borderline mystery. Fairly interesting.

Sep. 26 "My Friend Petersson" by James B. Hendryx (10pp): Petersson invents a device to locate his "soul-mate"---who turns out to be an Eskimo. He sets out to get her, and is involved in a series of adventures. Fair.

Oct. 3 "The Fog Man" by Edwin L. Sabin (47pp): A small California town is covered with fog for several days, and things start to disappear. A weird, manlike shape is seen about daily. It turns out to be an escaped "wild man from Borneo." The first part of this story is well written, but the good atmosphere isn't maintained throughout.

Oct. 10 "The Lost Echo" by Frank M. O'Brien (8pp): A semi-humorous account of an echo that took ten hours to return. Fair.

Nov. 14 "The Empire in the Air" by Geo. Allan England (4 parts: 26,23,21,36pp): Invading "vitons" (to use a later nomenclature) from the fourth dimension almost subjugate the earth, but are finally defeated. A little dated now, but still good and readable.

Nov. 21 "The Flying Scourge" by Chas. Augustine Logue (30pp): A subairplane, a device to explode ammunition at a distance, and a new plague lead to cops-and-robbers intrigue and adventure. So-so.

Nov. 28 "The Curse of Quetzal" by J.U.Giesy and J.B.Smith (52pp): Semi Dual returns to investigate a murder and a cursed image. Good whodunit.

Dec. 5 "The Fighting Soul" by Edgar Franklin and Gilbert Riddell (50pp): Hartwell, a financier, is trying to make his niece marry his partner. To persuade her he seeks the aid of Dr. Buckly, an occultist. The doctor reveals Hartwell's psyche to him as a separate entity, which tries

to change the man's cold methods. Odd: interesting.

1915

Jan. 23 "Sweetheart Primeval" by Edgar Rice Burroughs (4 parts: 17,22,15,34pp): The sequel to "The Eternal Lover." Reincarnation in reverse, back to the stone age. If you liked the first one, you'll like this also.

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This-'n'-That---concluded from page 87

Peckham, Virginia: Proud Angelina (Duell, $3½). Borderline allegory.

Philpotts, Eden: Address Unknown (Hutchinson, 9/6). Communication with intelligent life in another solar system. Plodding, talky.

Repp, Ed Earl: The Radium Pool (FPCI, $3). "The Stellar Missile" is included also. Garbage, both of them.

Rodda, Chas.: The House Upstairs (Barrie, 7/6). Psychological, borderline.

Romilly, Eric: Bleeding from the Roman (Chapman & Hall, 9/6). A soldier is thrown back in time to Rome. Both de Camp-like and Thorne Smithish.

Smith, Carmichael: Atomsk: a novel of suspense (Duell, $2½). A stereotyped science-detective thriller.

Stapledon, Wm. Olaf: Worlds of Wonder (FPCI $3). Don't let the odd paper and amateurish appearance fool you: this omnibus book of three short novels is one of the best buys of the year.

Stewart, Geo. R.: Earth Abides (Random, $3). Civilization is destroyed by a new disease.

Tchkotoua, Nicholas P.: Timeless (Murray & Gee, $3). Overly sentimental novel of psychic phenomena. Phooey.

Templeton, Wm. F.: The 4-Sided Triangle (Long, 9/6). Pleasant and entertaining expansion of an Amazing Stories tale.

Towers, Frances: Tea with Mr. Rochester (Joseph, 7/6). Short stories, a few of which are supernatural.

Varè, Daniele: The Doge's Ring (Methuen, 8/6). A magic ring takes its owner on excursions into other ages.

Véry, Pierre: In What Strange Land...! (Wingate, 9/-). Haunted by visions.

Waugh, Evelyn: Scott-King's Modern Europe (Little-Brown, $2). Weak satire.

Webster, Elizabeth Charlotte: Ceremony of Innocence (Harcourt, $2¾). A psychic novice wreaks havoc in a convent; the time-sequences are often confusing but otherwise the book is very good.

Weinbaum, S. G.: A Martian Odyssey (Fantasy Press, $3). Ingratiating shorts.

Welles, Orson, ed.: Invasion from Mars (Dell, $¼). 12 s-f shorts, including the Welles 1938 radio script.

Williams, Chas.: Many Dimensions; War in Heaven (Pellagrini & Cudahy, $3). Acceptable reprints.

Williamson, Jack: The Humanoids (Simon & Schuster, $2). Reprint of the recent Astounding novel in a sleazy, incredibly poor quality format.

Wright, S. Fowler: The World Below ($2½, Shasta). Good reprint.

Wylie, Philip: Gladiator (Avon, $¼). One of the best superman novels ever again available. Get it.

Zagat, A. L.: 7 Out of Time (Fantasy, $3). Bok-illustrated. A so-so fantasy.

NON-FICTION

Fagin, Bryllion: The Histrionic Mr. Poe (Johns Hopkins, $4). A brilliant, persuasive study. Highly recommended.

Garrett, Eileen J.: Adventures in the Supernatural (Creative Age, $3½). Experiences of a clairvoyant.

Gekle, Wm. Francis: Arthur Machen: Weaver Fantasy (Round Table Press, $5). A 500-copy edition, with bibliography.

Jones, H. Spencer: Life on Other Worlds (Mentor, 35¢). Very good pocket-book.

Ley, Willy: The Conquest of Space (Viking, $3.95). A beautiful volume of excellent quality. Highly recommended.

Rugoff, Milton, ed: A Harvest of World Folk Tales (Viking, $3.95). Illustrated by Low. Quite good.

Scott, J.E.: A Bibliography of the Works of Sir Henry Rider Haggard (Mathews, 42/-).

Summers, Montague: Malleus Maleficarum (Pushkin, 15/-). Reprint. ---A.L.S.