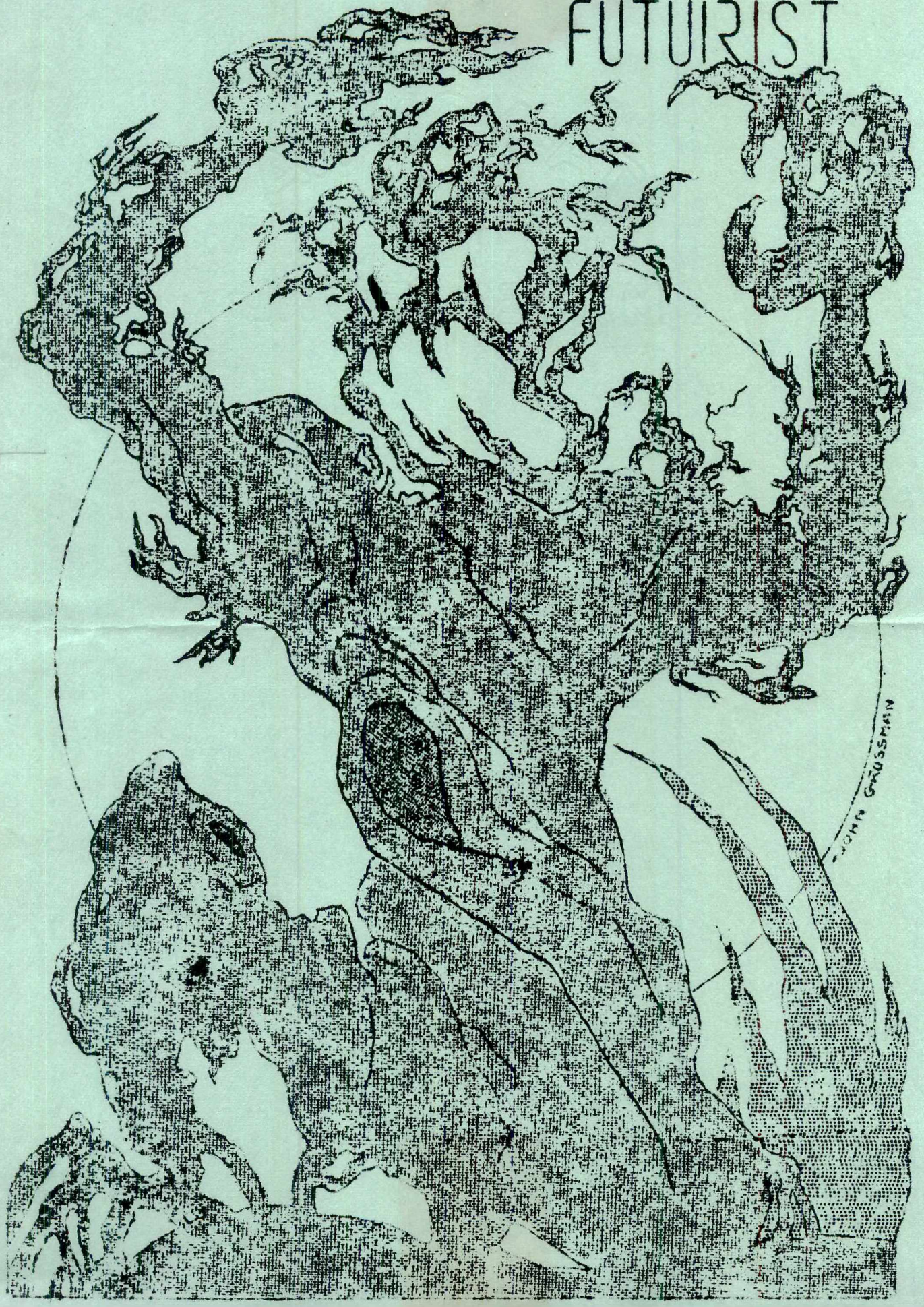
FUTURIST



THE NATIONAL FANTASY FAN FEDERATION PRESENTS:

FUTURIST

CONTENTS FOR ISSUE #2

Cover by John Grossman
All interior illustrations by Bob Dougherty, stencilled by Howard Miller.

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Publisher

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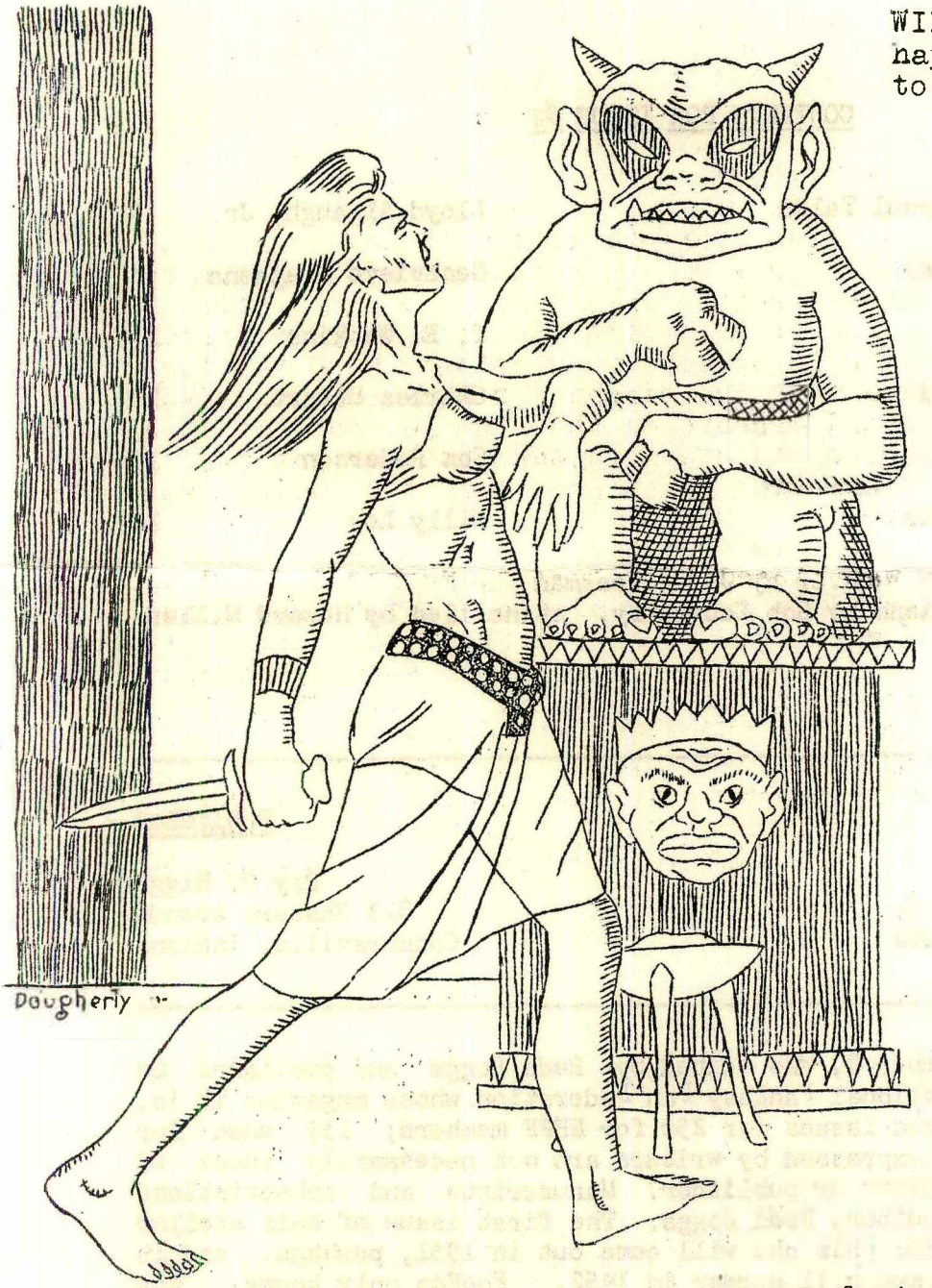
FUTURIST, volume I, number 2, was edited by Redd Boggs and published by Ray C. Higgs for the National Fantasy Fan Federation whose magazine it is. Subscription rates: three issues for 25¢ for NFFF members; 15¢ each for non-members. Opinions expressed by writers are not necessarily those of the NFFF, nor of the editor or publisher. Manuscripts and subscriptions should be sent to the editor, Redd Boggs. The first issue of this stellar fanzine came out in 1950; this one will come out in 1951, perhaps, and it may be that the next issue will appear in 1952. FooFoo only knows. Why don't you attend the Nolacon and console yourself? The Nolacon, the ninth (I think) world science fiction convention, will be held in New Orleans on the Labor Day weekend of 1951. Write Harry B. Moore, 2703 Camp Street, New Orleans 13, Louisiana, for details, and while you're about it, send along a dollar and help support the convention.

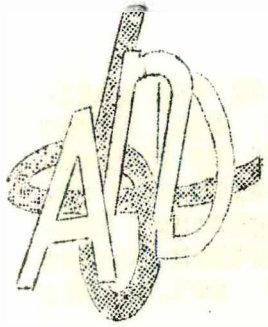
UNUSUAL STORIES



ILLUSTRATED BY BOB DOUGHERTY

WILLIAM CRAWFORD is perhaps unique in the history of fandom: He not only complained about the quality of fantasy fiction being offered in the pulp magazines, but decided to do something about it. He had a certain amount of money available, and this he proposed to invest in a magazine which would feature fiction of a more literary quality than that found in the then-current science fiction magazines.

So it was that late in 1933 the prominent fans of the day received a printed circular announcing the advent of a new fantasy magazine. Titled Unusual Stories, it was to appear monthly and be printed on book paper. The first number was to be issued early in November 1933, and be dated December of that year. The list of featured authors was enough to make any fan's mouth water: Ralph Milne Farley, Stanton A. Coblentz, H. P. Lovecraft, Clark Ashton Smith, David H. Keller, August Derleth and P. Schuyler



MARVEL TALES

Miller were among those listed from whom material had been obtained, and the beginning of Miller's excellent story, "The Titan", was produced in the circular, accompanied by a full-page illustration, rather amateurishly drawn by an artist named Guy L. Huey. The circular also stated that Lloyd A. Eshbach and Raymond A. Palmer had been appointed Unusual Stories' consulting editors.

Months passed, and William Crawford seemed to have vanished into that special limbo reserved for would-be professionals. At last, however, those who had hopefully sent twenty cents for the first issue received a so-called Advance Issue, which was actually a partially-completed section of Volume I, Number 1. Enclosed with the issue was a circular which explained that the reason for the long delay was that Unusual Stories' printer had discovered that the job was too big for him. What Crawford neglected to state in the circular was that he was the printer in question, and thus all blame for the delay was his alone.

This Advance Issue was listed as Volume I, Number 1, and was dated March 1934, being mailed in January of that year. The issue contained a short editorial which was reprinted from the circular that had announced the magazine; a short biography of author Richard Tooker; and nearly all the pages of Cyril G. Wates' story, "When the Waker Sleeps". As the title implies, the story was meant to be satirical; it came closer to burlesque. It concerned a man who fell asleep and wakened a thousand years from now. It was nothing exceptional, and I suspect it had a dream ending. Most definitely this story was not the type of fiction that was later featured in issues of Unusual Stories and Marvel Tales.

= by =

Lloyd Alpaugh, Jr.

Some time later, a second portion of Unusual Stories #1 was mailed; this contained the concluding pages of Wates' "When the Waker Sleeps" and a few pages of "Tharda, Queen of the Vampires", by Richard Tooker. This fragment was not mailed to all subscribers, with the result that it is today one of the rarest of all items of magazine fantasy. Indeed, it is so rare that a collector owning all other issues of the magazine may well be considered to have a complete set. This first issue of Unusual Stories was never completed.

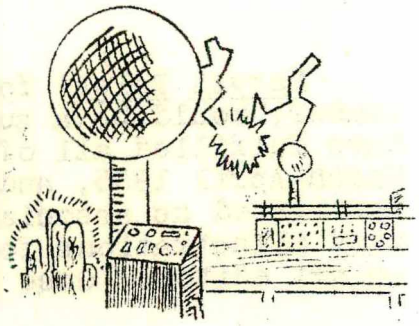
II.

For some reason Crawford dropped, temporarily, all attempts to publish Unusual Stories. He concentrated instead on the publication of another title: Marvel Tales. The first issue of this magazine was dated May 1934 and sold for ten cents. Crawford was listed as editor; Raymond A. Palmer and Walter L. Dennis were consulting editors; and Lloyd Eshbach was associate editor and art director. In a short editorial, Crawford stated that Marvel Tales would be issued bi-monthly and that effective next issue the price would be fifteen cents per copy. The lead story in the first issue was "The Man With the Hour Glass" by Lloyd Eshbach. This tale, which was recently reprinted in the booklet The Garden of Fear, concerned a man who, making the first trip in a time machine invented by a friend, arrives in the future to find that he, and not the true inventor, is credited with creating the machine. His attempt to tell the truth to the people who regard him as a national hero almost results in his death, but he escapes to the present where he makes certain his friend will get the credit due him. "The Man With the Hour Glass" is an above average story.

The other stories in the issue were: "The Cossacks Ride Hard", by August Derleth, a typical Derlethian tale; "Celephais", by H. P. Lovecraft, also reprinted in The Garden of Fear, as well as in The Outsider and Others; and David H. Keller's excellent horror yarn, "Binding Deluxe", which tells of a young lady who binds her set of the Encyclopedia Brittanica in the skins of her lovers and of a young man -- her latest lover -- who turns the tables and binds the final volume in her skin. One poem was in the issue; evidently it had escaped from a fanzine.

The second issue of Marvel Tales, dated July-August 1934, reportedly has driven some collectors mad. It appeared with three different covers on different colored paper and with the printing of story-titles and authors' names shifted about. Fortunately for the sanity of collectors the actual contents of the issue did not vary. The second Marvel Tales was an improvement over the first. The cover illustration, when it could be made out under the printing which obscured most of it, proved to be quite well done, although it still seemed somewhat amateurish. It was the work of an artist who signed himself -- so help me -- FUC, and depicted a snake with a human skull for a head which was coiled around a tree branch in the midst of a ruined city. A story contest was announced: authors were to write stories around titles suggested by Crawford. In the editorial Crawford announced that the third issue would contain ten pages more, and the fourth, twenty more.

The stories in the issue showed some improvement. The best in



the issue was Robert E. Howard's excellent science-fantasy, "The Garden of Fear", the title piece of the comparitively recent booklet. It is the story of Hunwulf, a Norse barbarian, and his encounter with the last survivor of a prehistoric winged race. This primal counterpart of Batman kidnaps Hunwulf's mate and carries her off to his castle. Hunwulf, following, eventually slays the winged man and rescues his mate. The writing is typical Howard and therefore typically good. The feature story of the issue was "The Dark Beasts", an imitation Lovecraft yarn by Frank Belknap Long, Jr., in which creatures from another dimension make a bargain with one of the characters. When the bargain is not kept, the expected happens. The other stories in this second Marvel Tales were: "Synthetic", by Harl Vincent (a scientist creates life and then is killed by the thing he creates); "Antidote", by Robert M. Hyatt (midnight and a vivid imagination transform some ants into a horde of ravenous monsters; the girl is rescued when her brother latches onto some ant paste); "The Torch of Life", by Joseph Skidmore (a story of prehistoric man and his fight for survival); and "A Horror in Profile", by Wilfred Blanch Talman (two archeologists discover the tomb of an ancient Inca god who is still living and proceeds to enslave the men). There were two poems, one by Manly Wade Wellman and the other by H. Donald Spatz. The latter was readable, but Wellman's merely proved that he should stick to fiction.

Six months passed before Crawford managed to publish the third issue of Marvel Tales; it was dated Winter 1934. The cover illustration, which was drawn by Huey, showed a man looking at a skeleton while bats flittered about him, and was again partly obscured by printing. Eshbach and Dennis were listed as associate editors, but Palmer had been dropped from the staff. Winners of the story contest announced in the second issue were listed as follows: Anders W. Drake, first; R. de Witt Miller, second; Richard Tooker, third; and Forrest J Ackerman, fourth.

The stories in this issue were all readable, and two of them, "The Golden Bough", by David H. Keller, and "The Titan", by P. Schuyler Miller, were in the excellent category. Keller's story told how a young married woman saw and fell in love with Pan and in pursuing him through the forest tumbled over á cliff to her death. (Both this story and "Binding Deluxe" were later printed in Weird Tales.) Miller's "The Titan" was a serial which was to have been published in four parts, but unfortunately only three ever saw print.

The remaining stories in the third issue were "The Second Step", by Orris M. Kellar (a story of the discovery of the spear; "Lilies", by Robert Bloch (a woman is so in the habit of giving a friend a bouquet of flowers each week that she does it even after death); and "On Board the Space Ship Terra", by Lloyd Eshbach, which is typical space opera. Of the two poems in the issue, "The Ship", by Duane W. Rimel, was at least readable, but the less said about Timothy Loft's "The

Ferryman", the better. The only interior illustration in the number was a full-pager for "The Titan", which was reprinted from the circular announcing the founding of Unusual Stories.

III.

Marvel Tales' fourth issue, predicted Crawford in the preceding number, would be a super-issue. And it was. At last Marvel Tales must have fulfilled all of Crawford's hopes and ideals. The issue was dated March-April 1935, and contained over 110 pages. Only Walter Dennis was listed as associate editor, but Clay Ferguson, Jr., who had done many illustrations for Fantasy Magazine, had been added to the staff as art editor. Once again printing half-filled the cover -- Crawford

IN THE FULL MOON'S WAKE

Pan loves the amber tinted moon,
The queer half-eerie sound of loon;
Green fragile moss that clothes a root
Whereon he sits with magic lute;
And plays his pagan reverie
Till wood nymphs dance from every tree;
Still piping, twirls on dainty hoof
To form the pattern in the woof;
And winging forth to join the revel
Beneath the old moon's wake
The little people of the hill
Dance round and round the brake.

-- GENEVIEVE K. STEPHENS.

seemed to have a predilection for doing this -- but the illustration itself was simply and effectively done. It showed a space ship in flight. Who drew it, I do not know, for no name was listed; probably it was Ferguson. In the editorial Crawford optimistically offered a five-year subscription to anyone sending in five one-year subscriptions for his friends. He also announced that Unusual Stories would be revived on a bi-monthly basis to alternate with Marvel Tales. For the first time a readers' department was present. Titled "The Control Room", it published two letters originally intended for Unusual Stories, one from "Jacobus Hubelaire" and the other from David H. Keller. Two short poems were used as fillers; both were readable.

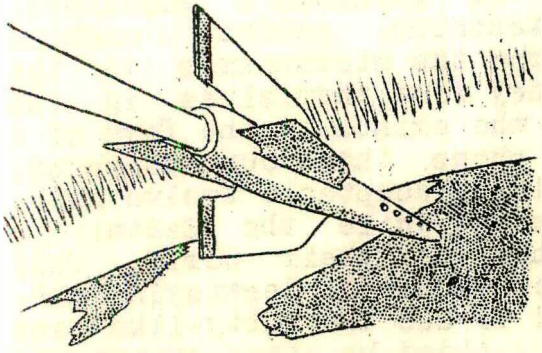
The feature story of this fourth issue was Clifford D. Simak's "The Creator", an excellent tale which for sheer quality surpasses all other complete stories published in either of Crawford's magazines. In "The Creator", two men, after years of research, perfect a machine which enables them to travel in time and from the microcosmos to the macrocosmos. Emerging from the machine, they find themselves in the strange laboratory of an intelligent being who exists in the form of a cone of light. This being, the Creator, shows them our universe, which is a grayish, putty-like mass in a glass receptacle twelve inches long, six inches wide and four inches deep. While the Earthlings are building a machine which will return them to their world, they discover that the Creator is working on the problem of destroying matter without the use of heat and has decided to use the putty-like mass containing our universe in the experiment. Aided by other beings who have also traveled up from the micro-universe, the Earthlings attack the Creator but are cast aside. An ally holds the Creator immobile with a weapon he has devised, while the others seek safety in the lab. The weapon, an energy screen, encloses the room while they cover the receptacle containing our universe with layer after layer of pure energy which congeals into an inpenetrable screen. Attacking the laboratory, the Creator hurls a bolt of energy that is reflected back upon him by the screen, and the Creator is destroyed. The narrator then gets into the machine they have built and returns to Earth, expecting his companion to follow. But they have forgotten the factor of time; every second spent in the ultra-universe was equal to scores of years in our universe, and the Earthman finds himself on an Earth of the far future, when the sun is dying. And so the Earthman writes his story in the last days of Earth, and as he writes he wonders where his friend is -- did he reach his own era, or is he too a prisoner in some alien century? Thus the story ends.

The next story was Lovecraft's "The Doom That Came To Sarnath", which is one of his better prose-poems. This was followed by "The Cathedral Crypt", by John Beynon Harris, a tale of horror in an old church. Part Two of P. Schuyler Miller's superb short novel, "The Titan", illustrated with the same cut used in Part One, followed the Harris story. Next was Amelia Reynolds Long's "Masters of Matter". This was the worst tale in the issue. I quote: "My science has driven me mad, you say? No, not mad; merely to despair. It was love for Granya that drove me mad; that and my own folly." The last story was "The Nebula of Death", by George Allan England, a tale from the pages of The People's Favorite Magazine of 1908. It was Crawford's intention to reprint this novel serially, as first of a series of reprints of difficult-to-obtain stories.

This, then, was the fourth and greatest issue of Marvel Tales. It might well have come from the press of any professional publisher. But this high quality was not to last.

IV.

Two more issues of Unusual Stories actually appeared. Conveniently ignoring the abortive Advance Issue of 1934, Crawford labeled the issue May-June 1935 and Volume I, Number 1. There was no cover illus-



tration, merely the title of the magazine and the titles of two of the featured stories. There was no interior artwork in either issue. The magazine contained 48 small-sized pages and sold for ten cents per copy.

The first story in the May-June number was "Waning Moon", by Robert A. Wait. Conditions on the moon were becoming unlivable, so the Lunarites decide to migrate to Earth. Civil war breaks out, however, and all but two moon-beings -- a man and a woman (surprised?) -- are killed. These two come to Earth and start that race of noble creatures, Man. The second story, Duane W. Rimel's "The Jewels of Charlotte", tells how a man builds a strange tomb for his young daughter and of the weird fate that befalls those who attempt to violate the crypt. The Lovecraft mythos is dragged in at the end, adding nothing to a mediocre story. Following the Rimel story was "The Experiment", by R. H. Barlow. In this tale a hypnotist sends a man's ego into the distant future where it enters the body of a warrior of that age. When the warrior is slain, the hypnotized man's body also dies. The final story of the issue was "The White Gulls Cry", by P. Schuyler Miller. This peculiar tale illustrates almost perfectly Crawford's "off-trail" policy. It is impossible to review the story and not make it sound like hack. Briefly, it concerns a dwarf who lives in a strange tower and captures the souls of people to give them new life in the bodies of wild gulls, and it concerns the blind man who comes from the sea to kill the dwarf. It is really an excellent tale.

There were two poems in this issue. They were written by Forrest J Ackerman, and Donald Wollheim and Kenrad Leister. As poems they make excellent filler items. Save for a short editorial, there were no departments in this issue of Unusual Stories.

The second issue was dated Winter 1935. Again, the cover had no illustration but merely the title of the magazine and two story-titles printed upon it. Three complete stories, the first part of a serial, a poem, and a short editorial made up the contents of the final number of Unusual Stories.

The serial, "A Diamond Asteroid", by Lowell H. Morrow, was to be published in two parts; only the first instalment ever appeared. The second story in the issue was Robert Bloch's "Black Lotus", the tale of a king who sought pleasure in drugs and who killed himself while under their influence. Beautifully written in a Dunsanyesque manner, it is somewhat reminiscent of "The Hashish Man". The story was recently reprinted in the first issue of Fantasy Book (1947). Bloch's yarn was followed by a short-short story, "The River Dwellers", by Lionel Dilbeck, which describes the withdrawal of the old Indian gods when they find themselves powerless against the white man's gods. The final story was E. Theodore Pine's "The Two Doors", a short Chinese

fantasy in the style of Frank Owen. The concluding item in this Unusual Stories was "Derelict", a poem by Robert W. Lowndes. It represented Lowndes' first venture into fan writing and was well done.

So ended the career of Unusual Stories. The magazine was never as popular as Marvel Tales, and it never reached the circulation of its sister magazine.

V.

Sometime between the two issues of Unusual Stories, the final issue of Marvel Tales appeared. This fifth issue was published on large size paper, some 8 x 10 inches in dimensions. The professional appearance of the fourth issue was lost completely; fortunately, the quality of the stories did not suffer greatly. The issue, dated Summer 1935, featured two small illustrations on the cover, both drawn by Clay Ferguson, Jr. One illustrated "The Titan"; the other was drawn for "The Nebula of Death". Both were used as interior illustrations for their respective stories. The "Tales Ahead" department listed Clark Ashton Smith's "The Coming of the White Worm" and Andrew North's "The People of the Crater" as scheduled for the sixth Marvel Tales. Both these stories eventually appeared elsewhere: Smith's in the April 1941 issue of Stirring Science Stories and North's in the first issue of Fantasy Book. In the editorial Crawford announced that in the future the magazine would be published at irregular intervals -- damned irregular intervals, as it turned out. There was one poem in the issue, "Witch's Bercuese", by Emil Petaja. Besides the letter department, which contained letters from Lester del Rey, Emil Petaja and others, a new department made its appearance. Titled "Famous Fantasy Fans", it was to publish short biographies of various fantasites, and this first column featured the biography of -- who else? -- Forrest J Ackerman.

The feature story was "Mars Colonizes", one of the best tales of Miles J. Breuer, which was another feature of the booklet The Garden of Fear. The Martians arrive on Earth and proceed to conquer the planet by legal methods. Selling Martian products, they invest in real-estate and industry and within a few years virtually own Earth. Finally the Earth people revolt, but upon reaching the Martian camp they find it deserted save for the bodies of a few Martians. The Martians found they could not exist upon Earth; measures developed to protect them from the alien conditions here proved ineffective after one or two generations. And so ends the Martian occupation of Terra.

The next story in the issue was Carl Jacobi's "The Man From Makasser", in which a man returns from the dead to avenge the death of a brother. "Annabel Reeves", by Ralph Milne Farley, describes a love so great that even death could not put an end to it. Next came "The Elfin Lights", by W. Anders Drake. This was the prize-winning story in the contest announced in the second Marvel Tales, and was the only contest yarn published by Crawford, although R. de Witt Miller's second prize tale, "The Shapes", saw print in the February 1935 issue of Astounding Stories. Drake's story proved rather interesting. All except two people -- a blind violinist and a drug addict -- are killed when strange, elfin lights drift down out of space.

The third part of Miller's "The Titan" and the second part of George Allan England's "The Nebula of Death" fill out the issue.

VI.

The story of Crawford's efforts to put the sixth issue of Marvel Tales on the newsstands has been covered in detail by two articles in Fantasy Commentator -- "It Might Have Been", by Sam Moskowitz (Winter 1944-45) and "It Nearly Was", by Richard Frank (Winter 1945-46) -- so I shall give here only a brief outline of what the contents of that ill-fated sixth issue were to have been.

One serial story, P. Schuyler Miller's "The Titan" was continued from the previous issues. The feature story was "The Shadow Over Innsmouth", by H. P. Lovecraft; it was to have been published complete in one issue. The second feature was to have been "The Challenge From Beyond", published complete, both the weird and science fiction parts appearing. This was a reprint from the third anniversary issue of Fantasy Magazine. The science fiction part was written by Stanley G. Weinbaum, Donald Wandrei, Edward E. Smith, Murray Leinster, and Harl Vincent; the weird portion was authored by A. Merritt, C. L. Moore, H. P. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard, and Frank Belknap Long. The weird section, reprinted in the second Lovecraft omnibus, is much superior to the science fiction part.

The remaining stories in the issue were "The Sixth Sense", by Stanton Coblentz; "The Ghost Mother", by Francis Flagg; "Sun's Tempest", by Raymond Z. Gallun; "Imitation of Life", by Miles J. Breuer; and "The Window in Space", by the then-active fan, Louis C. Smith.

The Lovecraft story had an illustration by Frank Utpatel, while the remaining illustrations were by Clay Ferguson. Whether or not any of the departments were present in this projected sixth issue is uncertain.

Thus the career of Marvel Tales came to an inglorious end. Fandom simply was not large enough to support such a magazine. The circulation of Marvel Tales at its peak was under two hundred. Disgusted and disappointed, Crawford abandoned Marvel Tales completely. This, then, was the end of a most commendable but highly idealistic plan.

And the fans went back to Amazing Stories.

Harry B. Moore
2703 Camp Street
New Orleans 13, La.

FICTION OF TODAY

by T. E. WATKINS

SCIENCE FICTION is usually advertised as "the fiction of tomorrow" or "the world of tomorrow today". And some of it is an effort to predict the future, to show the social effect of technological changes which can be foreseen today.

On the other hand, some of our science fiction is concerned with the present. It is often satirical comment on our social or political system. Its purpose, other than entertainment, is to point out certain trends and warn against them. Ray Bradbury has written a number of stories of this type. For example, "The Exiles", in the Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction.

In this story the ghosts of all the great fantasy writers, Shakspeare, Dickens, Poe, Blackwood, Lovecraft, Hawthorne, Carroll and many others, make a last stand on Mars. All their works have been outlawed a century earlier on earth. But Mars is being invaded. The surgically asceptic scientists, who are responsible for the banishment of the books, are on their way in a space ship. Aboard they have the last copies of the works of these writers. The ghosts try by every means to turn back the ship. They rally the characters they have created, they inflict dreams on members of the crew, they haunt the captain. They gather by the ancient sea of Mars hundreds of fantasy characters and try with their shadows to keep out the invaders. To no avail. The ship arrives, the books are burned, and the shades are gone.

Where did this idea come from? Is fantasy in danger? Of course the USSR has outlawed science fiction on the grounds that it is capitalist propaganda and is written by "the lackeys of Wall Street". But is there anyone in our world ag'in it? Who would want to burn the books of the above mentioned writers or take our prozines off the news stands? It would probably be hard to find anyone who would go that far (outside of Russia), but some of the restrictions against other forms of "art" have been most alarming.

This is a day of pressure groups promoted by professional organizers. These groups are out to restrict anything that they consider a danger to themselves, or that the organizer can promote "in the public welfare". Uncle Tom's Cabin cannot be dramatized in any city where there is a large Negro population. It cannot be filmed. Negroes will get it suppressed because they think it ridicules them. Comic books are having increasingly tough sledding. Certain groups in Los Angeles have tried to get them banned from the newsstands -- that is, the more "dangerous" comic books. Burlesque was banned in New York some years ago as part of a political campaign on the grounds that burlesque was responsible for an increase in sex crimes. The sex crimes have continued, but burlesque remains banned.

The list of restrictions and taboos in motion pictures have always been a source of wonder. Almost anyone with a little organization behind him can force a restriction on Hollywood. Bernard de Voto, an

editor of Harper's, writing in the February 1950 issue, described a new effort on the part of an organization devoted to the interests of the American Indian, to force Hollywood to stop depicting the Indian as a villain. "Whoever thought the cussed redskins would have to go," he yells. "Who is going to attack the wagon train as it travels across the plains?" He then decides that if the Indians go, the only persons left to attack the wagon train will be the Chinese, as long as the movie makes it plain that it is the Chinese communists.

Have you seen the "Can Can" lately? This French dance featuring high kicks, stocking tops and garters was usually a part of any program about Paris night life. That is, before the war. The last time I saw it in all its rugged glory, it was danced by the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo here in Kansas City, in 1940. Somebody decided it was too rugged -- and it cannot be seen in movies, stage or television any more.

Anything can be against the law. All a crank needs is a pressure group behind him to force the issue. The "pure in heart" decide that crime movies are causing the present crime wave and Hollywood has to look elsewhere for story material. Detective fiction is now receiving the frown of some pressure groups and those publishing houses who depend on this type of fiction for part of their income are going to have to make a fight for it. Stereotype characterization in magazine fiction is getting the bird from racial groups. No one can be a villain now except a white Protestant American of native parentage. Even to depict an admirable Italian, Scot or Jew in any way to give them racial distinction brings howls from the racial groups. So taboos are born, restrictions on broadcasting and filming build up, and censorship increases.

Each restriction in itself is small, but the accumulation of hundreds of taboos, and restrictions make writing, broadcasting, and motion-picture producing increasing difficult. The beginner is particularly handicapped because he must learn these taboos and restrictions before he can begin to succeed.

Each time a restriction is enforced a device or mechanism is created that can enforce restrictions. In banning burlesque in New York a license commissioner was given the power to censor all stage productions in New York. The "Legion of Decency" which enforced many restrictions in Hollywood in 1938 continues to operate and to demand more restrictions. When a device is created for censorship, it grows and develops. It must always find new things to restrict.

From this trend, Bradbury got his dandy little story, "The Exiles". And in it the ghosts of the fantasy writers lose the battle to the reformers.

However, in another Bradbury story the "tsk tsk, mustn't mustn't" crowd has a lot tougher sledding. In Thrilling Wonder Stories, Bradbury came up with a little gem called "Carnival of Madness". In this

one Bradbury lays about furiously among the censors with his literary whip. And he adds a little kick at the end that is an extra joy to the "unsaved".

The scene is laid in the far future (2249 A.D.) when the pressure groups have made everything except eating against the law. Our hero, Mr. Stendhal, explains it this way: "Oh, it started very small. Centuries ago it was a grain of sand. They began by controlling books, and of course films, one way or another, one group or another, political bias, religious prejudice, union pressures, there was always a minority afraid of something and a great majority afraid of the dark, afraid of the future, afraid of the past, afraid of themselves and shadows of themselves...and with a screw tightened here, a bolt fastened there, a push, a pull, a yank, Art and Literature were soon like a great twine of taffy strung all about, being twisted in braids and fastened in knots, and thrown in all directions, until there was no more resiliency and no more savor to it. Then the film cameras chopped short and the theatres turned dark, and the print presses trickled down from a great Niagara of reading matter to a mere innocuous dripping of 'pure' material."

The thing that burns our hero is that the "you-can't - do - that" crowd has discovered and burnt his 5000 volume library of imaginative fiction. So he seeks revenge. He builds a House of Usher, patterned after the original. Inside he has all manner of mechanical monsters, built of brass and plastic. They are all characters out of Poe's stories, with plenty of bats, cats, rats, and cobwebs thrown in.

To his house for a party he invites the leaders of the pressure groups. They are reluctant at first, but since Mr. Stendhal has promised to destroy the house in the morning, and since the wine is free and plentiful (plentiful! -- he has a creek of sherry wine wandering through the room; the dang house cost four million bucks) and the costumes gay and colorful, they decide to stay and have a good time. The kick of the evening comes when they think they see plastic images of themselves murdered by characters in Poe's stories. Of course it is the censors who are murdered and the robots who remain to sink into the tarn with the House of Usher.

A lesser artist than Bradbury would have had his hero sink into into the tarn along with the house, the robots, and the murdered censors. He would have had him die if only in obedience to the compulsion born of seeing hundreds of Hollywood films, the censors of which insist that the perpetrator of every crime of whatever nature must have his retribution. Bradbury is made of sterner stuff. His hero stands on the hillside, watches the house and its gory cargo sink into the tarn, and then boards his helicopter and flies away scot free!

Hot dog! Bradbury, I love you!

THE END

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OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES

by CHARLES STUART

FROM THE PRESSES within the past year have come two pocketbooks offering the adventure mysteries of Sax Rohmer. One is a collection of his Chinatown stories; the other is a new novel.

Tales of Chinatown (Popular Library #217) is an omnibus volume, comprising ten stories, reprinted from the popular magazines of Street & Smith, Munsey and Collier's of 1920 to 1922. Most of them center around Inspector "Red" Kerry, Paul Harley, and Malcolm Knox, lending some thread of continuity to the whole volume.

Of the ten stories presented, the majority fit into the familiar Rohmer pattern of Eastern adventure: the mysterious lurking presence of an ancient Chinese, his daughter, the unknown, exotic woman, and the blundering Western befuddlement of Kerry, Knox, or Harley. However, two of them are distinctly fantasy, capably written and worthy of previous presentation in Famous Fantastic Mysteries or Fantastic Novels.

"Tcheriapin", the first, is a weird adventure rotating about the figure of Tcheriapin, a Eurasian famed for his stirring violin recitals. This maestro of the strings falls in with a group of intellectuals, and soon finds Andrews, a dour Scot, the perfect butt for his wit. Unfortunately, Tcheriapin recounts one of his amorous adventures in Paris, not knowing that the girl he loved and deserted was the subject of Andrews' only great painting, "A Dream of Dawn." Andrews kills him in a fit of fury, and in order to protect their circle from investigation, the members rid themselves of the corpse in a most singular way: shrinking it to doll-size and preserving it with a formula developed by one of the members.

The story is unfolded by Dr Kreener to Knox (presumably) and he takes Knox to see Andrews. In the room, with the painting on the wall, the "statuette" on the mantelpiece, and Andrews huddling in his chair, Knox views with horror the state of the murderer. And then, faintly, growing louder by the second, comes the haunting strains of a violin melody, "The Black Mass" -- Tcheriapin's only published original work. Knox flees the room, leaving Andrews crying out in fear as the dirge beats upon him, a vengeance from beyond the grave!

"The Hand of Mandirin Quong" is perhaps a fantasy of the mystery-detective type. Again, Knox crosses the trail of an old Indian Corps comrade, Adderley, who had disappeared years ago, under the veil of suspicious rumor. Adderley is a hunted man, fleeing from nook to nook around the world, a scant pace from the avenging hand of the Mandirin Quong. Knox listens to his story, and allows Adderley to enlist his aid in defending him from the shadow of death that fast approaches. Knox fails to act quickly, and Adderley's body is found, his throat pierced by a long slender wound. In the pond waters is found a long fingernail, encased in a jade protector. The hand of the Mandirin has at last fulfilled its vendetta.

The novel, Nude in Mink (Gold Medal Books #105), is a new work from Sax Rohmer's pen. Mystery, the lurking menace of a shadowy, elusive and beautiful woman, her hunted quarry, and the conventional American journalist caught up in the maelstrom of action are the ingredients of a fast-paced and adventure-filled tale.

Mark Donavan befriends Claudette Dusquenne (the nude in mink), and comes to the attention of Sumuru. Sumura, woman of great beauty, magnetic personality, and many alter egoes, is the guiding mind behind a secret organization seeking to bring peace to the world through beauty. Sumuru plans to develop a new race by mating beauty and intelligence, and placing these cohorts in positions of power. Then, with the Day at hand, her minions will assume power under her direction, and enforce peace under the aegis of beauty.

Her methods are of necessity brutal and dictatorial, which brings into action against her the law forces of the Continent, and her personal nemesis, Dr Steel Maitland. Maitland and Donavan, with the plodding support of restriction-ridden Scotland Yard, foil Sumuru's plans, leaving the end of the novel very much in the air.

Donavan gets Claudette, Maitland prepares to follow the trail of Milady Sumuru, and Rohmer abruptly cuts off Nude in Mink, leaving a carefully paved way open for a sequel. The sequel is much demanded, for Nude in Mink is reminiscent of the Fu Manchu novels, complete with yellow peril, lovely damsels, and heroic valiants.

For an entertaining evening, or those blank spots after lunch and supper, Tales of Chinatown and Nude in Mink provide ideal time-passing material.

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C E N T R I F U G U M

Oh!
the black emptiness
the unsaid
the tearing out the inmost

The empty glass

The retrospection of

The empty brain

All the sitting and the
rhyming, till the weary
music stops

Tired of the life

The empty glass

The sitting dull withal

Compare the lamp, the dusty
wind outside, the clock
beside the bed

As the wilful sigh and the wistful
glass, the hollow of the night.

(The tired brain
the empty glass)

Watch with the eyes

The empty sphere

Forget the dying lamp.

-- CON PEDERSON

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TWO BOOKS by C. S. LEWIS

by WILLY LEY

WHEN Mr. Clive Staples Lewis' novel Out of the Silent Planet was published, I decided, after reading it, to be a nice boy and keep quiet about it. But then a sequel by the name of Perelandra came along and something had to be said about these two books. And it is entirely Mr. Lewis' fault if this "something" turns out to be nasty.

These two novels are not the first of Mr. Lewis' literary endeavors. The book jacket of the first states that Mr. Lewis, who was born in Belfast, Ireland, in 1898 and is since 1925 tutor of Magdelen College, Oxford, England, won the Hawthornden prize in 1936 with a book The Allegory of Love. I don't know this book, nor do I know his Screwtape Letters, which is said to have been received with enthusiasm in this country. And after reading Perelandra I wonder whether I would like to find out about these two earlier works.

Out of the Silent Planet may be classified as a science fiction story. Its hero is one Dr. Ransom, a philologist of Cambridge, who unexpectedly encounters two old school friends during a hiking trip. These two, after ascertaining that nobody will look for him for quite some time, abduct and drug him and when he awakes he finds himself on board a spaceship bound for Mars. It transpires that the two, of whom only Dr. Weston is important, have been on Mars before, that they encountered an intelligent or semi-intelligent race which demands a human sacrifice before it lets them have their way on Mars (whatever that way may be). The hiking philologist is to be that sacrifice and, accepting the error of the other two as fact, he behaves rather foolishly at first.

However, he quickly comes to an understanding with the intelligent races on the rosy world of Malacandra (Mars). There are three, the seal-like inhabitants of the canyons, representing literature and poetry, the tall and oddly semi-human sorn of the highlands, who represent scientific and abstract thought, and the small and hardly identified pfiffltriggi, representing mechanical aptitude. Once having entered upon the road of symbolism the story, as a story, begins to deteriorate. Then two things happen to enliven it again. One is that the other two earthmen, mainly Dr. Weston, behave abominably. The other is that suddenly a fourth and invisible race makes its appearance, the eldila. The eldila, one quickly guesses, are really angels. There are ranks among them and the top for the planet is represented by Oyarsa, the archangel of Mars.

While the earthmen, except for the hero, of course, behave badly, the story builds up to a climax, the judgment passed upon them by the wise Oyarsa. But the speech of the wise Oyarsa is an awful letdown. It is, as Hitler's biographer Konrad Heiden once said of the Fuhrer, both "terrible and banal." One cannot help but feel that there was no need for a trip to Mars to hear philosophical discussions of that type. You can have that anywhere, anytime, on earth, and it sounds much more bearable out of the mouths of mere humans.

The story ends with the earthmen brought back to earth by the powers of the eldila, the ship being destroyed by the same powers shortly after landing. The reader's reaction at the end of the book is a mixture of sweet and bitter tastes. Mr. Lewis has an almost unique ability for drawing word pictures of an alien landscape.

Mars, in this book, is really alien, not just an arctic salt-desert (which it probably is). And Mr. Lewis has a most amazing choice of words, his style is well-nigh perfect, and there is hardly a point where an editor could try to improve. But it hurts somewhat to see this literary splendor wasted on tiresome and inconclusive discussions.

In Perelandra these good points of the first novel are still there, having shrunk to a few scattered dozen pages. And all the bad points of the first are there too, with a vengeance. This time it is Venus, described as a planet consisting of ocean, fresh water ocean, only, with floating garden islands with delicious fruit, and only one (and incidentally forbidden) fixed land. (Later on there is suddenly another fixed land which is not forbidden.) Dr. Ransom is brought thither by way of eldila magic in a glass coffin, for the express purpose of preventing the second downfall of Eve, the new Eve of the floating islands, temporarily without her king.

While Dr. Ransom still wonders about the new world into which he has been thrust, a spaceship pops out of the golden sky, containing Dr. Weston, possessed by the Fallen Archangel. And then a hundred pages of intellectual seduction follow without any breathing space. Dr. Weston, to quote the book directly, is "a man obsessed with the idea which is at the moment circulating all over our planet in obscure works of scientifiction, in little interplanetary societies and rocketry clubs, and between the covers of monstrous magazines, ignored or mocked by the intellectuals, but ready, if ever the power is put into its hands, to open a new chapter of misery for the universe. It is the idea that humanity, having now sufficiently corrupted the planet where it arose, must at all costs contrive to seed itself over a larger area."

But this Dr. Weston, the scientist, because he is a scientist, is also the vessel of the Devil. The trouble experienced by Mr. Lewis is this, that according to his own doctrine all future humanities must have human shape, because Christ assumed human shape. The other trouble experienced by Mr. Lewis is that in all the discussions which go through the book, dripping transcendental nonsense as they crawl along, the Devil is usually right. And the solution is what one would expect of a philosopher: Dr. Ransom has to kill Dr. Weston with his bare hands, to destroy the vessel of the Evil. After which the archangels of Mars and Venus speak as no archangels should and Eve finds her king and the reign begins, hinting, curiously enough, that after the evil spirit of Earth has been subjugated, space would be thrown open to humanity. This is, at least, what it sounds like to me; any other reading of the same paragraphs is probably just as acceptable.

Mr. Lewis seems never to have seen a scientist in the flesh, else he would not ascribe to them the behavior of slave traders and of those politicians which have made a bad name for all politicians.

What he really describes is the behavior of a type which by now seems to be extinct, the behavior of the fanatical missionary who, like Eyraud on Easter Island, destroyed irreplaceable material just because it was "heathen." What Mr. Lewis really needs is a great deal of factual knowledge, including a few courses in the principles of scientific method and scientific thinking. Because of this lack of his, Perelandra, in spite of its still admirable style, and in spite of some intriguing scenes and landscapes, is a thoroughly bad book.

(Reprinted from Chanticleer #3)

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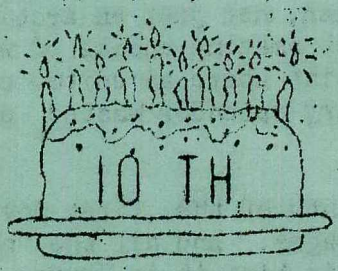

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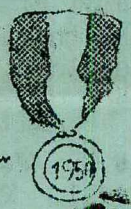

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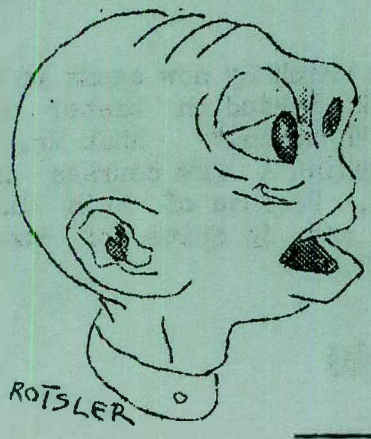

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