Fortissimo trumpets proclaim the presence of the beginning of the tenth year of Horizons. This autumn of 1948 sees the production of volume 10, number 1, whole number 36, FAPA number 30, VAPA number 10. Harry Warner, Jr., 303 Bryan Place, Hagerstown 1-A, Maryland, is lord high everything. The Doubledoubletoilandtrouble Mimeograph does the mechanical work, with Warner's help.

In the Beginning

I must say that I never thought that Horizons would last this long. I pulled two bad boners last issue: I said that this would be the tenth anniversary issue of Horizons, which is a year too premature, and I mixed up the whole number and FAPA number figures on the masthead to cause this fine publication to have appeared four more times in the FAPA than can be accounted for by its total number of issues.

But the start of the tenth year of publication isn't bad, as fanzines go. Horizons began shortly after Spaceways, as a hectoed repository for all the fan fiction that was being submitted to Spaceways. I quickly got tired of the work of putting out two fanzines on a subscription basis, and turned Horizons into the FAPA on a personalized basis, finally giving up the hecto pan after another year or two of striving to make the purple legible. Only in my balmiest days of fan activity did I have the ambition to turn out two magazines regularly, but I don't really regret it. It was fun of a sort while it lasted, and if I'd done only one sensible thing in my life, that was the decision not to quit fandom altogether when I found that Spaceways was too much for me. There was a big temptation to drop everything as long as I had to drop some of it, and there was certainly enough precedent from great fans of the past. But I've clung like grim death to some things--a few correspondents, FAPA activity, Astounding--and I feel all the better for it. If any FAPA members who have recently expressed an air of disgust with all fandom thing that this paragraph is intended in their direction, they are absolutely right.

Incidentally, I still have hopes of putting out the one issue of Horizons that failed to appear. That was at the end of 1943, when I was abed with intestinal flu for three weeks and just failed to hit the mailing. It is the only blot on a perfect four-issue-per-year schedule.

No FAPA or VAPA reviews this time. Harold Cheney and Jim Blish took up my proposal of last issue and plan to publish them this time.

As for the future of Horizons, it depends on the draft. I am almost certain to encounter a pre-induction physical examination before my 26th birthday arrives on December 19, and everything depends on that. If worst should occur, I think that I'd have time to produce yet another issue of Horizons over and above this one, and by delaying its release insure my continuance in both organizations for a while longer. Along the same lines, I think that it would be advisable for thoughts on the subject of activity requirements for draftees to be brought forth. I don't think that the draft is going to hit the VAPA members so hard, since many of them are married or previously rejected. But the draft in its present form is pretty sure to catch at least a few FAPA members, and it is very probable that the present draft is merely a ground-breaking procedure for a real all-out conscription program to be enacted following the elections. I'll leave it to someone else to write amendments or bylaws on the topic.

Blame Laney for This

It's hard to tell. Maybe I wouldn't feel like reminiscing if it weren't for "Ah, Sweet Idiocy!" On the other hand, this month represents just ten years since the days when I was planning my first fanzine, and that might have been enough to get my started without the example from F. Towner. Irregardless of whether the following contains anything of interest, I guarantee that it will not be as long as the Laney memoirs and will contain less of a shocking nature.

Matter of fact, quite a bit of what follows about the early days of Spaceways was to have appeared as the introduction to an index which Bob Tucker planned to issue for that magazine. Just when he was becoming really interested in fanzine indexes, however, he discovered that he could turn out mystery novels with equal ease and somewhat more profit. I shall proceed on the assumption that that introduction will never see the light of day.

After ten years of publishing, I'm still not sure what it is that causes a fan to start publishing. My example is a fairly average one, in all probability. A letter in Astounding's pages in 1936 has brought me about a dozen replies, and half of those people went on to become regular correspondents. Among them was James S. Avery, who immediately fascinated me because he lived in Skowhegan, Maine, which sounds like the most romantic and adventure-packed name in the nation. Both of us received a sample fanzine from time to time--Fantasy Magazine, Novae Terrae, The Phantagraph--and he showed somewhat more enthusiasm than I did about them, but I don't think that either of us subscribed to any. Then some time in 1937, Avery suggested that the two of us issue a fan magazine. It sounded to me likea ridiculous suggestion. Neither of us had any money to buy equipment and supplies, we had no contacts in the fan world, not even any knowledge of what most of the present-day fanzines were like. I said as much and he dropped the subject. One year passed and he brought up the matter of publishing a fanzine once again. This time I was wildly enthusiastic. We had no more money, experience, or contacts than a year before, and after ten years of pondering the matter (off and on!) I still don't know what new factor caused me to bite in 1938 at what I had ignored in 1937.

We did some very stupid things, and we had some miraculous luck. Avery promptly decided that he would do the publishing and I would do the editing. I remember some puzzlement on my part as to what "editing" meant when issuing a fanzine; it seemed to me that about all you could do was copy off the stuff that was sent you and hope for the best. Judging from the way things look today, that is still the prevalent attitude among subzine publishers. In order to give myself something to do, while we were scraping together enough cash to buy a hectograph and some paper, I decided to try to get material for the first issue. Lack of addresses was a handicap--remember, I didn't even have enough fanzines to know where the then prominent fans lived--but I scoured Brass Tacks and Discussions until I had found ten victims in the fan field and ten victims in the professional author field, and wrote each of them a letter.

Fan lyricists have sung of the indescribable emotions that an individual experiences when he has his first contacts with the people who write and write about science fiction. Cynics put this down to adolescent hero worship and sneer at that wonderful sensation. I don't think that it is quite as bad as that. I'm inclined

to believe that the feelings are more akin to those that come from shaking the paw of a spider-man from Mars than to those that originate in a personal word from Joe DiMaggio or Ike Eisenhower. It isn't so much hero-worship as it is the discovery of a new world that had been completely and thoroughly closed and locked in the past: a world which friends in the home town didn't enough know existed, a world which had seemed quite as remote and almost as mysterious as Venus. There is the egoboo at knowing that these people have taken the time to write you, there is the relief at the realization that they are human after all, there is the sudden ray of hope that maybe some day you too can become a famous fan. At the time of those first contacts, belief in the possibility of writing for the prozines is usually just a little too much for the imgination.

In any event, something like five of the ten prozine writers and seven of the ten fans to whom I'd written replied, if memory serves. All the letters were friendly, most of them contained material, and the problem of filling up the first issue of the fanzine was solved. I'm inclined to think that the same method of obtaining material would work today for the editors who can't find enough to fill their pages. Yet few of them try this perfectly obvious and simple method.

Meanwhile, Avery and I had toyed with the choice of a title for the fanzine, and had finally settled on Spaceways. A couple of people have insisted on praising me for this fine title, but it wasn't my inspiration; Avery thought it and a half-dozen other good ones up. (Teutonic influences are occasionally to be found in the writings of Warner; see how he [illegible] tacks the other half of a verb at the very end ofa sentence all too frequently on!) However, he didn't have as much luck with the hecto pan as he did with the title.

Flushed with the success with the letters, I had mailed out 50 postals announcing the imminence of Spaceways to all the fan addresses I could find. These postals contained a broad hint that a subscription would be the appropriate thing to purchase, and perhaps a half-dozen of the recipients mailed dimes or quarters. I had also arranged for exchange advertisingwith several other fanzines--the other fanzines were to advertise Spaceways immediately, and would in return get a big plug in the first issue of Spaceways. These obligations had all promised the first issue well before the end of 1938, and there were the rash promises that I had made to the contributors, too. It must have been about October of that year when I was brought to earth with a sickening thud: Avery announced in a disillusionedletter to me that the hectograph is the invention of the devil, that it is simply ridiculous to presume that a mere mortal should be expected to produce a fanzine out of such a contraption, andthat we'd better just forget the whole thing.

At that time, I was blissfully unaware of the real nature of hectographs and was thoroughly baffled by Avery's letter. I was also a bit frightened: dimes and quarters still trickled in almost every day, and it would have taken almost all the spare cash in my possession just to pay the postage on the letters mailing back the money which had already been spent. Salvaging of the project through a reversal of duties occurred to me, but Avery didn't seem interested. He had put the hectograph away in the deepest recess of his closet and didn't even want to touch it to wrap it and mail it to me. (Six months later, he want to inspect it, found it covered with a writhing, eldritch greenish substance, and shakenly consigned it to the purifying flames of the backyard incinerator.)

Then God entered the picture. A local church, by dint of [illegible] efforts from its sewing circle, Intermediate Christian Endea-

vor, and Busy Men's Bible Class, had succeeded in boosting attendance on Sundays to a point where the pastor was wearing himself out in cranking the mimeograph handle that produced the programs for the services. The Rev. Dr. Norment talked his official board into purchasing a new, electrically-driven mimeo, and the old one ceased its function as a force for good in the world, becoming the Doubledoubletoilandtrouble Mimeograph. It cost only ten bucks, which was pretty much of a bargain even in those pre-inflation days. It is an antediluvian A.B.Dick machine, built with the solidity of a battleship and weighing only slightly less than a cubic foot of neutronium. I've never determined its exact age, but some idea may be gathered from the fact that it originally used a kind of stencil that was unobtainable even in 1938, and had to be converted to take the punch arrangement at the top of stencils that is standard today. It has an automatic inking arrangement which doesn't work and a revolution counter which does work, and has never required a new part or any repairs of any type in these ten years.

So I started on Spaceways on my own hook, telling Avery what I was doing and not waiting for him to pass judgment on that action. Things went surprisingly well: Macbeth, despite its many faults, had the abilityto cut stencils very well, and the only hitch was getting the completed first issue stapled--local five-and-tens didn't sell staplers in those days, a good one was beyond my means, but once again fate stepped into the picture, a local industry went bankrupt, all the office equipment was sold for a song, and the Bostitch that has worked to perfection ever since entered my possession.

During most of Spaceways' existence, people wanted to know just what Avery did onthe magazine and why his name was on the contents page as one of the editors. Those questions I ignored, for the simple reason that I was a bit frightened. I was enjoying the new experience of putting out a fanzine immensely, Avery was ominously silent, and I feared a split between us. Such a split would not have interefered with the actual publishing, since I was doing all the work, but a certain amount of justice would have been on his side if he had claimed that I was overstepping my authority; after all, the magazine had been his idea in the first place, he had originated the title, helped to plug it, aided with the financing, and had generally been the spark plug up to the time that he encountered that hectograph. I'm pretty sure he was badly hurt, but he never reached the explosion point, and our correspondence was soon back on the old status, except for a tacit understanding by which we said as little as possible about Spaceways. I sent him a few extra copies of each issue, he eventually wrote a few articles for it, but aside fromthat his name on the masthead was merely a token gesture, which I kept there as a precautionary measure.

5 Avery, incidentally, negotiated the task of disappearing from fandom without much trouble. He spentmost of the war in the navy, visited me once, and we got along even better person to person than we had in the corresponding days before the Spaceways situation arose. Before thewar he had been working as correspondent for his part of Maine with one of that state's largest newspapers. After VJ-Day, he got married, and the last time he wrote, was attending college in Boston and enjoying fatherhood. He occasionally picks up an issue of Astounding, and writes to me whenever he happens to think of his days in fandom. Judging from that one visit and hundreds of letters, I'd say he is one of the most normal persons ever to be active in fandom.

The lesson and the moral of Spaceways? Well, it's pretty much negative. I never participated in fandom with the belief that it would cause me to become famous or help me to save the universe. Putting out Spaceways for four years taught me certain things that

I might not have learned without issuing the magazine, but nothing that I could not have learned in other ways if necessary. I picked up a lot of typing speed, and the publishing activity kept my mind off the war to a gratifying extent. Considered as a hobby, I see nothing wrong with fanning and fanzine publishing. It is much less expensive than most hobbies, doesn't clutter up the house quite as badly as some avocations, and it can be enjoyed in all weathers, at any time of the day or night, and in great or small measure.

So I don't consider the hours spent on Spaceways as wasted hours. If I had neglected things that should have been done to put out the magazine, then there would be cause for regret. But if I hadn't indulged in stencil-cutting and material-begging, I wouldn't have done anything better with those hours. Incidentally, a few people still have an exaggerated idea of the amount of time and money unecessary for subzine publishing. If you organize your work properly, youcan stencil and mimeograph a 24-page fanzine in a few days's spare time or in two days off if you really want to do everything in a hurry. It's the accessory things, like the corresponding with your contributors and the people who write letters of comment, that occupy the time. As for money, Spaceways broke even on a number of issues and rarely lost more than a dollar an issue until the very end. Even allowing for the increased costs of supplies in recent years, I'd guess that an even financial break with a moderately large fanzine would still be possible today by counting the cash value of exchange fanzines received among the income, something that I never did.

Nor do I regret discontinuing Spaceways when I did. My energy had sagged a bit below the point that divides a pleasant task from a worrisome chore. I think that Spaceways would have seen a couple of more issues if I hadn't listened to the people who insisted that it should contain more art work--the infernal nuisance of arranging for illustrations and getting them onto the stencil took a lot out of me, and hastened the decision to quit publishing. A couple of years ago, around the end of World War Two, I toyed with the notion of resuming Spaceways, then recovered my senses in time. I'm absolutely certain that that old thrill would vanish after one or two issues.

So please don't pay any attention to people who rave as violently against fandom today as they raved in favor of it a few years ago. It's the way you behave in fandom, not fandom itself, that determines your experiences.

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Continued atrophy of the sixth sense that once enabled me to find whatever I wanted in the chaos of the attic has eliminated When We Were Very Young from Horizons for the second straight issue. If I don't forget the department and if I can find the appropriate FAPA mailing, it will resume next issue. '' I might as well add at this point the warning that at least half of the next issue of Horizons will be given to an expositions of the reasons why I'd rather listen to the operas of Verdi than to the music of Bach. I didn't arouse as much excitement from this blasphemy as I would have liked, from that casual statement of that preference an issue or two ago. So I'm going to shoot the works next time.

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The famous experiments of Pasteur and his school definitely proved that even the simplest micro-organisms cannot appear spontaneously ..... But.....after all nobody can be sure of what would happen if a bottle of pasteurized milk should be opened a couple of million years after it was sealed! --George Gamow

Conventional Remarks

Anyone in the assemblage who thinks I should not discuss fan conventions because I never attend the things should read no further. I think it is often easier to see clearly at a distance.

The first of my two suggestions concerns the fetish of one "world convention" each year. It isn't hard to remember several occasions when all fandom was almost plunged into ghastly war by a large-scale "conference" in one city close to the time of the authorized convention in another city. It is quite obvious that a big "conference" in New York could take away some of the glitter from a convention in Boston two weeks later.

But I don't see why there should be only one convention to a year. A system of two conventions each year, one of them always in the east and the other in the west, might work very well. Not more than ten to 20 per cent of any convention's attendees come from the other half of the country. Under a two-convention system, some westerners would refrain from attending the east coast event because another was available in their own back yard; granted, and vice versa. But that wouldn't cost either event more than a dozen attendees at the most. Some fans would want to attend both each year, and everyone would have a convention within reasonable traveling distance each year.

One correspondent said this would complicate matters for midwestern cities. I replied that Denver is the only true midwestern town that has ever had fandom big enough to want a convention. Chicago and Cincinnati sound midwestern to us provincial easterners, but they aren't, in a real geographical sense. The real midwest could get a convention any year no town on the east or west coast was interested. The important thing, of course, would be to keep the dates far enough apart to avoid conflict between the two. Alternating Memorial Day or July Fourth with Labor Day would work.

The other suggestion deals with polls. No one has pointed out that conventions offer the only means of taking fan polls in which participants can be anonymous. Mail polls fail because a filled-out questionnaire reveals its identity through the postmark, typewriter, or the answers themselves. If anyone feels moved to poll fandom on really intimate subjects, I suggestion that the Cinvention be used for this purpose.

A real Kinsey report for fandom with fair degree of accuracy would be possible, if participants didn't fear identification. It wouldn't be hard for the polltaker. He could prepare the ballots in advance, distribute them to each fan at registration or in some other way that would insure one to each individual. A locked box with a slit in the top could be provided in which the folded ballots would be placed at any time during the convention. After the event, the polltaker could take the whole works home and count and deduce and analyze fandom at his leisure. Stuffing the ballot box would be impossible if only official ballots were regarded in the tabulation. Safeguards against deliberately wrong answers would be out of the question, but at least the inevitable wisecrack replies could be ignored in tabulations. Anonymity would be easily obtained: there would be no postmarks for identification, few fans at the convention would haveor use their own typewriters, and determining the participant's identity from a pencil scrawl done in haste during a spare moment at a convention session would be an impossible task for anyone short of an expert on handwriting. So the next move is up to de la Ree, Widner, Tucker, or anyone else who is in a polling mood.

Quick, Watson, the Needle!

Someone has expressed the hope that I shall write less about recordings of vocal music. That is a forlorn hope. A bit of explanation might induce some people in the audience to understand, even if they can't condone, however. I own seven Beethoven songs and none of his symphonies on records, but that doesn't mean I believe the songs better than the symphonies. My record buying is largely governed by the music that I hear on the radio. I don't purchase records which I hear broadcast with fair frequency--not as long as there are a lot of records that I don't get to hear on the air. My radio listening to good music is confined to two hours daily, Monday through Friday--and both of those hours are devoted to symphonic music. I can hear certain operas once a year on the Met broadcasts, and some varied types of music are available Saturday evenings and before work begins on Sunday. But the chamber music and vocal music broadcasts that are available to me are far in the minority. So the remainder of the world's great music that I don't hear frequently is what I buy on wax--vocal music, for the most part, and chamber music, for almost all of the rest.

Incidentally, there is also the consideration that the standard symphonic works are not apt to become unavailable in recorded form. New waxings of all nine Beethoven symphonies are released every two or three years, and each of the nine is currently available in two to six different versions. But "An die Ferne Geliebte" has been released in this country once once, to my knowledge, in over two decades of electrical recording. It might go the way of many of the finest songs of Schubert, Wolf, Franz, and Strauss at any time.

So this article will be about some records from Schubert's song cycle, Die Winterreise, The Winter Journey. The things that the recording companies have done to Schubert's song cycles are wondrous. To own the 24 songs in this cycle, you must purchase two Columbia and one Victor album, then juggle your discs like a prestidigitator to play the songs in proper sequence. The Schone Mullerin situation is even screwier. Nineteen of its 20 songs are in a single Columbia album, but to obtain the missing portion you must buy a five-record Victor album.

It is also lamentable that no domestic complete recordings of these cycles sung by a male voice are available. Both cycles concern tragic love affairs of young men, but the artistry of Lotte Lehmann is great enough to minimize this obstacle. I strongly recommend purchase of her stuff while it remains in the catalog--some of it presumably will give way tomake room for more albums like the one from "Big City"--and I suggest that a start be made with Victor M-692, which contains 11 of the Winterreise songs.

In "More Than Singing," Lehmann writes that she thinks the hero of Winterreise has gone a little mad from his grief. That isn't the whole story. He is wobbling precariously on the very borderline of a mental disorder, probably paranoia. In song after song, he interprets a blind force of nature or some inanimate object as conspiring against him, or serving some special function for his benefit alone. The graveyard that he passes is completely full, containing no room to spare for his bones. He wakes one morning, after sleeping outdoors during a frosty night, finds his beard and hair whitened with the rime, and for a moment persuades himself that he has grown old and grey, with a consequent extinguishing of the fires of passion. Almost always he recovers himself at the end of the song and realizes the true situation.

Although the songs in Winterreise and Schone Mullerin run to

certain points of similarity on the surface, there is all the difference in the world deeper down. Although both are told by the unhappy lover in the first person, Winterreise is a subjective psychological study, and Schöne Müllerin is an objective narrative. The man who loved the Schöne Müllerin had a grief that is just as deep, but he is an essentially simpler person who has the ability to retreat into the refuge of suicide at the end; his song cycle begins before he meets the girl and the last song is sung by the brook after his death. The first Winterreise song occurs after the hero's disillusionment with the girl, and the final one promises no real solution to his woes.

One of the unanswerable questions about these songs is the extent to which Schubert consciously strove for his strokes of genius. Did he knowingly decide to write the saddest songs in the major mode, and reserve the minor mode for the semi-cheerful ones, throughout most of the work? Did he has a definite effect in mind when he reshuffled the sequence of the poems? Did he deliberately refrain from the conventional sort of imitative effects until the very last song?

Whether all this happened through deliberate reasoning or the magic of the subconscious, the result is sublime. There are no whistling chromatics to suggest the wind's howling in "The Stormy Morning," no pianistic imitations of the cries of the bird in "The Raven," but the thick chords in the accompaniment of the former and the slow flapping in the relentless rhythm of the latter are a sort of impressionism that suggests far more perfectly than any mere imitation.

The Victor album under consideration has its flaws. From the mechanical standpoint, it is necessary to turn up the volume control uncomfortably high to get the proper amount of sound. Fortunately, the result is naturalsounding, and does not suffer from the poor balance between voice and piano that has spoiled many Lehmann records. Her voice is not quite able to cope with the gymnastics of "The Stormy Morning," and she sings "In the Village" at an unusually rapid pace, possibly because she hasn't sufficient breath to handle its long phrases at a more moderate pace. I am also disappointed in the overrestraint that she exercises in her treatment of "The Guidepost," and one of my rare record extravagances has consisted in the purchase of the old Alexander Kipnis recording of this song, which is done by him with much greater dramatic impact and intensity.

But such considerations are very small beside Lehmann's superlatively intelligent treatment of the songs. She is one of the few singers in captivity who can represent a modulation in the music with not only the correctly pitched notes but also a change in the tone quality that fits the emotional effect of that modulation. What if her breathing is painfully loud on these records? Every song becomes a tiny music drama, when she sings it, and "The Raven" becomes one of the most terrifying things in all music. That silent bird is far more menacing than Poe's garrulous visitor.

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Add to the list of letterheads that fascinate me: The one I received from someone in Indiana, who requested a back issue of Horizons, and wrote on stationery belonging to The Silver Id Press.

Then there is the sign which the janitor at the office created when the little stand bearing the dictionary was several times pushed near an open window and got wet from a thundershower. It read in laborious pencil lettering: PLEASE DO NOT MOOVE DICTIONARY.

This Has Nothing To Do with Fantasy
II. Bureaucrats I Have Known....

Newspaper work gives a splendid opportunity to observe the bureaucrat at first hand, together with a considerable amount of contact with the specials at the distance of mailed press releases. As long as I don't have to work for them, I love to observe them in action. Most of them are in governmental jobs; the remainder may usually be observed in industrial or commercial positions where the company in question hasa regional or national monopoly on the product or service that it offers. I think that this is very significant; I think that bureaucracy in competitive business wrecks the firms that permit it to flourish, and it can survive only where there is no rival to get things done in a more efficient manner.

I would love to know the identity of the gentleman at the University of Maryland who is called director of public information. Our activities came into juxtaposition when a man who was born near Hagerstown did a verry clumsy thing. This local man, an official in the University's extension service, was stupid enough to die on a Saturday. The height of this folly will become apparent.

We shall call the deceased Edward Ingram, since those were his given names. He had been working for the University long enough to knowwhe that Saturday is not a working day there. He had a brother living at Hagerstown, and told the brother not to worry about publicity for the obituary in case his illness proved fatal. "The boys down here at the University will take care of all the news stories for me," he whispered a day or so before he died.

Then he went and died on a Saturday. The brother went down to make arrangements for the funeral later the same day. He was disappointed to learn that it couldn't be conducted the third day after the death, which is the custom in this section. "We're entirely too tied up on Tuesdays to have funerals," the University people said. "It will have to be Wednesday. That isn't such a busy day."

The director of public information was not in evidence on a Saturday, but Edward Ingram's brother was assured that this official would try to stretch the point and seek the information from the University's files for preparing a press release. The brother could have supplied this information, of course, but that would have been as unorthodox a method of procedure as a telephone call to the newspaper informing the press of the death would have been.

Sunday night, the brother phoned me at the office. He was highly apologetic, but couldn t help wondering whether the University had released the obituary. It was the first we knew of the death, and we promptly informed the Associated Press, which was equally in the dark. The obituary went on the AP wire immediately.

The University's public information department released a mimeographed story to the state's newspapers on the following Wednesday, announcing the death, even though every daily in Maryland had carried the news on Monday. This Wednesday release was conforming to another procedure, you see. Weeklies in Maryland usually publish on Thursday, so stuff is usually mailed out on a Wednesday in order that the dailies shall not scoop the weeklies. In case a University official speaks over the radio on a Friday, the dailies often receive a digest of his talk well in advance with instructions that it is not to be published until the Thursday six days following the radio talk.

Hagerstown has some federal offices, and that gives me a chance to meet the bureaucrats in the flesh. The queerest of these ducks was the manager of the local office of the Society Security Board,

This office has a bit of importance, since it supervises 21 counties in three states. The manager, unfortunately, was obsessed by the belief that he was bound to become a great syndicate writer. He had have the ability to dig up facts, but this underwent a frightening magnification whenever he got drunk. He held his liquor well, except for losing all inhibitions about facts. I spent one entire afternoon in his office, listening to his description of a series of syndicated articles that he planned to write on the nation's sports. "I could do a hundred articles," he told me. "Of course, it will require much research. I shall have to look through dozens of books and encyclopedias and bring together scattered facts to find out where baseball was first played."

This tendency became worst when it concerned news stories. The Society Security press releases are sent by Washington to the regional offices, not directly to the newspapers. The manager was upset because these releases were from the national, not the local angle. He determined to do something about it. He did. Every so often he would put his entire staff to work on research for news articles, for hours at a time. I would eventualy get the result--page after page of data of the most detailed nature. To accompany a press release on the delays that widows create before filing claims, I would receive statistics broken down for each county under the local office's jurisdiction, showing how many widows without children waited one week, two weeks, four weeks, a month, six months; how long the same thing happened for widows with one child; and of course the number of widows, subdivided into location and fertility, who had never applied at all.

All this reached its climax when I started to get invitations to the man's home. He wanted me and the wife to come out to have dinner with him and his wife. "I now have all nine of the Beethoven symphonies, and I want to play them for you after dinner," he said. I hesitated to tell him that I prefer not to hear them all in a single evening, but I could point out that I have no wife. These invitations fortunately never reached the crucial point. I have the impression that my lack of a wife somehow prevented me from getting that dinner, but he seemed to think it was a delicate and embarrassing matter. A couple of months ago, he was "transferred indefinitely" to an office in another city. I dare not risk repeating here the fantastic story that circulated about the cause of this transferral.

The telephone company, possessing no rivals, suffers from bureaucratic tendencies quite as bad as those in the federal government. I watched closely the career of one young man who came here straight out of the Navy to take his first telephone office management job. He was an unremarkable person, aside from a trait of throwing out remarks in the middle of a conversation with no apparent relevance to anything else and instantly dropping the subject. I began to feel a little uncomfortable while with him, in the belief that he had a double mind like The New Adam and occasionally betrayed it in this manner. We were immersed at one time in the interesting topic of a new cable for Hagerstown when he pointed a finger at me, and declared: "You like the music of Shostakovitch." I agreed (it was a half-truth, but they aren't the worst things you commit for the sake of journalism) and he clucked with disgust. It seems that world-wide Navy service had enabled him to build up a collection of everything on wax by Shosty from all countries, which he sold for a song upon discharge, and would have sold to me for an even more modest song.

Things began to happen, however, soon after his arrival here. The switchboard girls struck all over the east, and he was forced to sit in front of the plugs and jacks 16 hours a day, handling emergency calls. Sit isn't quite the word for it; about 75 feet of switchboard space is involved in the local office, and he had to chase up and down the floor whenever a light appeared. This servile task was not forgotten until someone went into the business office to pay a phme bill, and picked up on the way out an envelope from one of the desks, containing all the executives' pay for that month. Through some weird cooperation of fate, the seedy appearing thief wasn't questioned at any of the county banks where he endorsed the checks and cashed them with the names of some of this city's best known men. The manager wasn't really to blame for this incident, since it was apparent to everyone that it was an inexorable combination of circumstances that wouldn't happen again in recorded history. But he was caught in the middle of the maelstrom that this created in the workings of the telephone company's bureaucracy. It probably entailed readjustment of every financial notation in every bookkeeping department in every office between here and Helena, Mont.

One day I entered the business office and failed to see the manager. All the secretaries and file clerks wore shocked, almost guilty expressions. One of them directed me silently to another official's office, where the atmosphere was even tenser. This official led me into a small back office, and confided in me in low, shamed whispers. The manager had quit, walked out. Nothing like that could be recalled by any of the 50-year employes.

Two months later, routine had been established again here. the 16,000 shufflings of jobs involved by the sudden departure had been completed, and someone found out that the blasphemous one had opened a hotel in Denver.

I want to look him up if I ever attend a science fiction convention in Denver. He is a man after my own heart.

Left Ear Department

Nominated as a Candidate for Shaver is the writer of the following missive, which I have reproduced just as it was received by the Hagerstown newspapers:

Am from prominent family,Oakland,Maryland.Former studentSt. James School,Mercersburg Academy,overseas veteran philippines where very ill fever.Still have effects of fever and tropical aclimation.Contracted bronical asthama,catarrah while in service.Getm colds and chills.Disabled Camp Gorden,Georgia.Jan.22 1918.My wrist and hand was partly paralyzed.Entitled to my Constitutional rights. Came here Feb.19.1931.Have been unwilling pawn..Can prove.Attempted fraudulent marriage,fraudulent foster paernts,fraudulent adoption. Outrageous.Please publish.Demand insist their immediate dismissal, arrest prosecution.Was drugged and abducted from Siana Hospital, Baltimore,Maryland Feb.19.1931 Done spite.Very ill at time.Negro jewish sex torture political plot.Can prove.Outrages demand Vengeance.Have wasted all these years here.Shame.Have money,however hidden.Must get out damp climate.You please insist Fort Meyer,Va., immediately cancel,eliminate contact human radio,my left ear.Determined to save my life and health without contact.Have been tortured over twenty years.Demand Vengeance.Must go home vote election,however can vote for whom please.Like talk yourreporter.Perry Point Maryland Monday September 1948.

Only light I can throw is that Perry Point is a Marine hospital.

SUNSET
By Frank Morison. London, 1932, Faber & Faber Limited. 286 pp.

This is a queer book. Divided into three sections, its first two parts are the story of the first contact with another planet and the terrible doom that threatens the earth, not too well described. The third section, which occurs after the story is apparently complete, provides the worth and distinctiveness of the volume. '' I know nothing about Morison and I don't think the book is very familiar to this country's collectors. But the plot of the story is thrice familiar. A typical scientist, John Byford, uses radio and television to contact a being on a planet that circles a distant star. Communications are difficult, and the language barrier slows things, but at last the world learns of this contact, and at the same time is told that a terrible radiation in space is approaching earth, due to wipe out all life here when it comes. There is a panic, stopped only when the scientist is found to have been murdered and the warning of doom created by people who wanted to make a profit out of a panic. '' So far, so bad. The panic is a very dull one, not much more severe than the things that happen after a big football game in this country. There is a little more merit in the chapters describing the communications between the two worlds, presented in a fashion that is vaguely reminiscent of John Taine. But some stupidities of writing and plotting are obvious; Byford, for instance, sends all his messages in two earth languages, English and French, for no discoverable reason. '' But then arrives the third section and the full explanation of the motivation of Byford. We learn after his death that he had reasons deeper than curiosity about other worlds. From boyhood, he had been obsessed with the conviction that something was wrong in the universe. He saw on every hand cruelty, waste, and stupidity. He could not believe that a god who had created the universe was allowing this to occur. Byford began searching for proofs of his hypothesis. Human actions were ruled out, because they could be ascribed to the weaknesses of man. The way a cat played with a mouse before killing it was an important clue; Byford saw no reason why the cat should be considered less guilty than a man who tortures and kills another man. Then Byford chanced upon the case of a rhm rabbit whose jaw was deformed in an odd manner which ultimately caused the animal to starve to death. He thought it was as obvious a case of insanity in the universe as the explosion of a sun. So Byford turned to certain Egyptian manuscripts and the planets around other suns in an effort to throw more light on the situation. '' Morison is no Stapledon, and he makes no effort to solve the problem that he poses in this book. He keeps his narrative simple to the point of naivete, and in this manner he manages to expound his staggering question with a great deal of effectiveness. The hints at the solution to the problem that he gives just before Byford's death are reasonably satisfying to the reader, even though they mean absolutely nothing. '' The whole volume is a combination of the sort of science fiction that flourished in the early days of Amazing Stories, the John Taine method of giving the reader only tantalizing hints of the solution to the problem as the narrative progresses, and even certain tricks of the Lovecraft descriptive method, shorn of the adjectives and horror element. It is as close to a decent combination of science fiction and religious mysticism as any volume that I've encountered over a number of years of reading fantasy stories.