Take a deep breath and prepare for the information that this is volume 10, number 3, whole number 38, FAPA number 32, VAPA number 12 of Horizons, which is edited and published by Harry Warner, Jr., 303 Bryan Place, Hagerstown, Maryland. The production job is done by the Doubledoubletoilandtrouble Mimeograph.

A Little More Learning

It was pleasant to see my Dream Quest article on education stir up a lot of comments in the most unexpected place, the FAPA. In addition to the set of orthodox comments in the form of letters to Don Wilson, and Don Thompson's article in the last mailing, I received a personal communication from [redacted] on the topic which I shall begin by quoting, that being a good way to put off the task of thinking more thoughts on the subject myself:

"I've been thinking a good deal about the learning process recently, perhaps as compensation for the meagerness of my participation in it. Exactly what is involved in 'seeing the point,' 'remembering the essentials,' 'taking the initiative,' etc.? What are the alterable factors which cause differences among students in these respects? Armchair answers are hard to give; & experience is not easily appealed to even thru the unreliable intermediary of one's subconscious generalizations, because of the unduplicatability of human beings and the fact that pre-school training & post-school experience are different in different groups & in different generations. Nevertheless I'm going to wallow in a full generalities in discussing your quite down-to-earth suggestions.

"You seem to want the present system to change principally in the direction of tying schooling in better with the rest of the individual's experience. Fine. The early concentration on practical things, things which the student immediately associates with events outside the classroom, fits in with this. Your pattern seems to be for each student to go thru a process of rediscovering the world as it currently exists, coming only later to abstract subjects & history. First the preparation for our society, & the gathering of facts which are found interesting; later the consideration of possible alternatives & evolution in societies, & generalizations from facts. It's an ordering which seems natural. But I'm not sure. I think that perhaps the ability to marvel at the airplane wd be lost if the possibility of airplaneless worlds wasn't submitted to the kids' consideration pretty early; etc etc. The picture of current US society mite be more vivid & interesting to kids who compared it with ideas, however indefinite, of primitive or stefnal societies. In other respects, too, the later emfasis on generalizations mite be impossible if you didn't give some notions of the way one goes about making profitable generalizations. In particular, take math. I suspect that without emfasizing math as a memory feat or a contest ofskill it cd be introduced naturally into gradeschool classes-- & I don't mean only in such overmechanical ways as having the kids pay & make change when they play grocerystore, tho that procedure's necessary too. No, don't just reduce arithmetical laws to the status of arbitrary rules like those of language, necessary for social intercourse; bring them in as often as possible as ways of figuring out 'that which is the case.' If you do it that way, you'll naturally teach the conceptual, nonmechanical, but still efficient ways of looking at the subject which DBT favors.

"I think the sort of change in your scheme I'm suggesting will avoid the danger of the kids' growing up accomplished & fairly facile but limited; the early years are the time when initiative can be made a habit without being forced, & when the habit of concen-

trated thot can be learned. At the same time, I shd emfasize that my suggestions are modifications of your basic idea, not arguments for the conventional system as opposed to it! The conventional system has two great faults which yours wd correct. First, the average student regards school as a meaningless chore, while the brite student may regard it as the center of his life & his primary source of egoboo (outside his family); both separate it in their minds inordinately from the rest of their experience. This fault you & a good many progressive theoreticians have dwelt on. Second, there's an overemfasis on end rather than process. The extreme form of this is the hero-worship which passes for history & history of science. One is told, not what Washington did & what it was like to be part of the events of Washington's time, but 3 reasons why Washington was a Great Man. One is told, not of the development of electricity to a major technological factor, but just that Morse (of all people) did Something Wonderful. Without doing any sort of detailed job on such things, it shd be possible to avoid this approach. Certainly it'd be desirable to; for its result is an attitude in the student of reverence for the outstanding nature of the accomplishment above its content & evolution. (I'm tempted here to digress, but will postpone the gratification of the urge.) In your scheme, even as amended by me, such an error doesn't arise; because such history as does come in in early education comes in because it fits in naturally with things in whose content the students are interested, so it'll be studied for its content. &, as I guess is clear without further belaboring, history is far from the only example I cd have used for this, nor is hero-worship the only manifestation.

"(Here's the digression promised above: The fellow next door quotes Freud to the effect that all Jewish boys want to be the Messiah & all Jewish girls are jealous of males because the Messiah must be a man! [illegible] she says [illegible] ing. Certainly plenty of kids, of whatever religious training, develop Messiah complexes, of whatever pseudo-rational superstructure. Christians sometimes make open attempts, with such things as the chummy little Lives of Christ, to get yung kids to think of themselves as Little Jesuses. It's all very well to want the kids to 'be good,' but it's quite out of order to get them thinking, or even only imagining, that they're the Blessed Lamb the preacher's talking so respectfully to & all the grownups are kneeling to. To get them to be good in a normal & constructive way, what's needed is not self-centered fantasy, but social sense, of which the Messiah complex is a destroyer. Some mite stick up for the M c as providing 'drive,' something highly rated & highly rewarded (apparently) in our society; I reply, 'Drive for what?' Getting back to the original point--shdn't the students' drive be motivated by more than a superiority-inferiority complex?)

"That's about all on this tack. I think another consideration is the difference in social structure between family, school, & the great world. This has been written about a good deal, & I haven't read what's been written, so I won't attempt specific comments; but I have a general feeling that it's easy to get the kid to accept the teacher as a quasi-parent but undesirable to do so, & that progressive ideas of emfasizing the class as a social group rather than each student's relation to the teacher, are sound. Written compositions shd be slanted towd the class, not tord the teacher, etc.

"A few minor points. 1) I disagree with Laney on practicability of teaching yung kids to type. The coordination required is actually less than for writing, I shd think. You mite find kids wd think writing so tuf they'd be reluctant to learn it; if so, it cd be put off till they were ready. (You may have made this &/or other of these remarks already; they sound in line with your thinking.) 2) The difference in attitude between Boggs & Pavlat on the place of extracurricular life in the adolescent's education is noteworthy. Neiter Boggs's semi-serious sticking up for the value of veneer nor Pavlat's plug for experimental fornication exausts the subject. Both imply incorrectly a division between intellectual & social development. Or perhaps B & P don't intend that implication-- at any rate, I don't. The formal academic work shd preferably be integrated in the student's mind with the intellectual bull-session, which in turn shd be integrated with social enjoyment. These are 3 things between which at various times I've tended to draw lines; to do so is unsatisfying. The first line is eliminated when students are interested in their courses & know others who are; the second is helped out the window (into the arms of a tangled metafor) when you have coeducational schools with contact between girls & boys made as easy as possible.

"Hmm. It happens that as I write a large foto of my 8-yr-old sister is on the desk in front of me. Terry has in the picture a brite print dress, butiful curly hair, & a front tooth missing on the classical model; I wonder what she's thinking."

As for me, I feel strongly inclined to write another article on the topic, at least as long as the one in Dream Quest, to amplify the things I said in a rather hurried manner there. But pushing that alluring idea aside, I shall contain myself to the bare exposition of a few more ideas, and some comments on the letters in Primal.

One important thing somehow got left out of that original Dream Quest article, an unfortunate circumstance because it may be a really original idea. I've not seen suggested anywhere the advisability of starting boys to school at a different age from girls. But it seems to me to be the logical thing to do. Girls mature a little quicker than boys when they reach the adolescent stage--you need no statistics to be aware of that, as far as physical development goes. Girls also have the reputation for being "smarter" in elementary schools than boys. Probably statistics exist on the topic somewhere, but I don't know how reliable they'd be; you can always point to the fact that boys on the whole seem "less interested" in studies than girls, and you can't tell whether that results from a personality or mental difference between the sexes. In any event, I think that it would help all around if the boys in each grade were one year older than the girls, preferably through sending the girls to school at the age of five for the first time, and the boys at the age of six as at present.

More reflection has induced me to give up my thought that shorthand should be taught as soon as possible in elementary school. It still should be compulsory, but only at a later time; we might have a bunch of littlepsychopaths if we tried to teach them to write longhand, shorthand, and to type all at the same time. But I think that application of the principles of shorthand to longhand and typing could be taught at a very early date. Schools nowadays don't teach the very important ability to take notes; good taking of notes involves not only skill at leaving out the non-essential words, but also a consistent system of abbreviating the words that are written or typed. Shorthand provides an excellent system of

abbreviating; in fact, some systems, not the Gregg to which I'm referring, utilize the familiar letters of the alphabet and reject the arbitrary lines, circles, curves, and hooks of Gregg altogether. [illegible] in his dissertation above demonstrates a very few basic examples of this sort of abbreviating--shd, cd, and tord, for instance, although he could save still more time by writing it td. Either longhand or typing has an advantage in this respect over Gregg, because of the more generous amount of symbols that are possible. Gregg's are so elementary that abbreviating is just a case of omitting or indicating by position; in typing, you can use a lot of other symbols like & for and, and the same holds true in longhand.

Kennedy's point about dramatics is well taken. I don't see why participation in plays should be an activity for the most active students; it's a wonderful personality developer and confidence builder which should be practically compulsory for every member of every class who can read the English language. Using good plays for this purpose is very important. One of the local churches this winter decided not to put on the usual sort of "amateur plays" that Sunday schools and Youth Fellowships almost always produce. Instead the church put on a real series of topnotch stuff: A. J. Cronin's "Jupiter Laughs," Maxwell Anderson's "Joan of Lorraine," and John Masefield's "The Trial of Jesus." The results were far superior to the worthless dramas that they had done in past years. It wasn't competition with Broadway, of course. Only the mostelementary scenery and props were possible, a sort of Elizabethan staging was required because of limitations of the stage, and costumes were few. But the things carried conviction; I was far less aware of the acting limitations than I usually am at a motion picture. Of course, in case I left it out of the Dream Quest article, I'd like to see ten times more music in the school system: less emphasis on singing, complete elimination of "music appreciation" from the vocabulary of teachers, and in its place at least a half dozen hours of listening to goodmusic every week, and instruction in the piano and at least one other instrument for every student.

I can't agree with Redd's ideas on jobs. Asking an adolescent to work several hours daily after he has been in school for six or seven hours is a pretty serious thing; it means either his giving up most extracurricular pleasures, or else driving himself dangerously close to exhaustion. I know it's done today, and I also know a lot of Hagerstown high schoolers who are very close to complete exhaustion; I think it'll show up in the form of poor health in later years. Besides, in poorer economic times an educational system which had jobs for students as one of its foundations would make it pretty tough on men who were trying to find work themselves.

Guerry Brown's insistence on visual aids also fails to appeal to me. They are badly overstressed right now as a value to education. I don't think the mind retains the knowledge that it gains through pictures as long as it does what it learns in the orthodox ways, even though the initial impression may be stronger. Of course motion pictures and cartoons were very valuable in speeding up the training of soldiers in World War Two, but that isn't a very valid analogy. This was a somewhat different sort of knowledge from that which the schools should impart; and it was knowledge that was going to be put into use at once. If you think that pictures cause the mind to retain sharp memories, just ask any of your friends to describe the plot of a motion picture that was in town [illegible] two weeks ago, or to list five photographs from last week's issue of Life. You'll get replies like "Well, there was a story on spring fashions in the magazine" and "I remember that Peter Lorre was the villain," and nothing better.

The Things in the Keller Collection

"Style" is an ambiguous word, and a dangerous one. When you use it to describe literary works, it almost always turns out to be hopelessly Aristotelian. Use of the word "style" is apt to cause the lumping into a neat packing crate of a group of diverse things that really have very little in common. "The Keller style" of writing actually is a description of something which has no single, actual existence. It means just about as much as "the older kind of science fiction" or "the right-thinking people of the world." It gives, to be specific, the impression that there are common factors throughout the fictional writings of an author who has always had a strange inability to distinguish his good writing from the bad, and a more understandable reluctance to keep out of print his inferior work. The collection of Keller stories by Moskowitz and Sykora is evidence that Keller's writing has an idiomatic trend. However, the output for the pulp magazines of Dr. David H. Keller has been varied not only in its intrinsic value but in the writing methods applied. The harping on Keller's "unique" or "personal" style that is found in almost any article about his stories is unfortunate. There is no one style. It is possible to find at least four distinct "styles" in Keller's published fantasy fiction. They are the extremely simple methods of narration and conversation, to which most of his admirers refer, as in "Life Everlasting" and "A Piece of Linoleum"; a rather similar system of syntax which is applied to entirely different purposes, as in the farcical "No More Tomorrows"; the less personal writing habits in stories like "The Thirty and One" which are not easily distinguished from those of the average pulp author; and a sort of compromise between the simplicity and the orthodox, not represented in this collection of stories, but occurring in some of the longer pulp magazine stories like "The Human Termites." The subject he is treating and the seriousness he is lavishing on that subject usually determines the style that Keller uses for any individual story.

Keller's writing idiosyncrasies are hardly spectacular, but some of them were ahead of the time in which they were first used. Some of them are remarkably similar to the more recent gospel of Dr. Rudolf Fleisch, who has revolutionized the wire reports of the Associated Press and influenced newspaper writing in general throughout the nation. Keller recognizes that it is much wiser to use two or three one-syllable words than a single six-syllable word. He avoids what Fleisch lumps together as "affixes"--the prefixes and afffixes that are tacked to the main body of a word like barnacles on a ship, an impediment to reading and quick comprehension. I know of no published fiction in which the sentence structure as frequently is of the simple subject-followed-by-predicate type. I suspect that at least four-fifths of all the sentences in "Life Everlasting" begin with the subject; those that don't usually open with only the briefest of dependent clauses or a prepositional phrase of only two or three words' length. Except when he is using the more standard pulp magazine style, Keller shuns the descriptive adjective; here again, he is applying the rules of good journalism, which teach that the wise choice of the right noun or verb will usually do away with the need for the adjective. Such things, together with the brevity of sentences and the preferences for one-syllable words, are the common factors in Keller's stories, and the persistency with which they are used determines into which of the Keller styles the individual story falls. A whole essay

could be devoted to the particular tricks of the Keller trade. For instance, there is his refusal to allow his characters the apostrophe. "I'll" or "there's" are almost as rare in a Kelleryarn as the past tense in the conversation or narration of a Damon Runyon story.

All this, of course, does not say whether Keller is or is not a good writer. I'm certainly not as impressed by some of these stories as in the days when I first read them, ten or fifteen years ago. Simplicity struck me then as automatically a virtue; now I've swung around to the opinion that simple writing is amoral and can be terribly bad on occasion. Science fiction and fantasy have traveled a certain distance, too. The "human" element which Keller injected into the stories appears a bit more frequently these days in the magazine and book stories of other writers.

That word "human" is almost as misleading as "style" when applied to Kelleryarns. I've found the greatest difficulty in tracking down the origin of the impression of "human" that everyone gets from reading Keller's fiction. Dr. Keller has no great ability to create characters. His hero is usually a greyish blur, as undistinguished as the typical man on the street. The females are nearly always distressingly Victorian and slightly exasperating for their intuitive knowledge of mankind. The minor characters are never sharply drawn; however, Keller is careful to try to make even the least important person in a story a living human, by revealing a little about his hopes or fears.

I think that one clue to this puzzle lies in the peculiar leisureliness and calmness of the people in Keller's stories. With rare exceptions, the main characters are seldom in a hurry or greatly agitated over the problem that confronts them. They have time to talk over the situation in a matter of fact way, even at the crisis; they are quite sure of what they want to do, once they reach decisions and proceed to follow their courses of action in the simplest, most direct manner. There is something strangely impressive about the scientist who can go back to his laboratory and work quietly for two weeks to save the worldwithout even threatening to develop a neurosis or resorting to aspirin; or the father who doesn't even require a long scene with his wife to decide notto raise any more children for the mechanized world of tomorrow.

Then too, Keller pioneered in keeping away from the stock occupations and age-groups of the typical science fiction characters. I don't think that many of his mild heroes are the inevitable bookkeepers, nor are many of his learned heroes the typical scientist. (Make no mistake about it, the situation hasn't improved much in 15 years in the prozines. The young scientist with his eye on the female career girl in Astounding Science Fiction today is just as stereotyped as the more celebrated elderly scientist with the lovely young daughter or niece of the Gernsback days.)

And still I'm writing all around the question of Keller's real worth as an author. Let's get it over with. I think he's a magnificent failure. From the standpoint of sheer literary merit, the stories just don't stand up to the top grade. Dr. Keller seems to be a man without great native ability who has taught himself an enormous amount. He has learned how to write, clumsily and awkwardly and very well, mixed up in a hopeless tangle. He knows an enormous amount about humans and the human mind; he simply lacks the spark of genius, unsemantic as that statement may be. A few drops of the elixir from "The Thirty and One" would solve all our problems. We could instill into the good doctor a little of the sheer yarn-spinning ability of Bradbury or Sturgeon and the critical faculty of Campbell. We'd emerge with a definite number one, top of the heap genius whose fame wouldn't be confined to pulp maga-

an occasional book.

The choice of stories for the "Life Everlasting" collection was a pretty good one. The title story seems to me to be the best novel by Keller that I have read. He has written so much fantasy in the smaller form that no volume of modest proportions could include a really representative collection of short stories in addition to the novel. But Moskowitz and Sykora have included--whether by accident or design--three or four of the short stories that bear on the topic of the novel, then filling out with a sampling of some of his other successful brief tales.

But there is something else that unifies the volume. That is the constant note of allegory that runs through almost every tale in the book. I have the impression that the sense of allegory is not quite as strong in most of Keller's fiction. Here again I don't know whether the editors decided to stress the yarns with the allegorical elements, or included them simply because they preferred them without realizing that the deeper significance is one reason for that preference.

This provides one possible explanation for "The Thing in the Cellar." That never impressed me as the great short stories that its admirers call it. I read it for the first time in the Bizarre Series edition, perhaps ten years ago, and experienced then a sense of disappointment. The ending was painfully evident one-third of the way through the yarn to any reader who had read a good bit of weird fiction and knew that this story would not have a mundane ending. Then too, there are technical faults of writing and construction. The first conversation in the story causes a severe jolt, because the reader has not been informed that the story is taking place in England. However, there must be something to the story; some explanation for the hold that it has acquired over so many readers. The "puzzle" at the end of the story isn't the reason; the majority of weird fiction fails to explain fully the supernatural phenomenon.

Moskowitz in his preface thinks that the story has a moral: "Our own fears will destroy us, if we permit them." I don't think it is quite that; it seems to me that this story has a Freudian explanation. It's a parable, in which the house corresponds to the human mind, the child corresponds to humanity, and the thing in the cellar is the subconscious and the things that lurk deep within its murky depths. I don't know whether Keller wrote it with that intention; if he did not, I think that the Freudian could explain why he wrote it. Certain things in the story that have little meaning from any other angle make sense when the whole is viewed as an allegory: the description of the barricade that divided off the cellar and how it had grown up over the centuries, the tragic result of following the inexperienced doctor's well-meaning advice. The outcome of the story is inevitable if considered in this light, that thing in the cellar does exist in every mind of modern man. It won't chew us up, literally, but it can destroy us in an ethical or moral sense if it is allowed to run loose and fulfill the role of which it is capable.

There is less of the allegory in "Life Everlasting" and more fiction. But it's still a remarkably skillful job of disguising a badly worn theme. I hope that Keller wasn't serious in the foreword when he insisted that it is "a science fiction tale of the most classical type." It is anything but that. It is illogical in construction and in the action of the principal characters; if the older science fiction tale had one strong point, it was logical events following the one accepted presumption of a new invention. Martian invasion, or whathaveyou.

"Sickness" and "illness," for instance, are words which have no correspondence in reality as Keller uses them in this story. He arbitrarily claims that such things as a golden brown tone to the skin and a mowe close observance of the Ten Commandments are symptoms of good health. I wonder how the serum would have acted when confronting the callous that builds up on a finger as a protective element for certain kinds of manual labor. It is also a bit odd that the serum, having given everyone a more cheerful outlook on life, did not also keep the people from becoming hnhappy over the lack of babies. But even if we accept as the improbable thing the all-perfect nature of thisserum, we are still confronted with non sequiturs at the end of the story. No one, to my knowledge, has mentioned in print the illogical aspects of the ending.

We have a serum that prolongs human life indefinitely at the price of sterility. We also have an antiserum which restores fertility at the cost of a return to illness and the certainty of death in less than a century. The serum works on everyone; the antiserum works on everyone who has received the serum; Keller does not say whether a new does of the serum would be effective for the person who has already had both serum and antiserum. Keller insists on treating all this as an either-or proposition, and says that humanity chooses illness, death, and the antiserum for the sake of babies.

Which is all quite senseless. Earth has two billion people, and apparently none of them think of the logical solution: that of giving the serum to the individual only after he has reach maturity, married, and helped tobring into the world as many children as he wishes to have.

So, all through the re-reading ofthis novel, I was tempted to believe that Keller was writing not of some future world in which the serum will exist, but of today. The problem exists right now, just as if the serum were at hand. A young person can have, if not life everlasting, at least a full life, one in which he does not really think that he will die until some vague date that is far in the future. Or that young person can marry and have children and sacrifice a good part of his time, his health, and his happiness to the sake of the next generation. It sounds stupid when stated like that, and Keller had to put the story into the future to bring the theme to life. And that is all that really counts. It's equally stupid to present as a bright, original thought the idea that a syphilitic parent may have a syphilitic child, but Ibsen was able to write a very fine play around that single thought.

"A Piece of Linoleum" seems to me to be the best of the non-fantasy stories in this volume. "The Dead Woman" is slightly more enthralling during the reading, but that is only because of the quite natural interest that everyone has in the morbid. The latter story, judged from the distance of several days, is a little too much like the thing that it probably is--an almost literal transcription of a narrative from an unbalanced individual. But it is rather surprising that "Heredity" had to wait and see print for the first time in a fanzine. It is the best vampire story I have read in a long time, if no one objects to putting into that classification a tale which Keller probably meant to be a mundane account of atavism. I think that this tale should be brought to the attention of the anthologists; it's effective enough when set in a fantasy collection, but it should pack a real wallop if read in the midst of a lot of non-fantasy fiction.

As for "The Cerebral Library," it isn't suitable for reading oftener than once in every ten years; on such an occasional basis,

it's thoroughly entertaining on two levels: for poking fun at the excesses of the average detective story, and as caricature of the earnest people who think that they have found the automatic and infallible road to education, intelligence, and culture simply by reading a certain group of books.

I must confess ignorance on the larger significance of the Cornwall stories. I've read only two or three of them, and none has made a lasting impression. "The Thirty and One" is hardly great writing or outstanding entertainment, and I don't think it would get a second glance if it appeared under another writer's byline. The contrast in style from most of the stories in the volume gives it a little distinction in this particular appearance. There is a certain clumsy tenderness evident here that is missing from even "Life Everlasting," but once again, Keller telegraphs his punches badly. His land of legend lacks the historical solidity of historical fiction and the individualities of the never-never worlds of Clark Ashton Smith, Lovecraft, or Dunsany.

I greatly regret to say that "The Boneless Horror" is simply a very bad story. It contains at least four plots, each of them melodramatic and juvenile, and these contaminate one another still more by juxtaposition. In spots it is terrible enough to be amusing, but that is the only reason for reading it. "Unto Us a Child Is Born" would benefit immensely if that "forward" were amputated. Why the introductory paragraphs are included is a mystery in itself; but to set them off from the story proper creates an unnecessary solemnity as a preliminary that the story that follows hardly deserves, and from which the yarn fails to benefit. The memory of Dostoyevski occasionally bobbed up as I read "The Face in the Mirror," though I don't quite know why. Presumably it results from the fevered nature of the gentleman's monologue; the position in which he finds himself also resembles the situation in at least two of the Russian writer's longer stories. "No More Tomorrows," on the other hand, is a rather entertaining reminiscence of Poe, in the character of the quite innocently evil nature of the narrator and the improbability of the events in which he finds himself.

In any event, the book makes very good reading, even if it doesn't impart the sense of all-powerful greatness that Keller's stories meant to me before I knew better. The collection has much more reason for existing than the majority of the semi-professional ventures that now appear: quite aside from the worth of the stories, almost all of them are difficult to track down in their only previous published appearances, and many of them had been in print only in magazines that have reached such an age that each copy disintegrates if read frequently.

The book is well bound, and clearly printed on substantial paper. Typographical errors are not numerous enough to be a distraction, but they do exist, and it is hard to understand why they can't be eliminated from a project that unlike a fanzine or a newspaper entails months of preparations and preliminaries. More important than the need for better proofreading, however, is the need for a companion volume that would contain "The Literary Corkscrew," "The Revolt of the Pedestrians," "Bindings Deluxe," "The Lost Language," and a dozen other of the better Keller short stories that made us so happy when we were very young.

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Apologies are owing for typography in this issue of Horizons, if it turns out to be worse than usual. The b is sticking on this typer, and the deadline is too close to risk calling a repair man. bbBBbB

Richmond Hill by Night

A ghost from the past broke through the barricades and road-blocks to penetrate Hagerstown a few weeks back, in the person of Richard Wilson, Jr. It was a little odd that he should show up a few weeks after I'd written that article in Horizons on the start of Spaceways. He represents one of the most pleasant memories of those days of 1938 and 1939, and it was rather immaterial that it was the first time I had ever laid eyes on him.

I had sworn witha mighty oath that I would publish one issue of Horizons without referring tomusic, as a bonus to the long-suffering FAPA and VAPA membership, but one becomes necessary at this point. It explains why Wilson had to stay in Hagerstown overnight. It is the oddest of all reasons: phonograph records that created a traffic hazard. Wilson was moving to Washington, and taking along his big collection of jazz records, together with such non-essential things as could be crowded into the remaining space of his car like clothing and personal articles. The phonograph records were all in the rear of the car, and their number was legion. After a couple of near-misses, Wilson discovered what was happening: he had so many records back there that they were weighting down the rear, causing the front of the car to point upward like a spaceship ready to aim for Venus, and the headlights were blinding the approaching drivers. Only daytime driving was possible after that.

Wilson has drifted far away from fandom by now, retaining contact with only a few close pals--Kornbluth and Tucker were the names he mentioned most frequently. But he retains the same engaging personality that he did back in the old days when he was one of my favorite New York area fans, at a time when my sympathy inclined to the Moskowitz-Taurasi side in the feuding. He seems to be one of the very few fans to give out precisely the same personality in reality as he does in his typewriter incarnation; Tucker is the only other example of this situation who comes to mind.

That evening, he was on his way to Washington, transferred there by Trans Radio Press. He apparently has an excellent job in this organization, which is something like the Associated Press but concentrates on serving radio stations. It got him involved in one encounter of fantasy interest: he interviewed Palmer for news purposes several times during the flying saucer turmoil. Wilson is convinced that Palmer believed heart and soul in the Shaver revelations. He is also convinced that Palmer went off his nut temporarily. Wilson can relate a quite fascinating story about some gunk that Palmer had received from a sailor on the west coast, allegedly solidified exhaust or something of that sort from a flying saucer. Wilson followed the adventures of this stuff from laboratory to laboratory; Palmer was sending it around, and said that the chemists couldn't discover its compositions. It finally disappeared in the wilds of the University of Chicago, and Palmer refused to mention it any more.

Nell's creator seemed a little agitated when I told him that the turmoils of New York a decade ago are coming back to life every three months in the pages of Fantasy Commentator, and even more disturbed when he learned that Moskowitz was writing the history of those unforgettable events. However, after I assured him that SaM is considerably mellower now and views things with a less prejudiced eye, Wilson was relieved and didn't even display any interest in getting hold of a copy of The Immortal Storm and find out what was being said about himself.

I'd say that Dick has done one ofthe best possible jobs of adjusting himself to the world at large; he'll never be a fan again, but those days have left no apparent scars.

We Have Wendt

I have never given Science Illustrated more than the most casual of glances. But it has come into my realm of attention indirectly twice in recent weeks, through an article in Shangri-La and a talk by its editor, Dr. Gerald Wendt, in Hagerstown.

The article seems to me to be a beautiful example of how prone fans are to accept as gospel truth anything labeled "science." In Shangri-La's January issue, Jean Cox writes about the popularity of astrology in the world of today. I don't question his opinion that astrology is a lot of nonsense, but I do wish to point out that some of his article is highly questionable.

Cox says he got most of his statistics from Science Illustrated. I don't know how Science Illustrated obtained them, but I suspect that they're nothing more than wild guesses which no one has even taken the trouble to analyze for plausibility. For instance, the estimated number of "devout adherents to astrology in the U. S. is 3,000,000." That seems pretty strong to me. It means that about two out of every hundred individuals in the nation, counting infants and astronomers, are "devout adherents." Now, I have lived in Hagerstown all my life, have worked on local newspapers since reaching maturity, and I think that combination of circumstances gives me a pretty intimate knowledge of the town and its inhabitants. I've encountered a little club of circus fans, I know some people who spend their spare time trying to convince dairy farmers that to breed cattle by artificial insemination is blasphemy, I encounter regularly the elderly man who has devoted his life to lobbying for more veterans' hospitals, and I've investigated a hundred other passions, beliefs, avocations, and queer ideas. Not once have I found a person who could be called a "devout adherent" to astrology. The newsstands stock a few copies of the magazines and the five and tens sell a few copies of the dime horoscopes; on occasion I've seen persons buying them with the same air of amusement as they have when they get their fortune told at the county fair. Yet Science Illustrated would give Hagerstown 800 of those devout adherents.

But even if the adherents keep their interests well hidden, it would seem that the "professional astrologers" would be in evidence. Cox quotes a figure of 25,000 as their number. That means one professional astrologer to every 5,600 persons in the nation, and would require seven or eight for Hagerstown. I know of none. Every so often Madame Jean or Madame Pearl rents a small house near the edge of town and distributes handbills all through the residential sections, offering to read the stars, palms, tea leaves, or whatever else is desired; she usually moves to another town after three or four months and a little later is replaced by Madame Joan or Madame Pauline. I've never known more than one of them in the neighborhood at the same time. Besides, the statistics are a bit contradictory. "Professional astrologer" means, I suppose, a person who earns substantial sums at his work. But Cox quotes as the nation's annual astrology expenditures the figure of twenty million dollars; that means the average astrologer's income must be considerably less than $800 a year, since such things as the magazines and the annual "Moon Sign Book" would consume three or four million each twelvemonth.

I'm on surer ground when it comes to the popularity of astrology columns in newspapers. For years we ran not one but two horoscopes every day--a rather extended one that ran to a half-column,

and another that was a paragraph in length, part of a syndicated feature that was part text, part illustration on a variety of subjects. I campaigned against them for several years, without luck, but the newsprint shortage during the war succeeded where I failed. Both were dropped, within a couple of months of one another. To this day we haven't had a single word of complaint or request to restore them. I talked to a good many people about it, and none of them had noticed the sudden disappearance of the astrology columns; quite a few hadn't been aware that they had been appearing daily for years. Maybe the London newspaper did receive that many requests when it tried to cut out astrology, but I sort of doubt it.

There isn't much of a moral to all the proceeding, except that I think it's a good example of how fans refuse to accept anything in a "science" publication with a grain of salt, and also a fine illustration of the present tendency to view with alarm things of no real danger to our present structure of society. It is bad enough to look through a magazine and be informed by the advertisements that our health and weath depends on regular consumption of Carter's Little Liver Pills, superoctane gasoline, a certain brand of shoelaces, and possession of the collected short stories of de Maupassant. It is even worse when the non-advertising matter in the magazine so regularly proclaims that for sanity's sake, we must become aware ofthe menace of comic books, the grasshoppers in Nigeria, and the addition of the American public to astrology. There is an old adage about the boy who cried wolf.

Dr. Wendt was making his second appearance in Hagerstown this spring. Last time he was here was just four years ago, when I embarrassed him greatly by asking during the question session how soon we would have an atomic bomb. Wendt is avery effective speaker, and has a knack of hiding the sugar coating on the "science" he dishes out to the public. Some of his ideas sounded plausible, and quite a few of them haven't been brought up in any science fiction stories that I've encountered.

The speaker was quite optimistic about the harnessing of the atom to peacetime uses. He predicted operation of the first atomic engine in two or three months, atomic motors for submarines and ships in three or four years, and progress to the point where atomic power would be as cheap as coal-produced power in ten years. Wendt was enthusiastic about a new system of feeding the world: it had something to do with wood and yeast, but was either too simple or too complex for me to grasp, and I recall only his statement that wood now wasted could be converted into food for the whole world, with a population of 20,000,000,000 feedable if we planted and harvested lots of forests. He thinks that Russia is more anxious to get atomic power for industry than for war making, and he has a lot of big ideas about how it could be used in the United States: to help the westward shift of the population, for instance, by piping water to dry areas just as oil is now pumped.

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Apologies are due for the blank spots in the article which opens this issue of Horizons. The writer of the letter from which I quoted at length gave permission to publish it. After it was stenciled but before it was, fortunately, mimeographed, he wrote again asking me to delete certain sections. I'm not sure how badly he wants them deleted and why, nor is there time to restencil the first five pages or to correspond with him on the subject before the FAPA deadline. So I'm removing the positive clues to his identity, and suggest that it might be wise if you and you didn't speculate about it in print.