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Science Fiction
Fantasy and
MEL HUMDRUM

THE MAGAZINE OF

Fantasy & Science Fiction

Nikita Khrushchev,

famous totalitarian dictator, ruler of Russia, Mongolia, Hungary, Roumania and perhaps eventually the entire world, who is currently engaged in pouring water on the troubled oils of the Middle East, writes:

> *"I like American Science Fiction. It tells about guided missiles, space travel, earth satellites, all of the unbelievable things man's imagination can conceive. Science fiction is something we don't have much of in the Soviet Union... "The Americans are world leaders in science fiction..."*

The growing popularity of science fiction all over the world for some reason hasn't attracted many new readers for S&FF. But every other day or so a new reader from some walk of life is attracted to this imaginative form of literature.

Typists, shoe salesmen, side-show barkers, hat-check girls, truck drivers, zoo attendants, elevator operators, dime store clerks, switchmen, bee keepers, car washers, artificial inseminators, Good-Humor men, olive stuffers, totalitarian dictators --all achieve glorious escape from the world of today in current science fiction.

Have you gotten away from it all lately?

THE MAGAZINE OF

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(launching of Vanguard satellite vehicle)

Joseph W. Verman, PUBLISHER *Anthony Twin*, EDITOR

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Henna Zenderson began her chronicles of The Folks with Genesis *(S&FF, July, 1955), and continued them with* Habbakuk *(&SFF, June, 1954) and* Gomorrah *(FF&S, September, 1953), all of which stories demonstrated that a tale of beings from the stars doesn't have to be a blood-and-thunder melodrama, but can sometimes be warm, human, tender, even a little dull. This latest tale of The Folks asks the question: Can a young girl from a little mining town in the west find happiness with a colony of interstellar aliens?*

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednigo

by HENNA ZENDERSON

When the other children left for the day, little Yoel Prtiz stayed behind. I had put my things in the desk and got up to go, when I saw him sitting in his seat. "Yes, Yoel," I said. "Did you want something?"

He got up slowly, looking at me strangely, and walked up the aisle. "Miss Finster," he said haltingly.

I was packing the homework sheets in a folder, but when he didn't go on I looked up. "Yes, Yoel, what is it?"

He was clenching and unclenching his hands and there were tears in his eyes. "I—I—" he stammered.

I took his small hands in mine. "You can tell me, Yoel. It's all right."

"I—I love you!" he cried out at last.

"Well, Yoel, I think that's very sweet. Now run along home."

"Yes'm," he said happily and bolted from the classroom.

I smiled after him. Child psychology was a great deal more simple than most people thought. It was all in knowing how to handle them.

I sighed and picked up my briefcase. If only all of life was that simple, I thought. If only adults were as uncomplicated as children. But adults ruled the world, not children, and I had to live under their rules whether I liked it or not.

I took the short cut home, up the hill, around the ruins of the rubber factory, past the reservoir and through the abandoned railroad tunnel. I wanted time for reflection, time to relax myself before returning to the boarding house. I knew I had to face another evening of sitting in the parlor listening to Mr. Clive's stories about the Spanish-American War and Zelda's interminable gossip. I wondered if the Spaniard, Guilliermo Pou, would be there tonight, or whether he would be off drinking somewhere.

But I could not concentrate on such things, because the day was so lovely and the sun so warm. I climbed to the top of a smooth rock and sat down. Away to the east the mountains caught the last rays of the afternoon sun and a purple haze from the hog-fat company lay over the town. I sighed, drinking it all in.

I was snapped from my reverie by a growing rumble behind me. I turned and saw a huge black rock rolling and bouncing down the hill toward me. I couldn't move. I was frozen with horror. I screamed as the rock bounded into the air and—hung there! I watched in amazement as it vibrated in the air, then broke up into a thousand pieces.

I found myself quivering with terror and relief, and had started to cry, when I heard a voice say, "Very good."

I looked up, startled, and saw a man walking toward me. He was dressed in a short hunting jacket and rough tweedy trousers, and his eyes were warm.

"Who—who are you?" I stammered.

He came and sat next to me on the rock. "That was very good, you know. Are you all right?"

"Yes, I think so," I said. "But what do you mean? What was very good?"

"Why, the way you took care of that rock, of course," he said. "It isn't every day you find someone as adept at the Perversions as that. How is it we haven't met before?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," I said.

He frowned. "Oh, come now, you don't have to pretend with me. Don't you think I have sense enough to recognize one of my own kind?"

"What kind?" My head was swimming. "What do you mean?"

"Why, Folks, of course," he said. "It's all right. I'm a Folk myself."

"Folks? You mean folks, don't you?"

He looked at me in surprise. "No, not folks; Folks." He narrowed his eyes. "You mean to tell me you actually don't know what I'm talking about?"

I shook my head. "I know what folks are, but Folks—well, I'm sorry."

"All right," he said. "Only tell me this. Where did you learn to handle a rock like that? That was very well done."

"I don't know what happened to the rock. I don't. I was sitting here and then I turned around and saw it and I thought it was going to hit me and then it went up into the air and hung there and broke into pieces and—" I stopped and buried my head in my hands.

"Well, I'll be!" he said. "A Virgin!"

"What?" I screamed.

"There, there," he said quickly. "It's just an expression we Folks use."

I dried my eyes and looked at him.

"A Virgin," he said, "is someone who has a command of the Perversions, but has never been a Folk."

"But what are Folks? Tell me please what you're talking about."

He sat back and looked at me. "It happened many years ago, before you and I were born. One of our ships went out of control and was forced down. Those who survived the crash were scattered. We've been trying to get back together now for years. Of course, all of the original survivors are dead, but their descendants still retain the old Perversions — the powers. I'm a Folk. So are you."

I struggled to understand. "Ship? Forced down? Do you mean an airplane?"

"No, no," he said. "A Space Ship."

"Good Heavens!" I cried. "You mean your parents were from another planet?"

He nodded. "A planet of another star, many Light Years from here. That's an expression we use. It means—"

"But I don't believe it! You look just like an ordinary person. You look just like—people."

"But we're not. That's why we call ourselves Folks."

The stranger's name was Mr. Lowb and he spent the whole afternoon telling me the story of the Folks—how they had shown themselves at first and the shameful way the people had treated them. Then, the long hiding, the waiting, the drawing together. There was a large community of Folks nearby, he said. "I'll take you there."

"No," I said, suddenly afraid. "No. I can't."

"Why, what's the matter?" He took my hands in his. "Are you frightened?"

I shook my head. "It's not that. It's just that I can't accept this all at once. My parents being things from the stars—"

"Not things, Miss Finster," he said gently. "Folks."

"And all these powers — what did you call them?"

"Perversions," he said. "All the Folks have them."

"What powers—Perversions—are there besides lifting up a rock and breaking it into pieces?" I asked. "Can you do anything else?"

"Certainly," Mr. Lowb said. He pointed to a tree at the bottom of the hill. As I watched, it rose out of the ground, high into the air. It vibrated, then broke into a thousand pieces.

"There's also this," said Mr. Lowb, smiling. As I watched, an entire section of the hill rose into the air, vibrated for a moment, then broke into a thousand pieces.

"That's wonderful!" I cried. "That's the most wonderful thing I ever saw! Imagine, to have a power like that!"

"Oh, that's nothing," he said. "I can lift you into the air too."

I looked at him in horror. "No. No! You wouldn't! Not—"

He sat back and laughed. "You don't understand." He sat forward, suddenly serious. "I wouldn't let anything harm you. Believe me."

"Oh," I said. "Ha, ha. Well."

Mr. Lowb returned with me to the boarding house that night and I introduced him to Mr. Clive and Zelda and Guilliermo Pou, who was there after all. When dinner was over we went out on the porch and sat talking in the hush of the evening. We talked of small, unimportant things and Mr. Lowb said very little. But I could feel his presence beside me, in a strange and subtle way. It was a sensation of sharing, of togetherness, and whenever Zelda said some outrageous thing about one of the townspeople I could feel his warm laughter inside me, like the touch of a hand on my knee.

"Please," I whispered. "Mr. Lowb, stop."

The silent laughter stopped then, but returned a moment later. This time it was definitely a hand on my knee.

That night when we parted he made me promise to go with him to the Folks the next day.

"Please," he said. "Say you will. It's very important. You can't know how important."

"Yes," I breathed. "Of course I'll come. But you must give me time to think, time to absorb all this." I smiled. "It isn't every day a girl learns that she is a thing from space."

"Not thing," Mr. Lowb said. "Folk."

"Yes—Folk." I stopped, savoring the warm feeling of that word, the sense of belonging and togetherness and a hand upon my knee.

"Imagine, another planet." I looked up at the starry sky. "Which star was it?" I asked, taking hold of his arm. "What was the planet

called?"

He scanned the sky, then pointed. "That one there, over the hog-fat company. It's called Krypton."

"Krypton." I repeated. "What a nice name." I looked at him. "And what nice people come from there."

He took my chin in his hand. "Not people," he said. "Folks."

Later on I lay in bed staring at the ceiling. Sleep was impossible after all that had happened. I tried to remember what my parents had looked like, but the picture was no longer clear. Had they truly been things from space? It was hard to believe, for what I remembered of them was perfectly normal. The only definite impression I could recall was a feeling of belonging, of togetherness—I sat up in bed.

Of course, I thought. Why hadn't I realized it before? Togetherness. Belonging. Only the hand on my knee was new. But that was as it should be.

I lay back and hugged myself. Yes, I thought, ha, ha. Well.

The next morning I woke with the sun and jumped out of bed. The day before seemed almost like a dream. For one horrible moment I thought that was what it had been. But then I felt the hand and knew everything was all right.

I heard a knock at the door and Zelda's voice. "That Mr. Lowb is downstairs," she said. "He's waitin' to see you."

She giggled hideously and clumped off down the hall. But even Zelda couldn't spoil this day. Even though she would be spreading awful rumors about Mr. Lowb and myself as soon as we had left, I didn't care. Nothing could spoil this for me, ever.

He was in the parlor when I came down. He got up and smiled.

"Good morning, Miss Finster. Have a good night?"

"Oh," I said. "Ha, ha. Yes."

"I'm glad," he said, looking into my eyes. "Today's the day, remember?"

"Yes, today's the day."

The feeling of togetherness grew stronger as we drove toward the place where the Folks were. I was brimming over with questions.

"You mean, Mr. Lowb, that I have these Perversions too? That I can lift things and make them vibrate and break them into a thousand pieces?"

"Certainly," he said. "Only you don't remember how to control them. When you were in danger yesterday you did it, but subconsciously. You've got to remember how to control the Perversions before you're a real Folk."

"How wonderful," I sighed.

"Then you can lift rocks and fly and make things change and squeeze and twist and stretch things."

"Tell me more. What else?"

He smiled. "You'll be able to look through things and leap tall buildings in a single bound and travel faster than a speeding bullet."

I grew reflective. "Just think," I said. "If I hadn't decided to take the short cut that day, and if that rock hadn't fallen at that particular moment, and if you hadn't been there to see it, we might never have met. I might never have known—"

He looked at me. "Yes, but it did happen. I was there. Nothing can change that now."

"Yes," I said. "Nothing."

We rode through the wooded hill country for hours, until at last we came to a dirt road.

"Here's where we turn off," Mr. Lowb said. "The Folks are just over that hill in a hidden valley."

My heart was in my mouth as the car bumped and jolted up the road toward the crest of the hill. Even if I was one of them, would the Folks accept me? Would they take me to them as one of their own? Or had I been too long away, too long a member of the human race? Would I become a part of their sharing, or would I have to forsake togetherness forever, now that I had tasted it?

I grew afraid as the car rounded the crest of the hill and a shaded hidden valley came into view. I felt Mr. Lowb's hand on my knee again, only his real hand this time. "Down there," he said. "Down there are the real Folks. Not like humans, with their wars and foolishness. No, we are above such things, we are better. We are Folks." He squeezed.

Three of them were waiting at the bottom of the trail for us, and others began drifting out of cozy looking little houses. "Welcome," they said. "Welcome."

An old man came forward and took my hand. "We are glad you're here," he said. "Lowb has told us many things about you. It isn't every day we find a Virgin."

I was confused. "But how could Mr. Lowb have told you about me? He was miles from here yesterday."

The old man chuckled. "We have ways, Miss Finster. We have ways." He turned and gestured at the assembled Folks. "These are your Folks, Miss Finster. These are your own kind. Here is where you belong."

A tall man came forward, smiling. "I think it's time we showed her a few things," he said. "I think it's time she Learned."

The others all laughed gaily as the tall man and Mr. Lowb took my arms. Suddenly I found myself rising from the ground, with them beside me, and all the others rising

too. Up, up into the beautiful sky we went, like bright birds in the sunlight.

I cried out with joy. "Oh, Mr. Lowb," I said. "I never dreamed it could be like this. I never imagined anything could be so wonderful. Ha, ha. Well."

I could hear their golden laughter filling the sky, and I felt as if my heart would burst with joy and belonging and togetherness. I laughed aloud, filled with the ecstasy of having found the answer at last, and flung my arms out to them as they rose away from me, high into the sky, higher and higher and faster and faster away—

* * *

They hovered in the air over the broken remains of Miss Finster.

"That was fun," said Lowb."

"More fun for you than us," said the tall man bitterly. "You set it up; you led her into it."

"Now, now," said the old man. "Don't be angry. You'll have your chance to Set One Up. We'll all have a chance."

One of the women looked at the body sadly. "It seems sort of a shame, though," she said. "Miss Finster was such a nice, innocent human."

"There's no such thing as a nice, innocent human," snapped Lowb. "Don't ever forget that. Don't any of you ever forget that." He looked down at Miss Finster. "Remember how they treated our fathers and mothers; the long hiding, the waiting, the drawing together." He looked up. "We'll get them someday, when the time comes. All of them!"

The Folks laughed their golden laughter and swept upward and away into the bright sky.

Through Time and Space With Ferdinand Fakeout

Ferdinand Fakeout, ever in search of new worlds to conquer, turned at last to the mysteries of the mind. His design for a psionics machine produced an unfavorable reaction in scientific circles, for it departed radically from all accepted types.

The machine was the approximate size of a breadbox, polished to a high gloss, and devoid of all controls. Across the top of the device ran a narrow metal slat, which, Fakeout claimed, produced tactile phenomina of singular eccentricity.

The scientists gathered at Fakeout's first public demonstration of his new machine, referred to it as "Fakeout's Folly," but Ferdinand silenced them with a wave of his hand.

"I ask that one of you gentlemen step forward," said he, "and lay a hand on this slat. Then shall we determine whether or not this machine is capable of all I say."

After some consultation, a Syrian brain surgeon approached the device and, at a signal from Fakeout, laid a hand on the slat. "Why," he exclaimed, "the slat is cold. Very cold. This is most interesting." He turned to Fakeout. "What mechanism did you incorporate to produce this phenominon?"

"None whatever," replied Fakeout proudly. "The machine is entirely empty."

"Empty? But that is ridiculous. That is impossible. It must contain some working parts."

"None," said Fakeout.

"You are a fool, sir," said the brain surgeon heatedly. "Any idiot knows that a machine without working parts is useless. Why, all findings proceeding from such a device must be regarded as spurious."

"Well then," replied Fakeout, "spuriousity chilled the slat."

"What was that?" The brain surgeon's face darkened ominously.

Fakeout laughed. "I said, 'spuriousity chilled the—'" He stopped suddenly. "What's wrong?"

"Come, gentlemen," said the brain surgeon, leading his colleagues through the door. "There is no point in discussing science with an individual who would make such a remark."

"But, gentlemen," Fakeout faltered, "it's only a play on words. You see, I—"

They slammed the door.

In this wonderful little gem (never before printed in this magazine), Thomas Hardy displays a fantastic turn of mind which one would never have suspected, while at the same time upholding the standards of polysyllabic excellence for which he is justly famous.

Bleak Fate Intervenes

by THOMAS HARDY

On an evening in mid-winter early in the present century, an observer judiciously posted at the approach to the village of Belching Prior would have espied an energetic figure toiling up the long slope that led to the village, a figure bowed low against the bitter wind that swept from the north. Little of the man was visible, because of the voluminous wrappings that protected him against the wind's keen tooth, but an observant eye would have discerned, by the curious conformation of calluses on the right hand that held his Mersey hat firmly on his head, that the traveller was a corn-flexer. This conclusion might have found confirmation, had the observer remarked the crutch of a corn-flexer's wurble that protruded from the rush basket he bore on his back.

Miggity Furm (for such was the corn-flexer's name) had not found life easy. He had been born out of wedlock to a feeble minded slavey who worked a treadmill in a blacking-manufactory, at such times as she was sober. Miggity had been thrown upon his own resourses at the age of three, and, through superhuman labor and deprivation, he had, in a few years, amassed a comfortable fortune in the elastic trade, only to have his competence swept away when, as a consequence of the suicide of his wife upon the deaths on successive Tuesdays of their six children, he took to drink, and remained totally paralyzed for eighteen months. Rescued from his sodden plight by a low-church clergyman, Miggity had learned the trade of corn-flexer, and now travelled with his wurble from village to village, seeking work.

Farmer Bravenwood of Bravenwood farm, near Belching Prior, was said to have corn in need of flexing, and it was toward Bravenwood farm that Miggity now bent his steps. He badly needed the work, and plans for convincing Farmer Bravenwood of his skill with a wurble occupied his mind to such an extent that he failed to observe the silent descent, upon a heath at his left rear, of a polished metal cylinder of unusual size. It was roughly a half-mile long, and evidently proportionately heavy, for it caused a considerable amount of damage to the trussed hay that lay in symmetrical barlows on the heath.

Miggity, after an interlude at the inn, during which he ingested bread-and-cheese and the directions to Bravenwood farm, presented himself at the door of the farmhouse. Following an interview with the taciturn farmer, he at last fell asleep in a pallet in the drothshed, having obtained a commission to flex the Bravenwood corn, beginning the following morning.

He was hard at work by dawn, and so engrossed in his labor that he gave a start when a basket, containing a breakfast of gudgeree and small beer, suddenly appeared at his elbow. The bearer of the basket was a well-formed maiden of middle years and retiring ways, who shyly introduced him to the homely country pastime (now unfortunately extinct) of tumbling in the hay. When she revealed that she was Salome Bravenwood, the Farmer's daughter, Miggity proposed matrimony, and Salome was pleased to accept.

Farmer Bravenwood, who had taken professional notice of the clarity of the corn Miggity had flexed, was not disposed to oppose the match, and the banns were published. The good farmer also made a trip to town, and, after a session with his barrister, hinted to Miggity that the broad acres of Bravenwood farm would someday be his. Miggity's future lay safe and assured before him.

Gentle reader, you have doubtless had prior acquaintance with my work; and, as you have, you well know that the serene circumstances which obtain at this point in our narrative cannot continue; that the inexorable workings of fate must necessarily destroy our dramatis personae. And so it will be; your attention is called to a minor circumstance previously mentioned: the descent of a large metal cylinder upon a nearby heath.

On the eve of the wedding there was bucolic celebration at the farmhouse; the sound of psalter and bagpipe rose into the still winter air. Also rising was the metal cylinder; it hovered over the farm for a moment, before falling silently upward. And in the moment that it hovered, the farm and all on it ceased to exist.

And thus were our friends, in one awful catastrophe, erased; thus fate destroys us all, even when the mean wit of a merely human author fails.

On April 25, 1955, the USSR announced that its scientists were at work on plans for a space station, and on October 4, 1957, this announcement was confirmed. Although the space station isn't up yet, science fiction readers are not surprised; they knew unmanned satellites would be the first step. But now it's time to consider the third step and those beyond--the fourth, fifth and sixth steps. It's time to pull out of overdrive and put on the brakes--before we hit something we don't suspect is there. Time to zoom off into the outer reaches, where only imagination can carry us, later. Now we should consider the immediate aspect of space travel: is it practical? Dr. R. S. Dickson, of Mount Sinai Rectory, virtually unknown outside of esoteric periodicals devoted to philosophic speculation, here proposes--in an article originally published elsewhere, but completely re-edited for &FFS--a question which puts into new perspective the previous question and, with simple duplicity leaves to the reader's imagination certain highly provocative conclusions.

The Night After We Land on Mars

by R. S. DICKSON

It has been asked, with perhaps good reasons for asking it, why anyone would want to go to Mars. Mars is the only body in our system to harbor the vestiges of life, so far as is known, and this is known fairly certainly, so that there may be no doubts as to the reliability of this statement. However, this is not actually important. There are other objects in outer space, such as stars and constellations, which present an even more engaging problem to man, since they are further away. Why not set out for one of these? Why not Sirius or Betelgeuse, for instance, where, our mathematics tell us, there is to be found more of interest? The simple fact is, Mars is closer, and if people don't know something exists they seldom think about it and they never care about going there. Few people know Sirius or Betelgeuse exist.

Men have, through the ages, dreamed of traveling to a distant, isolated world where they could be alone with a group of beautiful women. Until now, however, this dream has been impossible of realization. But now, within our lifetimes, or even before, space travel will be a reality.

The prospects thus opened to us, as one can readily see, are negligible. Few people, even with the terrific advances being made in jet engine research and astronomical physics, will be able to travel to Mars. But consider the prospects of those future space pioneers, who, even at this time, may be conducting their first experiments in preparation for the rigors of planetary colonization.

In the excitement of the hunt we have paid little attention to the rabbit. What are we reaching for? What will we be getting if we reach it? Will what we get be worth the reaching for? Will we be able to reach it even if we try? If we do try and don't reach it, will our disappointment result in a national trauma?

These questions are unimportant. The important question has yet to be considered.

Up until now, there has been no mention, to my knowledge, of the most pressing problem which is certain to arise in regards to our Mars trip. However, if we are going to approach the matter with proper scientific detachment and discuss it in a mature, grown-up fashion, there should be no beating around the bush. We should face things out; for, we may soon be forced to realize, in another system of morals there may be no morals as far as the former system of morals is morally concerned; we may, in other words, be forced to change our ideas so that they will be more in accordance with the ideas which will be forced upon us. We must, then, state things simply, even

blatantly; we must present and discuss the problem as adults. We must bring it out into the open. For there is that bio-chemical relationship between the male and female which effects directly the socio-biological life of the human animal.

Sexual intercourse, in other words.

Now, is it not reasonable to assume that if men travel to Mars so that they may be stranded for a number of years with a group of beautiful women, the problem of sexual intercourse will arise? Some may be shocked by this, but if we are to ask men and women to coexist on an alien world, cut off from social and physical contact of any sort with the earth and its inhabitants, then we must expect these men and women to engage in sexual intercourse, if they are normal, healthy and of age.

However, the Waldanga-Wildunga tribe of Northern Ireland would not see anything unusual in this state of affairs at all. The men and women of this tribe of primitive savages engage in sexual union as a matter of course. To the civilized mind, such an attitude may seem strange indeed, but it serves a definite purpose within the framework of the Waldanga-Wildunga culture. The young men and young women of this tribe have developed this method of expressing their mutual admiration to such a high degree of finesse that it has been accepted as socially correct, and in some cases even necessary, by the elders.

We, as a civilized culture entering the age of space, can profit from this attitude, since it is, in its basic form, a workable solution to a problem that faces us.

Perhaps, as the frontiers of space expand, knowledge gleaned from the study of primitive peoples may prove to be primitive. And useful.

While the moral question is one that needs serious and immediate consideration, it is not of primary concern. There is a more important question to be considered in a discussion of this sort than the moral aspect. Sexual intercourse has been going on for quite some time, as the study of primitive cultures has revealed, and while it may be regarded as immoral by those who subscribe to a system of morals which regard it as immoral, it nevertheless must be considered in any discussion referring to the interrelation of members of opposite sexes.

But this is all beside the point. We must face a more serious question. In this dawning space age, one must take into consideration the question of environment. Man's first sojurns into outer space are going to necessitate his adaptation to new and alien environments, ones which might possibly preclude certain of the functions which the space explorer may have come to take for granted.

The mechanics of sexual intercourse would be difficult, if not impossible to perform in that phenominon of space travel known as free fall. In such a condition, the slightest movement is magnified to such an extent that one finds one's self catapulted at odd angles through whatever open areas the spaceship may afford. Completely aside from the bruises inherent in such a situation, the frustrations involved would be greater than any fleeting pleasure that might result.

Free fall is one of the conditions we can predict. But what of those that are completely unknown to us? What of Mars itself?

It would, indeed, be a great disappointment if we were to establish a colony on Mars only to have it destroyed by a lack of incentive to work. If conditions were to prove themselves, through some imbalance in Mars bio-chemical environment, to be unamenable to the furtherence of the necessary social development, with the result that man found himself blocked, thwarted, unable to rise to the situation, it would be disastrous.

Is sex on Mars actually possible? We can only hope.

THE STORY MORE DULL THAN THE DULLEST STORY EVER WRITTEN

The last man on Earth
sat alone in a room. There
wasn't much else to do.
POCAHONTAS SMITH

Recondemned Reading

by ANTHONY TWIN

Of principle interest this month is a massive fantasy from the hitherto unknown pen of Whinemina Niddynoddy, a young female author of exceeding promise. Seldom in the history of English prose have such a profusion of delightful concepts formed the basis of a single work. One waits for years for such a book and for such a person as Miss Niddynoddy, and the waiting has not been in vain.

RING OF ROSES (Toutin-Snifflin, fifteen volumes, $7.98 each) concerns itself with the epical search for the meaning of life by a sister of a mythical sorority in the half-world of Central Earth. Starting from her homeland of Habiton, Sister Philomel journeys across the Plains of Darkness to the base of the Musty Mountains. While resting in a cave she comes upon an abandoned shrine to some forgotten god, and discovers a small cat-like creature within it. The cat-creature, which she names Blessums, leads her to a great iron door upon which is an inscription in a forgotten language.

Sister Philomel reads the phrase aloud, and suddenly finds herself standing at the bottom of a dried-up, forgotten well in the depths of a strange forest. A figure appears at the mouth of the well and helps her out, explaining that he is the last survivor of a forgotten race which once ruled the forest. He takes her to the ruins of a forgotten palace in the heart of the forest and shows her the semi-forgotten Stone of Bamferf, which, according to half-forgotten legends, has the power to unlock the totally-forgotten Gate of the Seven Bolts, behind which lies the Unknown Realm of the Three Things.

Sister Philomel, while contemplating the stone, suddenly becomes aware of its secret, through some medium which she cannot comprehend. She touches it and is instantly transported to the Peak of the Golden Tower, where she finds herself confronted by an army of Gunks —fearsome, half-gnome, half-troll, half-forgotten creatures which had been supposedly destroyed in the Battle of the Seventeen Valleys centuries before. As they advance on her, Blessums, the cat-creature, hurls herself in front of Sister Philomel, and the Sister suddenly finds herself standing on the floor of the ocean.

Before her is a vast structure from which come a host of creatures clad in diaphanous veils, singing a semi-forgotten song. Sister Philomel realises that this is the Sunken Kingdom of the Crystal Crayfish, which, according to ancient legend, had been sunk into the sea during the Reign of Gnob, the Black Sorcerer of Wimpleton.

Sister Philomel is brought before the ruler of this undersea kingdom, Fingill the Forgotten, and questioned as to her presence in the kingdom. Before she can answer, however, her breath gives out and she is catapulted to the center of a vast and legendary desert — the Wastes of Glarfoon the Gallant.

As she makes her way across the vast expanses, she meets a pilgrim who speaks an ancient half-forgotten rhune to her then falls into dust. Sister Philomel, undaunted, resolves to set out across the trackless desert, in search of the Land of the Flying Ginches, where, so the half-forgotten legends say, can be found the All-Hearing Ear, the repository of the world's knowledge.

I hope these few episodes from Part One of the first volume gives you some idea of the flavor of this incredible work — a book pregnant with wonder and beauty, written in a lovely, blossom-scented prose by one of the most delightful authors ever to cross this reviewer's desk.

In the more prosaic category of books which are merely excellent, I am happy to report the arrival of yet another fine non-fiction work by L. Prague Le Cramp. MISSING PLACES (Bubbleday, $10) is an erudite examination of archaeological evidence to support the theory that Atlantis and Mu are not actually lost, but that the rest of the world is. With his brilliant, witty, intolerably learned prose, Mr. Le Cramp proves once again his superiority to the readers of his works.

There are several anthologies on hand, the most deserving of which is Judith Milford's ESS-EFF: THE YEAR'S STRANGEST, THIRD VOLUME (Troll, hardbound, 35¢; Dull, paperback, $2.95). This is the third in the highly successful series which began with ESS-EFF: THE YEAR'S STRANGEST, FIRST VOLUME, and was continued so nobly by ESS-EFF: THE YEAR'S STRANGEST, SECOND VOLUME. Miss Milford is an uncompromising anthologist and every page of this current work enhances her reputa-

tion as an editor of impeccable literary taste. Fifteen of the sixteen stories are from this magazine.

In this same category is THE BEST FROM FF&S: SEVENTH SERIES (Bubbleday, 59¢). It is not, of course, within the scope of this column to pass judgement on this latest anthology of superb stories, since each of the distinguished, well-chosen and beautifully written pieces were originally published in this magazine.

Also on the anthology shelf this month is Gruff Conking's THE FIELD MANUAL OF SCIENCE FICTION (Crowd, $4.85), which is the most recent in his long line of beautifully balanced collections. Mr. Conking has become highly regarded among fantasts as the master of the theme anthology — that is, a selection of stories built around some central idea. This time, the pieces have been chosen on the basis of their resemblance to the work of authors other than their own. The book also includes an appendix of answers for those who cannot readily identify the authors in question. An invaluable book.

Since the opening of the space frontier by the unmanned satellites, scientific popularizations have been springing up at the rate of two per week. It is gratifying to know, now that it is too late, that the average person admits we were right all along, and has begun to spend so much energy learning what we have known for so long.

BASKETBALL! by Burgher Myser (Hacmillion, $8.65) is by far the most fascinating of the lot. Mr. Myser proves conclusively in Chapter One that space travel is impossible and devotes the remainder of the book to anecdotes.

Also of interest is Arthur C. Clerk's LIFT TO THE STARS (Carper's, $3.25), in which that highly talented Fellow of Her Majesty's Interplanetary Knights of the Garter and member of the exclusive British Society of Space, explains clearly and succinctly the basic principles of flight to other worlds as well as the principles involved in the launching of artificial moons. Most fascinating of all is his detailed account of his nation's intention of launching an earth satellite that will never set on the British Empire.

Reprints this month are three: IF THIS GOES OFF by Robert Heinstein (Cygnet, 35¢) is one of the best remembered works of this prolific author. It is gratifying indeed to see it back in print, since it is one of the few science fiction novels ever written whose action takes place on the surface of the sun.

SHIP OF IPSWITCH (Rubinstein, 35¢), one of D. Merrit's early novels, tells the story of a hapless archeologist who is forced to live out the lives of an entire race of warriors inside a cursed bit of pottery. Completely aside from his atrocious plotting, Mr. Merrit's prose is so lopsided as to convince the reader that he was not only incapable of putting a story together, but also writing good English usage.

The work of Eisenhower Asimuth has for years been setting new standards of excellence in the field, and it is a pleasure to see one of his finest novels in print again. WHAT, ME ROBOT? (Troll, $1.50) is a collection of short stories and novelets concerning the possible future of man's automatic brothers. In many ways, this book is superior to Asimuth's other robot collection, THE POWER OF POSITRONIC THINKING, and in other ways it is not.

Although it is not science fiction, or even fantasy, DANDELION BEER by Ray Gladberry (Bubbleday, $2.95) is nevertheless worthy of mention. Mr. Gladberry's work has long been noted for its general excellence and aptness of thought, and he has made many friends for himself in the field which brought him his first success. That he has chosen to move on to more lucrative pastures should not, I feel, in any way affect our opinion of this work, nor color our attitude toward Mr. Gladberry. If he is able to find greater success in the outside world, then it is his privilege to seek it out and leave behind him the devoted admirers who helped him achieve his present stature. It is not within our rights to pass judgement on such things. Mr. Gladberry knows best.

Next month this column will devote itself to a review of the worst science fiction and fantasy of the year.

The Man From Out There

He was kind and found me fair,
The man from out there;
He softly spoke to me,
And did not shrink
When I put out my arms to him.

All the others shrank;
They're in this jar here.

NONAH MCCLUNKRAK

The writings of Walter Jose Alvarez, it has been said by Judith Milford, are "characterized by a unique personal blend of semi-mystic impetuousness and two-headed optimism," and a great deal of the same mixture characterizes Alvarez' delightful Father Jack. You first met the little priest in The Day of Gray *(FSF&, April, 1958), in which the good Father's two-fisted faith rescued an entire colony from imprisonment in time to attend a Communion Breakfast. Father Jack's struggles against Protestant monsters from Aldebaran proved conclusively of what stern stuff the future's clergy must be made. Here, we find the little priest faced with an entirely different problem -- this time on a more personal level. How much devotion does the Church demand of Its servants, and where does blind faith end and sanity begin? Father Jack's decision, and his reasons, show forcefully the necessity, even in the world of tomorrow, for*

Platitudes

by WALTER JOSE ALVEREZ

Roger Tangent crouched behind his row of dominoes as if he were hiding behind a pinochle hand. His nose rested on the table and only his darting eyes were visible to the other players seated around the table in the lounge of the interstellar liner, Law of Averages.

"Father Jack," he said, "you can't fool me. You'll act nice and be tolerant and have a few drinks with me and smile when I say something that shocks you and lead me to think that you're a jolly good fellow, and then, when my guard is down, you'll all of a sudden show me what a sinner I am and expect me to jump right back into the church, just like that."

Father Jack looked up from his dominoes in surprise. "Why, what ever gave you that idea?"

"Ah-ha," said Tangent. "You can't fool me. You priests are all alike. 'There will be more joy in heaven over one sheep returned to the fold—' You know the rest."

"I do?" said Father Jack.

"But it won't work. You may think I'll fall for an old trick like that but you're wrong. I'm too far gone, Father, you'll never get me back in the church."

Father Jack scratched his nose. "No. I don't suppose I will."

"And you know why?" Tangent scoffed. "Because you don't know the right platitudes, that's why. You don't know how to get through to me, that's why. You can talk and talk and you won't even make a dent. It's no use, Father, no use at all."

"No, I don't suppose it is," said Father Jack.

"You'd better give it up," said Tangent, after a pause.

"Yes, I suppose I'd better," said Father Jack.

Tangent lapsed into silence. He was annoyed — the game had been going poorly, for one thing, and his money was getting low. He needed a killing, and he needed it now.

His eyes scanned the white pips swiftly, his lightning brain calculating possible multiples. This was Tangent's specialty, the thing that set him apart from all other dominoe players — the ability to calculate multiples of five in his head. While his opponents were still searching for a matching number, Tangent would be making Muggins. There were few people in the galaxy who possessed this unique ability, and they were the aristocrats of the gaming tables.

And, thought Tangent, for another thing, Father Jack. He glanced sidelong at the fat, happy little priest. He thinks he's going to get me, sneered Tangent to himself, he thinks all he has to do is snap his fingers and I'll come running. Ha. That's how much he knows.

"Muggins," said Father Jack, putting his last tile on the table. He looked at the other players. "That means I get the total of all the pieces you have left added to my score, doesn't it?"

Tangent's eyes darted feverishly over the table, and then over his own tiles. "Goddammit!" he said aloud.

The eyebrows of the other play-

ers went up, then down.

"Here, here," said Bawds, the Captain. "Watch your language, Tangent. We've clergy at the table."

"Oh, that's all right," said Father Jack, gathering his credits from the table. "I don't mind."

"Not much you don't," snarled Tangent. "You can't fool me. You think that if you remain calm in the face of blasphemy, I'll think you're a regular fellow and fly back to the Church, that's what you think."

"No, no," said Father Jack. "Not at all. I don't condone blasphemy. I just ignore it."

Tangent recovered his control, and lit a cigarette. "Like I said, Father, your trouble is you don't know the right words — the right platitudes. If you could find the right combination, you might be able to get through to me, you just might. But you don't know them, and I don't think you're going to have any luck."

"I suppose you're right," smiled Father Jack absently. "One-thirty-five, one-forty, one-fifty. One hundred and fifty credits — a handsome amount. I know a certain monestary that could use this."

"Ah—" snapped Tangent, stabbing a finger in the priest's direction. "Now you're trying to make me ashamed because you're giving your winnings to a monestary and all I ever do is keep mine."

"No, no, Tangent, not at all. Please calm yourself."

"Yes, Tangent," said Captain Bawds, "please."

"There! See? You're turning them against me! You're convincing them that just because I'm a sinner they should have nothing to do with me, that's what you're doing!"

"Now, Tangent," said Father Jack consolingly. "Don't get so worked up. I'm not—"

Tangent suddenly swept all the tiles from the table. The other players looked at him in shock. then rose, bowed to Father Jack and walked away across the salon.

Father Jack remained seated, smoking his pipe.

"There," said Tangent fiercely. "There, you see? Everyone else has left me, but you stay behind, symbolizing the Church's willingness to forgive our transgressions."

"No," said Father Jack reflectively, looking at his pipe. "I stayed because I'm comfortable here."

"And that pipe is another thing," Tangent ground on. "That pipe shows that even a priest is human, and that there is a little bad in the best of us and a little good in the worst of us." Tangent stopped suddenly, in horror. "My God," he breathed, "you made me say one."

"One what?" asked Father Jack.

"A platitude. I said a platitude."

A red light lit at the end of the salon and a voice said, "Please fasten your safety belts. We enter free fall in exactly seventeen and three-fourths seconds."

Father Jack busily began to buckle his belt, but Tangent sat immobile. They can't make me, he thought; I don't have to fasten my safety belt if I don't want to.

With a sickening lurch, the Law of Averages dropped from hyperspace into normal space. Inspired, Tangent put his hands on the arms of his chair and propelled himself upward.

"Look," he shouted. "Look, Father Jack! Joseph of Cupertino!"

"Who?" asked the priest, gazing up at hir

The trouble with philosophical discussion, thought Tangent later, was that it put him off his game. Not that it mattered; he found it impossible to find a game anywhere aboard the ship, except penny-ante Muggins with the ship's latrine squad. Dispite the fact that he won steadily, his funds rapidly decreased, until he found himself on the verge of going broke.

Tangent's original plan had been to disembark at Eg-Phoo-Yong, a planet of starry-eyed philosophers, still insisting they had invented the game. It was simple for any reasonably adept gamesman to make a killing on Eg-Phoo-Yong, because of the incredible stupidity of philosophers. But the planet was still many days away, and Tangent calculated that his funds would take him only as far as the next stop.

Unfortunately, the next stop was a frontier planet known as Bloodandthunder, which, though famous for its fabulous gambling spirit, was even more well known for its lynchings, which were held every time an outworlder started winning. Of course, it was doubtful if anyone on Bloodandthunder would suspect Tangent's uncanny ability to add multiples of five mentally—the planet, after all, was just emerging from the stone age—but the citizens had an uncomfortable habit of making up laws out of thin air, and then taking them into their own hands. But Tangent had no choice. It was Bloodandthunder or nothing.

The next stop proved to be a forbidden planet, however, one which earthmen were normally not allowed to visit. The Law of Averages had to make emergency planetfall to refill its carbon-tetrachloride tanks, but the passengers were warned.

Captain Bawds made the announcement in the salon: "Er—ladies and gentlemen—the Law of Averages has to—set down to pick—uh—up supplies—but I am sorry to—ah—say that no one will be permitted to—um—leave the vicinity of the ship while we're—ah—there. We have an agreement with the Alien Benevolent

Association—ah—not to have intercourse with the natives—ah, that is to say, no social—er— contact of any kind."

Tangent learned from one of the latrine squad that the Law of Averages would be down for five hours, which seemed ample time to hunt up a game. He had no intention of obeying the Captain's order, of course. They can't make me, Tangent thought.

He was watching through a port as the ship landed, and caught a glimpse of a small settlement in a crater about a mile away. After the passengers had disembarked and were dutifully stretching their legs within a few feet of the ship, Tangent saw his opportunity. He slipped quietly around to the other side of the ship, and began walking briskly in the direction of the settlement. He had gone only a few paces when he heard a shout behind him.

"Hold on, Tangent!"

He turned and saw Father Jack puffing toward him, a broad smile on his face. "What are you trying to prove?" asked Tangent acidly as the priest reached him. "Are you trying to show that the authority of the Church is greater than any Civil authority, and that a priest can disobey an official's orders whenever he wants because spiritual works are more important than temporal works?"

"Whew," said Father Jack. "I'm not as young as I used to be."

"Ah," said Tangent, "now you're trying to remind me of death, and the Afterlife, and how I will go to Hell if I haven't lived a good life and suffer in anguish and regret for all eternity because I will have deliberately chosen the wrong road during my lifetime and then it will be too late to do anything about it!"

"Why no," said the priest in surprise. "I wasn't—"

Tangent cut him off. "It won't work, Father, it just won't work. I know all those platitudes, and I found the loop-holes in them years ago." He turned to go, then stopped. "And you needn't think that you can follow me to where I'm heading, because I'm younger and faster than you are and I'll run away."

"I only—" began Father Jack, but Tangent turned his head and strode off. "—wanted a match."

Tangent crouched among the rocks of the ringwall, watching the natives. To his delight, they seemed to be playing some kind of game, and with great enthusiasm. Tangent's nimble mind quickly analysed the play. It seemed to be no more than a primitive version of parcheesi.

The natives were gathered around a great stone monolith, carved in the shape of a tree. From each of the stone branches hung colored balls, with markings on them. Each player had several cylinders of various colors in his hand, and a hoop around his neck. The gamemaster stood in the center, near the statue, holding a sort of weathercock in his hand. There were strips of cloth tied to the ends of the spinner, and tied to those were small glass cones.

The gamemaster would step forward, set the spinner in motion, then turn cartwheels around the stone idol, while the natives pelted him with the colored cylinders. When one of these hit a glass cone, the gamemaster would stop and indicate the player that had tossed the cylinder. The others would then remove their hoops and toss them around the neck of the player, until they had piled high enough to cut off his vision.

The player would then turn cartwheels around the statue several times and, if none of the hoops was lost from around his neck, would stand on one foot and throw all of his remaining cylinders at the stone tree. If any of the cylinders succeeded in breaking a colored ball, he would get them all back. If he missed, he would receive twice the original number of cylinders.

Simple, thought Tangent. He watched carefully for an opportune moment and slipped into the crowd while all attention was on the play. The natives in his vicinity expressed no outward surprise at his presence, dispite the fact that they were short and green and had twelve fingers on each hand, and Tangent was obviously different. Poker faces, thought Tangent, wondering just what the ancient term meant.

Through cautious side betting and careful manipulation, Tangent acquired a double handful of colored cylinders and worked his way toward the center. The natives parted before him and flowed in behind him again without a flicker of expression on their bland, green faces.

From this nearer vantage point, Tangent could hear that the gamemaster was chanting — a monotonous, unmelodic drone, which reminded Tangent somehow of a mathematical table. He re-examined the game quickly, watching the play and nothing the gamemaster's corresponding chant. Yes, thought Tangent with delight, it was true. The game was scored in multiples of five. He laughed silently. This was going to be almost too easy.

The afternoon flashed swiftly by in cascades of hoops and showers of colored cylinders. The pile at Tangent's feet grew steadily, until he had more cylinders than any two players put together. But still he did not actively participate, risking his winnings only on side bets,

and analyzing each new play with a practiced eye. I'll wait, he thought smugly; I'll wait until I have this down pat — then I'll strike! He watched the gamemaster, he noted the direction of the wind, he carefully analyzed the movements of each new player and the direction in which he cartwheeled. He felt his confidence building, and that strange elation every gambler knows just before taking a double or nothing risk.

At last, he saw his chance. A native player had broken a glass sphere and had gotten his cylinders back. The gamemaster began his chant again and started turning cartwheels around the stone tree. Tangent stepped forward, chose a cylinder, and raised an arm to throw it.

But the motion was halted in mid-air by a voice, which rose from the back of the crowd in a hoarse shout.

"Tangent, don't! In God's Name, stop!"

The crowd went silent as Tangent froze, and the gamemaster missed-step and fell in a heap. Father Jack came elbowing his way through the throng, with an expression of horror on his face. "Tangent, whatever you do, don't throw that cylinder!"

A sneer distorted Tangent's face. "Keep out of this, Father. I've waited all afternoon for this moment, and I'm not going to let religion spoil it. Stay back!"

Tangent raised his arm once more, but Father Jack jumped in front of him. "Stop, you idiot, before it's too late!"

While Tangent watched him in disbelief, Father Jack went to the gamemaster and helped him up. The crowd pressed closer to the center, carrying Tangent along with it. The little priest was indulging in animated sign language with the gamemaster. Tangent saw Father Jack point at him, then at the sun, then at his navel. It was clear what the little priest was trying to do and Tangent rushed forward to stop him.

But at that moment, Father Jack raised both arms into the air, clapped his hands and executed a standing somersault. A gasp of horror rose from the crowd, and Tangent felt rough green hands grabbing him. "Help! Help!" he screamed, as he was lifted above the heads of the throng and bourne off toward the ringwall. He could hear Father Jack's voice calling from somewhere behind, "Courage, my son, courage!"

When Tangent awoke, he found Father Jack bending over him. "How do you feel? That was rather a narrow squeeze back there."

"Where am I?" shouted Tangent, sitting up. "The game — what about the game?"

"We're outside the ringwall," said Father Jack. "The game is almost over." He pointed at a break in the rocks. "Look through there if you want to see the end of it."

Tangent crawled over to the breach and peered through. The crowd was gathered tightly around the monolith, watching the gamemaster and a player climb up into the stone branches. They seated themselves and the gamemaster raised his arms to the sky. Then he began taking bits of the broken glass spheres and cones and stuffing them down the player's throat.

Tangent gazed in horror as the gamemaster rammed handful after handful of glass shards into the player, in time with the monotonous chant. Then the gamemaster pushed the player out of the tree and the crowd began jumping on him.

"My God," cried Tangent, "do you see what they're doing, Father?" He turned away with a shudder. "It's a good thing you came when you did. I didn't know that was what they did to losers."

The little priest chuckled. "That isn't a loser — that player down there is the winner."

"What?"

"And after they finish jumping on him," continued the priest blandly, "they will take all the cylinders used in the game and stuff them down his throat, then all the hoops, and finally the stone tree."

Tangent stared at the little priest, horror-stricken. "But—but why. Father? Why?"

"Well, you see, Tangent, thousands of years ago on this planet, a great prophet was martyred in just such a manner, and this ceremony commemorates his death. It's like our Easter, in a way, because—" He stopped and looked at Tangent, who had suddenly gone pale.

"You mean that was a religious ceremony?"

"Why of course. I thought you knew."

"Father," Tangent said, trembling, "I almost committed a mortal sin!"

"I beg your pardon?"

"A mortal sin—I might have gone to Hell—" Tangent grabbed the little priest by the arm. "Father, you've saved my soul from eternal damnation!"

"Tangent, don't be silly. You weren't committing any sin. You didn't know—"

"But maybe I did know. Maybe I read about it somewhere and forgot. That would still be heresy, and heresy is a mortal sin!"

"Tangent, get hold of yourself. You didn't know, you couldn't have known. There wasn't any sin involved..."

Tangent wasn't listening. He stared straight ahead, his eyes wide with horror. "A mortal sin — I never committed a mortal sin. You can go to Hell for committing a

mortal sin. Go to Hell and suffer for all Eternity, denied the sight of God for a mortal sin." Tangent shuddered. "I've committed venial sins, but never—of course, when I gamble sometimes I cheat a little, and I don't always pay my lawful debts, and I remember that time in New Chicago, I—"

The little priest put his hand on Tangent's shoulder. "Haven't you forgotten something, my boy?"

Tangent knelt and clasped his hands in front of him. "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It is twenty years since my last confession. I..."

Father Jack settled back with a sigh. There will be more joy in heaven over one sheep returned to the fold, he thought. But what about mortals? Oh well, this was more important than temporal considerations and, after all, he had only himself to blame.

When they finally got back, they found that the ship had been gone twelve hours.

If you enjoy The Magazine of Science and Fiction Fantasy, you will enjoy some of the other less interesting Quicksilver Publications, now:

ELLERY QUEER'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE (not a Quicksilver Publication)—Unusual, off-beat mystery fiction. The April issue features, "Tony, the Butcher," W. P. White's bloody and terrifying tale of hidden identities. Also moving stories by A. S. Yates, Hiram S. Campbell, H. H. Holmes, Herman W. Mudgett, Henry Owens and M. R. Williams.

CENSURED—SFF&'s poor relation. Latest action-packed issue features "I Kicked It in the Guts," by Marion Swimmer Badly. Also "And So To Bed," by Arrat Davidstone. Plus other stories of tomorrow, some stupid, some foolish, all frightening. Also Theodore Surgeon on hooks.

QUICKSILVER MYSTERY BOOK-MAGAZINE-PAMPHLET-PERIODICAL-STORIES — Sam Bashful's "Hide," an up-to-the-minute story of taxidermy and murder in the ancient orient, is the featured short-short in QMB-M-P-P-S's April issue. Also, fiction-impossible-to-believe by George Sneezy, Stanton Grumpy, Madeline Doc, S. White and a few others.

REMAINDER MYSTERY NO. 59¢—"The Poisoned Tea-Cozy Murder Case," S. O. Salada's positively thrilling novel of a hidious and grotesque Eighteenth Century murder. A rich and influential ball-bearing manufacturer is found dead at the bottom of a flight of stairs—too late. The family has tea without him, but the party ends in murder. "A... there is no...never before...and then some...also..." says the New York Crimes.

GRAPE PRESS MYSTERY VAT 69—"The Possible Crime," by J. D. Tramm, a puzzling locked room mystery that takes place in an unlocked room—which was only the first of Detective Fell-Baum's problems. He next had to find out who the murderer was. "A squasher," says Gourmet Magazine.

Gone Last Issue

Our March issue (now off sale) featured a short long novel by Walter Pedro Millstone: A Prayer Wheel for O'Toole, a touching story of one monk's search for faith and sustenance atop mystical, barren Mount Fujiyama. Also featured was a medium-sized novelet by Kit Carson which told the moving story of an old man's love for his artificial feet, as well as the first published work of a new talent that is destined to become one of the most well known in our field. Eisenhower Asimuth was present with an article, "If Basketballs Were Meant to Fly...." in addition to several fine reprints: Throughout ye Darke Reaches of ye Outer Areas Beyond ye Region of ye Moone by Sir Anthony Titwillow, Plans for the Last Flight by Benedict Arnold and Will Tomorrow Come? by Mirium Clinker, which, together with the usual Recondemned Reading, some fine ads and a particularly good Gone Last Month, rounded out a superb issue. Aren't you sorry you missed it?

Fredric Beige has, over the years, contributed a great deal to the detective and science fiction fields, and has amassed a large following among discerning readers. His widely varied background brings to his stories an unmistakable air of authenticity, for Beige in his time has been employed as lumberjack, lama, television repairman, physicist, mind-reader, counterspy, plastic surgeon, carnival freak, messenger boy and milkman. It is his uncanny ability to infuse his work with this wealth of experience that marks his as a varied and profuse talent.

In addition to writing quality fiction of a conventional nature, Beige has also found time to originate an art form and make it distinctly his own: the science fiction short-short. Only Beige has perfected the technique of telling a complete and compelling story on a single page, of plumbing the uttermost depths of a character in a single paragraph, of making real to the reader the nature of lumbering, lamaism, television repairing, atomic physics, mind-reading, counterspying, plastic surgery, carnival freakery, messenger boying and milkmanism in a single sentence.

Mr. Beige's short-shorts have been appearing in these pages for quite some time and you have no doubt come to expect the brilliant economy for which he is justly famous. This present work, however, is somewhat of a departure, even for the versatile Mr. Beige. Here is a veritable short-short short-short among short-shorts. Yet, within the miniscule framework which he has assigned himself, Beige, as usual, manages to say more than many an author in an entire book.

This story, shorter than the well-remembered Over the Bottom *(F&FS, July, 1950 (in which a man has only two pages to solve the riddle of an alien culture which is intent upon destroying the universe)), more pregnant with excitement than* Way Out *(SF&F, August, 1952 (which outlined the systematic conquest of the galaxy by a single man)), more succinct than* Peephole *(&FFS, January, 1953(in which the entire history of the world is viewed through the eyes of a visiting alien (with all the attendant distortion of interpretation (because, of course, of the alien's inability to understand the people of earth (owing to the fact that he (the alien) came from another planet))))), is another significant achievement by an author so talented that nothing seems beyond his abilities, a man who exercises such utter control over his craft that his every work conforms magically to that most basic precept of writing, the single most important aspect of any work of prose, that tremendously essential quality which separates the mediocre from the great: brevity.*

Song of the Spaceways

by FREDRIC BEIGE

Help!

The Same Old Story...

That's what adventure is. It's the same old adventurer, too--when he's being eaten alive by midget ants in the trackless South American jungle...when he is attacked forcefully by women or alcohol or his own indecision... when he is lost and alone and can't find his way back. Whenever man ventures forth in search of gold, of lost tribes, of white goddesses, of space, of new ways to prove himself superior to everyone else, it's always...

THE SAME OLD STORY, which is also the title of the exceedingly exciting, movingly actionful novelet by Pool Bandersome in the currently extant issue of Censured Science Fiction. Which is certainly reasonable, because firm, manful stories proving you can be superior to everyone else are what Censured publishes...

In this very same issue there is a story by Algae Burbrzyps, "The Beginning of the Sea," which is the same old story of the eternal, diligent and foolish spirit of a man fighting to hold a lighthouse upright against the onslaught of a foaming sea, egged on by powers not of this earth.

Also: Eisenhower Asimuth contributes an article on the atmosphere of Deimos -- indicating how important that atmosphere would be to anyone without a spacesuit; Theodore Surgeon discusses a book which is of no importance whatsoever to the field, contributing many pages of thoughtful analysis bemoaning its existence; and Robert Silverfish reads the minutes of a fascinating case history, "Eve, the Twenty-Three Faces of." In addition, there are other stories, all of them on the same basis, by old authors with new hands.

In conclusion, if the same old story, over and over and over again, is the sort of thing you like to read, if exciting adventure is something you want to avoid but like to imagine yourself doing, you will be making an astute procurement if you purchase a copy of Censured Science Fiction.

inside books

THE THIRD LEVEL, Jack Finney (Collection); Rinehart, 256 pp., $3.00.

Every month or two my wife looks up from her magazine, eyes me scornfully, and says, "Why don't you ever write a story like this one and sell it to Good Housekeeping (or Ladies' Home Journal)?"

"This one" turns out, inevitably, to be a story by Jack Finney.

I read the story, and I haven't got an answer for her. Maybe this will do, because what THE THIRD LEVEL is is a course in how to write like Finney and sell the story to Ladies' Home Journal (or Good Housekeeping).

The Finney story is always deceptively simple; it has a plot in which nothing much happens. It seems as if anybody should be able to write a similar story and sell it to Good Housekeeping (or Ladies' Home Journal).

Nobody does, though—not since Bob Sheckley sold some whimsy to Today's Woman and Collier's a few years ago. (One difference: Sheckley's whimsy had a bite to it; Finney is toothless.) The truth is, nobody writes just like Finney.

Finney is the author of THE BODY SNATCHERS. He also has written two mystery novels. In FIVE AGAINST THE HOUSE he dreamed up an ingenious way to rob a Reno gambling house. In THE HOUSE OF NUMBERS it was a way to break out of San Quentin by breaking in. All three were serialized in a slick, reprinted in paperback, and filmed by Hollywood.

The mysteries, like the short stories, have a peculiar flavor. Perhaps it is because, like Adam and Eve, they were created without sin. There is no evil and if, as in THE HOUSE OF NUMBERS, there is a villain, he is without brutality. The stories retain the flavor of larks. Surprisingly, though, they have a strong element of suspense.

Finney's publishers called the stories in THE THIRD LEVEL "extraordinary" and "daring." They are neither. What they are is whimsy. None are strictly science fiction. Of the twelve stories in the book, six deal in one way or another with time travel, another with an abortive escape to a distant world, four are out-and-out whimsies, and a final one is a straightforward short story—probably the best in the book—"Contents of the Dead Man's Pocket."

In the time travel stories, the mechanism in two is a "time machine" whose workings are never explained. In the others it is accident reinforced by desire.

The pattern is set by the title story. In "The Third Level," a harried, ordinary guy named Charley wanders into the third level of Grand Central Station. Really there are only two; the third level exists in 1894. Charley seizes the opportunity to escape the insecurity of the present. He marches right up to a ticket window and asks for a ticket to Galesburg, Ill., where summer evenings were twice as long, and people sat out on their lawns, the men smoking cigars and talking quietly, the women waving palm-leaf fans, with the fireflies all around, in a peaceful world.

But Charley's money is the wrong size and appearance. He leaves before he is arrested and can't find the third level again. Nobody believes him except his friend Sam. Sam exchanges his money for 1894 money and finds the third level. He sets himself up in the hay, feed and grain business. He couldn't go back to his old business. He was Charley's psychiatrist.

Well, it's a nice story, all right. Nothing pretentious. Not much plot, but as much as any. It's typical in other ways, too. The time travel stories deal with people trying to escape the present (usually our present but sometimes merely theirs). It's just too much for them, and the past is pretty darned attractive.

That's what Finney has to say. It's similar to what Ray Bradbury had to say when he was writing fantasies. It's a truism by now that the stories may be psychologically valid but the reality is false. The past wasn't so secure; it was pretty stiff and uncomfortable. The rebels in that age usually wanted to escape to the future.

But it's Finney's technique that interests me. What sells the stories to Ladies' Home Journal (or Good Housekeeping)? One virtue probably is that they have no teeth. Finney isn't trying to sell anything or right any wrongs. His readers, like his characters, are trying to escape, and that is what he provides for them. The ideas are simple, easy to grasp, and described in effective imagery. The inanimate and the abstract are personified—like Grand Central groping its tunnels toward Times Square and Cen-

tral Park. The characters, though thin, are wonderfully sympathetic. The texture of detail is good, though not as lush and obtrusive as Bradbury's; it does quietly what needs to be done. The whimsy is often appealing (I liked particularly "Cousin Len's Wonderful Adjective Cellar"); to Finney's chief readers it must seem striking indeed.

Put them all together they spell Good Housekeeping (or Ladies' Home Journal). Striking, simple, innocuous, vivid, detailed, and appealing. Like the travel agency that sells tickets to Verna (in "Of Missing Persons")—the world where life is plain and simple.

—James E. Gunn

Novels

THE COSMIC PUPPETS, Philip K. Dick and SARGASSO OF SPACE, Andrew North; Ace, 319 pp., 35¢.

THE COSMIC PUPPETS is based upon an unlikely fusion of Zoroastrianism and solipsism. The author has also managed to work in some voodoo. With these outré materials, Dick has produced a short novel that exercises an almost hypnotic fascination for the first three-quarters of its length, and which solves with professional competence the problem of handling, in its final quarter, a situation so ingeniously contrived as to make almost any ending seem anti-climactic. This is a good, solid, well-carpentered piece of work, mercifully lacking the polemics that disfigured Dick's previous book, EYE IN THE SKY. It is also (and I speak as one who was a charter admirer of Unknown, and who ought to take this sort of thing in stride) rather silly.

It seems that Ahriman and Ormazd (the Zoroastrian equivalents of Satan and God) have selected the village of Millgate, Va., as a battleground. A native son named Ted Barton returns to Millgate for sentimental reasons, and finds that not only has the town changed beyond recognition, but that the people are convinced that there has been no change at all. He also discovers that he is unable to leave the village, that a pair of native children are able to converse with insects and to mold of mud little men who act as spies, and that God and Satan are visible from Millgate when a "lens filter" belonging to one of the child linguists is used. God and Satan are several miles tall.

Barton is fortunate enough to meet the town drunk, the only local who realizes that the town is not what it was. The two discover, after experimenting briefly, that by intense concentration they can nullify Ahriman's evil emanations, and so return the village piecemeal to its pre-PARADISE LOST condition. They proceed to undertake the project.

This Nosey-Parkerism sets off a Zoroastrian Armageddon, and, after a nightmarish battle, the forces of Good prevail. One of the children who talked to insects is revealed to be Armaiti, Ormazd's only daughter, and quite a dish when in her own form: "...cascades of black hair...bare white shoulders...sleek body...rippling skin...Glowing breasts, firm and upturned, as ripe as Spring." Luckily, she is not as tall as her father.

As I say, it's a bit silly; but in its first three-quarters, THE COSMIC PUPPETS builds its problem so expertly that you'll probably consider your thirty-five cents well-spent, even after you've suffered the let-down of the ending.

The other half of the double volume is Andrew North's SARGASSO OF SPACE. It is a juvenile. Very.

—Bob Leman

A CASE OF CONSCIENCE, James Blish; Ballantine, 188 pp., 35¢.

Buy this book.

Anything added to that sentence is not only superfluous but, in a small way, unfair. A CASE OF CONSCIENCE is one of that small army of books which deals so thoroughly and completely with a subject that they convince you the subject has never been touched before. MORE THAN HUMAN did it with the gestalt being. THE DEMOLISHED MAN took a section of the field labeled telepathy and rounded it out once and for all. Nobody's found much to add to THE INVISIBLE MAN or THE FOOD OF THE GODS, either. And A CASE OF CONSCIENCE belongs on that list.

Basically the story of Father Ramon Ruiz-Sanchez, Jesuit biologist and member of the first exploratory team to Lithia, the book includes great masses of organized material on the future of an underground Earth (providing a complete rationale for Asimov's subCities), on the flora and fauna of an unknown planet where iron is scarce and hence jets run by static electricity, on astrophysics, astronomy, medicine, chemistry — and, of course, theology.

The basic problem of the book is, as a matter of fact, purely theological. Don't let that scare you though. There's all the plot sense and suspense you might expect from the Blish of JACK OF EAGLES, and all the scientific, technical background you've seen in the Blish who wrote BEEP and EARTHMAN, COME HOME. At long last, the two sides of this writer's personality have fused.

I quote Damon Knight, writing about a long novelette, BEANSTALK, by Blish, in 1953: "If Jim Blish has just jumped to a new plateau,

meaning that this story is not a brilliant exception but the starting-point for another slow, steady advance, I suggest that the incumbent Mr. Science Fiction get ready to move over."

The prophecy has paid off, though it took five years to do so; an automatic candidate for the best-of-the-best lists has arrived. Mr. Science Fiction—whoever you are at this writing—move over.

—Larry Harris

MAN OF EARTH, Algis Budrys (Novel); Ballantine, 144 pp., 35¢.

Usually reliable sources (as they say) tell me that MAN OF EARTH has been rewritten several times, and that the last couple of pages, in particular, went through the mill over and over again before (a) Budrys and (b) the powers that be at Ballantine were fully satisfied. It seemed like a good idea to get that down, because this is one of those books that sounds rewritten.

The last 10,000 words or so read in a greatly rushed fashion; notions, plot tie-ups, theme and Final Revelation are thrown at the reader's head in a single undigested gob. My assumption is that this final portion started out about twice the length in which we now find it, and that it's been cut heavily and none too wisely. Because the rest of the book doesn't read like that at all.

Budrys has worked very hard at mocking up an acceptable and believable hero in Allan Sibley, who gets his body thoroughly revamped and goes out into the world as the prototype of all good Perfect Physical Specimens, John L. Sullivan. And the success is a brilliant one; Sibley is totally real, entirely believable and wonderfully familiar. The process of getting used to his own body is handled a little more baldly, perhaps, than you might wish, but, all in all, Sibley holds up from beginning to end.

The plot, somehow, never really unifies. It's as if Budrys had tried to do a logical reworking of the standard Pohl-Kornbluth plot: hero is a schmo who finds himself in a position of immense powers, overthrows the entire system and somehow becomes a non-schmo. The process of becoming a non-schmo is extraordinarily interesting to Budrys, and he's devoted a good deal of loving care to showing you various steps along the way. Sibley goes from a Twenty-first Century Earth to Pluto, gets involved in an army there, becomes an INFORMER-like character, and so on and so on. Apparently the character of Sibley is supposed to make all of this cohere; but it never really does.

In spite of the success with which Budrys has managed the actual portrayal of Sibley, there's been an almost total failure in getting any sympathy for the man. Frankly, there isn't any reason to care what happens to him; the reader is cast outward, to the plot mechanics and the background, for enjoyment, but these just won't do the job alone.

But, in spite of the foregoing, buy the book. Budrys is a writer in process, a writer still involved in growing at a great rate. There are wonderful individual scenes ("Sullivan's" relationship with his Sergeant make a whole series of illuminated moments) and some marvelous pages. Just as THE DEMOLISHED MAN made a half-written job like Bester's sole Unknown novel a collector's item, so Budrys' big novel, when it comes — and it's going to come, barring unforeseen accident— will illumine this half-failure, this peculiarly formless and cold novel.

LH

CYCLE OF FIRE, Hal Clement; Ballantine, 185 pp., 35¢.

This is no MISSION OF GRAVITY— but what is? It is, however, an enormously competent and careful work. Better close your mind to the style, though; it's like hasn't been seen in these parts since David H. Keller retired. But, beyond style, there's a firm grasp of science and beautiful extrapolation that makes the whole slightly juvenile book worth while.

There's nobody else doing work like Clement's. Sometimes, when you think of style, character and dialogue, you can almost be grateful. Then the whole enormous body of technical information hits you all over again.

But don't try to convert your friends to science fiction with it.

LH

VOR, James Blish; Avon, 159 pp., 35¢.

Some of you may remember "The Weakness of Rvog" by James Blish and Damon Knight from a 1949 Thrilling Wonder Stories. Well, here it is again, expanded, complicated and constructed into an exciting and totally believable novel. This is no CASE OF CONSCIENCE — but it would be downright ungrateful to expect it.

It's just a good, solid job of writing and plotting.

What do I mean, "just?"

LH

WHO?, Algis Budrys; Pyramid, 157 pp., 35¢.

Budrys (as has been remarked previously) is a growing writer. It can be a lot of fun to watch an author of such obvious talent and potential discover himself — since neither he, nor you, know exactly what the end product is going to be

like. But, as WHO? proves, it's more than fun; it's enormously profitable.

WHO? is in part a science fiction translation of the detective novel's most fascinating problem: the case of identity. Is the half-metal, atom-powered being who crosses the border between the Soviets and the Allies actually Dr. Martino, injured in an explosion, a Soviet prisoner for months and the key figure in the enormously imtant K-88 project? Or is he an imposter, cleverly trained and constructed by the Soviets themselves, to act as a spy on the project?

Because of the assumptions it's possible to make in the science fiction field, Budrys is able to do a much more total job on the problem than can be done in a detective novel. Fingerprints, eyeprints, even skin-pore patterns can't be used as identification; Martino (if the rebuilt man is Martino) is now more than half metal and wire. Because his face is an expressionless metal ovoid, there's no chance of his "accidentally" giving himself away by a change of expression, either. He has no expression.

But this generalizing of the problem has had other effects, too. Budrys is able to concern himself with the philosophic basis of the problem: the question of identity, not only as a suspense factor in a novel, but as a root question every human being must face. One of the Allied investigators says: "Nobody —nobody in the whole world—can prove who he is." It's that question which must be faced, and is faced, in a book as exciting and massive in structure, plot and conception as any Budrys fan could have hoped.

The novel is composed of the search for Martino's identity—coupled with background material. Identity, Budrys decides, is the sum of everything you have done, everything that has been done to you — plus the "indefinable residue." Martino becomes, slowly, completely real. But is he the metal figure the Allies are investigating? Is the young boy who came to New York, studied physics, worked in an espresso joint in Greenwich Village, the same person as the reclaimed semi-robot?

There's a lot in this book for any reader. For the thoughtful reader, the inquiring, or the philosophically-minded reader, there's an enormous amount.

LH

SLAVE SHIP, Frederik Pohl; Ballantine, 35¢.

Mr. Pohl, who has been responsible for some of the worst "good" science fiction in recent years, does nothing to impair the record with this novel. As usual, the prose is smooth and professional, but colorless, and the characterization pure knotty-pine. In this case, even the basic premise is untenable. That animals may have a language and are capable of communication is not exactly unthinkable, but my imagination stops at submarines manned by chimpanzees.

—Dave Foley

OCCAM'S RAZOR, David Duncan; Ballantine, 165 pp., 35¢.

The third of David Duncan's science fiction novels for Ballantine may not be quite equal to its predecessors in action and excitement, but it is far better science fiction. This opinion, however, is strongly biased; OCCAM'S RAZOR is one of those rare science fiction stories based heavily on mathematics, and as a mathematician I was intrigued by Duncan's manipulations of the theory of minimal surfaces in constructing his story gimmick. The basic idea is the old one of parallel universes, co-existant with this one but invisible and intangible to our senses. However, the rational is here made to rest on the quantized nature of time, and the actual means of transfer between the universes depends on the calculus of variations — in particular, on the theory of minimal surfaces and their soap-film models. Aside from a couple of pages (pp. 98-99) of unfortunate mumbling, the science background is ingenious, coherent and intelligently worked out.

The fact that the novel takes place at a moon-rocket base has no direct bearing on the plot, but it serves to introduce pressures and anxieties on the characters which would not otherwise exist, and hence heightens the tension and dramatic quality of the novel. The physical action of the story does not always move at the fastest pace, but there is never any lack of mental action: new attitudes, concepts and ideologies are juggled around frequently. Actually, "juggled around" is the wrong term; more often than not the concepts and attitudes are examined more closely than is usual and actually influence the course of the story. I found the book far from dull, and in fact a rewarding and exciting reading experience.

—Robert E. Briney

DOOMSDAY MORNING, C. L. Moore; Doubleday, 216 pp., $2.95.

I don't think C. L. Moore ever has really created a novel plot, and this one is no exception. A Down-And-Out Hero is given a chance to Redeem Himself by working for The Powers That Be but discovers Just In Time that the Poor Downtrodden Masses are In The Right and, naturally, Saves The Country. But what beats me is that — again, pretty much as usual — she has managed to use the plot as a mere skeleton and by sheer writing skill has turned it into a full-bodied novel which is a joy to read.

The situation (an all-powerful communications network controlling the United States) is a little weak in conception but is carried off smoothly enough, and the device of using an actor and an acting troupe for propaganda purposes is deftly handled. The hero, Howard Rohan, is a little boring in spots, with his mental problems, but the supporting characters are living, breathing human beings and even the stock types hold up logically.

Thinking back, I can't find a weak spot anyplace — the reading flows along without a letdown, and a tremendously suspenseful buildup and denouement in the last few pages actually had me excited even though I knew what the final outcome would be.

—Dick Ellington

WORLD WITHOUT MEN, Charles Eric Maine; Ace, 190 pp., 35¢.

In this World of the Future, everyone is One. Due to slightly religious, but mostly literary phenomena, man (that is, men) has become extinct. It seems that Mother Nature, in retaliation for Immoral Humankind's wholesale use of birth control pills, has made child birth possible only by the grace of parthenogenesis. Thus, a World Without Men.

The world, in other words, is damned with dykes and, as unlikely as this may sound in a society with 5000 years of cultural development behind it, some of the characters in this Lesbos feel exactly that way: uncomfortably immoral and, above all, queer. Some are even man-hungry.

I will say the book is consistent — the writing is on an equal level with the concepts and characterization.

—Martin Jukovsky

BIG PLANET and SLAVES OF THE KLAU, Jack Vance; Ace Double, 287 pp., 35¢.

These are both Standard reprints from six years ago, and neither of them are as good as Vance's recent TO LIVE FOREVER. But BIG PLANET is well paced action, with interesting characters. Claude Glystra is sent to Big Planet to stop a plot being developed to disturb the peace. On the way he discovers one of the enemy is among his crew and things go on from there.

Vance doesn't over-write his adventure as many authors do, but does fail to give enough background detail. Yet, he builds his story to an absorbing climax and a natural ending, making his work an ease to read.

SLAVES OF THE KLAU is one of those tales where one man manages to lick a whole planet of aliens, with the aliens having far more knowledge than any one on Earth. It's all believable, too, somehow, and it makes for a good van Vogt type yarn. Not as well done as van Vogt, but worth your attention as light entertainment.

—Dan Adkins

HIGH VACUUM, Charles Eric Maine; Ballantine, 35¢.

HIGH VACUUM is the usual Maine; perhaps a bit better written, but much more irritating. A stowaway on the first moon rocket is the wife of one of the crew (they're not supposed to be married). Because of her added weight, the ship crashes and her husband is killed. I won't go on. It's too awful.

—Bill Donaho

TWICE UPON A TIME, Charles L. Fontenay and MECHANICAL MONARCH, E. C. Tubb; Ace Double, 319 pp., 35¢.

TWICE UPON A TIME is fairly good space opera. It seems an unlikely combination of Leigh Brackett and Bob Silverberg. THE MECHANICAL MONARCH is the worst Tubb I have ever read. A society of the future is run by a giant brain, and a man from the past upsets its calculations because he is unpredictable, etc. Don't bother reading it.

BD

AN ELEPHANT FOR ARISTOTLE, L. Sprague de Camp (Historical Novel); Doubleday, 360 pp., $3.95.

I have often felt that de Camp would write a good historical, if the mood should ever take him; his erudition and his historical, linguistic, tactical and geographical proficiencies should combine to turn out a cloak-and-sworder of sterling merit, aided no little by his enthusiasm for the Conanesque romance, which has already preeminently produced THE TRITONIAN RING.

Well, seems I was right. AN ELEPHANT FOR ARISTOTLE is a rich, colorful, exciting and authentic picture of Asia and Hellas in the Era of Alexander, complete with well-rounded characterization and smooth, sound craftsmanship.

When Alexander, having successfully warred in India, decides to give his old tutor, Aristotle, a great war elephant and deputizes a veteran, Leon of Atrax, to deliver it, the result is exciting reading. Across the length of Asia, stopping off for a look at life in Fourth Century B.C. Persopolis, Babylon, Susa, Sardis, and Athens, Leon's motley caravan runs the gamut of every possible hindrance and obstacle. The story is well constructed and better written than 99 out of every 100 modern historicals, with much more pith and content for the discerning reader.

De Camp's familiar style, the jocose debunking of greatness and dignity and pomposity, is here used to good advantage. The novel at times skirts burlesque, flirts with satire, but is in the main a good adventure story by a fine storyteller. Not fantasy, but read it anyway.

—Lin Carter

Short Stories

THE GRAVEYARD READER, Groff Conklin, Ed.; Ballantine, 156 pp., 35¢.

There are twelve stories in this collection, eight of which are excellent. Bradbury's "The Screaming Woman" is one of his best stories concerned with children, lacking much of the syrupy sentimentality of his more recent work; its basic concern is the development of horror, and children aid in the development. It therefore ranks with the best of DARK CARNIVAL, which is very fine indeed.

"A Bottomless Grave" is an example of Bierce's acid carvings at the world as he saw it; brutal, it is at the same time either amusing, disquieting or disgusting, depending on how you look at the world. Richard Hughes' "The Cart" is a moody word picture of a child surrounded by the dark horror of death, quite effectively drawn. Dahl's "Skin" is irony; if a poor man finds he is the possessor of a treasure that will make him rich, you would say he was lucky—but is he still so lucky if the treasure is a part of him?

"Free Dirt" by Beaumont is, I think, my favorite of them all, though a comparison of such excellent and diverse stories is difficult. It concerns a glutton who collected dirt because it was free; it is moving and powerful, an effective short story, which is praise enough. "Listen, Children, Listen," by Wallace West, is about people very similar to those found in Wellman's Ballad Singer stories, but it is much finer than any of those; warmer, with characters more alive, and better written. In Collier's "Special Delivery" we come across a fierce, burning, unquenchable love; and as such a love invariably does, it destroys. Too, it is a love impossible of fulfilment, but what great love isn't?

And then, Sturgeon is present with an original, "The Graveyard Reader," displaying his usual magic, with his ability to give ideas completely new dimensions, and his ability to write of them in a way that leaves you wondering and breathless. Though this is not the best Sturgeon, it's far from the worst.

"The Child That Loved a Grave," by Fitz-James O'Brien, is an intriguing piece; it evokes a lonely meloncholy, and it is pleasant to read, but it is not a very good story. Kuttner's idea in "The Graveyard Rats," that of a man being trapped in a network of small tunnels where he is pursued by giant rats, is one of the most horrifying imaginable. Unfortunately, the fantasy element in general, and the pseudo-Lovecraft prose in particu-

lar, take much of the edge off of what would have been a very frightening story, if told from the viewpoint of reality.

"The Outsider," the Lovecraft story in the volume, was of particular interest to me, since it is only the second of his stories I've read and since it is so venerated among Lovecraft addicts. Happily, it is a good deal more bearable than the former piece which I had perused so shakingly (not, however, from the exact dread intended). There is, indeed, a magic to be glimpsed in it — in the dark and lonely castle, in the boy you imagine to be trapped there for unexplained and unexplainable reasons, and in the wild discovery he makes upon ascending the turret. This magic, however, is dispelled (effectively, if not altogether completely) by an archaic and inadequate style and an inability at description (compensation for which is attempted by an over-abundance of description, which is in truth verbosity rather than narrative ability). The final surprise of the story is no surprise at all, and the story is no story at all, but the magic of the first pages will remain, if one is susceptible and not overly critical.

The only really bad story in the collection is Mary Counselman's "Night Court," a weary, ridiculous piece of propaganda for safe driving; the mistake here is making the moral more important than the story.

This is a remarkably fine collection of fantasy and horror tales. Mr. Conklin is to be congratulated.

—Ron Smith

THE THIRD GALAXY READER, H.L. Gold, Ed.; Doubleday, 262 pp., $3.95.

When Galaxy Science Fiction first appeared it was — and continued to be for approximately the next three years — far superior to its competitors. The exact reasons for its decline are not clear to me in detail. since my reading of the magazine since 1953 has been very sporadic. However, it is obvious that, just as Horace Gold was responsible for the consistent quality of those early issues, so too is he responsible for the abysmally thin-blooded issues which have followed.

With one exception, the stories in this collection are from the later issues. The one exception, "The Model of a Judge" by William Morrison is minor, but well constructed and extremely enjoyable.

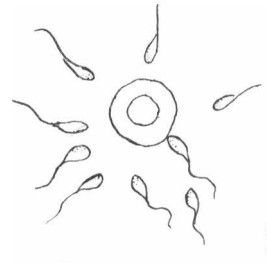
"A Wind Is Rising" by O'Donnevan is also entertaining, on the adventure level, being the story of man's struggle against the forces of nature, with an ending that is pleasantly ironic.

Fritz Leiber's "Time in the Round" has as its theme the self-centered, egoistic nature of children, the apparent result of which is quite often extreme cruelty. In Leiber's future, allowance is made for this natural cruelty, with provision for its harmless expression. However, there's nothing like the real thing — all things artificial fail to completely satisfy — and what is a boy's love of adventure but a manifestation of this egoistic nature? With sensitivity and literary deftness, Leiber has told the story of a young boy in this future, contributing the only exceptional story in the book.

The other stories in the volume don't belong in this, or any, anthology.

Of course, this is understandable to a degree; it would be impossible to assemble an anthology of acceptable quality from the recent years of Galaxy alone. But I suspect Mr. Gold could have done slightly better than this. There is, for example, no Sturgeon.

To give a brief rundown: "The Vilbar Party" by Evelyn Smith is cute and insufferable. "Honorable Opponent" by Simak presents a very clever idea very badly. "Help! I Am Dr. Morris Goldpepper" is probably the most delightful title I have encountered on a short story; it is hard to imagine a story living up to it, and the one Davidson has written doesn't. "Protection" by Sheckley is clever and amusing, but negligable. "End as a World" by Wallace concludes with one of those surprise endings that depends on verbal construction. "Limiting Factor" by Cogswell is about supermen who get nowhere; the story is no more successful. "Dead Ringer" by del Rey depends on one of those surprise endings where, to use an analogy, the detective turns out to be the murderer. "The Haunted Corpse" by Pohl, in which the Army is outsmarted again, is dull, ridiculous and anything but clever. "Ideas Die Hard" left me wondering what Asimov could possibly have been thinking of; no two men enclosed in a small compartment for a



"Joe sent me."

few days would react the way his characters react — and they were screened by psychiatrists! "Man in the Jar" by Knight is well written, but not worth the effort. "Volpla" by Guin is long and boring; space beings come and go, and something happens while they're here, but I've forgotten what it was. "The Game of Rat and Dragon" by Cordwainer Smith I enjoyed; however, the empact of the ending — a fascinating tragic situation — is deadened by the story development.

It's hard to imagine anyone buying this book. However, in case you were tempted, don't.

RS

ON AN ODD NOTE, Gerald Kersh; Ballantine, 154 pp., 35¢.

Most of these stories are short parables — chronicles, all of them, of some ironic tragedy. Most of them, too, are formless, lifeless and all but pointless.

The one exception is "The Begger's Stone," reprinted from Esquire. It is effective in its irony because it is a true irony, and because, for once, the author does not attempt to reconcile his parable, in its telling, with the present-day world.

The relatively longer stories are the more interesting, but they are neither amusing enough nor sharp enough to make the collection worth the assembling.

"Seed of Destruction" and "The Crewel Needle," both also reprinted from Esquire, are worthy of note, however, as is "The Brighton Monster" from the Post: still, the latter suffers the same fault as the remaining stories—the irony is weak, weak in nature and weak in presentation, which makes the story weak, which begins to make the reader a little weak, too, after ten identical failures.

RS

THE BEST FROM FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION (Seventh Series). Anthony Boucher, Ed.; Doubleday, 264 pp., $3.75.

Such anthologies as this baffle me. There's a case for a general s. f. anthology (you may not have seen Argosy for April 1912, in which a good story appeared) or for Judy Merril's annual SF: THE BEST jobs (few people can read all the magazines). But it seems to me that those who buy THE BEST FROM F&SF should be reading F&SF anyhow.

However, the current anthology contains, to my way of thinking, the following A stories: "The Wines of Earth," Idris Seabright; "The Cage," Bertram Chandler; "Ms. Found in a Chinese Fortune Cookie," C. M. Kornbluth; and "Journey's End," Poul Anderson. B stories include Ward Moore's overlong and overoblique "Adjustment," Fredric Brown's cute, but meaningless, "Expedition," Isaac Asimov's "A Loint of Paw" (ditto), Mildred Clingerman's somehow unconvincing "The Wild Wood," Robert F. Young's writer-hero adventure, "Goddess in Granite" (writers as heroes are about as tough to handle as gnomes and fairies—Mr. Young's attempt is gallant, but mistaken), and Fritz Leiber's too short, not quite convincing "The Big Trek."

The remaining stories are mainly C's — but better than you might think. "Mr. Stilwell's Stage," by Avram Davidson, comes to nothing at all, but reaches a few interesting notions on its short, perfectly styled way; "Rescue," by G. C. Edmonson, is arrant nonsense, solidly written and constructed; "Between the Thunder and the Sun," by Chad Oliver, is compassionate and thoughtful, if greatly overblown; and "Dodger Fan," by Will Stanton, is pleasant if ancient. This leaves only Arthur Clarke's "Venture to the Moon," a series for which I can not find the slightest excuse. These transparent gags are bull-session paragraphs, not stories, and shouldn t be peddled as such. And Mr. Clarke, who might be writing top-grade material, knows better than to waste his time with such very small beer.

Moving to the poems and oddities —unlisted on the contents page; pray, why?—we find a remarkably powerful and compelling James Blish sonnet, three extremely minor efforts (possibly humorous) by Doris Pitkin Buck, Anthony Brode and Dorothy Cowles Pinkney, and a special treat by Ron Smith.

If you buy THE BEST FROM F&SF anthologies regularly, buy this one. Four A's, six B's and a good poem make a fair average. But—if you do buy the anthology—I'd sort of like to know why.

—Larry Harris

THE VARIABLE MAN and other stories, Philip K. Dick; Ace, 255 pp., 35¢.

The volume contains, for the record, five stories. There is also a Special Introduction by Anthony Boucher, set where the inside blurb usually goes, which is a total loss as far as interest, information or conclusion goes.

Dick's a strange writer. At his best, he can create a nightmare world that seems more real than the world you know, a world peopled by beings who aren't quite human, who exist only as oddly shaped rubber portions of old dreams. Events in his best work occur inside a beautifully constructed framework, but the framework s never evident; the chain of causation seems to be broken and the things that happen fall out of the sky, without plan or prediction. Dick s world is surrealistic, convincing and terribly frightening.

Unfortunately, this is not a purposeful technique. Because when Dick is not trying for the effect, it comes anyway and spoils whole pages, or even an entire story. "The Variable Man" and "The Minority Report" are examples; both of these are fairly straightforward plots, but the misty, Daliesque quality of the writing keeps clouding things up without adding any contributory mood. (It's only fair to say that individual pages of "The Variable Man," entirely unimportant to the story, have enormous impact on their own, as Dick got carried away by his own style.) Too, the effect is so special that, seeing it over and over again, it gets hard to tell one Dick story from another.

Here, then, is the problem. Dick looks like a conscious, controlled author walking an extremely difficult tight-rope. He's no such thing. This is the natural bent of his mind; he hasn't learned to control it to any important degree. In other words, when he hits on an idea to which the technique is applicable (as in "Second Variety" or "A World of Talent") the story comes off brilliantly. When he hits on a "Variable Man" or a "Minority Report," everything goes to hell in a handbasket. And when he comes up with an idea which only half-fits the technique, like "Autofac," the effect is clouded; nothing quite comes off and it's difficult to see why.

LH

EARTH IS ROOM ENOUGH, Isaac Asimov; Doubleday, 192 pp., $2.95.

In this small volume, Asimovian talents have been turned to an examination of every type of science fiction story, and to several fantasies. As an added bonus for the reader who enjoys seeing authors jump technical hoops, every story takes place on Earth.

"The Dead Past," from Astounding, is the Campbell-type story. Take one new invention, mix thoroughly, and describe its effect on the world. "Franchise" is the Asimov reply to Pohl and Kornbluth. Here, a single tendency of society is extrapolated to absurdity. "Gimmicks Three" (like "The Message," "Hellfire," "The Immortal Bard" and "The Watery Place") is the F&SF Gimmick-type short. "Kid Stuff" is one of Fredric Brown's suppose-a-writer-got-involved-in-a-galactic-plot yarns, with the typical Brownian addition of elves as the villains of the piece. "Living Space" is one of Mr. Sheckley's nice-little-people-in-a-strange-world notions. "The Last Trump" is a del Rey fantasy. "The Fun They Had" is Isaac's answer to Zenna Henderson and her brood. "Jokester" might belong to Eric Frank Russell ("We're property!") and "Someday" to Philip K. Dick. Finally, "Dreaming Is a Private Thing" is the Heinlein story in the batch—the close exploration of what a new technique is, how it works, and what it does to the people who use it.

This leaves only the poems scattered through the volume (in which it might be argued that Mr. Asimov is having his fun at the expense of Mr. Garrett) and "Satisfaction Guaranteed," the one Robotics story. The implication is clear: Mr. Asimov is lifting other people's notions.

Nothing could be further from the truth. In effect, this volume is a how-to-do-it. The ideas are novel, the treatment wonderful (with a few small lapses — such as "The Watery Place" and "Hellfire"), but the manner includes every type of story. There could be no more conclusive proof of a writer's versatility than this book—and, since you probably haven't got all the magazines which contain these stories, it's a must for your shelves.

LH

ROBOTS AND CHANGELINGS, Lester del Rey; Ballantine, 175 pp., 35¢.

Standard del Rey product. Always competent, never exciting; always novel, never startling; always surprising, never meaningful.

The guy is a Classic. Why?

Ask me not.

LH

STARBURST, Alfred Bester; New American Library, 160 pp., 35¢.

This collection includes "Disappearing Act," "Adam and No Eve," "Star Light, Star Bright," "Oddy and Id," "The Starcomber" (magazine title, "5,217,009"), "Fondly Farenheit," "Hobson's Choice," "Of Time and Third Avenue" and three others

—including an original, "Travel Diary," which is, unfortunately, another rehash of Dorothy Parker's "Diary of a New York Lady." But it's the only clinker in the bunch.

LH

THOSE IDIOTS FROM EARTH, Richard Wilson; Ballantine, 160 pp., 35¢.

Ten stories, all except one written with the left hand. That one, "It's Cold Outside," somehow doesn't quite come off; perhaps it's the plain unbelievability of the comedian, Jerry Hilarious (come now, Mr. Wilson!) that puts it out of the running.

The other nine are all extremely pleasant, extremely easy to read, and totally forgettable. Why do people keep doing this?

And why do people keep buying it?

LH

TIME IN ADVANCE, William Tenn; Bantam, 153 pp., 35¢.

Here are collected "Firewater," "The Sickness," "Time in Advance" and "Winthrop Was Stubborn (magazine title: "Time Waits for Winthrop"). The first and last are Tenn at his very, very best; "Time in Advance" is second-rate Tenn, which means first-rate almost-anybody-else; and "The Sickness" is, unfortunately, a short story idea blown up to novelette length.

And the publishers are to be commended for the worst set of front cover, back cover and inside first page blurbs within recent memory.

LH

PILGRIMAGE TO EARTH, Robert Sheckley; Bantam, 167 pp., 35¢.

Mr. Sheckley proves once again in this volume that he is a very clever man. His stories are bright and sparkling with wit, and full of clever twists and snappers. His characterization is uniformly good, even though his characters are uniformly shallow. He even makes a small point now and then.

Unfortunately, this is about all you can say for Sheckley's work—clever and shallow. This is not necessarily a criticism, nor does it necessarily invalidate his work. Sheckley's stories are basically protracted jokes — tales that build through a sequence of amusing events to a punch line and are, as jokes, frequently quite funny. As stories, they are uniformly poor.

Once again, we are face to face with the old bugaboo: "Yes, but is it art?" By this yardstick, Sheckley runs an anemic last. But who ever said all fiction has to be art? Even the most titanic of intellects (I name no names) must get tired of thinking once in awhile, and turn for a small respite to a quiet, unimportant, mildly amusing diversion. Sheckley writes such diversions. If you don't like them, don't read them. But don't complain that they aren't art.

They're not supposed to be.

—Dave Foley

FANTASTIC MEMORIES, Maurice Sandoz; Doubleday, 146 pp., $2.00.

Seventeen brief, awkward and amateurish pieces, mostly in the grotesque, macabre and gothic

"To the greatest goddam mother on earth."

school. They are oddly flat and tasteless (and unrecommended), and nowhere near this author's previous books, ON THE VERGE and THE MAZE.

—Lin Carter

Non-fiction

THEORIES OF THE UNIVERSE: From Babylonian Myth to Modern Science, Milton K. Munitz, Ed.; Free Press, 432 pp., $6.50.

A vast and fascinating anthology of cosmological speculations, opening with an account of the Babylonian creation mythos, an imaginative and stimulating tale, and concluding with Fred Hoyle's own explanation of his equally imaginative continuous-creation theory of the universe.

Between these two sections comes virtually every major theory of creation and cosmology offered by Western man, told always in its proponent's own words; Oriental beliefs are omitted from consideration and, fortunately, so are all examples of modern crackpottery. The survey includes healthy chunks of Plato and Aristotle and Lucretius, a snippet from Ptolemy, and a long section on pre-Einsteinian concepts that begins with Nicolas Cusanus, Copernicus, Bruno and Galileo, proceeds through Kepler, Newton and some others, to Kant and Herschel.

From a science fictional point of view, of course, the section on modern theories of the universe is the most valuable; Einstein and Eddington are on hand, along with mind-widening selections from Lemaitre, de Sitter, and other bold thinkers of the present. Significantly, few of these men agree with each other's premises or conclusions, though each has demonstrated his particular cosmology with formidable erudition. This gives rise to the humbling thought that anthology editors of the Thirtieth Century may regard de Sitter et al., with the same kind of patronizing amusement we unavoidably must feel for the painstaking, elaborate and dead wrong theorizing of Aristotle and Ptolemy included here.

The six pages allotted to Einstein seem rather skimpy, and the index is hopelessly inadequate. Otherwise, the volume is first-rate. No technical training is needed for comprehension of the selected essays, but those readers who find that following a tightly-reasoned argument gives them headaches are advised to stay away from this book. Science fiction readers will find plenty of mental fodder here, and it belongs in the basic library of any serious s.f. writer.

—Robert Silverberg

DISCOVERY OF THE UNIVERSE, G. de Vaucouleurs; Macmillan, 308 pp., $6.

The redoubtable M. Vaucouleurs has, this time around, turned out a respectable text for the absolute novice in astronomy. The great simplicity and simplification of text and treatment make this a book which anyone with a fair grounding in the subject might as well pass up. The plates are gorgeous and almost worth framing (one of the Great Nebula in Orion is as clear and fine as anything I've seen), but unless a few plates are worth $6 to you, stay away.

The novice will, however, get a fine grounding in the history and practice of astronomy from the book. Everything is made wonderfully clear and simple, and, if you don't know much about the subject, this might be a good volume to start a library with. A full bibliography is included, and the book is fully, marvelously, indexed.

—Larry Harris

THE SUN, Giorgio Abetti, transl. from the Italian by J. B. Sidgwick; Macmillan, 325 pp., $12.

As the price would indicate, this is not for the dilettante. For the well-read amateur, and perhaps even for the professional, the book's a must.

Abetti has done an enormously comprehensive job on every phase of solar studies, from simple spectroscopic analysis to a short, hopeful chapter on the use of sunpower. The plates, which number 147, are clear and fine (Macmillan seems to be doing exceptional work in this area lately).

Abetti has his own somewhat philosophic views on the subject, which intrude every so often, but, far from being bothersome, they're odd and attractive. Example (from the introduction): "The occurence of spots on the Sun in no way detracted from its perfection; the Earth, after all, has its oceans, its continents and its mountains." Maybe this is the way Italian professionals in the field think; personally, I find it refreshing. If you don't, the best thing I can suggest is that you grit your teeth and ignore it. The book's much too good, and too thorough, to pass up on such grounds.

The index is rather short, but surprisingly good. There's a short bibliography.

LH

GUIDED WEAPONS, Eric Burgess; Macmillan, 247 pp., $5.

Here's an oddity — a specialized book written for the novice. Much less comprehensive than Ley's ROCKETS, MISSILES AND SPACE TRAVEL (in any of its incarnations), GUIDED WEAPONS devotes itself entirely to missiles and, out of necessity, some rockets. Probably meant to cash in on current curiosity about

the Vanguard, Sputniks, and so on, the book's already out of date, of course (it would have been out of date on the presses), but does make a fine attempt at covering its subject.

The book is divided into three parts. The first starts with "What Is A Missile?" and works its way up through a general discussion of missile systems, propellants, general principles of guidance and control, and testing facilities, to the heart of the book: three chapters headed, respectively, "Ground-to-Air Missiles," "Air-Launched Missiles" and "Ground-to-Ground Missiles." This grouping, while confusing to the more knowledgeable reader who's willing to take all three as special cases with many items in common, is nevertheless helpful to the novice whose main concern is What Are They Going To Drop On Me? The final portion of the book is a single chapter on production and development of missiles, in which it becomes painfully obvious that the writer is making bricks out of straw. The trouble here is Security, of course; anything the reader really wants to know, the author can't tell him.

Bibliography (which lists the Ley book as from its British publisher, in spite of several American publisher listings) and index are both more comprehensive in scope than the book requires. For the novice who hasn't got the latest Ley, or for the novice of very specialized interests.

LH

SATELLITE!, Erik Bergaust & William Beller; Bantam, 176 pp., 35¢.

SATELLITE! deals with just what you think it deals with. The authors tend to go overboard a little (on the subject of life on other planets, for instance, which has no business in a basic information book on satellites) and the book is a little out of date, but that, at least, can't be helped.

There's very little new here for the science fiction fan; this is a basic book. But some of the details may surprise you: there are lots of drawings and explanations. The book is written in the usual, almost impassable style of the second-rate popularizer.

LH

THE WORLD IN SPACE, Alexander Marshack; Dell, 189 pp., 35¢.

THE WORLD IN SPACE is a book on the IGY which starts from rock-bottom basics (carefully explaining that IGY means International Geophysical Year, for instance), and is clearly and simply written, has extra plates and some fine diagrams, and has an index.

LH

ONCE ROUND THE SUN, Ronald Fraser; Macmillan, 160 pp., $3.95.

ONCE ROUND THE SUN is for the somewhat more sophisticated reader. You have to know something to make sense of this one. The plates and diagrams are interesting, if hardly spectacular, and the writing fairly good (not as good as the Marshack, nor as poor as the Bergaust-Beller).

Of course, it is $3.95. The question is, is it worth it, when the two previously mentioned books are only about a tenth the price? Frankly, the answer is no; there isn't too much here that isn't in the Marshack, and the better plate reproduction means very little, since many of the plates are unimportant shots of men smiling into the camera or ships breaking the ice in Antarctica.

If you have the money, buy the Fraser. If not, you won't be losing a good deal by buying the Marshack.

LH

THE INEXPLICABLE SKY, Arthur Constance; Citadel Press, 288 pp. & six illustrations, $3.95.

This book is a sort of cross between Charles Fort and the Encyclopedia Britannica: a compendium of odd, unusual and/or interesting facts, theories and phenomena concerning the gaseous envelope overhead. Mixed in with fairly interesting meteorological data and things like why we have sunsets and rainbows, is the latest "news" on the saucers — approximately a hundred pages worth.

The book is a curious, rather naive melange of fact and fantasy. The author uncritically wanders among theories of both the serious scientists and the lunatic fringe, and takes a little from both armed camps.

—Lin Carter

Reprints

CHILDREN OF THE ATOM, Wilmar H. Shiras; Avon, 192 pp., 35¢.

Except for one discrepancy, CHILDREN OF THE ATOM is a superb piece of work. That one discrepancy, however, is so huge as to set you wondering who's crazy: you or Shiras.

Novels usually follow a similar pattern. The characters are introduced, the conflict is set up, and the plot proceeds through a chain of events to a resolution of some kind. Sometimes, the foregoing are subordinated to a concept, in which case the resolution is usually the last statement by the author of his particular opinions. Huxley does this sort of thing regularly, as does Wylie. But the works of these authors are novels, if only in form rather than intent.

There is also the pseudo-novel sort of book, in which a group of short stories, related through some common denominator, are strung in a sequence. Steinbeck, Anderson and—closer to home—Simak and Bradbury have written books of this sort. But, again, these are novels, if only in intent rather than form.

And so we come to CHILDREN OF THE ATOM — a moving, beautifully written, completely engrossing two-headed whatsit of a book—and there we stop.

First of all, it contains no conflict whatever, on any level. The sequence of events is as placid as a river, beginning well below the headwaters and never even coming in sight of the sea. Except for the most minor altercations, the characters coexist in utopian harmony with themselves and the rest of the world, and the end of the book leaves no doubt in your mind that things will continue in this fashion indefinitely. The only concept in the plot which can be identified as such simply postulates the existance of the central characters, and nothing more.

The author has managed, in a display of sheer virtuosity that is awe-inspiring, to avoid every possible ramification of the basic premise, as well as any speculation on what might happen beyond the end of the book. I wouldn't have believed it possible to write so much about super-intelligent mutant children, a concept loaded with possibilities, and manage to say so little.

Think for a moment: how would the ordinary people of the world react to a child who was intellectually ten times superior to them? How would such children adjust to living in a world of comparitive morons? What would happen to the children when they became adults—would they coexist, or would they chose to rule? How far would their intelligence eventually extend?

Here is the basis for conflict, for extrapolation, for interaction of concept, for probing characterization, for the evaluation of moral precepts and ideals. Here, in short, is enough material for ten novels, and enough raw thinking matter to keep author and reader awake well into the night. Nowhere in CHILDREN OF THE ATOM are any of these questions even asked, much less answered.

And yet, despite all this, you will never forget the book. There is an undefinable quality about the prose that makes it, in a subtle way, almost hypnotic. Shiras has one of those styles that seems to be almost no style at all, as have Heinlein and Clarke, but she has carried it to a higher degree of sophistication. Neither of those talented gentlemen has ever written a completely plotless novel and I doubt if they could, but Shiras can and has. It isn't technique such as Knight might employ, nor striking images such as Bradbury's, nor Sturgeon's moving love of man, but rather a subdued nobility that carries the reader from page to page. The empathy one feels for the characters is amazing, especially since the characterization is so shallow. But almost without realizing it, you become so much a part of the proceedings and so deeply involved with the people that any conflict is unthinkable.

Examined in the cold light of reason, CHILDREN OF THE ATOM is neither fish nor fowl. If one must have a label, novelized non-fictional extrapolation is the closest I can come. And it is, in its way, the absolute quintessence of John W. Campbell's idea of science fiction.

But Shiras' inherent humanity lifts CHILDREN OF THE ATOM out of Campbell's realm and places it on a level few science fiction novels have ever attained.

—Dave Foley

EARTHLIGHT, Arthur C. Clarke; Ballantine, 155 pp., 35¢.

Clarke's strongest talent, a prose so persuasive that you begin to believe he's actually visited the locales he describes, this time illuminates the surface of the moon and its colonies. Stirred into this are the threat of a war with Earth and a desperate search for the Earth spy who could set it off. The attack, when it finally comes, is one of the most hair-raisingly vivid passages in science fiction. A fine job all around.

DF

SATELLITE E-ONE, Jeffery Lloyd Castle; Bantam, 164 pp., 35¢.

This one ought to be lumped with the fact books. Mr. Castle, in the best wide-eyed nineteenth-century style (like an old juvenile) has attempted to tell the wondrous story of the first manned satellite. The book is as timely as all get-out, but it isn't very good.

The major trouble is that it is not a novel, and has nothing to do with the form. Characters, dialogue and a certain amount of scene-setting are tossed in to fool the reader, but this is a text dressed up as a novel. Everything is carefully explained either to the narrator (who is the most spavined, knock-kneed excuse for an expert on "orbital dynamics" in recent fiction) or by him, to the reader. Long excerpts from the reports of the first space pioneers are shoved in with no light hand, and the entire book reads in only one tone. It's as if a second-rate London newspaper had commissioned a man to ghost such a piece, in the year 2100 or thereabouts, and the ghost

had done a fairly poor job.

Nothing new here for anyone over the age of twelve. There are better ways to spend thirty-five cents. There must be.

LH

2ND FOUNDATION: GALACTIC EMPIRE, Isaac Asimov; Avon, 192 pp., 35¢.

This is a reprint of Gnome's SECOND FOUNDATION, and completes the Foundation Saga. Okay, so history doesn't repeat, and the Roman and British Empires won't recur in the far, far future. This is still a classic, and a wonderfully rousing story. If you haven't already read it, where have you been?

LH

THE END OF ETERNITY, Isaac Asimov; New American Library, 192 pp., 35¢.

YOU TRAVELED THROUGH TIME TO TASTE FORBIDDEN LOVE BUT NOW YOU MUST MURDER HER.

In spite of the SF Book Club ads, this is a good book. The only unfortunate thing about it is that cultural patterns don't seem to change through the centuries over which the yarn ranges; Asimov says they do, but they don't. Lots of action, lots of plot surprises and some of the smoothest writing ever to come out of the Boston University School of Medicine.

LH

THE MARTIAN WAY, Isaac Asimov; New American Library, 159 pp., 35¢.

Four novelettes: "The Martian Way," "Youth." "The Deep" and "Sucker Bait."

This is Asimov at the top of his form. Read it. And learn from it—here, gentlemen, is how to do it.

LH

CITY, Clifford D. Simak; Ace, 255 pp., 35¢.

There isn't much to say about this one, these days. It's an IFA award winner, a collection of stories about Man and Dog (and other beings) in the far future, and one of the best semi-novels in science fiction. It's easily, barring the wonderful novelette, "Eternity Lost," the best Simak yet. And, though Ace's padding makes for less words per page, this is still a lot of reading for thirty-five cents.

LH

THE SHORT REIGN OF PIPPIN IV, John Steinbeck; Bantam, 151 pp., 35¢.

THE SHORT REIGN OF PIPPEN IV is utterly unlike anything Steinbeck has done before—a light, wonderful satire on the political situation in France. In many cases the satire is just straight reporting, but satirical speculation is the basis.

To get out of their hopeless political quagmire, the French decide to restore the monarchy. Even then there are so many pretenders of different dynasties to chose from that the solution is not easy. A descendant of Charlemagne is at last chosen, since his dynasty is furtherest back in time and therefore has fewer enemies. What happens afterwards makes for delightful fun and games. Not to be missed.

—Bill Donaho

WORLDS APART, J. T. McIntosh; Avon, 189 pp., 35¢.

The hard cover edition of this was BORN LEADER, and is McIntosh's usual craftsmanlike job. Earth, destroying itself in atomic war, has managed to establish two colonies. One has had things relatively easy and is a pleasant society. The other, established at the last moment, has had a hard struggle and has a totalitarian set-up. When Earth is finally destroyed, the totalitarian one tries to conquer the other. If you like McIntosh, you'll like this; one of his best.

BD

INVADERS FROM EARTH, Robert Silverberg and ACROSS TIME, David Grinnell; Ace Double, 308 pp., 35¢.

Grinnell's superior story is coupled with an original Silverberg—his best novel to date. Space opera with real people! If you go for tightly-knit adventure yarns, don't miss these.

BD

CITY ON THE MOON, Murray Leinster and MEN ON THE MOON, Donald Wollheim, Ed.; Ace Double, 288 pp., 35¢.

A competent novel (neither exciting nor dull) by Leinster is coupled with five average stories about steps in the conquest of the moon. If you have an extra 35¢ and some time to spare, you could do worse. On the other hand, if you don't, you won't miss anything.

BD

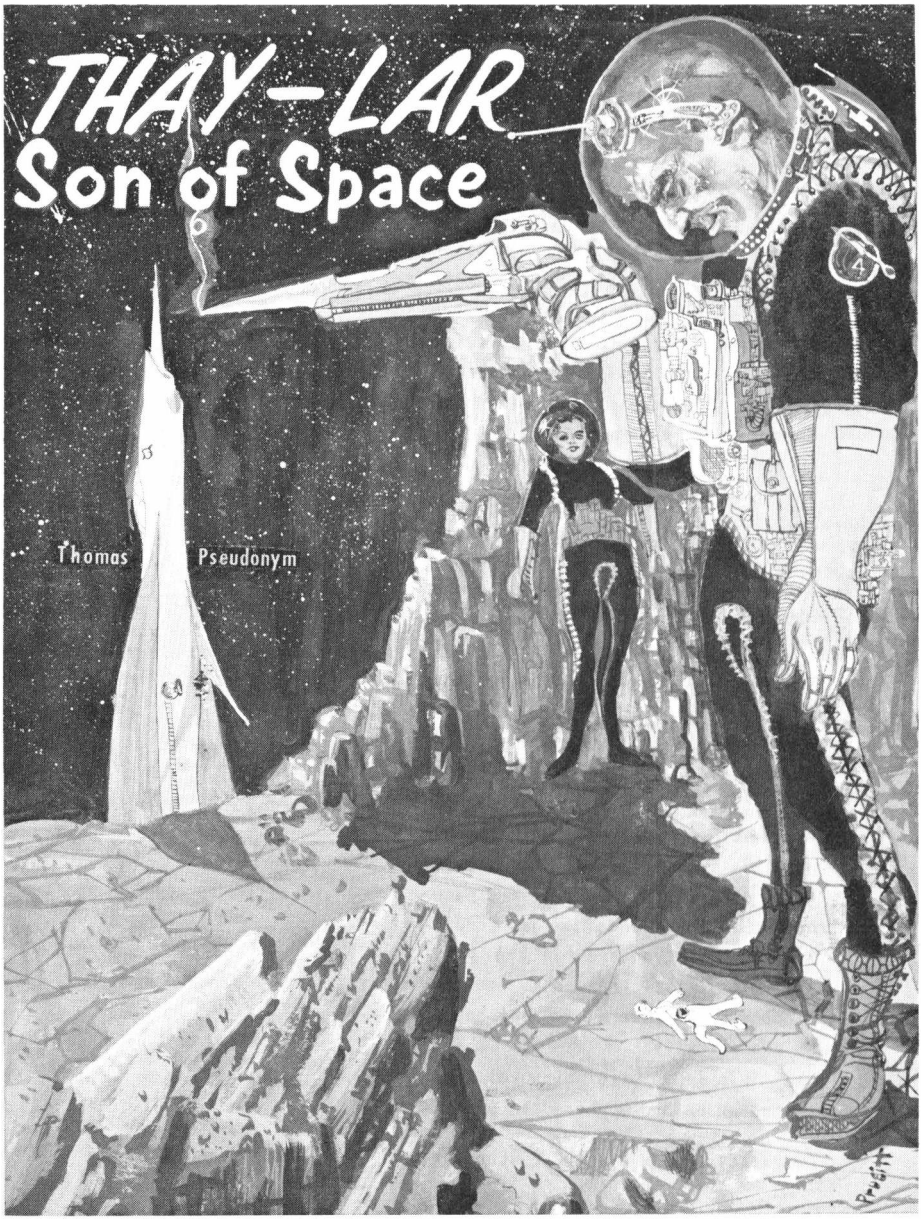
THE SKYLARK OF SPACE, Edward E. Smith; Pyramid, 159 pp., 35¢.

This is Doc Smith's first pocket book. Also Doc's first book, published in Amazing Stories in 1928, and written ten or twelve years earlier. It's been extensively revised to give it a more modern setting, mention of the A-Bomb, etc. Like all of Doc's work, it is a very fast moving and absorbing story, with competent science and interesting concepts. Unfortunately, it also has Doc's faults of wooden characters and impossible (both as to choice of words and the things expressed) dialogue.

BD

Blurb Happy

by Bob Tucker



Thay-lar

Son of Space

"A man of mystery was seen to enter the darkened flat at 313-B Jackson Street, carrying beneath his cloak a sinister black bag. The man never emerged from the building but minutes later a dazzling pillar of fire shot skyward, and the ground shook. Quickly the FBI threw a cordon about the block and moved in to investigate. The strange man with the terrifying powers was gone, with the only clue to his disappearance a scorched, gaping hole in the roof."

Once again that master storyteller, Thomas Pseudonym, has written a clever, fast-moving novel of double-agents and derring-do of the atomic world. As always, Pseudonym has peopled his story with believable characters, with living human beings and eldritch aliens. His scenes are colorful and exciting, his pace breath-taking, and his background is solidly grounded on the very latest scientific research. The far planets have never been presented so dramatically.

This is an original novel, and has never before appeared in print.

JACKET DESIGN BY SAMUEL BLUDGEON

The Reviews

A Vacuum

Occasionally one wishes that science fiction writers would first learn the rudimentary facts of interplanetary life before embarking on a novel such as this. Thomas Pseudonym's THAY-LAR, SON OF SPACE (Fantastic Press, $2.50) is a brassy concoction of questionable science, incredible plot and cardboard characters. Briefly, the author would have us believe that his protagonist manages to exist in a vacuum by psi-control—willing himself not to die without air. Disappointing.

Anthony Boucher

THAY-LAR, SON OF SPACE; Thomas Pseudonym; Fantastic Press; $2.50. Humble superman flies from earth to Mars to save kingdom of beautiful princess. Much action, romantic interest. Suitable for advanced teens. Will rent well.

Library Journal

Real Humdinger

THAY-LAR, SON OF SPACE by Thos. Pseudonym ($2.50) is a real humdinger of a rocketship story, and the rocketship fans are legion these days. You will go zooming into outer space on a wild ride to Mars, plunge deep into the mining pits of that planet, and in general have yourself a wonderful time. This is probably the best science fiction novel of the year!

Elkins Bay *Sentinel-Herald*

THAY-LAR, SON OF SPACE (Fantastic Press, $2.50) by Thomas Pseudonym is the damndest piece of tripe I've ever read, and I have been reading good and bad science fiction since twelve years of age. Pseudonym is a chucklehead who was born without imagination and has been earning a living in that vacuum ever since. Imagine, if you can, a sinister man with three eyes living peacefully and undetected in a quiet Brooklyn neighborhood; imagine that man constructing a space ship -- piece by smuggled piece -- in his apartment building without anyone being aware of it; and try to imagine that ridiculous alien blasting off from earth without pulverizing the entire block and the hundreds of humans living in it. The tail-blast from a space ship is a monstrous incinerator, for God's sake!

Not content with that, Pseudonym commits stupidity upon stupidity after his hero's departure. Thaylar (and what is that supposed to mean? Is it spelled backward, like another cathartic?) possesses the power of psi, if you please, and wills himself to live in naked space without the necessary nuisance of breathing--but nine pages later the stumbling dolt is down with "Martian strep-throat" (whatever that is) because his creator forgot he had the magic power to will off physical limitations. For that matter, his psi powers alternately work and not work all through the book; Pseudonym can't remember from one chapter to the next that a psi-shield *is* a psi-shield. Carrying on from this ridiculous point would be useless. Pseudonym's previous books each set a new mark, one below the other, and this volume does not depart from that tradition.

This is the science fiction boom?

damon knight

REVIEWS CONTINUED

Another new book from the never-ceasing science fiction presses is Tom Pseudonym's interplanetary thriller, THAY-LAR, SON OF SPACE. I was talking to Tom at the convention a few months ago and he told me about this book, and the plot is real cool. The fake fans -- the loud mouths alsays knocking science fiction and fandom -- have never had a good word for Tom, calling him a "world saver" and a "superman hack" but I've read this book and I can truthfully say it will stack up against anything Heinlein and van Vogt ever wrote. The science is pretty darned good, too, and nobody in the whole field extrapolates like Tom does. The critics have been knocking it, but then they knock everything said about psi these days -- and they claim to be real science fiction fans! Get Tom's book, you won't regret it. I happen to know that Gerry de la Ree is selling it for half price, so it's a bargain!

Joseph Fann

THAY-LAR, SON OF SPACE, Thomas Pseudonym; Fantastic Press, 186 pp., $2.50.

This is something to be seen to be believed. An incredible story of nonsensical characters and unscientific locale. Skip it.

INSIDE SCIENCE FICTION

The Paperback Reprint Blurbs

"The interplanetary facts of life..."

--Anthony Boucher

"...a real humdinger...you will go zooming into outer space on a wild ride to Mars...this is probably the best science fiction novel of the year!"

--Elkins Bay *Sentinel-Herald*

"Imagine, if you can, a sinister man with three eyes...imagine that man constructing a space ship in his apartment building... the tail blast from a space ship! Pseudonym's previous books each set a new mark...and this volume does not depart from that tradition.
"This is...science fiction..."

--Damon Knight

"I can truthfully say it will stack up against anything written by Heinlein or van Vogt. It's a bargain!"

--Joseph Fan, "Mr. Fandom"

"...something to be seen...incredible..."

--INSIDE SCIENCE FICTION

The Scoop

Flash, flash, fans! Good old Tom Pseudonym has done it again! Not content with racking up several hundred thousand dollars with a hardcover and then a pocketbook sale, he has just announced exclusively to Science Fiction Global News that Thay-Lar, Son of Space has been sold to the movies! Yes! another half million bucks (at least!) in his pockets, and another swell science fiction movie coming up! Watch for it!

Bill Fann, Science Fiction Global News, "Fandom's Reliable Newspaper!"

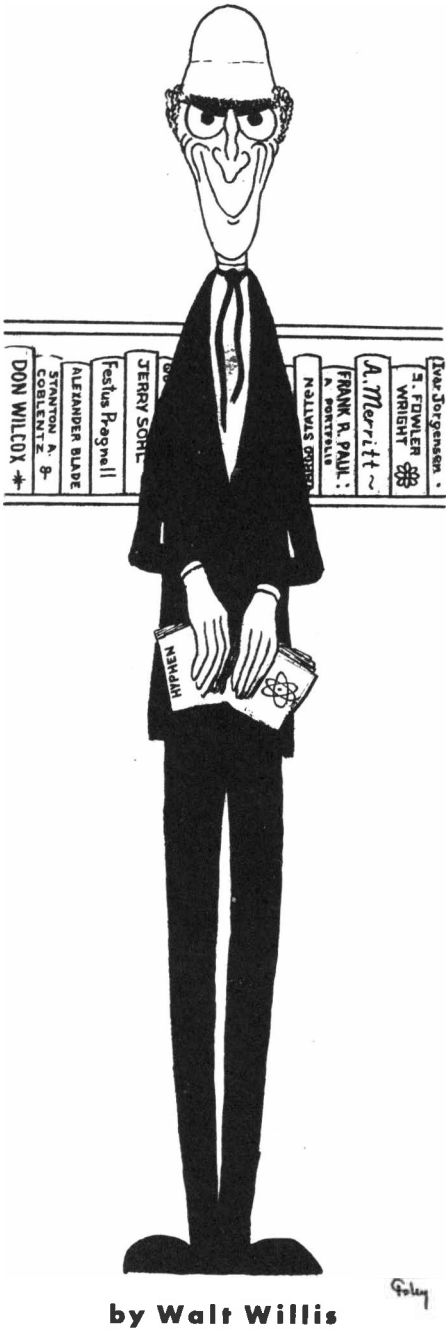
The Trade Press Notice

BEM BOOM BIG B.O.

Benny Z. Goldman, production chief of Mammoth Studios announced today the purchase of THAY-LAR, SON OF SPACE, which he described as a natural for the booming monster market. The property was penned by Thomas Pseudonym, a top writer in the science fiction field. To be shot in Mammoth-Scope and Mammoth-Color, the seat-gripper is slated to roll about the first of the month. Harry Zinwheeler has been set to do the screenplay and the first of his chores will be the creation of an awesome monster which — according to the storyline — takes over a rocketship and threatens to destroy the earth. This monster is something of a shocker: it can live in space without breathing, which, Zinwheeler said, makes it something special indeed. Jib Strum, who directed *The Creature From the Star Islands*, will pilot. The original title, deemed unsuitable to a marquee, will be changed to *The Son From Outer Space*. Get it?

Sound the Anti-tocsin

by Walt Willis



Friends, have you ever felt persecuted, wronged, the victim of a vast secret conspiracy against you? You have? Well, you were quite right, and you can tell your psychiatrist I said so and ask for your money back. (If you get it, tell some other psychiatrist about him.)

But let's take this gradually, because this is too shattering a revelation to be faced all at once. Have you ever heard or read a phrase, a sentence in some book, or overheard conversation which lodged in your mind like a tiny poisoned dart? You scarcely notice it at the time, but it festers there dully, spreading, growing, until—aaagggh! One night you awake screaming with a monster in your mind, full grown. It happened to Dean Grennell one quiet Saturday afternoon, as he was half listening to a sports commentator discussing the prospects for the day's football games: the voice ambled along innocuously on the threshold of consciousness, and then suddenly tripped over it with the unforgettable words, "No upsets are expected." Poor Dean. His fine, delicately adjusted mind has never quite recovered.

It happened to me in this case way back in 1952, while I was reading Other Worlds. I know I have only myself to blame, but this dreadful sentence wasn't in the Palmer editorial, where I'd been on my guard; it was in the Personals Column. It was a little advertisement no bigger than a man's hand, and it read:

"Phyllis Hollans, 209 Forrest Ave., Redford, Va., would like to correspond with anyone who shares her dislike for S. Fowler Wright."

Well, it so happened that I had other things to think about in 1952 and I dismissed this with a light laugh. Ha ha, I thought, just like that. What a funny idea. No doubt this girl will get in touch with another girl who dislikes S. Fowler Wright, but what then? Will they exchange girlish confidences about the bits they hate most, wallowing in a sort of perverted literary masochism? Or maybe it'll be a boy who answers and, united by this common disinterest, they'll get married and raise their children as dedicated Wright-haters. How dreadful it will be when they find their eldest smuggling in a copy of THE WORLD BELOW disguised as LADY CHATTERLY'S LOVER. You could write a long, turgid psychological novel

about a family like this. Or maybe Phyllis will form an organisation: they'll write dozens of rude letters to Wright's publishers under assumed names and put his books behind others in bookshops: maybe there'll even be an extremist wing that wants to capture him and torture him. (Come to think of it, I haven't heard much from S. Fowler Wright recently.) Ha ha, I thought, as I told you. I had considered the matter from all angles and this was my conclusion. Ha ha.

But had I? Was it? As the years went by this advertisement refused to let itself be forgotten. A niggling doubt kept recurring in my mind in that mysterious way such things have (but you know what the Bible says about the way of a niggle), and I kept puzzling about it. Why S. Fowler Wright; he isn't in practically everything but the wallpaper, like Bob Silverberg. Why not Heinlein-haters, Bradbury-baiters, Leinster-loathers, Ellison-enemies, Asimov-abhorrers? Why not indeed? There could be a club for every science fiction author. They might even form a sort of loose federation and publish amatuer magazines to spread their gospels of hate, and hold conventions and everything. There would be a National Anti-Fantasy Fan Federation composed of those who hated all the science fiction authors.

And then a cold shudder ran through me, leaving me gasping with belated realisation. There was such a thing! There must be—nothing else could account for all the dozens of hitherto inexplicable facts which leaped to my mind in a terrifying horde. These anti-fans have been ganging up on us. Ever since that advertisement of Miss Hollan's and maybe even before (maybe they just needed more recruits for the anti-Wright branch), these dedicated science fiction haters have been getting together in secret, organizing, conspiring, scheming—and striking. Treacherously, they have been attacking, sniping, sabotaging, kneeing us in the groin while our backs were turned like the famous mad dogs once did to Harlan Ellison. Of course it's only too obvious when you think about it, it's just that we sf fans were too noble and generous-minded ourselves to suspect such a dastardly thing. Even now, a few of you might still be in doubt. If you are, just one example will convince you. Ask yourself this. You know those people in convention hotels who always complain to the management just when you've got a really good party going? Well, did you ever see one of them? Of course you didn't. Ha. No fan ever did. They take good care not to show themselves because they're the same people year after year. Every September when the sf convention comes round, they book into the hotel, taking care to get a room in the middle of the fan rooms, and punctually at 11:30 p.m. they take up action stations beside their telephones. But of course that's not all they do at a convention. Ho no. Didn't you ever wonder why so many unpleasant things—damage, thefts, etc.—happen at conventions, when you and all the fans you know are decent, honest, well-mannered and refined people? Well, you know who's responsible now, don't you? And these fiends don t let us alone between conventions either. Oh, no, they never rest in their villainy. You must have noticed that when fans plan anything, like a trip or a meeting, something always goes wrong, like a convention program. You don't still think those things happen through any fault of ours or of the Convention Committee, do you? With us intelligent, clear-thinking fans? Come now.

Of course, all that is just a sideline to their main work, that of sabotaging science fiction. You will have realised by now how they do it, of course. You must have said to yourself several times a month as you throw the latest issue across the room, "My Ghod, what made John / Horace / Tony / Larry / Bob /Bill / etc. print that?" Well, you know now. It was because the last time he ran something by that author he got a flood of appreciative mail from you-know-who. These people scan the new authors for the worst potential hacks they can find and then sedulously build them up. How else do you think XXXXXX XXXX-XXX was able to turn pro? Their plan, of course, is to disgust everybody with science fiction, and lately they've been wildly successful.

Too successful. They've overreached themselves and put themselves at our mercy. At the last moment, with victory in their grasp, they can be thrown down in utter defeat. The Russians, of all people, have delivered them into our hands. When the satellite went up, up went the prestige of science fiction fans everywhere. We were the people who had been right all along. More important, we were the people who had tried to save the Western World from the ignominy of being beaten in the race into space, the true patriots. Conversely, the anti-fans are obviously fifth-columnists, un-American, traitors. This gives us a weapon to smite our enemies and destroy them utterly. It may take time, but we can root them out from cover one by one. The next time someone in a cinema jeers or guffaws during a good science fiction film (and to think I used to wonder why people went to see sf films when they didn't like them!), or the next time someone in a hotel complains about your party, you know what to do. Report them to the FBI.

LETTERS FOUND IN AN AUTHOR'S DRAWERS

by Robert Bloch

Sept. 1, 1957

My Dear Robert Bloch:

I trust you will forgive my presumption in addressing you, but as one who has read your stories since the old Weird Tales days, I dare to presume upon the quasi-acquaintance between a longtime writer and a longtime reader of his work.

Specifically, I have always admired your fantasy stories, most particularly those in the Lovecraft genre, and your several pastiches on Poe's work. You have carried plagiarism to new heights.

In recent years, however, I confess myself saddened and disappointed by your efforts at cheap and vulgar humor; beginning with your LEFTY FEEP series and ending, at present time, with such asinine items as those which appear in Playboy, Rogue, Caper, etc. Really, Mr. Bloch, these are not worthy of you! As a lover of pure fantasy, I tender a strong protest.

However, it has recently come to my attention that you have produced a story entitled WHAT OF THE NIGHT? which is to appear in Mr. Pohl's Star series for Ballantine. According to reports this story, while essentially science-fiction, contains elements of fantasy and is written with the poetic stylization characteristic of your better work.

I trust that this marks a turning-point in what I was beginning to believe was a lost career. I truly hope so, Mr. Bloch: you owe that much integrity to your fans.

Sincerely,

Fancourt Snoopwhistle

Fancourt Snoopwhistle, Ph.D.

9/?/57

Dear Mr. Bloch:

You don't know me, but I know you. That is, I read a lot of your stuff, like in Ellery Queen and that yarn you had last month in Alfred Hitchcock about the guy who got lucky all of a sudden.

For a long time I shied away from reading anything by you, like that Lovecraft crud you used to grind out in the old days. Brother, did that stink! Who in hell you think you were kidding?

Take my advice and stick to hardboiled stuff. This is 1957 -- who wants to read about bats in the belfry?

Yours,

Ruff N. Tumble

Ruff N. Tumble

9-3-7

Dear Daddy-o;

Im putting it on the line man that youre really solid like whats behind Mansfields brassiere; That yockeroo kick of yours like in rogue and the new one in argosy is further out than Mansfields brassiere; Bloch I dig your humor the most, whyncha keep it up and cut out the square bit I mean your detective stuff; I mean man who needs all this bloodandguts kick when you can live it up on laughs; Now hear this cat, just keep on making with the funnies and you'll end up more prominent than Mansfields brassiere;

Groovily;

Julius Kalikuk

PS; You get around a lot in all these sophisticatedtype mens magazines, can you give me the address of Jayne Mansfield;

September 4, 1957

Dear Robert Bloch:

As a psychotherapist with a background of penological experience, I have been particularly interested in your work in the field of the so-called "psychological suspense" novel.

It occurs to me that perhaps you have a familiarity with clinical procedures -- as therapist, or patient -- which stands you in good stead when you deal with the psychopathic personality in your work. Certainly you seem to feel at home in a restraint-jacket.

In view of your interest in delineating deviations from the norm from the standpoint of psychiatric interpretations, I confess myself baffled by the fact that you also write so-called "fantasy", to say nothing of "detective stories" and alleged "humor". I am in hopes that your recent novel, "SHOOTING STAR", will, upon reading, offer a further example of your ability to limn a word-portrait of a psychotic rather than descend to the "blood-and-thunder" or "space-opera" level of your lesser efforts.

Yours truly,

Otto E. Rotic, M.D.

Sept. 5

Dear Bloch:

I just read your story, THE MAN WHO KNEW WOMEN, in The Saint. I liked the part where he kills the old dame. I mean, about how he feels when he's doing it. That's what interests me in your stories, the way you understand things. I mean, you don't leave the juicy stuff out, you tell how it really is. I remember the one about the rats coming in that you had in this Hitchcock anthology, Stories They Wouldn't Let Me Do on TV. That was good, about the rats, I mean, how they ate this guy and this dame. And the way they tried to kill each other first. I wish you told more about the blood, though. How it spurts, like. But you write real good stuff. I mean, I can't stand the way some guys write, they leave out all the best parts, they never tell about anything, really, the details that is. They talk like some of them crazy bug-doctors, how I hate the bug-doctors, all the time asking you questions and then shooting off a lot of big words.

Of course sometimes you write like that too and that is why I am writing you now to tell you please lay off, don't waste your time, you can't write no good that other way anyhow so stick to blood and guts and rippers and such stuff. You know, make it interesting. I also liked the Playboy one about where this dame comes at the guy with the knife to carve him up, that was plenty keen.

Your pal,

Nick

Nick Rophile

1957: 6 September

Dear Sir:

When are you going to wake up the the truth? For years you have fooled around with fantasy, dabbled with detective stories, hacked out humor, played with psychology, and simulated sophistication.

And yet, primarily, all the time you've been a potential writer of science fiction! Your recent stories, such as ALTERNATE UNIVERSE in Super Science and BROOMSTICK RIDE, are borderline at best, but they do betray the possibilities inherent in your work if only you would settle down and make a serious effort to adapt yourself to the demands of the field. With the proper training, I am confident you have it within yourself to become another Ivar Jorgenson. This, I am sure, is your true destiny. Why waste your time writing junk in other fields when fame awaits you?

Sincerely,

B. N. Faaaan

B. N. Faaaan

Sept. 7, '57

Dear Bloch, buster:

I been reading your so-called stories for twenty years now, and I get more out of the instructions on the side of laxative boxes. You can't write fantasy, you can't write science fiction, you can't write detective stories, you can't write psychological suspense stuff, and God knows you can't write humor. In fact, you can't write, period. Why don't you give up?

That's what I do when I read your yarns.

WYATT URRP

September Eighth,
Nineteen Hundred
and Fifty-seven.

Dear Master:

Please accept these poor words from one who has been your humble and adoring disciple from afar these many years gone by.

I merely wish to tell you that I worship every word you write and treasure it in my heart. From time to time I have faithfully copied out in long-hand every line you have published, and can recite long portions of your works from memory.

Would a faithful fan of yours be permitted a single, wee request? It is merely this: since you excell in virtually every field of writing -- humor, fantasy, detective and science fiction, psychological suspense and are in addition one of the leading authorities on coprolalia -- why is it that you have never combined your manifold stylistic talents and multiple evidences of genius in one masterpiece?

Please, oh please, Mr. Bloch, if only you would take a week or so off and write the "Great American Novel". I am sure it would satisfy everybody, including,

Your loving cousin,

9/9/57

Dear Bob,

Ferchrissake, I'm an agent, not a magician! You write a yarn, I peddle it for you. But whatinell kind of stuff you sending me lately? I can't make heads or tails out of it.

Is it too damned much to ask you to please stick to what you know how to do?

All I want from you is a typical Bloch story.

Yours,

A. Fleshpeddler

P. Petter Peterson,
Director
SUNNYVIEW SANATORIUM

PPP:yz

September 10, 1958

Dear Mr. Bloch:

Yes, we have made arrangements to reserve a room for you for an indefinite stay. Come at once.

Very truly yours,

P. Peter Peterson, Director
SUNNYVIEW SANATORIUM

PPP:yz

THIS CURIOUS MANUSCRIPT, BELIEVED BY PROMINENT LOWCRAFT AUTHORITY AUGUST SEPTEMBER TO BE AUTHENTIC, AND PERHAPS THE LAST THING LOWCRAFT WROTE, IS PUBLISHED HERE FOR THE FIRST TIME, WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE OWNERS OF THE MANUSCRIPT, LIN CARTER AND DAVE FOLEY.

BY H. P. LOWCRAFT

"It is my firm belief that we are but the puppets of some evil, malignant Thing, beyond all mortal comprehension, that torments man and has done so since the very Dawn of Time; and that the foul worship of Incarnate Darkness still goes on in the far corners of the globe."
—Louisa Mae Alcott

HAD I BUT RECEIVED some occult premonition of the ghastly horrors that awaited me that fateful evening, I have no doubt but that I would have turned my coach about and gone back to Arkham forthwith. However, no such warning from the Beyond was mine, and my mind was at ease as I drove my lathered horses up the storm-swept, treacherous road to the mouldering, incredibly ancient castle that crowned Gallows Hill. It was a night of unbelievable hideousness; the lightning flamed and flared in the sky like a burning iron held in the hand of a slavering demon with which to torture a helpless, chain-bound god; the wind shreiked and bellowed like a frenzied hoarde of shambling ghouls, mad with unmentionable hungers; and the rain poured down unendingly, as another deluge, come to sweep a sin-drunk mankind from this cosmic globe of fecund slime. In the goblin-flickering of the levin-bolts that wracked the tortured welkin with their demoniac fires, I caught intermittent glimpses of crumbling, ivy-covered Castle Drumgool where it crouched, rotting with centuries, atop the barren hill like some waiting monster. The leering cornices, the blind windows, the crumbling cupolas, the tottering turrets, the slimy porticos, all cast a pall of unutterable desolation within the hidden adyts of my shuddering heart.

As thunder (or was it thunder?) whooped and gobbled down the inky skies like the babblings of an insane god, I drove my curiously unwilling steeds through the tottering arch, over-grown with peculiarly unwholesome fungoids of obscene shapes and eldrich colours, and into the mouldering courtyard. A sodden groom appeared from the darkness to seize the reins, and as he led my mares off to the stables, I found myself speculating oddly on his shambling, loping gait, and the scaly batrachian appearance of his bloated, greyish face with its leering, disturbingly mocking eyes.

My unknown host was not at the crumbling portal to greet me, so I pushed open the ancient, decaying, oaken-panneled door, and entered the gloom-shrouded, dust-mantled, dark and fetid vault of the castle vestibule. Black unseen horrors seemed to flutter back into the shadows at my approach, and I watched with growing unease as the faint and ghostly shaft of light from outside narrowed and was gone. The rotting oaken door boomed shut behind me and I found myself alone in the hellish, stygian hall of the cursed and benighted Castle Drumgool.

A foul and decaying foetor rose from deep within the dark halls, and as it enveloped me, I felt my heart shudder and quail. I backed toward the door, involuntarily, and at length, unable to bear for a second longer the nauseous miasma that assaulted my nostrils, turned to leave. But on the instant, from deep within the gloomy depths of the ghostly halls, there issued a

sound of crusted metal squealing, as an inner door swung open. My fingers froze on the latch, and I could do nothing but stare in growing horror as the bent and shambling figure of a man (or was it a man?) made its way toward me across the echoing chamber. There sounded a voice from this twisted travesty of a human, and as he approached my unwilling eyes beheld his corpse-like pallor, and the subtly rotted aspect of his dress. His eyes burned in his face as he fixed me with a stare, and repeated that phrase which I had not before heard. or perhaps had refused to hear—"Welcome to Castle Drumgool!"

My frame quaked as the full import of these words struck me, and I staggered back a pace in order to protect myself from the aura of evil that sprang up almost tangibly around the ebon apparition. My heart sank in my breast as, from a fold of his decaying robe, he produced a taper, and I was for the first time subjected to the sight of the face of the master of Castle Drumgool of Gallows Hill (or was it a hill?). The wavering flame of the candle, that was, my shuddering mind conjectured, fashioned perhaps of corpse-fat, revealed—ah, imagine, if you but can, the rotund, worm-soft, slug-like, unwholesomely bloated figure that met my cringing gaze; a swollen-cheeked visage whose pallid flesh seemed acrawl with pulpy maggots; and eyes, half buried within folds of flaccid flesh, glinting hellishly with a diabolical counterfeit of friendly welcome. Hastily I muttered some conventional acknowledgement of his greeting, while my fear-frozen gaze took in, with what inward quakings my reader is at liberty to surmise, the unutterable loathsomeness of his robe (which I now perceived to be a smoking jacket), his obscene felt slippers, the hideous travesty of jollity in his smirking face. My host ushered me into a large, dimly-lit cavern of a room, and showed me to a seat, while he rung, ostensibly to summon a servitor, although my terror-fraught mind visioned all too clearly the ghastly creatures his alarm was meant to rouse, a bell. The room, my paralyzed senses gradually perceived, was a library, and, in an effort to calm my leaping pulse, I tore my eyes away from his grusomely ribicund visage, and fixed them upon the tomes that crowded his shelves.

A thrill of pure horror pierced my innermost soul, as I glimpsed the titles lettered in gold (or was it gold?) upon the bindings. The books, if such they could be called, exuded an almost palpable odour of foulness and decay, a grave stench before whose unnerving assault my nostrils crinkled involuntarily. There I glimpsed that hellish text which celebrates the splendours of the Elder Dark, that monstrous volume of demon-worship, Black Beauty: next to it rested a copy of that unholy and blasphemous history of a necromancer famed in eldrich legend, The Wizard of Oz: beside that, bound in the rotting, ophidian hide of some loathsome serpent, was that foul tome which the ancient pagan deities of the woods hold sacred, Peter Pan: and next to it, that chaotic and monstrous volume, that incredibly ancient compilation of eldrich lore, that vast anthology of demoniac wisdom culled from forgotten ages, The Pickwick Papers!

Though I, as the reader of these tortured words might well perceive, found my soul reeling in revulsion as each new title defiled my eyes, still I was not able to tear them from the continuing shelves of literary horrors which sprawled around the walls of the darkened chamber. My unwilling eyes pressed on, into the dark corners of that damned and benighted library, and each turn of the shelf brought some new terror, some more monstrous and perverted blasphemey.

My shuddering gaze fell upon a copy of that black and nefarious tale of alien life on Earth, that hellish chronicle of that dweller in the dark and sinister depths of haunted woodlands, Winnie the Pooh. Resting next to it, I beheld a volume of the foul and ghastly legends and lore which are known to the horrors of the night; that fiendish compilation of eldrich terrors, that awful and soul-searing tome, Aesop's Fables. And at last, though my brain reeled in rejection of this crowning horror, I forced myself to gaze upon the volume which inhabited the last space on the worm-eaten shelves—a work of unspeakable loathesomeness and terrific monstrosity, a tome of ghastly and consuming hellishness, that fell and blasphemous atrocity which no one may name aloud, and at the writing of whose title my pen recoils from the paper, The Power of Positive Thinking!

I struggled with my tortured mind, attempting to regain some semblance of composure, so that my host would not perceive that I had discerned his devilish nature, but no sooner had I suppressed the expression of loathing and fear which threatened to contort my face, when a new and more frightful horror became apparent. A thrill of terror shot across my brain, as I saw the latch of the library door (or was it a door?) slowly lifting—without any visible hand to raise it!

I shrank back into the cushions of the unspeakably loathesome chair in which I was seated, in a transport of horror. My frozen brain searched frantically for some explanation of the ghastly phenominon which was taking place before my very eyes — some sane, rational, physical force which could raise a door latch without making itself

apparent in any other fashion. My mind boggled, however, and I could only watch numbly as the latch was raised to its limit, and the door was slowly opened.

A thing stood in the doorway, half in shadow, and for the first time in that dark and grim evening I was struck with the diabolical cleverness of my eldrich host. The phantoms which no doubt occupied the chamber had not, after all, made themselves known. No, my host was far too clever. The raising of the latch had been done by the dark creature which stood now in the doorway, deliberately calculated to convince me that the chamber was indeed the abode of spirits from hell, and to then dispell the illusion and convince me of the opposite. But I was far too clever—I was now more firmly convinced than ever!

The creature on the threshold entered, and I saw at once that he was dressed in the attire of a man-servent. His costume, however, was of such a material and aspect as to present an impression of naked, rotting flesh, seeming, in the fire-light, to be acrawl with maggots. His face was a fiendishly clever imitation of a human countenance, but, apprehending his hidden nature, it was not difficult to see beneath this mask to the lurking monster beneath. His eyes burned like twin coals dying in a cup of hemlock, and his mouth was like some rotted wound as he opened it to shape this grotesque phrase—"The brandy, sir."

The very walls of Castle Drumgool rocked about me as his words fell upon my ears. I wanted to shout, to cry for help, to beseech someone from the world of light to come and rescue me from the cloud of evil that held me in its crushing clutch. Through a haze of palpatating disconcert, I watched the man-servent-thing cross the room, and set a tray of beverage upon a table. My hellish host, who had been, with a fiendish counterpart of composure, lighting what seemed to be a briar pipe, as I had gazed at his servitor, now cleared his throat (of what unmentionable phlegm I could but conjecture), and said, in his diabolical travesty of a voice, "The night is cold. Would you care for a warming beverage, sir?"

The very Universe seemed to shatter, as before the mad pummelings of some idiot-god, and crumble about my frozen mind, as the true hidden meaning lurking behind the obvious hidden meaning behind his apparently ordinary invitation dawned within my panic-riven brain. What could I do but accept his ghoulish invitation? Were I to refuse his offer, then he would know, beyond any wan phantom of a doubt, that I was aware of his true, indescribably nauseating identity. Forcing my visage, with a colossal effort of will, to show no sign of my revulsion, I murmered acceptance, and watched with congealing blood as he poured a gelid, incarnadined fluid into a gruesomely-carven goblet of what may, or may not, have been crystal. I received the goblet he handed me (writhing inwardly as his rotting talons touched my flesh), and sat numbly, my mind a chaos of boiling shadows, gazing at the squamous liquid of which I must imbibe.

With a vulpine leer, my host uttered these damnable words, which burned, as a smoking iron in the claws of a tittering fiend, into my quaking brain—"There, old man, drink up now!"

My time had come.

With a supra-human effort, I lifted the noisome goblet to my cracked, parched lips, and drank down the slimy brew, conjecturing (as the reader might well imagine) in blind perterbation upon what necromantic potion, what nightmare philtre, what unutterably unmentionable ingredients comprised the devilish draught. The room spun about me—the evil, ghoulish leer on my host's bloated countenance, the zombie-blank face of the servent-thing, the rotting row of demoniac tomes—all loomed madly as the insidious poison bubbled through my veins. Space and time seemed to crack; the world crumbled from beneath my feet; I went careening off into a chaos of spinning stars...

And then, with a flash like that of an entire universe of planets exploding at the command of a blood-mad, satanic god, the full import of the incredible truth burst upon my brain. Nothing whatever had been in the brandy! My host, from whatever pit of hell he hailed, had been clever enough not to poison the brandy. Then what, my shuddering soul asked, unthought-of torment had he planned for me?

As my mind sought desperately to answer this question, the fell servent removed the goblet from my clutch and left the room, ominously closing the great door behind him. We sat alone, my monstrous host and I, as, outside, thunder gibbered and rolled; a nightmare wind shreiked cacaphonically and clawed with icy talons at the window panes. A numbing chill, as from grave-soil, soaked into the room, unrelieved by the eerie red and yellow flames that coiled and wavered in the great fireplace, flames that fed (doubtlessly) upon the fang-picked bones and splintered coffin of a nearby tomb.

I felt the forces of hell gather around the crumbling walls of Castle Drumgool as the night shreiked on, and their insane voices roared as if in answer to the thunder, as if in challenge to the elements, with every flash (lighting up the fetid land surrounding the high and hellish castle in a deadly and

corpse-like pallor) of lightning, while the wind howled through the overgrown turrets and down the chimney, blowing the fire in the grate into mad, phantasmagorial shapes, the significance of which I could not bring myself to imagine. I could only attempt to converse with my host in what must seem a normal fashion, never once allowing my mask to slip, never once allowing to fall from my lips any word, from my hands any gesture, that would suggest to him that I knew his true and hideous nature, knew him to be, not a simple mortal, but a creature of the nameless pit, a being of the black and awesome region which, thankfully, lies beyond the ken of mortal-kind, and invades the world of daylight only in abysmal dreams and nightmarish fancies.

In a few moments he spoke again, inviting me, ostensibly, to partake of his hospitality for the night. My mind shuddered, its very fabric ineffably soiled, at the hellish implications of his apparantly harmless words; however, I allowed him to proceed me (again with that hellish taper of corpse-fat, whose sickly coil of filthy vapour tainted my quivering nostrils) out of the library and into the darkness of the outer hall; thereupon, he led me up a rickety staircase fashioned (by whose fingers my frozen brain could not imagine) of some unutterably hideous wood (or was it wood?), which teetered over the yawning edge of an ink-black pit, above which we wound our slow and torturous way, at every step my mind quailing at the thought of What might await me above; we proceeded upward, however, while the wind screamed and whooped outside and the thunder rocked and rolled like the mad laughter of an insane deity, while darkness closed about us, clammy, noisome darkness tainted with the charnel-stench of things long dead and better left unnamed; then, my eldrich host, reaching the worm-rotted landing of the hideous staircase, gestured to a scarred and slime encrusted door, which, as I watched with growing horror, began slowly to open, its hinges groaning, as the sound of a damned soul crying for succor from the depths of hell's blackest pit, revealing behind it a stygian chamber whose infernal darkness the oily taper could not penetrate, and with a thrill of horror I realized that this foul cell was intended by my host to be my resting place; feeling then his gnarled talon gripping my arm, and hearing these perverted syllables escape his fusty lips— "Here's the guest room; hope you'll be comfortable."—I felt myself drawn irresistably into the dark and fearful maw, upon entering into which my fractured senses perceived the great iron-bound portal closing behind me, perhaps, my careening imagination led me to surmise, although every fiber of my consciousness rebelled at this most ghastly of fates, forever; and all the while my mind revolved on a line from the Crazy Arab who had once described just such a horrible scene, just such an indescribably hideous, unmentionably blasphemous, incomparably disgusting, unnameably nauseating, overpoweringly ugly, chaotically loathesome, blood-chillingly unsettling, sickening, soul-searing, sight defiling—sight—sight—NOT SIGHT! I see with a new sense—lightning flashes, but—UGUG! YIG! BLAH! YOOHOO have mercy—I...UNIFY THE FORCES...Yubbleglub and Cobblenobbin—gods of night, WOW! ... HELL FIRE AND TITANIC FOOF...FARB SAVE ME...THE EIGHT-NODED FLAMING EYE—OR IS IT AN EYE? OOOO aaaa ee

NOTE:

The curious manuscript which trails off above was found beside the body of Hiram Phineas Lowcraft, who had apparently died of something resembling a stroke while spending the night at Pleasant-Acres-by-the-Thames, the country estate of Sir Rodney Happie-Happie, famous author of children's books. Sir Rodney, when questioned about the odd circumstances surrounding Lowcraft's sudden death, commented:

"Demmed peculiar; couldn't make anything out of the fellah; seemed to be always jumping or looking about for something. Must have been from writing too much of that irregular horror stuff—you know, all that heldritch bosh, and that sort of thing. Well, I certainly wouldn't have invited him out again..."

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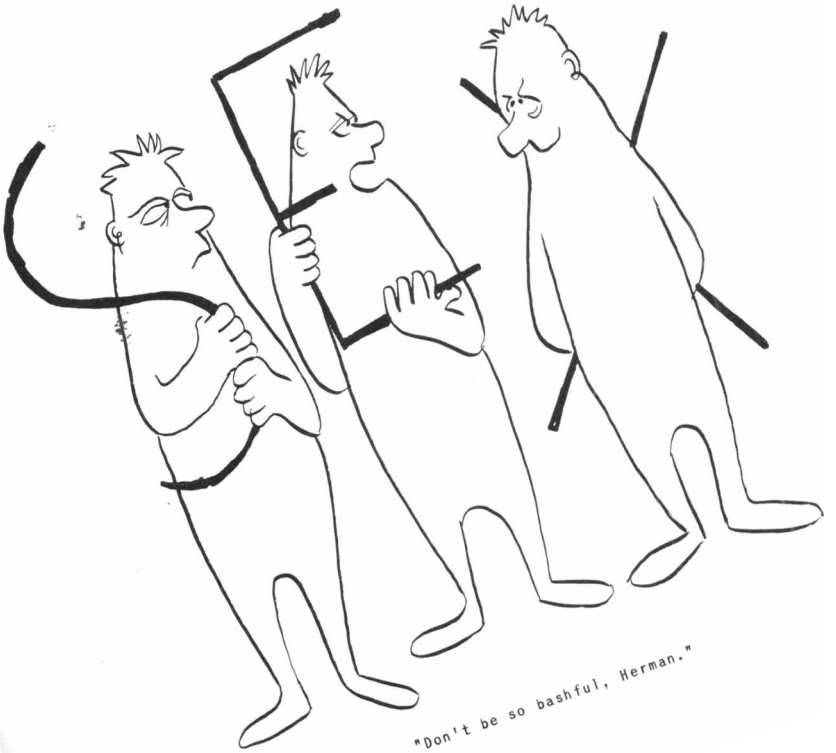
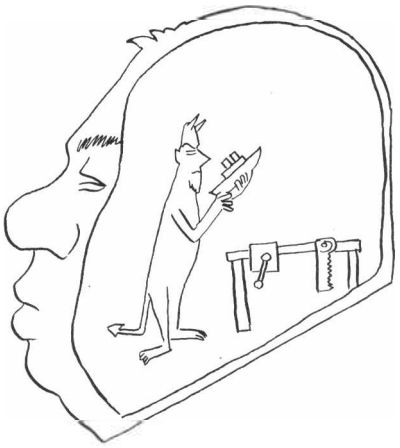
miller by moonlight



"Don't be so bashful, Herman."

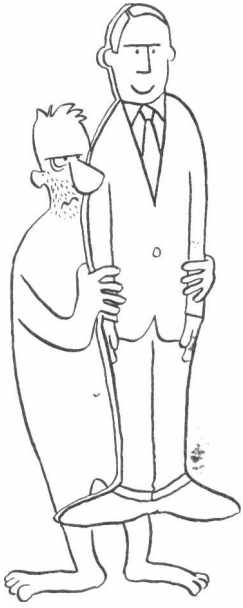


An idle mind is the devil's workshop.

"That's nasty."

Le Sacre du Printemps

"I'm in love again."



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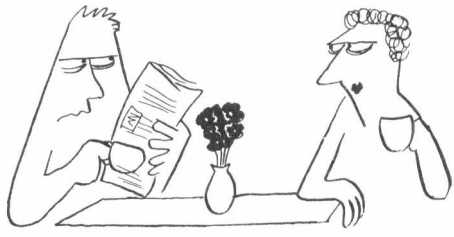
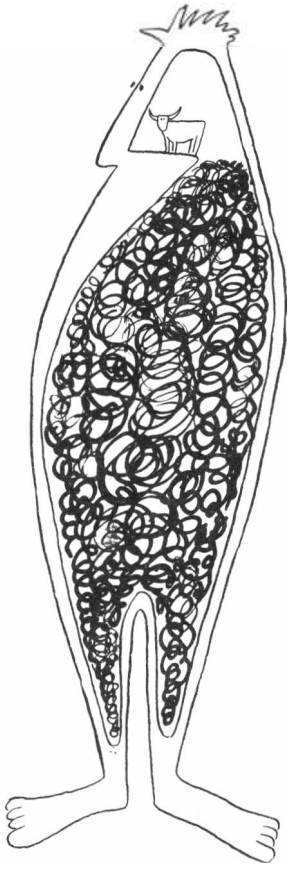


War is hell.



Man is essentially full of...

...and the Renaissance produced Michelangelo's David.

"The whole world is ours."

HOW THEY DID FOR THE DOGGIE AT THE CURBSIDE

by David R. Bunch

THEY had this knife and this pup. The knife was a very sharp looking, shiny and new butcher's knife, with a blade about half as long as a kid. The pup was a woeful looking little black and brown doggie with more-than-the-average ears, which hinted at hound-dog, and a stocky body that I thought didn't quite go with his spindley legs. But he had been cute enough I'm sure, and many a kid has loved just such a mutt.

The boy was about four, and his sister—I took it to be his sister—must have been at least a year younger, both of them beautiful little physical champions. They both had yellowish hair and blue eyes and very sturdy straight-legged bodies that just seemed to shout, "These kids have had the vitamins and the pablum and the milk and the teething biscuits right from the very start. And look at them now!"

He was playfully thrusting at her with the long knife — nothing malicious I felt sure — and she was jumping up and down and screaming. But her face registered ecstasy. "Let's cut him right in two," she screamed, and then she laughed, a little-girl high chortle. The boy glared at her, hating her for her ignorance, I supposed, and the pup lay as still as, and did not move any more than, a shiny-and-bright larger-than-dinner-plate-size hub cap that lay tilted at the curbside directly across the street from them, glinty in the noon sun where a Cadillac had thrown away part of its glamor. "We'll quarter him first, silly," said the boy. "Which means we'll cut all his legs off right up to his belly, and then we'll rip him up just about any old way. I saw all this in a butcher shop show on the TV. You wanna help?"

"Yes," she squeaked, probably somewhat dominated now by the boy's firm tone and abrupt question. "I wanna!"

"Well, grab hold. Hold his legs. She'll be yelping pretty soon. Or the sitter may wake up. Mommie's too excited now, thinking about the car."

So the little girl grabbed hold and they fell to cutting the dog, the little boy wielding the knife, for the most part. And I had to admit that he was quite expert for his age. He carved at the hips and shoulders and hacked at the bones and worked at the joints, almost as well as I could have done it myself, until soon he had the dog in five parts. The legs all lay nearly equidistant from the body — it just happened that they fell that way— with the feet farthest out, until you could imagine that the parts of the dog would soon bridge the small distances between themselves and right soon they would all jump up and say Bow Wow! And yes, it made an arresting scene there, the dismembered black and brown doggie lying rearranged on the white street in his own dark-ruby blood, and the two sturdy, tanned children who had certainly had all the vitamins that anyone could wish for them, and the shiny butcher's knife stained red now, and the glinting Cadillac hub cap looking a little silly and unnecessary off its wheel, and the fine green lawns in front of the new red houses all around this development area. And all this seemed somehow usual and almost all-right-American under the warm noon sun in outer suburbia at this neat place.

"Here," the boy said, "you cut his tail in two, if you wanna. You didn't get to cut much." So the girl took the knife and hacked, a little awkwardly I must say, at the dog's long dark brown tail, her face as screwed up at the effort of it all as a young demon's might have been. But since the knife was very sharp and new, very soon she had the tail in two parts. Then the two kids stood and looked at their little friend, a bit sadly, I hoped, but presently the boy started to hack again at the body, saying, "We haven't finished yet. In the butcher shop show on the TV they did lots more." So he hacked on there until he had the guts all scattered on the street and the heart out, and the lungs like big pink flowers over on the lawn. "See what's in 'em," he said. "Did you know that's what's in 'em?"

"Nah," the girl said, "I just thought maybe they's like my dollies. I ripped 'em up. But my dollies didn't have any juice inside of 'em like him."

"Heck no, silly," the boy said. "They weren't alive like him."

Presently, after a bit more hacking and slicing, the two tots fell happily to tossing bits of the dog across the street. "See who can hit the hub cap Mama lost," the boy said. So they threw at that, the little girl very awkward and never coming close and the little boy coming quite near with a piece or two and finally close enough with a leg that a streak of muddy red fell across the hub cap. "Almost give 'er a good hit," he said.

Just as he was throwing the last piece of the dog — about a two-foot length of intestine it looked like to me — an example of good grooming up the street, in high-heels and nylons, and a girdle I presume, jumped up and down and let out a scream and disengaged itself from a knot of suburbanites staring at a Cadillac that had just recently tossed a hub cap, jumped into the curb, wrenched a bumper, scratched a fender and possibly tilted its forward wheels out of alignment. The two tots' well-dressed, pretty mother, whom I judged to be about twenty-seven, came running down the street awkwardly in her high-heels, the calves of her legs making a nice little play, that I enjoyed watching, in her nylons, and she screamed, "Tommy, Susan Elaine, what on earth are you throwing?"

"The dog," they said quite simply. "Just throwing the old dog away. He's no good now."

Then this fashionably dressed young mother took one look at all the blood all around, and even a streak of it on her shining Cadillac hub cap across the street! and she just collapsed where she was, a moaning heap of nylons and high-heels and perfume and good grooming and not much else right there on the sidewalk.

But it all turned out not so bad in the end, because the caretaker and some maid-type cleaning woman saw her and came out to carry her in to her cool clean ranch-type home with the big antenna on the rooftop and the breeze-way on the side. And the baby sitter woke up about that time and came charging out to demand that the kids come right in and get ready for the TV, now! As for the other people, they were still too busy staring greedily at the wreck of the Cadillac to help much, talking damage, thinking insurance and congratulating themselves that it wasn't any of their cats or dogs or cars. But finally they tore themselves loose too and came over to help some, and someone called up about the car and a man came to take it down to the shop, and really her husband wasn't so terribly angry when he came home from doing the western district in the business auto and found out. He hadn't liked that pup much anyway.

But yes, out of some deep-seated need to do the average thing they got the kids another dog next week, hid the butcher's knife better after that, lectured the baby sitter sternly and traded the damaged Cadillac in on an unblemished spick-and-span-new-model as soon as they got the chance. And things went right along month after month cozy as you please, and almost all-right-American, there in that neat place in the new development area in outer suburbia.

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MISCELLANEOUS: "Miracle Science and Fantasy" V1N2 (June-July 1931, a very rare magazine, in fairly good condition, only $2.50). "Astonishing": April 1940, June 1942, April 1943 (50¢ each) "Comet" January 1941, March 1941 (in good condition, only 50¢ each).

HARDBOUND BOOKS: Taine's Green Fire $1.00. From Off This World, $1.30. Science Fiction Omnibus 1949-50, $1.30 S. F. Wright's The Deluge - first edition, mint --- $2.00. Astounding Science Fiction Anthology $1.45.

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ETC., ETC., ETC.

As all of you know, this issue is late — five months late, as a matter of fact. I offer no excuses; I just didn't get the work done (I didn't get any work done). But I do appreciate your patience, or resignation, as the case may be, exhibited by the fact that I received during this time very few letters asking for "all the issues since the Oct. 1957 issue, none of which I've received," or requesting "my money back," and only one or two threatening phone calls. I do hope I will be able to repay this example of patient fortitude by producing issues at a somewhat greater frequency; I shall try. But however well, or badly, I succeed, once again I want to assure you that no one is going to lose his subscription money; INSIDE isn't going to fold.

I have worked out a scheme which would assure quarterly, or near quarterly publication, in the near future, but it is no more than tentative at the moment and very likely nothing will come of it. It would involve a split of labor, which is the primary reason for the scarcity of issues the past two years. INSIDE is a hobby, as are all fanzines, and when the enjoyment of a hobby is outweighed by the drudgery involved, you start finding excuses for not doing the work (and there are plenty of them). However, if things don't work out, if I have to continue doing the majority of the labor myself, it won't mean I'll give up completely. I'll publish as many issues as often as I can manage — for I still get a great deal of pleasure from it — and hope you will all stick with me.

I do hope that none of you whose subscriptions expire with this issue will hesitate to renew because you think you may not get all your issues — you will. It would be discouraging to start losing readers now that we have managed to build our circulation up to something approximating that of the Advertiser when we first took it over. Not that I wouldn't deserve it, but I hope that as long as you find INSIDE of interest you'll stick around.

We would be even later than we are with this issue, actually, if it were not for the last-minute assistance of a good many very helpful friends. I especially want to thank Larry Harris, Bill Donaho and Dick Ellington who, in various ways and with the maximum of dispatch, performed duties the lack of which would have accounted for a great many blank pages in this issue. And, of course, the eminent Mr. Foley is to be held responsible for a great deal, too.

There are — at least this is the impression I get when I look at the stack of letters — a number of correspondents I've neglected equal to the total population of Northern Ireland. If you have written me a letter and it hasn't been answered (and I'm sure it hasn't been), I can only say I'm sorry about it. Almost everyone — from my closest friends to prospective contributors — who has written me in the past year or more has received no reply. This is but another sign of the gargantuan lethargy which overtook me. I will try to catch up soon, if only through short notes of acknowledgement, but if I don't manage to find the time, I hope each of you will accept my apology and feel secure in the knowledge that you certainly aren't alone.

Having covered the explanations, assurances and acknowledgements, we come to what might well be termed a memorial.

At the present time the future of Fantasy and Science Fiction seems to be in doubt. Whether it will survive the next year or not, I don't know — one can only speculate. But it is certain that, financially, the magazine is not doing well. It will be a great loss to the field if the magazine does go under, and we certainly hope it

---

won't. The field has already suffered one loss of equal magnitude, when Anthony Boucher retired as its editor. It was announced that he will return in six months; this may happen, but, although I have no knowledge of the facts in the case, I am inclined to think that it won't. I do and always have had a great deal of respect for Mr. Boucher and his magazine, and I am greatly disappointed at what, at the present time, looks like its slow demise. I hope that his retirement from the field, in any case, will not be a permanent one; it would be extremely unfortunate if it were.

But whatever happens, we wish you to note that a certain satire (which we will not mention) will not be pertinent to Mr. Mills' edition of F&SF, whatever that may be like. I think that this satire (which we have just recently finished reading) may in itself be considered a sort of memorial — if not an altogether starry-eyed one.

Some of you will undoubtedly be attending the World Convention this year in Los Angeles (a suburb of South Gate). (If you haven't joined yet, by the way, send your dollar to The 16th World Science Fiction Convention, 10202 Belcher, Downey, California; even if you don't go you'll get a copy of the program booklet, with a full page ad for INSIDE in it. That should be worth a dollar.) And some of you who do attend, will undoubtedly be awake Monday in time for the business session. The business session, as dull as it may be (though there are promises of interesting front line skirmishes this year between the New York politicians and certain splinter groups) is important because part of the business is voting on the convention site for the following year. There are, at this time, three groups planning to bid for that site: Chicago, Detroit and Dallas. It will be up to those attending the session to chose between the three.

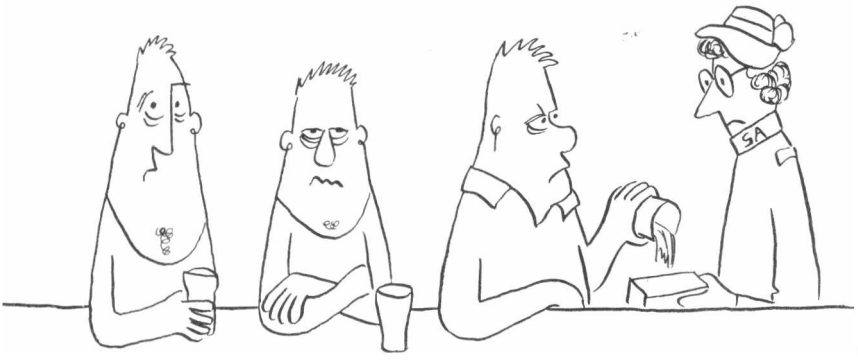
I personally favor Chicago, for two reasons: 1. The city itself, while not recommended for year-round habitation, is a more favorable convention site than either Detroit or Dallas, with a good deal more to offer in the way of convention facilities and extra-curricular activities before, during and after the convention. 2. Members of the prospective convention commitee have proven themselves capable of taking on, carrying through and completing difficult projects; for example, ADVENT PUBLISHERS, which is headed by Earl Kemp, has successfully published, at a profit, two books and an art portfolio, entailing a great deal of hard labor and intelligent promotion.

This Chicago committee, chairman of which would be Fritz Leiber, wants to put on the convention, and in my opinion is the most capable of putting it on successfully. I hope you'll give them your support —if you wake up in time, of course.

We are at last going to California, by the way (you see, we get things done, even if it is months after I say we'll do them). We've bought a car, and are now busily engaged in unloading miscellaneous trivia (s.f. magazines, comic books, souvenir booklets, fanzines, old shoes, pictures, books, bricks, etc.) on whatever unsuspecting people happen to come around, preparatory to packing. Right after this issue is mailed we'll be on our way, but don't hesitate to send your money or your letters because of this, either — our mail will be forwarded all right, as always, and we'll need something to eat on when we get there.

Perhaps when we're settled, the mild weather, the pleasant surroundings and the other envigorating aspects of a more advanced civilization will serve to revive my energy, in which case our next issue will be out in December (we have a Santa Claus cover we want to use, so that's one incentive). But if it doesn't show up then, don't fret— and have a Merry Christmas.

—Ron Smith



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a prose limerick

by Anthony Boucher

KHARTOUM:

THE LAST MAN and the last woman on Earth sat on the edge of the last bed.

Somewhere the Arcturians were watching them, gloating over having found at last two specimens, and with marked sexual differences. But both were inured now to this benevolent scrutiny.

The figure in the shaggy tweeds stirred restlessly. "You're pretty," the gruff voice rasped as one hand went out to touch a silk-sheathed knee. "The Arcturians did OK by me."

The improbably jutting breasts rose and fell rapidly. "I like you, too," the pouting lips admitted. "And of course we are going to have all kinds of fun... But when it comes to Perpetuating the Race — well, I'm afraid the Arcturians are in for an awful shock." He giggled as he reached in, detached one improbably jutting breast and playfully tossed it to his companion.

The powerful masculine hands half-fondled the conical object, then embarrassedly discarded it. The lean rangy body rose from the bed and began shedding the tweed coat. "It's against all my principals and probably yours; but it's been a long time and at least it'll be a novelty... I guess," she grunted as she freed her own quite probable breasts from their overtight bra, "the Arcturians knew what they were doing after all."

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