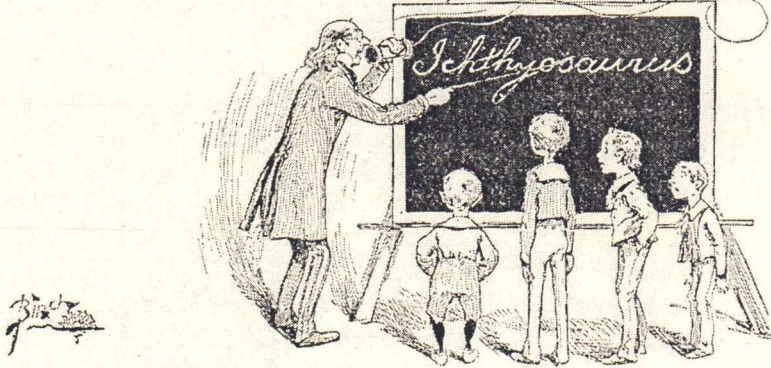


The New Port News
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There once was an Ichthyosaurus,
Who lived when the earth was all porous,
But he fainted with shame
When he first heard his name,
And departed a long time before us



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Cover art by R. B. Birch for *There once was an Ichthyosaurus*

by Isabel Frances Bellows

in the March 1887 *St. Nicholas* (The Century Co., New York)

OO - Jeff - Got the mailing on October 5. Much thanks for the extra copy of the quotes collection! I got one in the thrift store the other day, **The Cynic's Lexicon** edited by Jonathon Green (St.Martin's, New York 1985).

Variations - Lynch - Amazing about the musical prodigies!

Revenant - Sheila - Weird computer problem. I always back up to diskette, but also save a file to the hard disk while I'm working on it. I didn't know it was possible to have a file that would print but couldn't be copied or saved.

Good report on the DSC. I would not have expected anything on Von Braun's early political connections at the museum! Was the 20-hour **Lord of the Rings** audio the one done in California? I tried to listen to that one once, but it didn't sound right without a British accent.

Yes, the Huntsville DSC was the first I had missed since I went to DSC III. I don't think I even knew about I or II! But I am not obsessive about such things. I just didn't feel up to it.

I think I would rather miss beef, not that I eat a lot of it - probably more as sausage than any other way. I don't think I've had but one steak this year - it was very good though. My sister often makes spaghetti sauce, which to me doesn't taste right without some beef. But if you decide not to eat beef, what then? I have no idea what excess hormones or antibiotics they may feed to pigs or chickens - grains and vegetables may be genetically modified - there's this and that in the water....

Are all the Baptists teetotalers? My parents were southern Methodists and had no problem with social drinking. My mother (who will be 94 the day before Halloween) won't drink more than a taste of wine now, because of possible conflict with her medications.

Yngvi - Toni - I would hate to have to waste time memorizing all the stuff I might need to know (or might not) - much better to have only to remember where to look for it.

Naturally as soon as a system of rules is defined, some of the people subject to the rules will try to fiddle them - but systems that favor those who succeed in fiddling the rules seem doomed to failure.

I really miss having seen Hank as a "Peacebonding Officer"! I guess you were just lucky that his sore neck didn't let someone slip in a laser cannon (spewing corrosive froth).

I agree with you that the risk of breast cancer from hormone replacement seems overstated - but with a sample size of 20,000, an 8% variation is not a "blip". To know whether it is a good reason to stop hormone therapy, you would have to follow the subjects for the rest of their lives, as the hormone therapy must also confer significant benefits or they wouldn't have started it in

the first place. Well, unless it just enriches someone a lot....

I have not seen any analysis on what would happen if a bullet did penetrate the skin of an airliner at 50,000 feet - just offhand I would not expect explosive decompression or further structural damage. The air in the cabin would begin to rush out at the speed of sound, but the cabin pressure would drop slowly - perhaps more slowly than the compensating pump circuit could handle - and the hole could be plugged. Other scenarios would involve the stray bullet hitting the wrong person, or damaging some important equipment such as electrical, hydraulic, or fuel lines. The worst situation could be if a bullet hit the cockpit windshield.

The problem with your rant against "illegal aliens" is that they only come here because they can get jobs that pay better than they could do at home - and our economy has become dependent on this source of cheap labor. Could most of us even afford a rug or a chicken or seasonal vegetables if these industries didn't use cheap labor? And the fewer people who can afford such things, the more expensive they will become, as the industry loses the benefit of scale.

I have no solution for this problem. Our constitution does not provide for the existence of second-class citizens, which is the *de facto* status of illegal aliens - the state of Georgia is now struggling with the question of whether it is worse to give illegal aliens drivers licenses, as compared to the problem of *lots* of unlicensed drivers. Of course, we could simply require that anyone who wants to stay in the US become a citizen - but that seems likely inspire a tidal wave of immigration.

I agree with Dave Locke - Castro is no saint, but not much of a villain either as compared to the tyrants around the world that the US has financed over the years.

Whatever I said about Celko was as much as I knew - or could remember. Haven't heard from him again.

The Final Solution for people who wish to live with those who look like them may be at hand - they can have themselves cloned. While I do not seem to frighten small children (much), I think one of me is quite enough.

Hope to have gotten to your Halloween Party - Mary loaned me a mask. She will have missed it - she's going to Yale to lecture on quilts.

Variations - Lynch - I like Dvorak's 9th Symphony far better than I do other such works based on American folk tunes - I really don't care if I ever hear Copeland or Gershwin again.

I don't understand what you mean by a "compatible" turntable. Don't they all produce an audio signal that the amplifier can deal with? I used to have two, but one of them has died. The other still works, with a little nudging.

Even my antiquated *OED* has an entry for *fanzine* - it's in the 1987 *Supplement* and so should surely be in the main listing by now. The earliest cite is the Jan.17'49 issue of *New Republic*, referring to Langley Searles' *Fantasy Commentator* - "a magazine for fans, especially of science fiction". What would they accept as documentation of the 1940 origin with Chauvenet?

I gather the DC elephant and donkey things are mass-produced and differ only in the surface decoration.

Tyndallite - Metcalf - A lot (about 4 dozen) of Harry Stephen Keeler is now in print as \$19.95 paperbacks from Ramble House, run by Fender Tucker from 443 Gladstone Blvd, Shreveport LA 71104 (www.ramblehouse.bigstep.com).

I'm glad I never tried to read Verne in the original French - the bit you quote seems badly

contaminated with apostrophes used to denote elisions! Common steel does indeed have a specific density of about 7.8 (7.8 as dense as water) - according to my handbook, 1% carbon steel (boilerplate) has a density of 7.83 while manganese steel has a density of 7.81.

Luke Skywalker is Gay? - *Plotz* - I have what must be some of the earliest media "fanfic" - Devra Langsam's 1967-69 *Spockanalia* - but I don't see any "slash" fiction in the five issues. The first one was meant as a oneshot. All are enormous - there must be 500 pages altogether - and well mimeoed but on cheap paper, now quite brittle.

Hugo Hysterics - *Copeland* - Interesting - it's been 15 years since I read the Hugo-winning novel!

Twygdrasil - *Dengrove* - Yes, I had read up on the German bills with the weird art and knew they were locally issued currency. They are apparently collected, and there are several websites for collectors.

Putnam's is an old publishing house. I think they are still around, but probably belong to some multinational conglomerate now. I knew the books were all from the same publisher because their logo is quite distinctive.

Asbestos appears in many forms, and is only hazardous if the loose fibers get into the lungs or some other corners of the body. It is not poisonous in any conventional sense. The copy of **Fahrenheit 451** that I used to own did not seem to be shedding any fibers. Only the binding cloth was asbestos - far too thin to provide much real protection against burning.

The witches riding goats must have been midgets - I don't think the average goat can bear the weight of an adult human!

The legal system is, as you say, based on the totally unproven idea that there is any such thing as "free will" - but then, if there isn't, why am I predestined to worry about it?

I read some of the James Tiptree books before it was revealed that the name a pseudonym for a woman - didn't bother me. While the genre overall had traditionally been male-dominated, my favorite prozine is *F&SF*, which always had a lot of female authors.

I doubt anyone would notice if I fired a BB gun off the back deck, but Hughes and Reinhardt are so far out in the boonies they could fire a machine-gun and no one would care. On the other hand, Jerry Proctor is in an urban residential area and shoots a hunting bow across his lot.

Spiritus Mundi - *Guy* - Today's paper noted that 165 people have died of the West Nile virus - as compared to umpteen thousand who have died of flu over the same period. Most people have at least a vague notion that they have the flu, but apparently most people don't ever know they have had West Nile. And while you can have flu over and over again, you can apparently (according to the paper anyway) have West Nile only once. The whole thing seems to have been designed to add another layer of expense to the health care system - every time someone dies of non-obvious causes, they have to check and see if it was West Nile.

That 144,000 will be saved is a notion the Calvinists got out of the Book of Revelations. and apparently part of their belief in predestination. The Baptists split into Hard-shell and Free-will was over this issue - the Baptist preacher I used to trade books with in Newport News explained to me that he was on the Hard-shell side, and believed in predestination - I told him that if he was right, I must have been predestined to believe in "free will" (though I could not prove it existed). In a way I suppose the belief in predestination is a comfort - Jeffrey Dahmer could have believed he was predestined to eat his lovers, and that since he had no choice, he wasn't really such a bad guy. Perhaps Dubya believes he is predestined to conquer Iraq - so the collateral

damage won't be his fault.

George Burdette was cutting classes when my father was at Georgia Tech in the 1920s. I don't know when the spoof is supposed to have started.

Your analogy fails in that I never thought of DSC as a sport at which I might somehow excel - but then I was never into sport.

The Nigerian-style scam spam (which I have now received from many other African countries) is said to "succeed" to the extent of a hundred million a year in the US. A rough estimate, no doubt. There obviously must be a support industry peddling PCs, ISPs, details on cyber-banking, and sample texts to the perpetrators.

You are right about Ashcroft - I bet he believes in predestination! It struck me how much alike he and Tim Curry look - someone should write a parody and have Curry play him.

I liked *Young Frankenstein* and *Phantom of the Paradise* better than anything made since, and I have seen each several times. *Fellowship of the Ring* is an interesting effort at a book I like a lot, but I doubt I will rewatch it more than once.

osushigumi - *Copeland* - The rational content of the cover eludes me - is it a food ad?

I never much cared for anyone having "weapons of mass destruction" - note that we are the only ones who ever actually used the nuclear variety. Boy George Dubya is making a big thing of Saddam for political capital - but how are Saddam's imagined nukes any worse than the actual nukes held ready to let off by the Indians, the Pakistanis, the Brits, the French, and the Israelis (who all put together have nothing like our doomsday arsenal)? We also have more chemical weapons piled up than the rest of the world's armed forces combined. And what Saddam has in this line, we gave him to fight Iran with. He got his bio-weapon material from us too. The question of "what to do about Saddam" is just a politically useful distraction, as is the entire concept of "weapons of mass destruction" - you are just as dead if killed by a "weapon of local destruction" like a land mine - and we have scattered those over the face of the Earth like candies at a birthday party and left them hidden to kill or maim anyone who happens by the wrong spot for the next 25 (50? 100?) years.

If we invade Iraq we may or may not kill Saddam - but we will certainly kill and maim thousands of civilians. We may find and disarm his "weapons of mass destruction" - or he may let them off first. It is far too late to talk of "zero tolerance" - we have already instigated the use of deadly force for political ends for too long, no one can believe in a *Pax Americana*. Especially when the people who now say we should destroy Saddam are pretty much the same ones who created him - almost sounds like stock "churning".

It seems to me that modern science should easily extend to the design of a *nerf door* that could not be slammed. The body of the door could be made acoustically dead, and with some synthetic foam on the jamb and some damping in the hinges the door should be quite impossible to slam. The self-closing doors in industrial and commercial buildings cannot be slammed as long as the damper cylinder in the closing mechanism is properly maintained.

If I had to watch *Sabrina* again my brains would turn to guacamole and run out my ears.

Some softwares recommend that the anti-virus be turned off at installation and I am sure they know more about it than I do. It would be counterproductive for a software maker to sell contaminated software, and I don't recall ever hearing of it. Contaminated e-mail however, is apparently just a sport of cyber-bullies and I get a lot of it.

Aluminum is paramagnetic, as are many non-ferrous metals. It will react vigorously to an alternating magnetic field, as is easily demonstrated if you have one of those old bulk tape

erasers.

I have heard several mentions of the **Fahrenheit 451** "printed on asbestos" that Matcalf attributes to Ballantine. But while at least two books and a newspaper are mentioned on the Net as having been printed on asbestos paper, and I once owned a copy of the Bradbury novel *bound* in asbestos cloth, I cannot find any bibliographic data on the edition printed on asbestos paper.

There are of course well-known pistol bullets that would not damage the structure of the airplane or control lines - you can buy .22 long-rifle shells loaded with birdshot. But these may be too light to stop a determined attacker, and could still have catastrophic effects on instrumentation and windshield glass.

Time Warp - Copeland - Cute - of course, for Gary Robe and Rich Lynch and Tom Feller especially - those locations are only quantum probabilities.

Revenant - Sheila - Argh - I would hate to have to take another course.... The calendar on the cover of my zine in SFPA 228 is apparently a complete fantasy - not only does it allot July only 30 days, as you noticed, but it does not match the real July 1910 calendar at all, where July 1 fell on Friday, not Wednesday. Although I attributed this to a calendar with art by Vernon Hill, I don't think I have the actual calendar, but just copied an image from a book.

Peter, Pan & Merry - Schlosser - Glad to hear the Prius is running well. What you can carry in a car is a matter of design as well as absolute size - I could get a lot more in my old Honda Civic hatchback, one of the smallest cars on the road, than I can in the 2000 Corolla sedan I drive most of the time now.

Why does Stedman hold the "indicator lawn" over his face to spread sulfolobus cells on it? Seems like this creates an unnecessary hazard of getting the mess in his eyes!

The Sphere - Don - I never thought of Cheney's motives as being religious, but I have no idea what he said to the Arabs.

I see no way or much reason to distinguish between fascist, communist, or theocratic tyrants - they are all using the trappings of a theory to prop up their evil lust for power. Do any of them actually believe in their theory? I am inclined to doubt it.

I have tried the glue traps, but I don't think I caught a mouse but once, in the attic of the house in Virginia. What I heard here was apparently in the wall rather than in the basement, probably a squirrel that got down a vent pipe. I never had much trouble with cats - I would hear them sing occasionally in Virginia, and there was sometimes an odor. Here I have seen two in the yard occasionally, but never heard or smelled anything. I see a rabbit in the yard more often.

An airliner with only a small hatch between the cockpit and the cabin would cost a bit more - doors through the fuselage structure are complex and expensive. And the cockpit would then have to have its own restroom. Far all I know about it, there is already a cockpit sanitary facility - but the cabin restrooms serve as back-up if something went wrong with it.

Oblivion - Brown - Is that you on the cover? I always remembered you as you looked in the photo with George at the Atlanta worldcon!

This would be the time to buy a house, there are a lot of them on the market here anyway.

I thought I saw Mark Verheiden's name in a movie credit the other night, but I've forgotten the name of the movie. Nice picture of Alan Hutchinson with Weird Al!

I saw the one-legged runner on TV, running. He may have been in the paper too, but I

seldom look at the Sports section.

I always like Robert Crumb's drawing. Stephen King's problem isn't that he can't write but that he doesn't know when to stop writing.

Travelers Tales - Hughes - Now that's *slick*! The Flying Saucer house is cute, but doesn't look as though it would have room for enough bookcases.

Trivial Pursuits - Janice - Sorry to hear about Neil.

I put about 50 old fan photos up on the fanac.org website a couple of years ago, but I don't remember if the one of Bruce Pelz as Fahfrd was one of them. The scans are not on this machine, as they were done on the old PC and I never got around to shifting them - the old machine still works, but I haven't fired it up lately. I suppose I should put them all on a CD, but I don't know if it's worth the trouble - Siclari's files are probably backed up, and I still have the photos.

I love the "thong" cartoon!

Confessions - Hlavaty - I thought the business about the 9/11 terrorists being armed with "box cutters" came from the phone messages that got out before the planes went down.

Comments - Hughes - Yes - I once owned an asbestos-bound copy of **Fahrenheit 451**, but although several people have mentioned the one printed on asbestos paper, I haven't found any bibliographic data on it - it's not in the big Nolan **Bradbury Companion**. The Net does locate two other books and a newspaper printed on asbestos - apparently the form called *chrysotile* is most suitable for the purpose.

Yes, the stereoscope I have is made for 9x9 aerial prints and is by Delft. I have not assembled it. As to whether the lenses are 4.5x - I only made a D in optics and am probably not qualified to know about that. Nothing about it in the instructions - there are several copies of the instructions, none in very good shape and smelling a bit of horse. Aha, here's a card dated 24 June 1955 (the instructions are dated 1953) that gives the Class - "10 B-NL" and the Contract no. - "AF 61(514)-852" and also says "ODSS 2; 1.5x and 4.5x" (the instructions say "ODSS II"). There is a thing that looks like a manual lensholder, but there are no lenses in it. But on the side of the main unit there is a push-pull knob that says "←4.5x 1.5x→", so these must be internal lenses. Come over and look at it sometime.

Interesting about the Claritin side effects - I got no effects at all, but I never thought my problem (pain in the right of the abdomen and adjacent hip) was due to any sort of allergy - I have since decided it is a form of sciatica, as it goes away with back exercises.

As to the theory that for a real scandal "one side has to have a clean conscience" - the Republicans were still bleating about Clinton's sex scandal long after it had come out that several of their leading lights were also involved in illicit affairs.

The last time I looked, expositions of the aspartame hazards could easily be found by googling the Net.

Something went astray at the top of your 4th page of text - a paragraph ends at the bottom of the 3rd page, and the 4th page starts in mid-sentence.

Avatar - Cleary - I got the *SFC Bulletin* with your cover the same time as the mailing - I thought they had used an Old Master for some reason, but now I see you signed it!

Yngvi - Toni - Two lice in the same mailing? Ghad.... Nice monster cover. I never knew just what sort of math Rick Norwood taught. I cannot remember being taught math myself - mostly I learned it from doing the exercises in the book.

Your MRI must have been in better shape than mine, which had a very loud knock!

E-Mail - George - Hope your back is better!

Passages - Janet - Fancy photos! First I ever heard of a Fantasy Wedding.

Tennessee Trash - Robe - Spectacular cover. I don't doubt that the US can kill a lot of people in Iraq - most of whom are victims of their tyrannical government - and destroy the infrastructure remaining from the previous Gulf War. But just what benefit this will be to anyone but the arms merchants is another question. If there are "weapons of mass destruction" they will no doubt be obliterated - but they may blow up in our face first. Dubya's oil buddies want control of the oil fields, but those may all be set on fire again.

I hadn't realized that Corlis was in the same Math Department as Rick Norwood. A sad affair - John Guidry sent me the URL of the website that had a photo of Mary Norwood at the courthouse.

I would guess that the overtones you can see on an oscilloscope from Yo Yo Ma's cello are from the instrument itself rather than his playing - and may be due to the age of the instrument rather than anything the maker intended.

There were people on the *fictionmags* Net list who said they could never get into **Perdido Street Station**. I've never tried it myself.

Ticklish - weber - Snazzy zine! Did you ever send me that VHS? I never got it. I like the lab report!

Night of the Living Statistics - Copeland - But, but, but there are no zine titles in *italics* - even though the second title listed should have been!

Armadillo - Liz - Nice cover! The University of Victoria sounds like quite a place - I had no idea that rabbits required winter quarters. I have some living in the azalea bushes here, but hadn't thought to provide them with a medical plan or shelters. I wonder if they have sense enough to avoid the fire ants that they share the lawn with?

* * *

My mother tells me she has been trying to get rid of a sort of bush in the back yard that spreads by putting up saplings from an extended root system, and has a foul odor - anyone know what this pest is called and whether it is native or a foreign import? If I knew the name I could look it up on the Net. She had seen something about it in a magazine or newspaper, but doesn't remember the name.

By the time this appears in SFPA we will have had the mid-term elections - we are supposed to have touch-screen voting here, but it hasn't always worked in trials during the primaries. I doubt Dubya can launch his new war before the elections - perhaps he will wait to see how much support he gets there.