

# PEON

JANUARY 0000 1954



MORTON



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Subscriptions to PEON may be  
had at 10¢ per single copy,  
or 12 issues for \$1.00. Over-  
seas subscriptions, 15 issues  
for 7/- to the appropriate  
representative listed above.

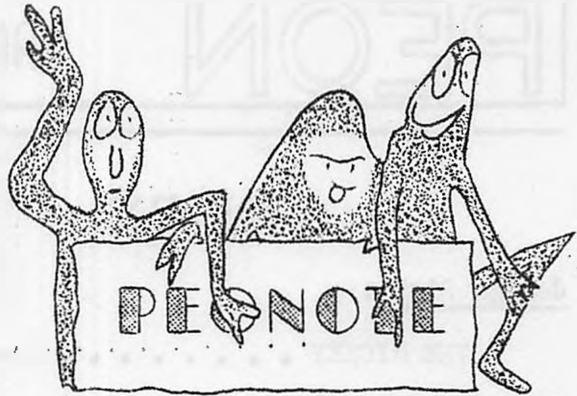
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the authors, and not necess-  
ary those of the editor.

PEON, A "Fantascience Publication", is published on the first day of January, March, May, July, September, and November, finances, and the wife willing, by

CHARLES LEE RIDDLE 108 DUNHAM STREET NORWICH, CONNECTICUT

Exchanges with other fanzines solicited and gladly arranged

Well, if any of you people ever doubt that you're wonderful, just contact me, and I'll assure you that you are! I've heard it said before many times that fans are some of the best people in the world, and now I have proof of that statement. It wasn't ten days after I had mailed out the November issue of PEON telling about the loss of all my material that I was simply deluged with letters and stacks of manuscripts. I actually wasn't prepared for so many letters of sympathy and offers of help. So, to all of you who took the time to write or sent me those stories, articles, and poems, I want to thank you a lot! You're a grand bunch of people!



I would like also to thank those of you who I wrote personally for something to print in PEON. With the exception of a few, I've received prompt replies. They were mostly regrets, I am sad to say, but your courtesy in answering my plea was appreciated. I did manage to gather in a few very good manuscripts---some you will find in this issue of PEON; the rest will appear in the very near future.

I might add aside to those two snide characters who profess to disbelieve my story (are you listening Tom Watkins and Jim Harmon?), the thing is true; just contact the Police Department of New London for proof!

-oOo-

You don't have to tell me--I know the last issue of PEON did not look at its best. The material I had was excellent, and brought some very nice letters of comment on it. However, the mimeographing was not what I like to present and there were multitudes of typos in that issue. Naturally, apologies are in order and are herewith tendered. You must remember, though, that I was in a very despondent mood when preparing that issue, and I guess it reflected my mood quite well. Incidentally, to those of you asking about it: the last issue of PEON was not #5 in Volume 5; it was #4. Just another typo..... I am still trying to get my mimeograph adjusted so some of the mimeographing in this issue probably will not be up to par. However, I do hope to have this back to normal with the next issue. There is quite a bit of offset on various pages in this issue, due to the wrong type of paper being shipped to me from the distributor. I didn't have the time to exchange it, so had to use what they had sent me.

-oOo-

Two columnists are missing in this issue of PEON. Tom Watkins has been sick and by the time he was able to type up his column and send it to me,

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 26)

# The Mickey

— by —  
JEROME BIXBY

John Allen went down the short, dark flight of uneven concrete steps and pushed open the shop door. A small bell tinkled. The painted-paned door swung shut behind him, muffling the thin wail of the late September wind.

It was a tiny, narrow shop, crowded with merchandise all of which was strange and some of which was frightening.

John Allen walked to the counter and said intently, "Once I read a very amusing little story by a gentleman named Collier, in which a young man such as myself visits a purveyor of enchantments and spells such as yourself."

"Indeed?" said the little man, standing on tiptoe to put his elbows on the counter of his musty, dimly-lighted hole-i n-the-wall, which was located on the most obscure side street of the greatest city in the world."

"Quite. The young man, like myself, is in search of a love potion, by which he may secure the affections of the young lady of his choice."



"Very interesting," said the little man.

"The Story was called The Chaser."

"I have not read it."

Outside, it was night. The little man had watched, through the window cluttered with shelves of oddly shaped bottles and jars and dusty packets of herbs, John Allen's progress up the darkened street. He had watched John Allen hesitate under the single street lamp, looking furtively about, then cross the street determinedly to enter the shop. He had noted John Allen's manner, his well-cut clothing, his handsome but weak and somewhat petulant face; he had noted four signs positively, with the possibility of a fifth, of the many thousands of signs known only to those who travel the magical ways and byways. He had been quite certain beforehand that his visitor would express an interest in love potions.

"In the story," John Allen said, in a businesslike tone, "the old man sells the love potion for the sum of one dollar."

"How odd," said the little man, "my own price exactly."

John Allen's face lighted. "Excellent."

"Perhaps," the fat, little man mused, "Mr. Collier was writing of this very shop... though I can recall no customer by that name."

"Oh, no," said John Allen, shaking his head. "I'm sure he was making it all up. It wasn't actually a shop in the story, you see-- it was just a small, barren room on Pell Street, with an old man who sat in a rocking-chair. A man much older than yourself, sir... ran his business from his home, evidently. It couldn't have been you, could it?"

"I suppose not. I've done some business in London; but never on Pell Street. And though rejuvenation is hardly beyond my powers, it is a sin after all, and when death finally does win out the penalty... h'm... at any rate, it is my true age that you see; so I could hardly be Mr. Collier's old man. Now, sir-- if you wish to purchase the love potion--"

"First, I think I should tell you the story."

"Oh?"

"It will interest you."

"Then," said the little man courteously, "by all means."

"The old man in the story," said John Allen, "describes the effects which the love potion will have on the young lady in question--"

"In detail?"

"Oh, in the very greatest detail! His description of the effects constitute the bulk of the story." He paused, as if reading a page in his mind. "He says, for example, that the potion is much more than a simple ...m'm..."

"Aphrodisiac."

"Definitely. Not a mere aphrodisiac. He makes that quite clear. The potion's effects are permanent. They last and last and last! And, of course, they include far more than--in Mr. Collier's own words--the casual impulse."

"Ah, far more, indeed."

"But they include it," John Allen said firmly. "Mr. Collier makes that clear also. They include it."

"Fiercely," said the little man. "Forever."

"Yes, yes!" said John Allen, eyes gleaming.

For the first time the little man noticed that his visitor wore, beneath a veneer of almost brusque practicality, a distinctly wild look. John Allen's eyes were narrowed at the outside corners, while his upper lids lifted and fell as he spoke. Pressure was palcely evident at the corners of his mouth. Tension rode his shoulders.

The little man noted these as signs, and nodded wisely.

"I've read the story so often," John Allen said, tight-throated, "just wishing to Heaven that I could find such a potion in real life. Of course, I never thought I would--but then a friend told me about you... perhaps you remember Mr. Miller, who bought a salamander so he could collect the fire insurance on--"

"Ah, yes," said the little man. "I saw the papers. But I would prefer not to discuss past business relationships. They are better forgotten and put entirely out of mind. A slip of the tongue, you know..."

John Allen nodded. "Oh... of course."

"Tell me more of the story."

"Well--the old man in the story tells the young man that, once the potion is administered--it is quite tasteless; by the way, undetectable in soup or orange juice..."

"Quite so."

"...once it is administered, the young lady, no matter how disinterested or even hostile she may have been before, will change completely. Day

and night she will think only of the young man--"

"True," nodded the little man. "Its effects are instantaneous."

"The young man will be the focus of her every desire, her every thought-- of her very life! She will want him utterly to herself. She will shun social life, for she will hate to share him-- and also she will hate having pretty rivals around. Never sure of her possession of him, she will be in a terror of jealousy when he so much as looks at another woman--"

"True," said the little man again. "And, of course, she simply won't be interested in social life-- or in anything else except the young man. You know, I must read the story... indeed, I must. Mr. Collier seems to have made some very astute guesses. Pray go on."

"Can you imagine the young man's reaction to being told all this?"

The little man smiled, without a great deal of humor. "Unbounded joy and enthusiasm. A fever of anticipation."

John Allen shuddered a little. "She will be continually wanting him to tell her everything that has happened to him, every day. What are his innermost thoughts... why he is smiling ... why he is not smiling. She will fuss over him, worrying about his going out in the rain, or not eating properly, or getting enough exercise. She will be forever terrified of his being hurt, and whenever he is just a few moments late, she will be frantic, and will fall weeping into his arms when he finally does arrive."

The little man sighed and held up a pudgy hand. "Enough. I thought so. What you are saying-- or what Mr. Collier said-- is that after a while, the young lady would become absolutely unendurable."

"Precisely."

"All the wonderful and longed-for qualities which the petion had instilled in her would eventually become, instead of a constant joy, things of horror. In her undying love, passion and concern, she would drive him half insane. She would be impossible to live with. He might wander to other women, seeking relief--"

"She would forgive him-- endlessly."

"He might want divorce--"

"She would not, could not, give it to him. Tearfully hopeful, she would try to fix things up--"

"And try, and try, and try."

"Horrible, isn't it?" said John Allen, after a moment.



"I've seen some who could just scarcely believe it had happened," the little man agreed. "One doesn't think of a love potion backfiring so..."

They were thoughtfully silent. In a small cage behind the counter, a creature, which was the only one of its kind in the world because it had been made to order, snuffled softly and lashed its eyes.

"In the story," John Allen said carefully, "the old man mentions, in passing, a poison... a tasteless, colorless poison, undetectable by autopsy. Of course, at the time, the young man cannot conceive of any use for such a thing---"

"Of course."

"Now, do you, by such a chance--?"

The little man smiled. "I have such a poison."

"And the price?"

"Eight thousand dollars."

"In the story, it was five thousand."

The little man shrugged. "Prices have gone up, you know. M'm-- I must say, your Mr. Collier has made some remarkable deductions. I think I'll ask around among my colleagues... perhaps he has patronized one of us at some time or other, or come about in search of story material." He opened a drawer beneath the counter and took out a small, dusty vial, which he put on the counter between them. "In the story, then, the old man tells all this to the young man -- fair warning, as it were -- and still the young man, all eager and unsuspecting, buys the love potion for a dollar and goes forth to enjoy a few years of Heaven... and then.. the opposite. Correct?"

"Correct."

"After which he will again seek out the old man, to spend the greater sum for the poison. Correct?"

"Correct."

"And the story ends...."

"Ah," said John Allen. "The ending is magnificent! The ending is the whole story! The ending is this:

"The young man says happily: 'Good by.'"

"And the old man says: 'Au revoir.'"



The little man behind the counter laughed. "Delightful! The 'chaser' eh? Most clever!" He nudged the vial on the counter with a fat finger. "Well, here is the love potion. But I suppose, after the little tale you've just told, that you won't be interested in buying it---"

He picked up the vial and prepared to put it back in the drawer.

"Oh," said John Allen, "but you're wrong. I do want to buy it!"

Again the little man noted how John Allen's upper lids moved with his words, giving him an almost predatory look; again he noted the tension in mouth and shoulders. And now the hands were trembling.

This time, the little man frowned. The signs were hinting at something he had not expected to see. He pursed his pink lower lip as John Allen said:

"There is a difference, you see, between the situation of the young man in the story and my own: I do not love the young lady on whom I am going to use the potion."

Now the signs were clear--- ninety-six of them in all.

"I want her," John Allen said, hunching his shoulders against their tension. "I must have her." He pressed his hands against the counter, but the fingers remained clawed. "She is the most beautiful and desirable woman I have ever met!"

"I understand," said the little man.

"There is more," John Allen said, his face getting uglier and uglier. "There is more than just having her. But I must have her too!"

"You shall," said the little man, putting the vial back on the counter and removing his hand from it as if it were filthy. "You shall possess her as few men are given to possess a woman. The potion is quite effective in that area."

John Allen smiled a hating smile.

"You see," he said, "I am extremely wealthy."

"I see."

"So I can well afford the poison, when the time comes."

"I see."

When I am done with her, I shall return and buy the poison, just as the young man in the story will return. But the difference is this: I am

not a drooling, starry-eyed child seeking to capture the girl of his dreams! I will not walk out of here unsuspecting, not knowing what is in store for me... oh no! There is no terrible disillusionment awaiting me.. because I know full well what to expect, and don't care anyway! There will be no pain for me-- there will be pain only for her. I will turn all her frantic worries and needs to her own destruction! First, pain..." his eyes were wide and fixed, as was his smile... "as much pain as I can inflict--- and then, death!"

"I will be here," said the little man. "And so will the poison."

"How I hate her!" John Allen said. "How I want and hate her! She has scorned me, rejected me, spurned my advances... now I shall tantalize her! I will ignore her very existence until she is torn by desire of me.. until she follows me about on the streets, begging for my attentions. I will make it terribly, terribly difficult for her to see me... but, flogged on by her desire, she will crawl over the obstacles I will place, in the hope of one word, one kiss. And I shall see that she finds me in another's arms, and I shall close the door on her need, her tears-- and her forgiveness! She will be my ever-willing mistress-- bound to me by the chain of devotion forged by your wonderful little vial!"

"You will punish her."

"Yes!"

"You will torment her!"

"Yes! And then I shall have her-- take her. But I will satisfy only myself. I shall revel in my own pleasure-- ah, she is beautiful-- but to her I will extend no tenderness, no soft word, no loving caress, no kindness. I will be a beast! There is a way of loving I saw in Malaya--"

"You will brutalize her."

"And she will come back for more! She will seek me wherever I am, forsaking her dignity-- and she has so much of that!-- throwing aside self respect! She will come to me, again and again, knowing that I will laugh at her, mock her-- all in the hope of one touch of my lips, my hand, my body." John Allen held the vial up to the light, baring his teeth as he admired its clear, colorless contents. "I will pay her back a thousand-fold for the frustration and unhappiness she has caused me. Perhaps, later on, I will stage public scenes, and see that she is disgraced in the eyes of her family and friends. They may confine her, eventually. But she will accept no help, no advice; she will find some way of coming to me-- for all she will want is me, and they cannot take that desire from her." He leaned over the counter. "Can they?"

"The potion's effects cannot be altered."

"Ah, she will be an old woman before I am through!"

"Very likely."

"And when the time is ripe-- when I have had my fill of her body and her agony-- I will give her a child! She could not object, could she?"

"She would -- want it."

"Then I will tell her that I am completely through with her-- that she will never see me again!"

"She will cry," said the little man.

"Yes!"

"She will scream."

"Ah!" John Allen pushed a dollar bill across the counter. "When I tire of it all, I will come back and buy the poison and be rid of her!" He paused and looked sharply at the little man. "You seem a little disturbed by my intentions," he said in a nasty tone. "I hardly think you're in any position to moralize, do you? After all, how many happy young men have left this shop, only to return years later with eight thousand dollars, seeking release from the Hell which you sold them for a dollar? Why, you would have done it to me, if I'd come to you for the ordinary reasons, wouldn't you?"

"Certainly. I am not moralizing. I am a businessman."

"You're many times a murderer."

"In a sense."

"Well, then," John Allen laughed. "In a few years I'll be back, and we'll do business again." He slipped the vial into a pocket. "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned, eh? but she'll never be able to lift a finger against me! She won't be able to even think of harming me, eh?"

"Under the effects of the love potion," the little man said, "no woman in her right mind could harm the man she loves."

John Allen turned and walked briskly to the door, where, relishing the phrase, he said, "Au revoir!"

As he closed the door behind him, the September wind wailed thinly and painfully, like a madwoman.

"Good-by," said the little man.

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DICK CLARKSON

Well, apparently all the columns got shut out last issue....Lee wanted me to locate my copy of the last installment and add it to this one. The trouble is that I couldn't find it, so you-all won't have to suffer through it. Maybe it's just as well, since as I remember, it was mostly a con report, which can always be done without in a pinch. In any event, I'm glad to be back here again.

I almost didn't get this out in time....as you all know by now, some doctors got happy with me and didn't want to give me back my leg, the result of which has been that when I finally got back here to college, back work was piled so high I needed a shovel to get rid of some of it. I got it all done, and then find myself up against a battery of exams and quizzes, and papers, in addition to all those I had to do that were make-up, which were on the regular schedule. I am now in the middle of those.

But anyhow, last summer a correspondent of mine and I were arguing as to just what makes a prozine tops, or in fact, just what makes a prozine. There are several factors: you have "atmosphere". The way you feel when you read a mag -- entertaining, dry or what. You have its "slant" -- what kind of stories it prefers to run. And then, you have the stories themselves, good, average, or bad as the case may be.

So you take a look. The atmosphere and slant of a mag are both subjective, and whether or not the individual likes them is up to his own personal make-up. Some like thud-and-blunder, others real scientific writing, and so on. You have a wide range of likes and dislikes in writing-type and atmosphere. But almost everybody enjoys a really well-written story. I could give examples like "The Lovers" and "Sam Hall", of modern vintage, and there have been plenty of others....lots of people who "don't as a rule take to that kind of yarn" liked one particular one of that kind because it was well done.

So we have got down to stories. Now, novels play a big part in almost every prozine, and novelettes. They are the big drawing cards, and

the bigger the name of the author concerned, the better the chances of that particular magazine's selling for that issue. Novels, however, are limited; or maybe I should say that their limit is the fact that they aren't limited. You can go on for thousands of words and still cover only a little bit, if you want. You can write into it reams of description, action, and so on. And when you're done, maybe you have a good story.... more power to you.

But the correspondent and I decided that it was short stories that actually determine just how good your mag is. They are the main body on which depends the overall impression of an issue. A mag can have good novels and lousy short stories and still be well-received, no doubt about it. But a TOP flight prozine will have to have good short stories in addition to good longer stuff.

And that's the point. A short story is a lot harder to write than a novel. True, organization and sequence of plot in a novel is a lot more complex, since you're planning on covering a greater area. However, look at it this way: in a short story, you have to do the same thing as you do in a novel, and do it in one-tenth the number of words. You have to boil down, and cut until you bleed. And when you're done, you have to have something more than a outline, or a shell of a story, left. You have to have something readable, entertaining. You can't take your time, word-wise. You have a limit set. You have to do a good job in less time and space; and nothing can be sacrificed -- you have to have full plot development, detail, sequence of action, character delineation, setting, and so forth. And you have to do it in damn little space, where in a longer opus you have much more room to do the same.

In a short story, you have to do all the same things you do in a novel and you have to do them well, yet in almost no time at all. It isn't easy. I'm not saying anyone can write a novel; that is silly. And the best short stories, usually, are those which do the most in the least time, while still giving entertainment and reading pleasure.

Not everyone can do this. There are a lot of writers in the field today who write excellent novels, but bog down somewhat on the short stories. So there you find the top prozines; they have good novels, good novelettes, and good short stories. It's like one plus one plus one plus one equals four; leave one out and you get three. Three isn't as high as four. Now, make the top-notch prozine four, and a fairly good one three. The one that is missing, nine times in ten, is short-story quality. You have to have them all to be tops; there's not getting around it. Take a look and see if I'm not right.

Now, here I'd like to tell those who haven't heard from me recently that I'm still alive; I have good reasons for not being active right now, fan-wise or physically. After this week, and during the vacation coming up, I'll remedy this. Sorry to have lapsed, but here there are little men who stand on platforms and babble at you for an hour, and they don't like it when people don't have their work done. In fact, they dislike it very much!

## DEAR JOHN W. CAMPBELL:

AN OPEN LETTER FROM VERNON M'CAIN

Dear Mr. Campbell:

To avoid any false impressions I'd like to say right at the start of this letter that I admire you immensely. I consider you the most distinguished editor in science fiction history and Astounding Science Fiction during its golden period (1940-1949) not only had no real competition at the time but has no real competitor for excellence, past or since, with the sole exception of your own incomparable Unknown of the same period.

But a magazine cannot live on past glories alone and, Mr. Campbell, I am not the only one who has expressed a dissatisfaction with ASF in the last few years. There are issues of your magazine when I am utterly delighted and vow this is the old ASF come to life again. But there are other issues when you fail to have a single readable story, and the magazine is surpassed by half a dozen competitors. Most of the time, of course, you steer a path someplace in between. One or two good stories each issue matching the average quality of the old days, if not that of the remembered classics, while the rest are adequate if sub-ASF brand stories.

Now I realize that editing ASF isn't quite as simple as it used to be. In late 1949 you had to face another quality magazine in your own field for the first time. A year later you encountered no-holds-barred competition for your traditional title. Your old standby authors have gone....some have left the field, others sell to your competitors, still others have moved to more remunerative branches of writing. However, for whatever reasons, the names that have made ASF great, and vice versa, Heinlein, van Vogt, Sturgeon, del Ray, de Camp, have been noticeably absent from your pages in recent years. Of all the big guns, only Asimov has appeared in ASF in the last two years and his appearances are far less frequent than formerly.

Not only have you had to buck the big-money boys who want to dethrone you....you've also had to contend with a dozen or so get-rich-quick publications, out to skim loot from the sf bonanza while it lasts. Formerly a writer had to perfect his work to ASF standards or not appear....unless it was in some very inferior magazine. Now there are a score of non-discriminating editors willing to take anything halfway acceptable. There is more money to be made in selling first drafts at 1¢ a word than in revising half a dozen times in order to sell to a 3¢-a-word market.

To add to your woes, where once you were the sole dominant influence on the field, there is now a competing diametrically opposite influence which has exuded stronger each succeeding year and threatens to eclipse your own school of sf writing completely. Its name, of course, is Ray



Bradbury and the Bradbury devotees ignore the chesslike construction and scientific accuracy which you made fetishes for the chance to wallow in emotionalism and not have to worry about scientific facts. This is deceptively attractive....one doesn't need a scientific education to write like Bradbury and everybody has emotions. Unfortunately, there is only one Bradbury. And so, fewer and fewer writers, either old or new, are slanting towards Astounding.

Recognizing all these difficulties I feel there is still a lack in the current ASF which is not attributable to any of them but to an editorial change....where deliberate or not, I couldn't say.

With your permission I'd like to analyze the basic story situations in their relationship to ASF. I would say there are five basic types, although of course, there is room for disagreement here.

(1) The most basic type, because it is what primitive man lived for many millenia is Man Against Nature. This is fairly easy to construct; the plot structure is simple and being so basic it has some fairly strong virtues. There are people who delight in such stories....the addicts of sea stories being an outstanding example. I am not one of them. Offhand I can't recall one Man Against Nature story which I have ever read and found really worth the time. The type is far better suited to the movies. Every year I see one or two such movies, which are really enthralling although after you state the basic plot type there isn't a great deal more to it. (A recent such example was "Inferno".) In sf, this usually takes the form of someone being stranded on a Martian desert or in a lunar crater 50 miles from the nearest settlement with insufficient oxygen to walk the distance. In the end he always makes it. Happily, this sort of story has been mercifully absent from the pages of ASF in your tenure. It is not a form really well suited to science fiction; the only good handlings of it have been several Raymond Z. Gallun stories about people adapting themselves to alien climates, but even Gallun has stubbed his toe on this favorite gimmick several times.

(2) And, perhaps, a step higher is Man Against The Machine. This, perhaps, should be a subcategory of (1) or (3) but it is so common in sf I feel it deserves its own listing. The lesser magazines abound with this sort of story, and unhappily, so does Astounding. It used to be a fairly rare occurrence in your magazine, being confined usually to occasional appearances of George O. Smith. Since Smith's departure, however, you've found a succession of new one-shot writers to keep turning them out. This is the sort of story where a man finds himself in one hell of a predicament. His space ship, or oxygenizer, or frimazubble just sprang a leak and there is no chance to repair it before he reaches port 10,000 miles ahead. All the characters are named Joe, or Tom, or Dick and completely indistinguishable from each other. Usually if you read carefully you can remember which is the hero but this doesn't do you much good. He's as one dimensional as all the rest. The authors of these things don't breathe enough character into their puppets to even give them the dignity of cardboard cutouts. They remain bare outlines,

If the reader sticks with it, 10,000 words later, Joe (or Tom or Dick) after spending 1500 words being very mysterious, fixes the trouble and then casually explains: "I just happened to remember that ammonia boils when brought into contact with oxygen so naturally those sheets of cellulose we were transporting to the natives of Titan were just the thing to make a temporary patch." End of story and end of boredom until you start the next one.

Now, Mr. Campbell, I know you are quite proud of catering to informed technicians but surely you don't think it is this sort of simple-minded narrative which first attracted them to your magazine? Even technicians tend to lose contact with other fields, and their math and chemistry get a bit rusty when not in use, so they must be as aggravated as we ordinary readers when they come upon this sort of supercilious bilge. Everyone gets a bit of a kick out of coming across something dealing with their own speciality, of course. However, I happen to be a telegraph operator and I'm sure I wouldn't consider it worthwhile to read a story which was miserably written and whose sole reason for being printed was a trick ending which hinged on the fact that the minimum number of words on a telegram has been 15 for the last two years instead of the traditional 10 most people still think it is.

Hal Clement has been a particular offender with this sort of thing. Flawless science and atrocious writing. It is precisely because he concentrated on the human and adjoined the technical that his "Needle" is probably the most engrossing pure science-fiction novel ever written. In "Ice World" he backslid and made the story about 35% technical, which pulled it down to the level of just another novel. In his latest thing, he went almost all the way on the technical side....only about 5% of the story dealt with the human angle and it proved the most boring serial you've run in years. Yes, I know the readers voted it top story each time but after all these years you should know it takes practically an act of congress to prevent the serial from drawing top place. Readers like long stories.

It is this sort of thing which has become my pet hate in ASF. More and more frequently, I open your magazine to some story, only to find the first paragraph describing the velocity and location of some spaceship. I sigh, knowing that I'm in for one of your man versus machine stories and sadly shake my head for the glory that was once Astounding. Usually, I plough through them to the bitter end, since it is in ASF, where I'd just skip the whole thing in a lesser mag, but I'm not happy about it.

(3) We have the Man Against Man story....far away the most common and most popular type. Practically all adventure stories fall into this classification....most comedies and farces....in fact, probably 80% of all published fiction. This is the story that involves the most detailed plotting....and holds the deepest pitfalls. In some ways it is the most difficult to write since it is the most artificial. Man is actually a pretty cooperative animal, despite all that has been written about him. Normally, he does not come into sharp conflict with his fellows. His

troubles are more apt to fall into one of the other categories.

However, there is no denying this is a very satisfying type story when tackled by a good writer such as Heinlein. Human beings are basically most interested in other things. Other human beings. Thus, in the Man Against Man story, you are doubling the elements of interest for the reader. (I might add, for the benefit of quibblers, that I am including Man Against Aliens in this category. As has been pointed out elsewhere all alien viewpoints hold interest precisely to the extent that one can identify them with humans. Thus a story giving the thoughts of a horse, rabbit, alien, or sentient chair is actually merely a story about a disguised human being and the term Man used throughout this letter can be interpreted as referring to any form of sentient life.)

The Man Against Man story is used to the exclusion of practically all other forms by hacks. And the story whose plot-frame is painfully evident is usually in this category.

Naturally, ASF, like every other all-fiction magazine, features a hefty percentage of this type, though less than average, I would say. I won't condone or condemn here as the quality of such a story hinges almost entirely on the ability of the individual writer. However, I would say that ASF does not currently have any masters of this genre among their regular contributors.

(4) Perhaps a step higher and a fairly recent addition to the ranks of fiction is Man Against Society. Too often this is the scapegoat story. Some poor persecuted innocent is hounded by the faceless, inhuman, and irresistible forces of society. In the pulps, he takes inspiration from the arms of some luscious female and sets out to right all wrongs. In the arty circles he winds up being ground ever more wormlike into the ground, his dignity stripped away. "1984" is the classic example here, not only in sf, but in the general field of fiction. This type story was very popular among rebels in the 30's. It was very convenient to blame your troubles on impersonal forces too big to fight. Now, the trend is the other way, which I would say is healthy.

During the 40's, ASF worked some interesting variations on this formula....examining society and what makes it tick. Asimov's "Foundation" series comes most readily to mind, but there were many more and you, Mr. Campbell, usually seemed to have flawless taste in picking these. Where are they now? One occasionally crops up, but it's rare....not the every issue occurrence it once was. This analytical trend toward society was one of the things that made ASF my favorite. Why the trend away from them?

(5) Last, and almost certainly the highest of these types, is Man Against Himself. Practically all the great classics of literature fall wholly or partially into this category. From "Hamlet" to "The Lost Weekend", your story of permanent value embodies this motif. The upsurge of

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 22)





# J I M H A R M O N

"You'll get your writings stolen, sending them off to those strange men," my mother always used to warn me when I was starting out in Fandom, at thirteen or so. Alas, I watched the professional magazines faithfully after sending my stuff off to strange men like Lee Riddle, but never did I find one story Henry Kuttner or Ray Bradbury had stolen from me. But, now it has happened! Messrs. Bradbury and Kuttner's hands are still clean-- they have resisted temptation nobly; but somewhere in New London, there is a thief with his hands on a Harmounscript, as Forrie Ackerman has remarked in a careless moment. Somewhere hearts are happy, somewhere fans are gay, but there's no joy in Riddle, he's just Peoning away. But old fanzine editors never die. They just fade a pass, when it's time for a 7 -- and being an old Navy Man, Riddle is good at this. But even more tearful than either Harmon or Riddle, must be the dirty crook who swiped Lee's briefcase. Imagine how you'd feel if you were a self-respecting potty thief, and wound up with a stack of old fanzine material, especially when you were expecting negotiable bonds or plans for the Navy's latest secret weapon. Perhaps Lee, Watkins, Clarkson, I; and the rest have suffered in a good cause. If that wouldn't drive a man to drink, what would?

Of course (chuckle-chuckle), I pity the poor thief in another way, too. You may not know this, but Lee has confided in me. Riddle is just the name he uses in Fandom. His real name? Well, I'm not saying, but have you ever heard of Don Winslow.....?

In that lost column, I revealed to the waiting world some staggering news: I AM NOW A PROFESSIONAL SCIENCE FICTION WRITER. It took me some seven years, so it is no remarkable success story, but as the Indianapolis driver said when he finished sixteenth in the "500", "At least, I finished there!"

In my previous column, I outlined my ideas on how other people can sell to the pros. Briefly, I stated that I thought a professional style of writing was the most important consideration in getting to the selling

stage. Secondly, Viewpoint is your most important single thing. An old master of the professional writing can handle a story without a single protagonist, but generally speaking, beginners will have more success if they write a story that tells the feelings and reactions of one person constantly, and never leaves him during the entire story. Plot is still a nice thing to have in a story, even if Bradbury doesn't have them around a lot of the time. Beginnings, middles, and ends help a story get from the start to the finish. Character faces problems, tries to solve problems, nears success, then fails, finally succeeds. That's the formula for 99% of all stories of all kinds ever written. It can produce great stories, and it's the surest way to success.

Those are just a few suggestions on how to sell, if you want to sell. I don't claim to be an expert, but I thought my ideas might be of some help to some fans. If any fan reading this thinks I might be of some personal help to him with his pro-aimed efforts, I'd be glad to hear from him. No guarantees for sales, or even for help to everybody if enough fans overestimate me.

If I may, I'd like to take this space to publicly thank Forrest J. Ackerman for all the help he has given me, and continues to give me. I don't think you're too surprised at such words. So many people owe Forrie so much. You owe him a lot yourself. Without him, many of the things you like best about science-fiction would never have come into being. He is truly "Mr. Science-Fiction." Naturally, there are those who envy him his position, but they can never take it away from him. As an idol, Forrie's feet are of honest clay. All the slung mud in the world isn't going to make him topple. His head is above the baying of the jackals.

There is an old story about when the Devil went out of business, he sold all his tools at auction. He received a good price for Frustration, Lust, Greed, Pride, Hate, and Fear. It's said that he received the highest price for Envy. But I wonder if he might not have made out rather big with the tool he stole from his Competitor--LOVE. In the Devil's hands, it's a dangerous tool.

I drew the above simile because I am going out of the Big Name Fan business, and I feel that I have much in common with the Devil. Now the first tool of the Big Name Fan business is a rule of thumb: Never hit anybody smaller than you. Obviously, you'll only hit out of your weight and who cares if you do knock the flyweight out, if you're a heavyweight. Hit the Big Guy! Even if you lose, you're still thought of as a promising contender. The second tool: Always hit a man when he's down. If a man has shot off his mouth, and paid dearly for it, don't let him forget it, don't let him lick his wounds. You can't let Fandom think you were taken in, even if you were.

I remember I spent a good deal of time kicking one R. S. Shaver after he had taken the count. I believe, though, that I was the first person to present evidence that he really was mentally ill.

The third tool: I don't care what they say about me, as long as they spell my name right. This needs no explanation. It's virtually the only way to get to be a BNF. Fourth tool: Your name on the door is more important than a raise. This one you use in reverse, handle first. Whenever a new fanzine comes out, immediately write in saying you hope to have something to contribute before long. That way, the editor will say, "We hope to present some excellent material in the near future by T. E. Watkins, Vernon McCain, Jim Harmon, and Claude Degler..." That way you get your name in the magazine, everyone thinks you've slaved away on a contribution (young faneds always crow over their eggs before they're laid), and you don't have to do any work. Fifth tool: Refer to yourself in the third person. This sounds modest for some reason, yet drills your name into the fannish mind.

But don't get the idea you're getting rid of me. No, I'm just going into the Little Name Pro business, and like the Devil, am changing only the name of my work. He has changed Evil to Ism these days. Facisism, Communism, MacCarthyism, and of course, his most dangerous tool when it's in his hands, like Love, Misguided Americanism....

I almost forgot one important tool of the BNF: A good excuse for not bringing out your fanzine. I published a couple of issues of a fanzine--ASTEROID X--years ago. Since then, I've kept up a reputation as a fanzine editor on the strength of excuses as to why I'd not brought out that third issue. You have to be smart in your excuses, though. For instance, you might go far enough to say that you had left all your material in a briefcase in your car, and a petty thief ... No, you'd have to do better than that. No one would believe a thing like that could happen.

But, then, it's hard to believe what happened to the pulp magazine. I've long pondered, publicly and privately, what its fate would be. It is far from resolved. Popular Publications has expanded its entire line of standard pulps, but all the rest of the publishers are cutting titles. Fiction House has taken a realistic step I thought all pulp publishers were afraid to try--charging 35¢ for a straight pulp. The digest-size has many advantages over the standard pulp--the pulp's only attributes being more quantity and a better medium for ads--but maybe the pulp is too deeply ingrained to disappear from our culture. Anyway, it seems that as long as the cultural trends of our present society continue, we will have something with a recognizable connection with the pulp magazine. With all this wondering about the future, there is one hard fact; there is only one science fiction magazine in a straight pulp format--rough paper, rough edges, approximately 8"x11"--Planet Stories. All the other so-called pulp magazines either have trimmed edges or semi-slick paper. The handwriting is on the wall, and we must consider a move to another house.

I got a lot of stuff in the mail. A few months ago, I got my three introductory books from the SF Book Club. Two of them were very well turned out--either worth far more to me than the dollar I paid. But one made me mad. It was "Sands of Mars", and for a minute, I thought i t



had been wrapped in genuine sand paper. However, it turned out to be some rough and flimsy orange paper (like the kiddies use for paste-up) with some fuzzy blue printing on it. It certainly wasn't the jacket advertised and I wrote Doubleday, complaining about the fact. I thought it was a case of insufficient supplies of the original cover. The answer by a Mr. Sherman Foster proved the deception went deeper than that. Foster patiently explained in three-letter words, that the Book Club reprinted the selections, and sometimes the plates for the original dust jacket wasn't available, so they substituted a cheaper -- his words were "less elaborate" -- wrapper. A good excuse, but I would like to hear the excuse for advertising pictures of the Publisher's Editions and presenting them as the Club Editions they offer for purchase.

I had used as a point of argument the fact that the inferior jacket would affect the resale value of the book, if I wished to resell it. Mr. Foster forbid me to resell the books. Since only items subject to certain state and federal taxes can be prohibited for resale, I would like to know how he intends to prevent me from disposing of my own property as I see fit.

Pocket Books seem to be doing all right without misleading advertisements. So much so, that I think we will finally get to the point where only reference and text books, along with certain ancient and modern classics and collectors' items will be hardbound at all. Obviously a paperback can only offer momentary entertainment, or information, but the only greater value of a clothbound book is its permanency--and there just aren't that many books worth saving. Anyway, a paperback will last quite a long time itself if you care to keep it. So, just how many people are going to pay twelve times as much just for a pretty row of leather backstrips.

You might call the following outburst "The Double Standards of Snobbery in Science Fiction."

A certain type of professional in the field is its subject. There are many exceptions to the norm for this type, of course, in the semantic sense that there are rats who are rats only when they are not good guys. There are many pros who are snobs for a majority of the time.

This pro at a convention imposes the restrictions on himself that a Negro has imposed on him by a prejudiced society which allows the animal instinct of fear and thus hate of difference to be unchecked by reason. This pro eats, drinks, talks, and sleeps only with other pros in special eating and drinking places, rooms, and beds reserved for pros.

This pro wants fans around at a convention mainly because they are a prominent part of the publicity he hopes to gain for himself, his magazine or his book company. He also wants them to look upon him adoringly, perhaps ask for autographs if he is not too lazy to feel like signing them. Perhaps we shouldn't feel too harshly about this type of pro. He is really

a pretty unimportant person. Except to us, the fans, and fellow pros, he is not famous, and to nobody is he wealthy, and only to a few pros is he powerful. It is natural that he should resent the few people who do consider him famous and important. They are a constant reminder to him that only this handful of humanity has more than a passing biological interest or financial concern in and for him.

Especially at a convention is he painfully reminded of this. He can see all of the people in the world who give a damn about him, virtually, or so he magnifies it. A small handful. He is reminded of his unimportance, but at the same time he realizes that these few people do consider him important; so he openly ridicules and insults them. It makes him feel big--like shooting a woman's navel out or splitting a skull with a gun barrel. If you are unfortunate enough to want to talk to and show your respect for people like this pro whose work, at least, you admire, then you--like I was--are in for the megalomaniacal assertions of some professional science fictioneers.

The second part of the double standard of snobbery is almost purely financial. Certain pros don't want any fans at a convention, but at the same time, he wants a lot of fans for commercial publicity purposes. In fact, he doesn't care if they are fans or not, just so long as they appear fans. At Chicago, I met an incredible number of people who would rather discuss photography, sex, or Little Orphan Annie, than science fiction--and they didn't have the remotest who John Campbell and Hugo Gernsback were, although they might have some praise for Robert Bradbury and Ray Heinlein. I am all in favor of newcomers learning the ropes, but I'd hardly suggest that a trackrunner start learning in a track meet, out of consideration both to him and the experienced runners. At any other con the delegates have to establish some qualifications for attending--that goes for stamp collectors and toy train fans. I'd suggest that no membership cards be issued to people unless they had some credentials such as FAPA asks--membership in a fan club, appearance in a fan or professional magazine, or references from some known fans. The attendance might not be so high, but then I might not have to listen to a discourse on photography while I was trying to listen to Willy Ley.

As for the pro snobs, I suggest that nobody tell them where the convention is being held. Then they can get together someplace else, and have a fine old time, insulting each other. I doubt if we'd miss them.

All of which brings me finally down to the last note of my off-key Harmony, one of an indefinite number now that I've escaped, apparently, from the clutches of that new kind of involuntary servitude that must have the Great Emancipator spinning on the stroke of the hour in his grave: Selective Service. I hope that won't bring the epitaph against me when I complained that confiscatory taxation of wealth was legalized predatory envy: that I was a alleged "dirty red". Perhaps Utopia will come, though and we will be sure against having to work or hunger...or think. Which is a good note on which to leave "Harmony"...the sweet and most peace-loving Nymph, strangely, also, the Mother of the Amazons.....

DEAR JOHN W. CAMPBELL:  
(continued)

interest in psychology in recent decades has caused this sort of story to flourish. It must be remembered, of course, that while this is the stuff of which classics are made, it is also the easiest type of story to do dully, with the possible exception of Man Against Man. An awful lot of effusions which should never have seen print have been published in this vein in the last fifteen years.

I can't truthfully say you were leading the pack in this trend, Mr. Campbell, but you were certainly one of its active members. ASF's staple commodity in the fondly remembered years were the psychological stories and others falling into the same general category, such as van Vogt's confused supermen, and the tortured lead characters of such outre Kuttner stories as "Private Eye".

These are even scarcer than the Man Against Society stories in the current ASF and yet they contributed even more to its imprint on sf.

I, for one, will not be able to be satisfied with ASF until the Man Against Machine stories go and the Man Against Society and Man Against Himself stories, which made ASF great in the past, return.

Until then, I remain,

A sincere admirer,

Vernon L. McCain

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### THE TETHER

by Burton K. Beerman

Moving forth in garbed array,  
Banners high to meet the day,  
Danger stalked...gamma's prey,  
The spacemen move in a haunted way.

Something stirs within their breast  
The gnawings of some thwarted quest,  
Fretting movements without rest,  
To yonder planet and distant test.

They cried in the silence of the night,  
..... As if regretting some yearly plight,  
And found themselves in morning light,  
Doubtful of making the first Star Flight.

# Caviar Emptor

Robert Bloch

I have just finished with "E Pluribus Unicorn", but it has not finished with me. As is always the case, Theodore Sturgeon's work has a way of lingering in memory as a pleasant and welcome guest.

Sturgeonophiles (and they are many) are a rather strange breed. The Heinleinites are a vociferous crew, the Campbellians highly articulate, the Bradburyians positively loghorreaic. In contrast, the admirers of Sturgeon seem oddly reluctant to speak up. And yet -- make no mistake -- they do constitute a deservedly large portion of sf-fantasy readership. It seems to me high time that somebody undertook the formation of a Sturgeon-cult or a Theodorian Society. I have no intention of donning the ecclesiastical vestments as High Priest, but I do intend to go on record as a confirmed devotee.

This is neither the time nor the place to assess "E Pluribus Unicorn". His latest collection of short stories rates a view from every reader rather than a review from a few critics. The critical notices I have seen are justifiably unanimous in their praise -- I am more interested in the actual reader-reaction to what I feel is an intense, intelligent, imaginative output on the part of an important literary craftsman in the field today.

That reader-reaction seems, as I've previously remarked, rather difficult to come by. Sturgeon's writing is widely acknowledged as "tops" but many fans seem content to limit their aesthetic evaluation to such remarks.

A venture into Sturgeon must, of necessity, leave those fans behind. His is a realm where space-ships seldom land, where hot-rods cannot park with ease; the flights of fancy leading to his domain are not usually jet propelled.

In the purely superficial sense, he has made use of all the conventional backgrounds and gambits of the genre. He has introduced space-ships extra-terrestrial locales, and polished the facets of various jewels in the crown of the atomic age.

But the space-ships are pure vehicles, they convey the reader to only one destination. The distant planets in his stories always bring the reader closer to home. The atomic crown is always placed squarely on the reader's head.

For Sturgeon has chosen and laid claim to strange territory indeed -- he ventures inside the reader, where angels fear to tread and rockets can



not soar.

His is the uncharted continent of the cortex, the terra incognita of the psyche, the cellular constellation, the grey galaxy of the mind. The resultant geography is in reality parapsychology.

Now this is strange territory indeed, and there are some who say that you'll never reach the Indies by this route -- that you merely go off the edge. Here there be unicorns and this way lies madness, and who is this unknown upstart with his babblings of telekinesis and telepathy and teleportation and ESP and hypnosis and triadistic concepts and the like?

For it is a peculiarity of we mortals that, at times, we may cheerfully admit to ourselves and even to others we may be just a bit unbalanced, aberrated, or downright screwy -- but two canons we hold inviolate nonetheless: we insist that we have a "sense of humor", and we insist that we have "common sense".

We may have a little trouble defining a "sense of humor" (it usually boils down to the fact that we laugh when somebody else falls down and breaks his neck) but we all know what "common sense" is. It's what we happen to believe at the moment.

At this moment, unfortunately, Messrs. Dunno, Rhino, et al, are in obscurity -- for, in this mundane world of ours, all good men and true are dedicated to the proposition that  $E = MC^2$  (the proof of which may soon burst upon us). Everybody with "common sense" knows and accepts that. But interpretations of psychological phenomena, in the broadest sense of the term, are subject to widespread individual variations.

For this reason, there are many who admire Theodore Sturgeon's style of writing, who admire certain individual stories ("Killdozer", "Thunder and Roses", "It") which do not directly address themselves to a parapsychological theme, but who profess concern regarding his "tendency" to devote his major efforts to the metaphysical. It wouldn't bother them merely as much if he labelled these stories frankly as metaphysical in basis; what offends their "common sense" is his insistence on dealing with various phenomena as valid rather than extrapolate extravaganzas.

This is neither an analysis nor a defense of such material -- it is, though, a definite statement of the fact. Theodore Sturgeon is writing about the mind of man; the unexplored potentials of that mind; the relationships of one mind with another; the possibility of interrelationship or interexistence between minds. He writes of love against hate, of life against death, of love-hate and death-life undemarcated. He is an explorer of the Id, and analyst of the Ego, a pursuer of the psyche and, a seeker of the soma.

The "common sense" crew can stand by to blast off for Betelgeuse, there to embrace the folksy familiarity of the bug-eyed monsters. Visitors to Sturgeon will find stranger worlds, where greater terrors mingle oddly

with greater reassurances.

As fantasy, it's superb. As fact -- I doubt if Sturgeon has ever laid claim to anything more than sincere desire to explore and expound, tentatively and subject to revised judgement, the cerebral sphere.

His sincerity is evident; it manifests itself both in the superb quality of his writing and in the conscious or unconscious preoccupation with certain themes which I made bold to hazard are derived from a synthesis of personal attitude and experience.

We find recurrent in his work, the triadistic concept, the gifted or fated child, the elderly woman (Sibyl or Norm) possessed of extraordinary powers. We find much of music (and of rhythm of the spheres and atoms) and I am sure that the average psychiatrist or psychologist could make all sorts of "common sense" deductions based on this material. For all writers work from the personal to the impersonal. Few, like Sturgeon, have managed to maintain the personal element and utilize it as fully and as capably.

No, it is not for this commentator to casually accept or reject the Sturgeon dicta as implied in his stories on the basis of "common sense." There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in even Gernsback's philosophy, and we have certainly not reached the stage where we are qualified to chart the cerebrum and cerebellum with the precision, as others, of Messrs. Rand and McNally!

Until the glad tidings are announced, until the happy millenium arrives when the savants emerge leaping and hosannaing from their laboratories with a calibration-chart of the human soul and a micrometric-model of the mind, I take the stand that what Theodore Sturgeon is doing is important. His investigations into the possible permutations of human behavior are, to my way of thinking, of more interest than the ceaseless speculations on the governing-system of the planet Jupiter; the potential practical applications are infinitely greater, and the stimulus to the imagination affords a keener challenge.

In thus underscoring the content of Sturgeon's work, I have been guilty of a considerable omission -- I meant to accord equal mention of his ability as a writer. But that's unnecessary. If you want to read superlative science-fiction, fine fantasy, delicately delineated on a lasting literary level -- seek out Sturgeon. I've yet to see the new novel, "More Than Human", but I am impatient to get at it. Anything from Sturgeon is bound to be caviar.

Will pay 25¢ each for the following in excellent condition:::GALAXY S.F.NOVELS #3 & 7; SCIENCE FICTION PLUS #1; IMAGINATION #16; OTHER WORLDS #16, 26, & 30. Charles Lee Riddle, 108 Dunham St., Norwich, Ct.

PEON NOTES  
(continued)

I had already more pages than I usually do for this issue. Rather than add anymore to this issue, I've saved his column for the next time.

Also missing this issue is the fanzine reviews by Steve Curtin, who was to have his initial column this time. He's been very busy acting the part of a new father (for the third time), and just didn't have the time available to give a decent review of each fanzine. I'd like to suggest, however, that any fanzines for review in his column be sent to him c/o General Delivery, Uncasville, Connecticut. However, don't forget, I'd still like to exchange with anyone who publishes on any sort of a regular schedule.

-oOo-

It appears that my big change in the appearance of PEON as represented by the September issue went over like a lead balloon. You will recall that I used regular size paper, colored, in that issue, and stated that I would like to continue its use in the future. However, it seems that the majority of you readers liked PEON as it had been appearing these past five years--the off-sized paper and not colored. So...the last issue went back to the old style, and I guess I'll keep it that way--at least, until I get another wild idea to try out on you!

-oOo-

Although credit is not given for it, the drawing on page 3 illustrating Jerry Bixby's little gem of a story is also done by him (but murdered a bit by yours truly in transposing to the stencil). Jerry spent the Thanksgiving weekend up here in Norwich with us (how that fellow can drink milk--a fact surprising to most fans who know him well, I am sure!) and during his visit drew up quite a few illustrations which you will find cropping up in almost any PEON from now on. He also did a wonderful cover which will be on the next issue of PEON. It's not very many authors who can draw well also, and I believe that this is the first time anything by him in the way of art has been presented in a fanzine. However, I understand that quite a few of his illustrations did appear in Planet Stories some years back.

-oOo-

I'm not trying to steal Steve Curtin's thunder, but there have been quite a few fanzines received here in Norwich recently that should be mentioned. For three of them, I have nothing but the highest of praise, and one..well just read on.

First of all, the VEGANNISH, representing the 12th issue of VEGA, issued by Joel Nydahl. It makes me quite envious, what with 100 pages chock full

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 32)

Quite often the wife is the guiding and steering power behind a successful author. I wondered how Mrs. E. E. Smith felt about her husband's work, and down in Philadelphia, I asked her to tell us about it. This is what she writes:

## THE DOCTOR AND I

*mrs. e. e. smith*

Those lights in the banquet hall at the Philcon dinner were dimmer than I thought. Otherwise you would have had a better look at me and would have known my inadequacy as a writer of any sort. However, be that as it may, I do help "Doc Smith" a bit.

Doc is a science fiction fan from away back, as well as an author from about the same time. Science fiction he loves. Perhaps not every individual story, or some authors, but overall. And his writings are a hobby with him, though often I doubt that when I see him drawing maps, graphs, vessels, stars, planets, worlds, and peoples.

He waits for cold weather, especially snow, then he feels the urge or desire to write, although I have seen him slaving in ninety degree weather. Me too, as I type for him.

When I see him striking his characteristic pose, not sitting at his desk with his pencil in hand, but standing about six inches from the wall, leaning forward with his head on the wall, I know he is working on some idea or problem of his story. I haven't seen him bang his head on the wall, yet, but I wouldn't be too surprised if he did.

The only way I can help is by being able to read his handwriting, usually in pencil, and then type it. Reading his handwriting is quite a gift, but in my case, it was due to our courtship. I lived in Idaho, and he was working in Washington, D.C. Before he graduated from the University of Idaho, he was quite attracted to a picture my brother had of me, and asked my brother to write a letter of introduction. My brother did, but I received one from Doc first, leaving me slightly confused--a state which I have been in ever since. He came down to Boise with my brother to meet me, and then went on to Washington. He wrote me every day for about eight months, then came back to Boise where we were married.

Everyone knows that I am not a fan of science fiction, because it's just not the kind of stuff I like. When I type, I don't really read it. It's too deep for me, and I don't have the time to study it out when I'm typing it, and lack the desire to do so after typing. However, I can, and do, admire people who do read it.

When Doc does start writing, I sort of keep watch, or he'd be down in



his workshop or darkroom playing with his other hobbies. He's much like his brother who was supposed to be studying for his railway mail clerk exams. His wife looked in to see how he was doing, and found that he had stepped out the window on other business. Ground floor window, of course.

On the other hand, when he does have the urge, nothing can distract him. When our children were quite young, they'd make noise on purpose, so he'd send them to a show or send them away. They were quite nonplussed when they found he didn't even hear them. I would call his attention to their idea, and he would send them off to a show then.

Once in a while I suggest a bit and he does use it. As I said before, I type his stories. He studies the typed version minutely and notes words omitted or misspelled by my typewriter. These he corrects, changes, or inserts chapters or material. Then, after a long time of studying, etc., I type it again. If the story is to be published in bookform, I type it a third time. One would think I'd know every story of his by heart, but far from that.

He has had and does have, many fans who are really friends, through his writing. Once in a while, amusing things happen. One night, very late, two young men knocked at the door. Doc had been asleep about two hours and I was finishing reading my kind of story. I didn't know whether to answer the door or not at first, but finally I did. There were two young men wanting to talk to Doc. I called him, telling him their names and down he came. They retired to his den and talk they did until about three a.m. (usually he dislikes staying up to 10:30.) They were planning to leave the next morning, but since Doc had a story about finished and it being Sunday, one started reading the handwritten copy, the other the typed copy. They all came up once in a while for breath and eats. The boys didn't leave until Monday.

Another time, Jack Williamson stopped to meet Doc, also planning on staying only a short while. However, since we enjoyed talking to him so very much, we kept him over night and a part of the next day.

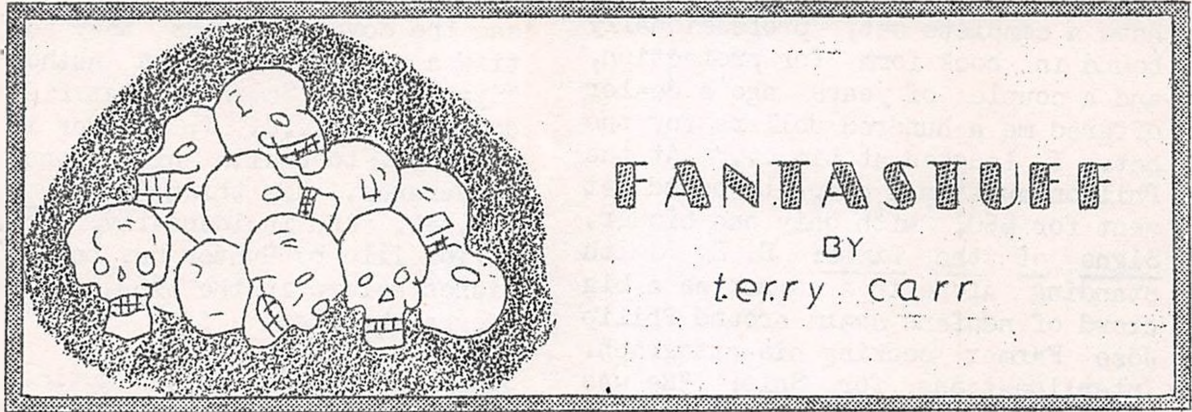
Doc looks forward to attending the Science Fiction Conventions, so much always, and meeting his fans and other authors (whom he greatly admires and can meet no other way during the year.) Why do I attend them when I am not a fan? Well, because I meet so many nice people and at them I can bask in reflected glory. Also, I like to be with him, though we have been married over 38 years now.

I really don't have any problems, you might say, but it certainly does give life a lift when Doc's pencil and pen start writing.

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ATTENTION, MR. BOUCHER: In the last installment of "Fantastuff", I wrote an item which immediately brought this reaction from Anthony Boucher, editor of Fantasy and Science Fiction:

"Dear Mr. Carr:

In PEON, Sep 53, p 12, you write:

"Betty R. Lewis . . . is a San Franciscan. . . So is 'Bruce A. Agnew,' the penname taken by Mike Walker for 'The Key' in Fantasy & Science Fiction for June, 1953."

I'm sorry to spoil Mr. Walker's story, but 'Bruce A. Agnew' is simply Bruce A. Agnew, a young man from Connecticut now in England on student exchange.

I hope you'll publish a retraction, and look as marked suspicion on any further data that Mr. Walker feeds you.

Who on earth is Mike Walker? This is as foolish and pointless an imposture I've ever encountered.

Curiously,  
Anthony Boucher."

I wrote back to Mr. Boucher, of course, telling him the background for the story. Boiled down, it goes like this: Walker is a local fan, teen-aged, who is perhaps the world's leading contender for Arthur C. Clarke's "Ego" nickname. He told me that he had written the story, gave the price he had received and a few other particulars, so as to make his story sound authentic. A friend of mine, who knows Walker and his writings a bit better than I do, read the story and indicated that it was Walker's style all right. I, seeing no

reason for him to lie, believed him and included the item in "Fantastuff." This good enough retraction for you, Mr. Boucher?

NOTES N QUOTES: Bob Tucker, in OOP-

SLA #11 (speaking of Unknown): "...I have a complete set, professionally bound in book form for protection, and a couple of years ago a dealer offered me a hundred dollars for the set. I laughed at him...." At the Philcon auction a complete bound set went for \$50, with only one bidder. Signs of the Times: E. E. Smith standing alone in a corner as a big crowd of neofans swarm around Philip Jose Farmer seeking his autograph. Interlineations for Sale: "He was composing on stencil, making cutting remarks." "There were so many cars in the street there wasn't room to jaywalk!" "The dropping of 'etc.', from the language would necessitate a lot of thinking that is not done at the present."

END OF AN ERA::E.C.'s two science-fiction comics, Weird Science and Weird Fantasy, have passed on to the land where all good mags go. In their place will be a 15¢, quarterly comic called Weird Science-Fantasy. Apparently, the comics just did not sell, what with the tremendous amount of competition that was going on. Odd that it was their stf comics that folded instead of their horror comics, considering that science-fiction is supposed to be going through a "boom" period...or perhaps whoever it was that said that stf is waning and fantasy taking over the spotlight was right....

AD INFINITEMS::Three fanzines are currently on sale in southern California at the newsstands: SCIENCE FICTION ADVERTISER, INSIDE, AND QUIS CUSTODIET. SFA, it is reported, is selling particularly well..This issue's razzberry: to Cosmos Science Fiction and Fantasy, for that story they so "hilariously" (maybe they thought) presented in their second issue by N. R., "....a noted Martian author." ...Spaceways, the new mag from FPCI,

caused a chuckle here when I first saw the cover. Seems they advertise a novelet by the author of "Spaceways". Somehow, that figures doesn't it?....J. T. Oliver is in evidence, too, with his second pro appearance. His third is in Vortex S.F. #2. And incidentally, the interior illo by Hunter has been published before in the 1953 Westercon program booklet.

STUFF 'N' NONESUCH::Ever notice how one particular artist's style often perfectly matches the style of a certain author? For instance, Virgil Finlay is obviously the man for A. Merritt's works. A few other instances: Leigh Brackett and Frank Kelly Freas' drawings (see Tops In Science Fiction #2); Ray Bradbury and Paul Calle; Eric Frank Russell and Edd Cartier; H. P. Lovecraft and Hannes Bok....Somebody Goofed: According to Things to Come, the SF Bookclub O-O, their next selection, "Syndic" by C. M. Kornbluth, was originally serialized in Galaxy SF. Well, I dunno, I guess Galaxy has changed its name to Science Fiction Adventures, because that's where it originally appeared.

ITEM OF NO MOMENT::You may be interested to know that those 3-D viewer's enclosed with the 3-D comic books (the latest fad) work wonders on many stf cover paintings. Particularly beautiful when viewed by these glasses are the Bok cover on Fantasy Magazine #1 and the Freas cover on Tops in Science Fiction #2 as the red areas shine with an eerie light as a result of these new glasses, giving these covers quite a weird effect.

HITHER, THITHER, AND YAWN::See that great portfolio of artwork in the latest BREVIZINE ADVENTURE? Seems that Donald Cantin sent them a few



fillers, and they printed them as a portfolio, depicting "life as it should be done...with a slight touch of genuine insanity, boiled until simmering over a kettle of sarcasm..." And all this for five measly fillers, none of them much good...The January 1954 issue of Planet Stories reminds me of the good old days, what with Bradbury and Brackett so prominently displayed all over the cover. I noticed, though, that the illo for "A Sound of Thunder", the Bradbury story, was practically the same as the original painting which accompanied the story in Colliers! Well I suppose one can't be too original when, like Emsh, one has to turn out half the illos for practically every science fiction mag on the market. It's a wonder that Emsh's stuff is as good as it is!....Any of you notice the varying amounts of gravity listed by Campbell in connection with Mesklin, Hal Clement's monster-world in "Mission of Gravity"? In the April issue, he blurb-ed the planet's gravity as being 500 times that of Earth. In May he said it was 700, and as well over 600 in that issue's synopsis. For the next two installments, at least, he was consistent: he blurb-ed it as 700 and called it well over 600 in the synopsis.

CHRISTMAS PRESENTS::Or The Carreate Awards. Since I'm feeling a bit poetryless at the moment, I'll give them out without the so-called poetry (actually a bastard form of old doggeral) this time. For the best novel of the year, I must admit it has been a scramble, but the above-mentioned "Mission of Gravity" did finally wind up on top. Poul Anderson's "Three Hearts and Three Lions" takes second place, with 3rd and 4th places going to Charles L. Harness's "The Rose" (Authentic S-F

British), and to Philip Jose Farmer for "Moth and Rust", respectively. The best cover of the year is a tossup between Alex Schomburg and Frank R. Paul, for their efforts on Startling Stories and Science Fiction Plus, both for October 1953. The best new artist of the year was Frank Kelly Freas, though he didn't actually start in 1953. He distinguished himself many times with covers such as the one on Tops In Science Fiction #2, Astounding, October 1953, etc., and displayed a variety of styles on his interior art. The best new magazine of the year was Science Fiction Plus, which brought to the field a slick format and a taste of yesterday, then gradually combined yesterday with today to form a pleasing magazine with a definite personality, something which just about every other magazine now this year lacks. Fan departments in Startling, TWS, and Amazing, were dropped, only to be replaced by new ones in S-F Quarterly, Future, Dynamic, and S-F Adventures. The new features, in my opinion at least, are far superior to the old ones, though of course, their circulation is much smaller.

BORINGS::Orma McCormick's STARLANES is taking the plunge and going to be printed, starting with the next issue--she's also upping the price to 40¢. Artwork will be dropped, too, she says. Too bad; the artwork of STARLANES always lent it a certain air that made up much of the mag's personality.....Poul Anderson and Karen Kruse, both living in Berkeley, Calif., are engaged to be married. Expect to see a lot more Anderson material on the market soon, because Poul's going to have two collections to keep up now.....That's all for now. See you next issue.....



PEON NOTES  
(continued)

of good--damn good, I must say--material, and beautiful mimeographing. I always thought that an annish was a waste of effort, but this one proves me very wrong. His selection of material is excellent, and the highlight of the entire issue is a massive report on the last convention down in Philadelphia. Congratulations, Joel, but don't fall down on the job now that you've established a wonderful record.

Another bit of excellent mimeographing and material selecting is CANADIAN FANDOM, edited by Gerald Steward. This 'zine's appearance is equal to that of any other fanzine I've ever seen--and tops most of them. I only wish that I could get PEON looking half as nice. One thing though. Gerald calls this the tenth anniversary issue, a statement which I take issue with. I've always considered a magazine to be broken in continuity if it does not come out regularly--and with CANADIAN FANDOM, there were no issues in 1950 or 1952. However, that's a small matter of opinion--and at least it's a wonderful job.

Not quite as well mimeographed, but something different in the way of fanzines is ALPHA, printed in both Dutch and English! ALPHA is the official organ of the Antwerp Science Fiction Fan Club. I can't read a bit of Dutch, but it was interesting to try to make out the book reviews of U.S. books listed in the Dutch section of ALPHA. I'm sure that if you send a recent U.S. prozine, the editors will send you a copy. The address, as closely as I can make it out is J. Jansen, 64 Fort II Straat, Wommelgem, Belgium.

Now, to the fourth fanzine worthy of mentioning. I'm doing it here only to try to talk some sense into the editors. What would you think if you received a fanzine, and on the index pages found these phrases: "Executive Offices", "Chairman of the Board", "All rights reserved", etc.? You would probably have the same reaction that I did--that this fan or this group of fans are taking themselves way too seriously! Of course, you probably know whom I am talking about--Warren A. Freiberg and BREVIZINE ADVENTURES. BA is a very nice little fanzine--but nothing to be so proud of that the editor should try to sound like a prozine editor! I've always thought of fanzine-publishing as a way of fun in life, and I think that if Warren would come down and admit it himself, BA would be a much better fanzine. Oh yes, Warren--you can't reserve a bit of rights, unless your entire magazine is copyrighted--and then you have to state the fact that it is copyrighted.

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That's it for this time friends. But before we go, congratulations to Ken Slater and Mrs. Slater on the birth of their daughter last September...see you around the first of March with the next PEON. Deadline for that issue is February 1st.....Have a very happy new year, won't you?

Lee