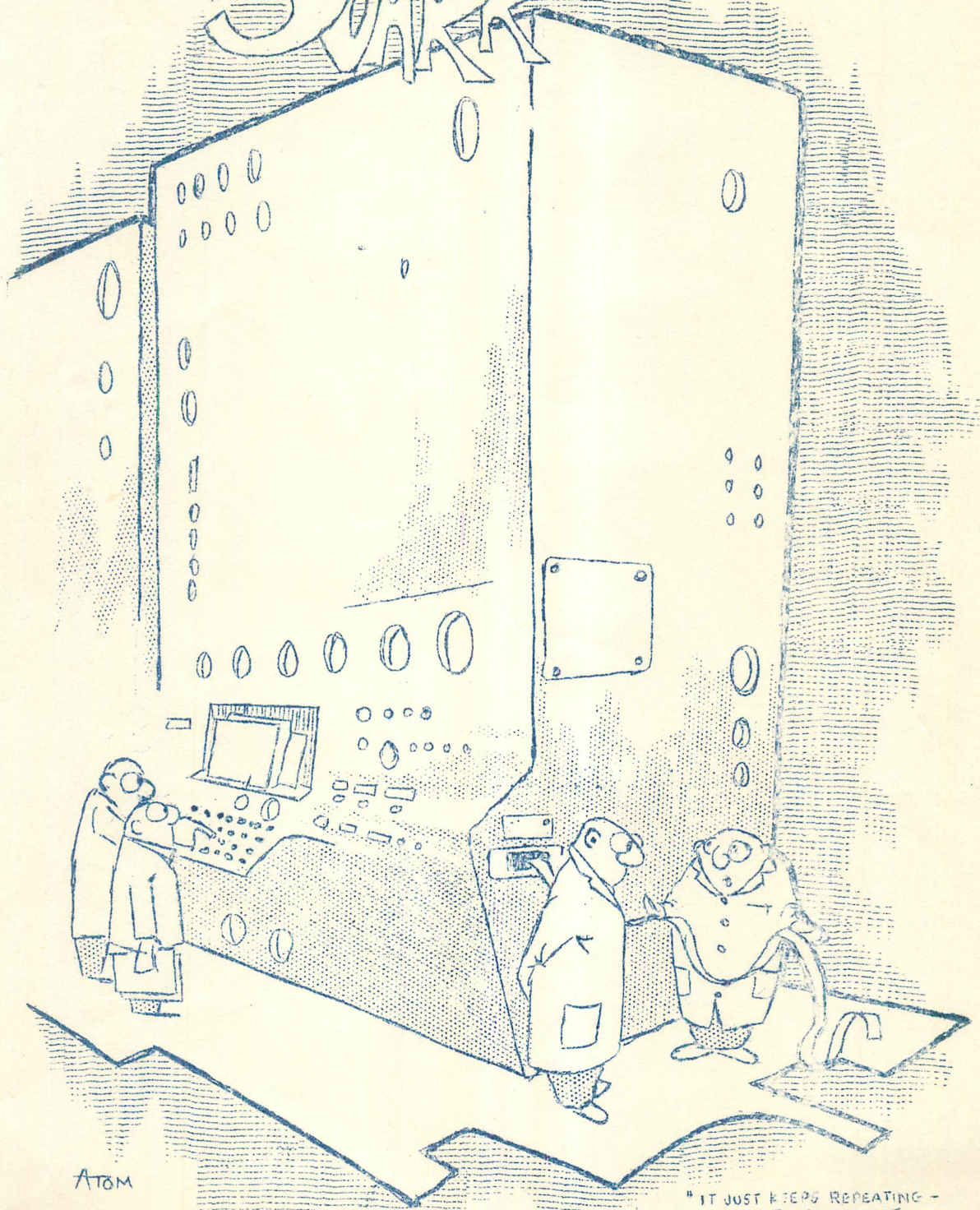


the STARR



ATOM

"IT JUST KEEPS REPEATING -
'HELP, I AM A PRISONER IN A
QUESTION AND ANSWER FACTORY' "



November, 1964

THE SCARR

Number 6

THIS FANZINE IS PRODUCED for the Offtrail Magazine Publishers Association and other interested and interesting parties. It is free for letters (not necessarily of comment), trade, articles....or the January 1930 issue of Astounding Stories!

OMPANs will see that there are no Mailing Comments. This is due to my bashfulness as a new boy, and a modest reluctance to tell the old hands how to make their efforts as good as my own superb production!

The Diary extracts are, in the main, a list of the books I read. Tactfully I have omitted most of the Westerns and crime stories. Usually there are only a few words about each book, but when I read a book I like I let myself go, as in the case of McGonigall's poetry or Frederick Kennedy's NORAH, or almost any bad science-fiction story. Also, every now and then, there are corny jokes, quotes I have read or heard, etc. For example, every time I get a cold I remark that I must have got it through drinking out of a wet cup. If I know the source of a wisecrack I give it.

There is no letter column this issue, partly due to a paucity of letters, but mainly to the OMPA deadline, a grave defect common to all APAs. To make up for it there will, I hope, be TWO letter columns next time — not just a letter column divided into two parts, but two legitimate lettercols.

A whole crowd of fans (in Fandom two's a crowd — and three is a drunken mob) complained that there was no indication when an article was finished. Something will have to be done about that next issue too.

c c c c c c c c c c c c c

In a certain professional magazine (as we used to say in the good old days of First Fandom) Isaac Asimov enjoys himself tossing large numbers around. I am going to do likewise.

Consider the number 26. (Millions of other numbers would do as well.) If the figure 1 is placed before it or after it we get 126 and 261, and both these numbers are divisible without remainder by 9. Now find a similar number, but using 7 as a divisor instead of 9. There are zillions of answers but the smallest one is 10,005. (110,005 and 200,051 are both divisible by 7 without remainder.) That wasn't difficult, was it?

Now try finding a number with the same property but using 17 as divisor. Lots of numbers will do as before but a couple of minutes figuring will give you the smallest one: 100,000,000,000,015. With 23 as divisor the smallest answer you'll find is 100,000,000,000,000,013 and if you're not heartily

DISCOURSE ON METAPHYSICS

BOB SHAW

WHEN I WENT TO LIVE in Canada for a few years I was very interested to discover that their lavatories were different to ours.

This was brought home to me most forcibly, and almost disastrously, in Montreal. I had been drinking a fair amount on the train, possibly due to the fact that there were posters everywhere urging me to "Drink Canada Dry", and I just can't resist a challenge like that. Anyway, while we were eating in a Montreal restaurant I realised that Canada was winning and I went along to the lavatory in somewhat of a hurry.

Once I had closed the door I searched around its edge for the familiar shoot-bolt which is traditional door furniture in the British Isles. There wasn't one! Just as I was about to send for the manager I noticed a small button projecting from the centre of the doorknob, and, being a trained engineer, deduced that this was some kind of locking device. (This was my introduction to the combined doorknob and lock which is standard throughout the North American continent — and a fine how-do-you-do it was.) I pressed the little button, heard a satisfying click and thought to myself that the door would now be locked.

Then, as I was about to proceed, I got another thought — how did I know the door was locked? This was an unfamiliar land where lumberjacks, Eskimos and Mounties might burst in on me at any moment; it wasn't Ireland where the worst that could burst in on me would be gypsies, special police and Gaelic dancers. I went back to the door, gave the knob a tentative twist and the door opened easily and immediately!

A moment's reflection in the calm comfort of the armchair will show readers of this magazine that the door lock has to work that way, otherwise once you had pressed the little button you would be locked in forever. But in the stress of the moment I didn't appreciate this point and stood there for ages, hopping from one foot to the other, clicking and twisting at the lock, snarling obscenities at it and wishing I was back in Belfast. Finally I had to give in and carry out my original mission in an extremely alarmed and apprehensive state of mind.

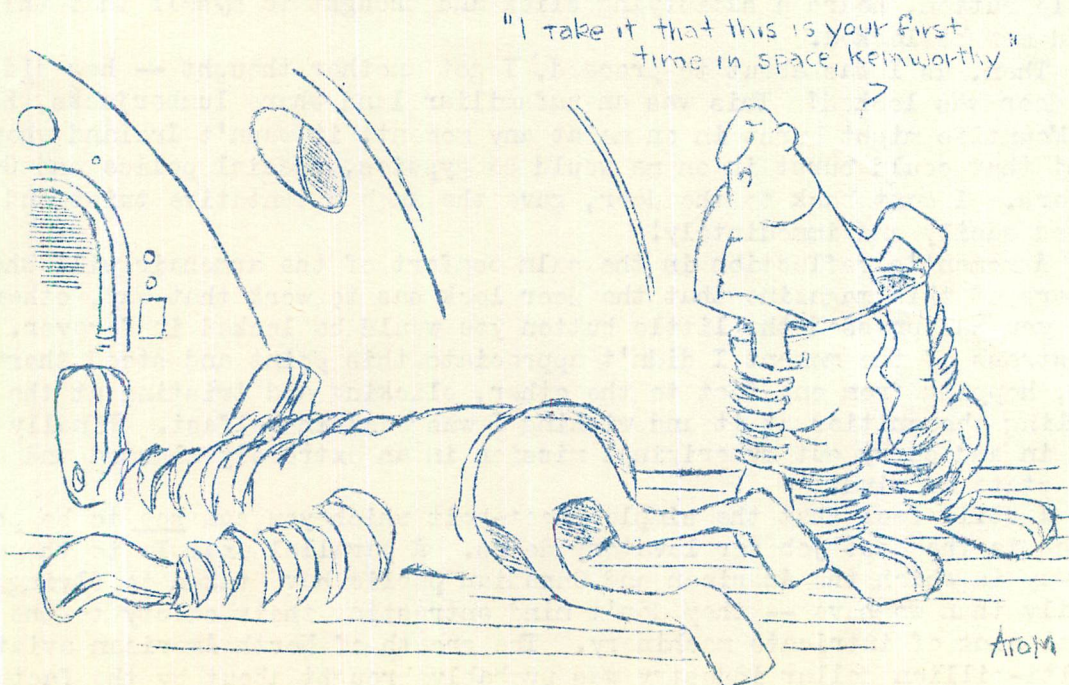
I still feel that the simple shoot-bolt which you can see to be positively locked is the best job for lavatory doors. A parallel example to the above is the way in which the American and Canadian public have taken to flying more readily than we have — they don't mind entrusting their safety to the proper functioning of intricate machinery. The growth of North American aviation into a multi-billion dollar industry was probably brought about by the fact that the people over there were conditioned for it by their lavatory doorknobs.

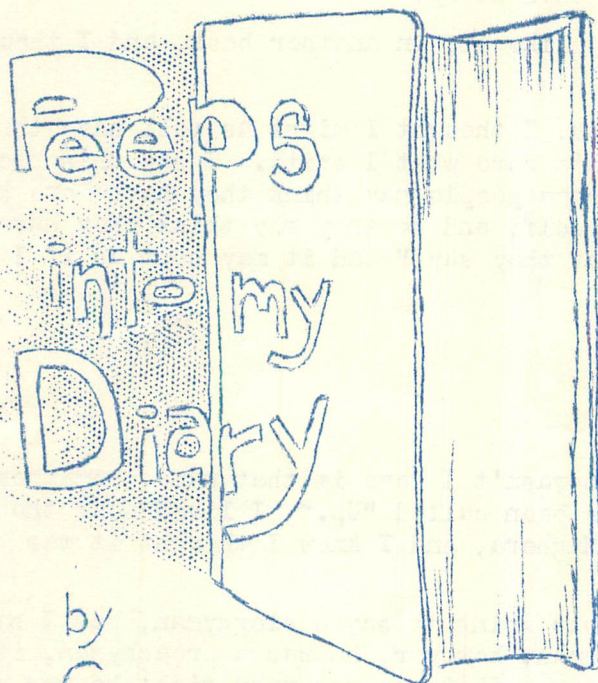
Another big difference was in the attitude of Canadian business firms to employees' toilet facilities. The aircraft manufacturing firm I now work for operates a sort of caste system both in lavatories and canteens. There are separate facilities for each grade of staff and nobody would ever dare to use one allocated to a more senior grade. It is a bit sad in a way because you can get used to seeing certain faces around the toilet, but if any of them get promoted they vanish from your ken as though they had suddenly died. There is nothing to stop them continuing to use the old place, but they vanish just the same. In very rare cases, if a man does really well and reaches management level and is therefore above the rat race, he will occasionally reappear in his old lavatory. Nobody ever speaks during these strangely eerie visitations.

In Canada it is all different. The structural engineering firm I worked for out there provided only one toilet for all grades of staff, thereby enjoying the twin benefits of democracy and a greatly reduced plumbing bill. In that one little room senior executives might chat with junior clerks; in fact it was in there that I had my only conversation with the tycoon-type who owned the firm and all its branches. It wasn't really a conversation, now that I recall it. He had gone to the lavatory and forgotten to lock the door, or else the little button hadn't worked (!), and I charged in about three minutes later. The tycoon said only two words to me, but he delivered them with such loudness and sheer force that I began to understand how he had managed to batter his way up into the millionaire class.

Perhaps using lavatories with faulty doors had taught him to speak like that in the first place. It could easily be that all those domineering, aggressive trans-Atlantic giants of industry were made that way by their lavatory doorknobs.....

Let's face it — we in the United Kingdom will have to do something drastic if we are ever to regain our former proud position among the leading industrial and technological nations of the world. I suggest lavatories with revolving doors.





by
George
Charters

1960

Oct 4 Tue Ben Barzman (70) OUT OF THIS WORLD. A "sister Earth" story. "Siater" is in another continuum but visitors fly here. The two earths have had no contact till now since they were created, but they have the same languages, towns, &c. Even people are duplicated. There has been no WWII in Earth II, making duplicating problems which are not explained. The hero makes love to the girl-friend of his duplicate and the duplicate makes love to the girlfriend of the hero, with very satisfactory results for all concerned.

Oct 5 Wed Graig Rice (50) MY KINGDOM FOR A HEARSE. Rice has written several crime stories but judging by this one she doesn't know her hearse from her kingdom. Unnecessarily complicated. And the "hero" is always tired and depressed, like Bailey's Reggie Fortune. I hoped the denouement would be a hearse of a different colour but it was just a dead end.

Oct 6 Thu Kingsley Amis (30) I LIKE IT HERE. A man's holiday in Portugal. Clever-clever writing that doesn't quite come off in spite of earthy words.

Oct 7 Fri Frederick Kennedy "NORAH." (Printed by W & G Baird, Ltd., Belfast, 1935.) This is the kind of book I like: crazy, naive, corny, fantastic. Report has it that Frederick lived in a shed in the bottom of his garden as he

did not want to spoil the beautiful furniture in his house. And when the book was printed he took all the copies and put them in one of the rooms.

There is a preface:

I am not bound.

I am not in any way bound by this story.

I saw that, or something very like it, in another book, and I thought that that was the way to begin.

So many people have made books, I thought I might as well have the honour of making a book, too. I don't care what I write. I say this because you needn't criticise my story: some people may think they have more knowledge of parts of it than I have myself, and so they may think they have found me wrong, "but I care not what they say," and it may seem as if I don't care what I write.

What is any book but paper?

Dry paper.

The first two paragraphs:

I was born in County Down; it wasn't I gave it that name, remember; I thought it might as well have been called "Up." I lived near the Mourne Mountains, near the town of Maghera, and I know I thought it was both up and down.

My father was a ———man, I was going to say a clergyman, but I stopped there, for he wasn't a clergyman, however, he was a preachyman, if there be such a word; but before he was that, he was very rich; he was a lord, and a landlord; he owned an enormous quantity of land, I think it was as big as a county; and we had tenants; oh, no end of them; and I remember people bowing and scraping to me, although I think I can't have been much bigger at that time than a fat midge.

A little further on he says:

Of course in those days I know nothing about governments, or rents; ay, and I may say I know nothing about government yet, but I always like to give my opinion on every subject, especially on subjects I know nothing about: my opinion on English government in Ireland is that it is rotten. Some people have called opinions "onions," but I think they would find their mistake if they want something to eat: I scorn the idea of classing a good onion with some man's senseless opinion.

Isn't it nice to be talking all sorts of nonsense? I find that the only way to get on smoothly when making a book is just to work away at anything that is in my head.....


And he does so for cccxi pages. Yes, the pages are numbered with Roman numerals. Print is small, blue in colour, and about 700 words to the page. The chapter headings are given in the usual way on the Contents page, and also at the back, with sub-headings (as in many old-fashioned books) and notes of the origins of the hundreds of Biblical quotations scattered throughout the book. And lastly an alphabetical index to the chapters.

Chapters are headed oddly, like so:

31

CHAPTER XXXI.....

In the Ivy

There are a few queer footnotes. For example, at one place Norah is telling Freddy that people are becoming more and more sinful, and says, "If something does not come to stop it, what will be the end? It is not a good preparation for Storm to be." This is followed by what seems to be a rough upside-down Y, like so: , apparently done in Indian ink. This mark is repeated at the foot of the page, followed by "Storm more and more, saith E.N., seller of this book, 'Norah.'" There is a black border round this foot-note.

A hymn finishes the book. Freddy was intensely religious. He thought smoking a "very foolish, sinful, wasteful, odious, hideous habit, and tends to more insanity." Just didn't like smoking, apparently.

An odd thread of simple, naive humour runs through the book. When the school is flooded a boat is rowed to it to rescue the Teacher.

We were not yet far from the school, when a shrill voice was heard, and lo! (or perhaps I should say high!) there was Miss Lytle with her head like a scarecrow out of the top of the school chimney.

I came at Harry about going for a swim, but when the Mother heard of it she wouldn't hear of it.

Mistress Margot was missing. Some searched the boat and reported "Not here." Then we looked up at the trees and the boatmen dived among the branches in the water. In one of the falls of the waves I spied a white looking thing in a branch and made a dash for it, and lo, it was the arithmetic book open, and underneath I found Mistress Margot tied to it, or perhaps I should say it was tied to her, for when the men were carrying her over the boat to the bank it was hanging by her left side tied to a button hole, so there is nothing like having arithmetic by heart.

I taught Bully, the bull, to work at drawing the cart, and pulling the plough, and Bully became a very good horse — I'm at it again, but pardon me, he was an Irish bull.

Pounder was a brave manly dog, that is if it's possible for a dog to be manly, perhaps it was dogly he was.

Perhaps I may divert for a moment here to say that I was just at this part of the book when a man said to me: "Will you not soon be done with that book?" "I am at chapter forty," I said. "I am glad you are at the last," he said. "I am not at the last," said I, "I have a little more to do yet." "How can that be?" he said, "How can there be any more than 40? How can any number excel forty? Forty does XL, and no other number does." Notwithstanding his XLent joke, I, in the next chapter, continue....

Killelagh Rectory was not in Killelagh townland, it was in Gortinure, between Maghera and Swatragh. The very old church was in Killelagh townland; another old church was near the Rectory in Gortinure. The church that was now in use was in Swatragh, but still it has the name Killelagh parish church. I thought it well to explain this, as I have known some to blunder about this.

At one point Fred, our hero, makes a couple of remarks to our heroine, Norah, about the Aurora Borealis and the speed of light and the stars. Norah's reply, explaining the whole cosmos, takes 18 pages — 12,600 words!

But the funniest thing in the book is the story of Norah's rescue from a cave on the sea-shore near Portrush. She had been missing for a week or two when one

day Fred, worrying about her, is told by a travelling tinker that he had seen a cat, very like Norah's, near Portrush. So Fred takes the train to Portrush and there sees the cat, with a potato in its mouth, going towards the sea. He follows it, climbing over rocks and swimming across two stretches of water, to the cave where Norah is prisoner, and where she had been fed by the cat bringing food to her every day.

A lovely, stupid, crazy, delightful book.

Nov 1 Tue Nevil Shute (80) IN THE WET. (Written 1952) Voting & Commonwealth relations in 1983. We are to have a 3rd war; we are to have a Labour Government; Princess Anne is to marry the Duke of Havant & have 3 children; &c. Fantasy.

Nov 5 Sat R de Witt Miller & Anna Hunger (30) THE MAN WHO LIVED FOREVER. Part of an Ace double. A short story padded out. :: Jerry Sohl (30) THE MARS MONOPOLY. Rest of the Ace Double and worthy to go with it.

Nov 8 Tue A E van Vogt (70) THE MIND CAGE. vV's latest. An electronic brain runs everything on Earth, including the Great Judge. The usual vV complications. Not to be compared with SLAN or WEAPON SHOPS.

Nov 10 Thu Robert Bloch (90) PSYCHO. Criminal psychopath. Filmed.

Nov 11 Fri Murray Leinster (30) WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE. Gory story of modern West, with machine-guns, &c. Some of the episodes read like St Valentine's Day massacre.

Nov 17 Thu Lauran Paine (60) MAN BEHIND THE GUN. Paine's stories give the same kind of unpleasantness as A J Cronin, Thomas Hardy, Hall Caine.

Nov 18 Fri Noel Loomis (20) CITY OF GLASS. Low even by low Loomis standards.

Nov 24 Thu Carter Dickson (90) FEAR IS THE SAME. Science fiction/fantasy. Phil & Jenny are in trouble over a murder and are somehow transferred back into the bodies of a man & woman of 1795 and find themselves in trouble over a murder. Although 288 pp long it'd take much more to do it properly. Scene I never read about before is a duel between 2 men with swords versus one man with boxing gloves.

Dec 3 Sat Jack Finney (80) THE BODYSNATCHERS. Little town in process of being taken over by aliens in the form of pods which develop into replicas of human beings who are then destroyed. Strangers are kept away by bad roads, &c.

Dec 13 Tue Judith Merril (30) THE TOMORROW PEOPLE. Story of Moon/Mars flight incidentally causing telepathy. Didn't like the jerky style of writing. Didn't like the hero: a moron with more than a trace of insanity. Didn't like the queer italics (difficult to distinguish from the rest of the type anyway) and there was no need for Italics anyway. Didn't like the drivelling, endless, pointless talk. Didn't like the "Hi, babe!" and "Hey, baby!" which studded the book. Couldn't check the science, but suspected it. On p 96 the diameter of the Earth is given as 7928 miles. Story never serialised in a magazine which is not surprising. Judith is a good anthologist.

1961

Jan 8 Sun R Lionel Fanthorpe (20) HAND OF DOOM. 40th century. No work, all fun, robots, parties, &c. RLF makes this clear in a couple of pages, but then he drools on and on about it. A fight, man v. robot, takes up 15 pages. Spelling example: "mellaganic."

Jan 12 Thu Leo Brett (30) THE MICROSCOPIC ONES. Nine men in a ftl ship become Lilliputian, then Brobdingnagian. Great pains taken to distinguish between the characters: Negro, Greek, Irishman, Welshman, german, etc. Dunno why, as they are all cardboard anyway. Boring conversations.

Jan 13 Fri E Everett Evans (60) MAN OF MANY MINDS. Lone telepath in future galactic intelligence service. Controls, birds, animals, etc.

Jan 24 Tue Zane Grey THE DEER STALKER. Quote from p 33: "Some day, Thad, you'll have to choose between stalkin' deer and trailin' after another kind of deer." Zane Grey's other joke is in THE CALL OF THE CANYON, where the hero asks: Did you ever read of the woman who said, "Whither thou goest I will go?" And, with a straight face the heroine replies: Oh, don't be ruthless!

Jan 29 Sun Jerry Sohl (80) THE TIME DISSOLVER. Scientist invents machine which erases memory. His enemy uses it on him (poetic justice!) and he finds 11 years wiped out. Eventually puts machine into reverse to get his memory back.

Jan 31 Tue Sterling Noel (90) WE WHO SURVIVED. When fifth ice age comes a group of people make their way to Equator. Ice becomes half a mile thick (?). Like, man, NORDENHOLT'S MILLION, 25TH HOUR, LORD OF LIFE, EARTH ABIDES, &c &c. Story starts on Saturday, 14th September, 2023, but I calculate that as a Monday, so we'll just have to wait and see who's right.

Feb 4 Sat Louis Charbonneau (30) NO PLACE ON EARTH. Story told in flash-backs which I dislike. Year 2240, but apart from paralyzers and a Population Control Corps, things are much the same. About as much sf as DAWN'S DELAY, THE BIG EYE, DREADFUL SANCTUARY, ALICE IN WONDERLAND. :: "Pirates" brought captured liner to Brazil yesterday. They think Brazil will give them asylum as political refugees, and have formally surrendered to them. No walking the plank, no keel-hauling, just Yo-he-he and a bottle of coko. If there are repercussions they'll probably be stuffed with reperfeathers.

Feb 11 Sat Pel Torre (5) FROZEN PLANET. Very poor plot, poorer grammar, punctuation & spelling. E.g., physiognamy. :: Davy Whelan, referring to a girl who went to an all-night party & was assaulted, said, "Well, she went there of her own violation."

Feb 15 Wed Leo Brett (50) FACELESS PLANET. Not too bad, considering Brett's too fond of quoting poetry and too fond of dialogue which is pointless and unnecessary. Quote: Jules Verne and H G Wells and R L Fanthorpe were still writing their classic masterpieces back in the 19th & 20th centuries. Unquote. Who says we've lost the sense of wonder?

Ian R McAulay

A MELLOW FELLOW

FOR TWO LONG YEARS I WORKED IN BELFAST, living side by side with the natives and treating them as equals, with only an occasional week-end trip back to the gaiety and sub-tropical climate of the Republic of Ireland. During that time I did all the things a science-fiction fan in Ulster should do: I inspected the Great Charters Collection of brown paper parcels (he says all the parcels contain rare and valuable science-fiction magazines, but nobody has ever seen them); I played ghoddminton at Oblique House; I saw John Berry's typewriter; I tried unsuccessfully to outdrink Bob Shaw; and I was granted an audience with James White, Belfast's answer to Burroughs (William, not Edgar Rice).

However pleasant were these spare time activities, my main reason for being in Belfast was scientific. I was the physicist in a research team investigating the effect of environment on health. All of the others on the team were medical doctors, and some of them were involved simultaneously in other projects which they would discuss with the rest of us and occasionally bring us in to co-operate with them. It was in this way that I learned never to volunteer for anything.

It started with my door being hurled open, disturbing my pre-work perusal of The Guardian, and a colleague, Peter, whom I shall leave partially anonymous, rushing in and asking would I help out his project by acting as an experimental subject. After first making sure that his project didn't involve pre-frontal lobotomy or major amputation, I agreed. All I was required to do was to avoid drinking anything for the next 24 hours, after which my blood would be sampled every five minutes for a further two hours, about 0.5 cc of blood being removed every time. The clinching argument, apart of course from my desire to advance the cause of medical science, was that during the final two hour period I was to drink as much as possible of the liquid of my choice, which would be supplied free by the sponsors of the research project.

Peter brought ~~myself~~ and the seven other subjects to lunch and made a note of the various liquids he would need to have available the next day. One man wanted water, one orange squash, two tea and four beer, so there was a fair variety to assist in the evaluation of liquid intake capacity and its effect on blood levels.

It was a fairly thirsty bunch that presented itself at ten the next morning in the research lab. My tongue felt like a piece of loose linoleum as Peter stabbed my finger and vampired off his half cc of blood. A technician poured my first pint of best bitter and thirty seconds later I picked up my second one. By the time the second finger stab I was on my fourth pint, but slowing a little. Everyone was more or less neck and neck on the amount of liquid consumed, with the exception of the water drinker who had consumed ten glasses full.

Things progressed much as you might imagine for the first forty or fifty minutes; the beer drinkers became a little talkative and the water, tea and orange squash drinkers began to get a little green about the gills. Peter began to exhort everyone to drink more and faster but with less and less effect as the initial thirst was assuaged. Just about an hour after the start one of the tea drinkers clapped his hand to his mouth, slurped to the sink in the corner of the laboratory and disgorged about sixteen cupsworth of tea. The full horror of what we had all let ourselves in for penetrated to the rest of us when the unfortunate tea drinker returned white and shaking to his seat and Peter handed him another full cup of tea, saying, "Nobody can back out now or the statistics will be upset. Keep drinking."

The last twenty minutes or so was sheer agony, but I just managed to be one of the three who finished the experiment and kept down the liquid taken in. The way I felt, being in the other group couldn't have been any worse. Peter thanked us, and we staggered off, sloshing as we moved, to recuperate. I suppose Medical Research must have profited as the results of this epic were eventually published in some journal or other.

That evening there was a fun meeting at Bob Shaw's house, but I didn't feel equal to my usual three or four pints just to keep Bob company. In fact when I went home after the meeting I left a half bottle of beer undrunk behind my seat. Of course Bob finished it off when he found it, but he's wondered ever since why I couldn't finish it. Now he knows.

() () () () () () () () ()

Geo. L. Charters,
3, Lancaster Av.,
B A N G O R,
Northern Ireland.

From your letter of the 10th inst. I have received
the enclosed and have been very much interested
in the account of the various experiments which
you have made.

It was a long time before I was able to
make any experiments of my own, but I have
now made a few, and have found that the
results are very similar to those which
you have obtained. I have also found that
the results are very similar to those which
you have obtained.

I have also found that the results are
very similar to those which you have
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results are very similar to those which
you have obtained. I have also found that
the results are very similar to those which
you have obtained.

Yours very truly,
J. J. Thomson

Received of J. J. Thomson
the sum of £100
on the 10th day of
January 1906