

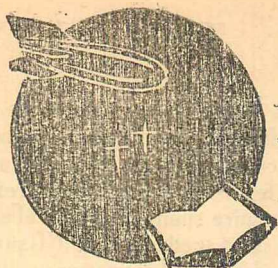
SLANT

A stylized, high-contrast illustration in a woodcut or linocut style. It depicts a person from the back, wearing large headphones, looking at a vintage television set. The television screen shows a cityscape with prominent spires, possibly a cathedral or a futuristic city, with a rainbow gradient overlaying the scene. The background is filled with various electronic components, circuitry, and mechanical parts, suggesting a theme of technology and media. The overall aesthetic is mid-20th-century modernism.

NO.
FOUR

1950
AUTUMN

NO.
4



AUTUMN
1950

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WOOD & LINO CUTS BY JAMES WHITE

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ON THE LEVEL

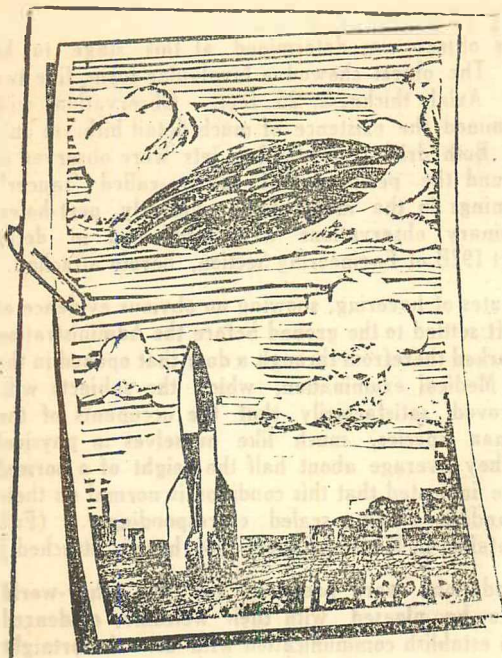
Well, here at last is the bumper issue we promised. (If it doesn't bump to your satisfaction we guarantee to refund your subscription on receipt of a dollar to cover postage, packing, and our confusion.) The delay was due to the lever of our printing press leaving us as we were finishing No.3, and to the nice summer, which allowed us to catch up on our cloudwatching during a short spell of gaffa. ('Gaffa', for the benefit of those miserable wretches who don't read 'Spacewarp', is a rapphrase for the occupational disease of fan editors, Getting Away From It All.) Silver linings were supplied by Messrs. Palmer and Wollheim, who bought SWORDS-MEN OF VARNIS (from SLANT 3) for OTHER WORLDS, and STILL SMALL VOICE (SLANT 2) for the AVON FANTASY READER. S of V saw republication in OW Sept., 1950. I should say here that another reprint from this magazine, 'Atomic Error', [SLANT 3 & OW July] first appeared in F.J. Ackerman's own SHANGRI-LA. We would have mentioned this at the time if we had known; and also that Evans' 'Revenge' was previously published by the redoubtable PEON.

The cover of this issue was produced by a means probably never used in publishing before. (And don't say you can understand why!) I don't know what to call it but it's mighty like a ruse. The multicoloured ink comes from the same firm that makes the striped paint. And by the way you won't be troubled any more by our over-inking woodcuts. We are now over-inking linocuts. Seriously, let us know what you think of the changeover, won't you? All the large illos in this issue are lino except the one on p.11.

The first story is a reject from [redacted] (Who is this guy Palmer anyway?) [redacted] commented: 'I am returning your yarn because of the flying saucer angle. Flying saucers do not appear to be too popular as an s-f theme right now. As this seems to be the case, I am forced to go very easy on the subject.' Ah well, we shall just have to risk losing a few thousand readers.

Next, an unusual little story by Ted Tubb, and then the too-logical mind of Geoffrey [Corn-of-the] Cobbe continues to have trouble with his heroes.

We were tempted to call Cedric Walker's story 'The Lost Lead'. You'll see why when you read it; and also perhaps why Cedric is one of the up-and-coming British authors. After S3 went out we had a nice letter from Ted Carnell, editor of NEW WORLDS, in which he said: 'I am prompted to write and say how much I enjoy reading the fiction in your magazine . . . I must congratulate your regular fan writers on the good quality material and ideas they produce, and I'm hoping that some of them will attempt [Sorry about these 'continueds' but would you mind turning to p.9]



OFFICIAL REPORT

MANLY
BANISTER

Classification: TOP SECRET
From: The Commanding Officer, Project Saucer
To: The Commanding General, XVth Corps Area.
Via: CO, Rocket Experimental Base.
Subject: Landing of aerial object hitherto referred to
as 'Flying Saucer', investigation and report.
Reference: Ltr of Instr 319C. CGO.Gen Reg XVIII, 2/C/Y 32.

1. Object first sighted over Experimental Rocket Range, Project Headquarters, eight hours, morning. Weather clear, sunny. Visibility excellent. Our radar screens picked up object at altitude 50,000 feet, azimuth 30 miles. Teleikonoscope tracking instruments were brought to bear. Velocity determined at 300 miles per hour, negative acceleration, angle of dive 15 degrees. The object halted at altitude 2000 feet, directly above the headquarters building, and hovered there fifteen minutes. A light east wind was blowing; ground speed ten miles per hour.

2. Diameter of the object was determined at this stage to be approximately 100 feet. The object showed a bivalvular form, like two saucers faced together. Axial thickness, 25 feet. Observation with optical instruments determined the existence of much detail hitherto only guessed at or assumed. Both drive and steering jets were observed in considerable number around the periphery of the so-called 'saucer', while many circular openings in the metal hull, evidently port-holes, were observed. Preliminary observations were confirmed in detail later, for which see report 192B of Engineering Section, hereto attached.

3. After fifteen minutes of hovering, showing no obvious evidence of hostility, the unknown craft settled to the ground before the Administration Building. Six men disembarked therefrom through a door that opened in the lower part of the hull. Medical examination, which the subjects willingly underwent, has proved satisfactorily that the occupants of the 'Saucer' are of the human species, much like ourselves in physical constitution, except that they average about half the height of a normal human being. They have indicated that this condition is normal on their own world, their fauna and flora being scaled correspondingly. (Full medical particulars are detailed in Medical Report 148c hereto attached.)

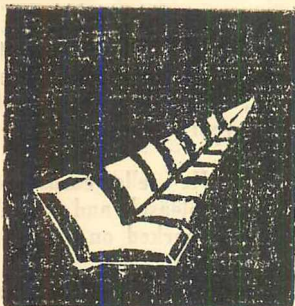
4. Proper accommodations were prepared for the other-world denizens, who appeared to be pleased with their welcome, evidenced friendliness and anxiety to establish communication with us. A fortnight spent at this has progressed us rapidly in the establishment of a common ground of understanding.

5. The Psychological Section is now preparing a full and lengthy report of all information gleaned from the diminutive strangers. This report will follow the present report within two or three days.

6. Specific information has so far been obtained to the effect that the flying saucers are actually space craft, vessels designed to navigate the distances between the stars, and that their port of origin is located on a planet in a solar system about 8 light-years removed from us. We have determined the identity of this sun, according to our stellar charts, as G-XVII-324c, a small, yellowish sun, enumerated as here given in accordance with the Brodan catalogue of stellar bodies. This sun is of a spectral type similar to our own, possesses nine planets, one of which was originally inhabited, the other two having been colonised in the last 500 years.

7. Further information has revealed that our solar system

[continued on page 26]



THE LAST WORD

E. C. TUBB

At first it was annoying rather than anything else. He forgot a word. A simple thing, it could happen to anyone and it happened to him.

He would have thought nothing of it but for the circumstances accompanying the loss. He had been arguing. Tempers had run high and ideas had become involved. He had cornered his opponent and just as he was stating the final step of logic that would clinch his case, he forgot a word. He fumbled, strove to remember, hesitated, and lost the argument.

He brooded about it on the way home.

'Strange,' he thought. 'Now why should I forget that word? I knew it. I know it now. It was . . . ?' He sat very still for he did not know it now. In fact he never knew it again.

Time passed and his friends noticed nothing. He did not argue as once he had done, but they were relieved rather than puzzled by this. He took to carrying a small book about with him, a dictionary it was, and he studied it at all manner of odd moments. He could read it. He could even understand it, but he could not remember what he read, not even the word his eye had just passed over.

Still he forgot words. Not all at once, and only the more difficult ones at first, but he forgot them, and could not relearn them. Secretly he grew afraid. He began to hold examinations with himself in the still of night. He would lie awake and question himself for hours on end asking himself. 'What word means lying flat on one's back?' or 'What word means a nice view?'

He began to do the children's crosswords in the paper instead of the difficult ones he had liked. His work began to suffer. He lost his job in the end, he had been a hotel receptionist. They had to

ask him to go when he took to looking up words in his dictionary, the tenants complained, they thought that he was insulting them.

He drifted into simpler jobs, jobs in which he did not have to talk, jobs he could do with his back and hands instead of his head and brain. And all the time, steadily, evenly, relentlessly, he forgot. A word a day, three hundred and sixty five a year. He had had a full vocabulary, it took a long time.

He sits on the bridge at Westminster now. He sells cards and cheap souvenirs of London. He still can say 'please' and 'thank you', and a few other words. His prices are marked on cards, a friend did them for him.

He seems quite content but sometimes there is a naked look of horror on his face. At such times he is thinking with the few shredded thoughts left to him. He is thinking of a lost word and what it can lead to, and sometimes he thinks of the last word, and which one it will be.



THE 'GOOD OLD DAYS'

'A dark shape, slithering upon lurching tentacles, came from the lower ramp. In the edge of a tentacle fold a gleam of metallic tin appeared . . . The xanthic eyes fixed upon the terrestrials and a tiny, fanned-shaped orifice in the base of the pyramidal head opened to emit guttural speech.'

'Denizens of Zeron.' J. H. Haggard, ASF 1937, Jan.

THE DIABOLICAL DRUG, by Clare Winger Harris

'One drop was all that he intended to inject, but when Nap felt the prick of the needle, he leapt wildly into the air, and before Edgar could withdraw the instrument, Nap had in his veins about ten drops. After a dazed second or two, Edgar thought the cat had disappeared, but upon close observation, he perceived a faint gray streak near the floor moving with almost lightning-like rapidity around the room. Finally the streak

[continued on page 26]

BLACK BART'S REVENGE

A SAGA OF THE SPACEWAYS

by

GEOFFREY COBBE

Buck Corrigan stood in the observation dome of the spaceliner POLARIS with one arm round the slender waist of the beautiful Topaz Lorraine and gazed at the twinkling green star.

'Gee, honey,' he sighed, 'that little old Earth sure looks swell.'

Her soft voice was husky with emotion as she answered him.

'Our Earth, Buck darling. Our home.' She laid her lovely dark head on his manly chest and looked up at him with shining eyes.

Suddenly they were thrown to the deck by a sudden change of course. They looked up, startled. There, blotting out the stars, hung a sinister black ship, squat and menacing like some terrible bird of prey. In huge black letters on its bows was the name BLACK BART.

Buck's steely grey eyes widened. 'The most ruthless pirate in the Solar System,' he breathed. His rugged jaw set in determination. 'We have come to grips at last.'

'Oh Buck!' she murmured, 'I'm frightened for you. Be careful, darling. I love you so much.'

Buck gave her a boyish grin. 'Me too,' he murmured. His eyes narrowed and his hands went to the bu'ts of his twin De Lammeters. 'It's Black Bart who'll have to be careful,' he gritted.

Suddenly a harsh sinister voice barked from the ship's loudspeakers. 'I order you to heave to at once. It is useless to resist, for my deadly Z ray is trained upon you. I have only to touch a button and your brains will explode!' The pirate laughed horribly. 'At least it will be a quick death.'

Pandemonium began to rain on the POLARIS as her passengers felt her begin to decelerate.

'Don't worry honey,' said Buck with a boyish grin, as the durasteel door of their prison clanged shut. 'I had to get captured. Once aboard this hellship I know I can outwit the devil who commands her. The cell hasn't been built that can hold Buck Corrigan. Look, they took away my twin De Lammeters, but overlooked this slim but deadly needle gun hidden in my shoulder pad.'

'Oh Buck,' breathed Topaz, clinging to his manly chest, 'You're marvellous.'

'Aw shucks,' he murmured modestly, 'any red-blooded he-man with courage and genius would have done the same. Now, see,' he went on, 'a small but vital adjustment to the squagging coil of this atomic cigarette lighter, which I had concealed in my pocket, turns it into a tiny but efficient torch. Watch.'

The tough metal around the door lock began to hiss and flow, and in a moment Buck stepped stealthily into the corridor. With an easy cat-like grace he crept along the passage and through a bulkhead door, where he was expertly tapped on the base of the skull by a black-suited pirate wielding a rubber truncheon.

When the black mists swirled away from his aching head he found himself with Topaz on the bridge of the cruiser, surrounded by two of Black Bart's husky crew. They stared in horror and fascination at the huge man slumped in the captain's chair.

Cruel black eyes that glittered evilly from under bushy black brows: a matted black beard and a tousled mane of black hair; a massive chest tufted with coarse black hair, revealed by the soiled open-necked tunic. Black Bart himself!

Buck Corrigan stared at him coldly, defiance in every line of his proud features, lips curled in contempt.

'The end is near for you, you filthy pirate,' he gritted.

'The end is near for you, you miserable upstart,' grated Black Bart with a foul oath. 'Gunnery! Break out No. 1. torpedo turret. I'm going,' he explained, with a bectial grin, 'to fire you into space.'

Pale in spite of himself, Buck thought with desperate speed. He whispered to Topaz. 'Even now units of the Interplanetary Police are closing in on the ship, alerted and guided by the tiny but powerful transmitter hidden in the heel of my space boot. If I can keep Black Bart talking for ten minutes the I.P. will bring relief.'

'I'm not afraid of death, you swine,' he said, striving to keep his voice steady. 'But before I die tell me the secret of your impossible career. Two years ago you kidnapped the Empress Ming on Venus and simultaneously held up Governor Rankin's spacer near Jupiter. Six months later you carried out no less than four daring coups at the same time . . .'

'Maybe I'm quads,' growled Black Bart, examining his finger nails, which were very dirty, 'Put him in the torpedo tube.'

Buck began to struggle. 'But you MUST tell me,' he yelled. 'The hero always stalls the villain until help . . .'. His voice was cut off by the hollow clang as the breach slammed shut.

Black Bart turned to Topaz and drew her towards him. 'I'll do my best to see you're not . . . lonely, my dear,' he leered through his beard.

She ran one hand down his huge chest. 'I'll bet you will . . . Blackie.'

'Gunnery!' she called, 'Fire number one torpedo turret!'

[ON THE LEVEL, continued.] writing stories from 4,000 words and upwards and submit them to myself.' We passed this invitation on to all our authors, and soon a longish story by Cedric was accepted for NEW WORLDS: curiously enough, it's the sequel to a yarn called 'The Guinea Pig,' bought almost simultaneously for the shortly-to-be-revived MARVEL. (And placed, as were the reprints from SLANT, by Forrest J. Ackerman.) I haven't seen the sequel but I remember that the first story was very good, though unfortunately too long for SLANT. It will probably be in the new MARVEL's first issue, so look out for it.

Ken Bulmer's story this time is in the E.E.Smith tradition: quite a change from his last, which many thought reminiscent of UNKNOWN. No comments from fellow-purists please about James' chessboard being the wrong way round. Us non-combatants are naturally seeing it SIDEWAYS. (Oh happy afterthought.)

Last, but only because that's when it arrived, is Clive Jackson's first serious story, THE ENEMY. I hope you won't be too tired after working your way as far as page 27 to give this story the attention it deserves. I'm not going to prophesy that it will follow Clive's previous stories into the prozines, but I do think you will find it memorable.

Noticing the success of Boggs, Laney, etc. in keeping SPACEWARP such a stimulating fanzine, we have decided to flatter Rapp in the sincerest way possible. So, taking cover behind our editorial neutrality, we innocent bystanders present SLANT's first independent columnist.

We had hoped to run another column, by that interesting personality known variously as John Edmiston and John Blyler, who I noticed in AMAZING characteristically described his MAKHZAN as a 'dirty old beat-up kind of an issue, absolutely no good and not worth a cent of anybody's money.' It seems that Phillips had lost his copy, but he'll never find it from that description. The one I got was quite fascinating, though so small that you would need a geiger counter to find it among a heap of ordinary fanzines. (Thought: who wants to count geigers anyway?) I doubt if there has been a next issue. One of its main features was to have been a report on the sex life of the adult hamster, which would have been of considerable interest if only because there was only one hamster for observation. But I understand that the wretched creature has 'worn himself to a frazzle'; and apparently frazzles have no sex life worth talking about. This news will be a great disappointment to all fans and particularly to those of us who happen to be hamsters: to soften the blow I am happy to be able to quote a few words by the Dr. Kinsey of the hamster world on a less delicate if less wildly exciting subject;

'... this gentleman Geoffrey Cobbe does the kind of thing I like to read. I was extremely happy when the Swordsman did what he did. Many times have I wished to see certain stories brought to their abrupt and logical

end right at the most thrilling part of the climax . . . there were times when I became so disgusted with the stupidity of hero John Carter in not recognising his own son for chapter after chapter that I wished for the son to goose him with one of his own dammed swords and have an end to it all . . . A very intelligently written letter by G.C. Banks. No believer in Shaverism could possibly write one as intelligently. If there is anything I dislike it is cheap pornography. Give me the classical pornography every time. However I like to 'insult the intelligence' of every 'serious-minded lover' of anything. Anyone who can seriously love anything, except people, deserves to have his/her intelligence 'insulted' . . . I challenge Mr. Banks to show that intelligence is something that can be insulted. Like many other fans, I too have read PART OF Science and Fantasy.

And with that we begin and end the comments on our last issue. Even if we had space for more I guess most people have forgotten all about it by now. So I'll just mention that the most-liked stories seem to have been: 1. Swordsman of Varnis, by 'Geoffrey Cobbe' (Clive Jackson). 2. Last Wish, by Ken Bulmer. 3. Strictly Logical, by Cedric Walker.

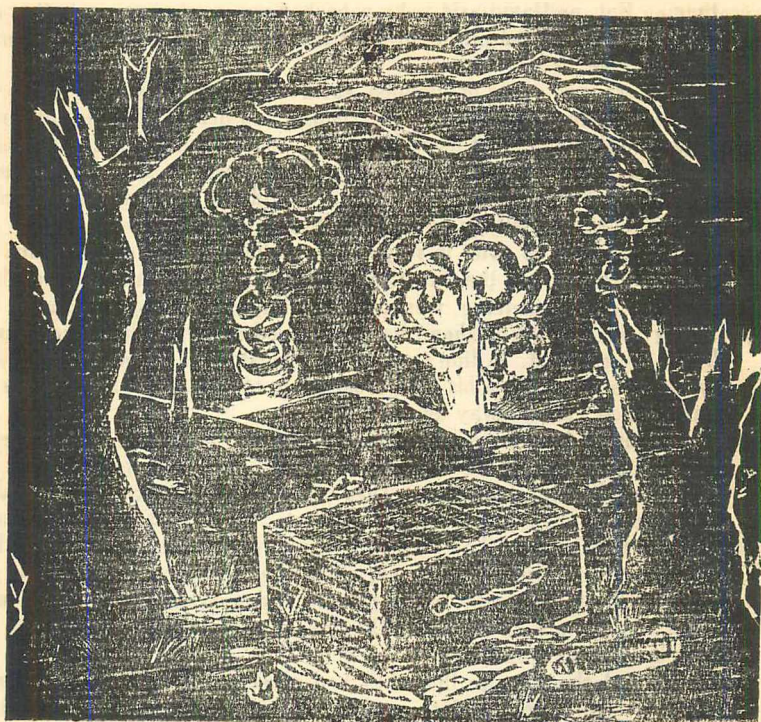
We hope to make better time with No. 5. In fact we have part of it in print already, a clever little yarn by Peter Ridley held over from this issue only because our stapler couldn't cope with 4 extra pages, and his story was the only one which just filled that many.

One last word. Unless you have been a fan editor yourself you will never realise how much they depend on readers' comments: fanzines can exist without profits, but comment is their breath of life. So won't you please write and say what you think of this issue, even if it's only to grade the stories as you liked or disliked them? SLAINTE! [ctd. from p2.]

LESSER KNOWN FANTASY [II]

'The hero awakens one morning to find that he is under arrest, without having done anything to deserve it. He is called before certain curious tribunals, of whose purpose and competence he is quite ignorant. He engages advocates whose status he cannot discover, seeks the advice of experts who really know nothing about the case; indeed nobody knows, except by hearsay. He cannot discover what his offence was, nor if his trial has any hope of a reasonable end. He is told there are only three courses he can follow: ask for his case to be lingered out as long as possible, so that the verdict may be indefinitely delayed; sue for 'ostensible pardon,' which is easy to win but lasts only for a short time, after which he will be arrested again; or demand real pardon, of which nothing is known, except in ancient history.'

I haven't left myself much space to talk about Kafka, but this synopsis of 'The Trial' will bring out the point I was going to make: that surely Van Vogt has been influenced by him? The stories of both authors seem to me to have the same type of imaginative force and bewildering fascination.



THEIR DAY

CEDRIC WALKER

They first saw the dogs three days after the local Blowup which destroyed their home and threw them out into the scarred land. It would have destroyed them too but for the fact that they happened to be in a hollow some miles away eating their lunch and thus missed the main force of the

blast. Strange time for a picnic with the world falling to pieces around them. But, as David said, why not when you never knew whether it was going to be your last picnic, or your last day, for that matter. There was nothing else to do.

There was a pile of tumbled earth and cement lying in a depression where the house had been. The house had been pulled violently up like some giant's tooth from its socket. The woods around were flattened as if something huge had rolled over them. They stared in silence for a moment then Sheila began to cry very softly. David put his arm round her. He wanted to say something but he didn't know what to say.

There was no point in staying. He pulled his wife away gently. They turned their steps in the direction of the main road. A few paces then he realized that something was missing. Bayard. He looked back. It was sitting with its back to them, its nose turned towards where the house had been. He called it. It didn't move. He repeated the command more sharply. It came trotting to his side, looking up at him. He fondled one of its ears. 'Don't stray away again.'

They had examined their bodies minutely but so far there were no signs of anything, no burns, no spots at all. And they felt all right themselves, no feeling of lassitude. They seemed to have escaped the radiation while getting their full share of the blast. David felt there was a good chance that the town had survived. It was only fifteen miles away, less as the crow flies. Quite a big town, almost two thousand people. One of the biggest left in the world, he supposed. A dangerous spot to live near, yet what was the use of running? The days of running away were over. With luck they should reach it in a few hours.

It took them longer than they had expected. Every so often they had piles of debris to negotiate, and in some places the road was made completely impassable by mounds of trees, and they had to make long and tiring detours down slopes and across ditches. There was no hint of life. There were, or had been, a few cottages scattered along the roadside but they saw no signs of these, and didn't know where to look for them since all the familiar landmarks had gone. Once they lost the road altogether.

Late in the afternoon David called a halt. They sat on the grass verge with their backs against a tree-trunk. He took off his wife's shoes and began to massage her feet methodically. He'd noticed she had begun to limp a little. The light sandals were not made for such rough wear. Afterwards they ate a little. Sheila had stocked the hamper well. Food was quite plentiful as yet. There weren't many people to eat it. But they had to be careful, until they knew about the town.

They lay for a time on their backs, saying nothing. They let the hot August sun burn their faces. They drank in the blueness of

the sky. Empty of cloud. Empty. The peacefulness of the earth around them. The silence. The emptiness and the silence where birds should have specked the blueness and a myriad earthy sounds shattered the stillness.

They came to their feet simultaneously, looking at each other with horror in their eyes. 'We'll have to keep going if we want to reach the town before dark' David said. She nodded without saying anything, though she knew that despite the state of the road they would make it easily before the long summer evening came to an end. The terrier, reluctantly dragged from its doze, trailed behind them.

They found the first bodies in a field on the outskirts of the town. A young boy and girl, lying with their arms entwined. They didn't appear to have suffered much. Their faces were still gentle, just as they had been looking at each other at the end, and there were no marks or burns on their bodies. David was glad about that, somehow, though it made no difference.

At first glance the town seemed to have suffered little. Only here and there was there a collapsed wall or a shattered roof. David entered the first house they came to. A few seconds later he reappeared, his face devoid of expression. 'Dead' he said briefly 'All dead.'

They passed on. Behind them Bayard trotted into the house then came out, his tail wagging indifferently.

The rest of the town was the same except that some of the people had been standing near their gates chatting or walking down the streets when death had greeted them. They lay in grotesque heaps, some with expressions like those of the boy and girl in the field. Others were more gruesome, and some had lost all semblance to humanity. But apart from an occasional shudder Sheila gave no sign. One got used even to things like this.

After a time Bayard gave up following the two and went off on his own course, dashing in and out of houses, rooting around gardens with an air of resolute urgency unusual in a dog of his placid nature. He gave an effect of searching . . .

After a time the two humans gave it up. There was a fairly steep hill not far from the town, and David suggested they climb it and see what was to be seen. There surely must be someone left alive somewhere: they couldn't all have perished.

They started off. 'Where's Bayard?' said Sheila. She called his name. David whistled. There was no response. 'He'll be all right,' said David, 'We'll pick him up later on.'

They reached the top, panting. In silence they looked around. Then Sheila sat down suddenly, woodenly, like a puppet whose legs had given way, and buried her face in her hands. Her body shook but she made no sound. David lifted a hand and let it drop back

to his side helplessly.

The girl took out a handkerchief and blew her nose. Her eyes were quite dry. She said, 'Is there anyone left in the world?'

'Don't be silly, dear! Of course there are, there must be many like us.' 'Is it the end?'

He came and stood beside her and fondled the blonde curls dangling untidily over her temples. 'You musn't speak like that, Sheila darling. Man has got himself into a mess, but he'll get out of it, one day. He'll rise again like he has before. There have been Dark Ages before. Maybe this time things will be different, better. Maybe the ones who are left will make a better job.'

He felt confidence swinging back to him as he spoke. Yes, Mankind would rise again. He felt his back stiffen almost involuntarily. His wife's voice brought him back to earth.

'What?' he said.

She pointed. 'There. Can't you see?' She jumped to her feet and clung to his arm in her excitement. People! Thank Heaven they weren't alone! They gazed with shining eyes.

'Why, they're only . . . dogs. Dogs', the man repeated lamely.

She tried to hide her disappointment. 'How many do you make?'

Pause. 'Twelve . . . no, thirteen.'

'Might as well have a look. Where there are dogs . . .'

When they got a little nearer Sheila gave a cry of surprise. 'Why, look! Bayard's amongst them! Here, boy. Here! Bay-a-a-ard!'

'Why are they sitting around like that?' said David. 'What are they doing? I've never seen dogs behaving like that before.'

The dogs, all shapes and sizes, were arranged in a neat circle, and in the middle sat a large collie. Amongst them was Bayard. At his mistress' call he turned his head reluctantly but made no move to approach. Apart from a few growls the rest of the dogs ignored the two humans.

'Come here at once, you bad dog,' said Sheila, 'Come here . . .'

Her voice trailed off falteringly. She clutched the man's arm.

'What is wrong with him? Why does he not come?'

David held her tight, stifling her hysteria. He called the dog again, harshly. There was a breathless pause, then Bayard slowly got to his feet and ambled over to them. As he did so the collie turned its head with great dignity and gave them a brief glance full of disdain.

'Let's get out of this,' said David.

When they awoke the following day Bayard was gone. The man stood up, anger in his eyes. 'We know where to find him, anyway.'

'Don't go,' said Sheila.

'Silly!'

'Don't go. . . . I'm afraid.'

'Of a lot of dogs? Ridiculous.'

'Then I'm coming with you.'

At the top of the hill they both gasped in amazement, 'Why! There must be hundreds of them!' the girl said. The man felt a cold hand tighten round his heart. He didn't look at his wife. He didn't need to. He knew that he would see in her eyes the same dawning of understanding that now swept like fire through his brain. He remembered what he had told his wife yesterday and he gave a hoarse chuckle. It made a sound like the hand of death scratching at the window-pane. The wildness of the thought sobered him instantly. 'Come on!' he said.

They approached the circle of dogs. The outer circle now contained a smaller circle, comprised, David noticed, of the original dozen dogs of yesterday, among them Bayard, and in the centre as before the collie.

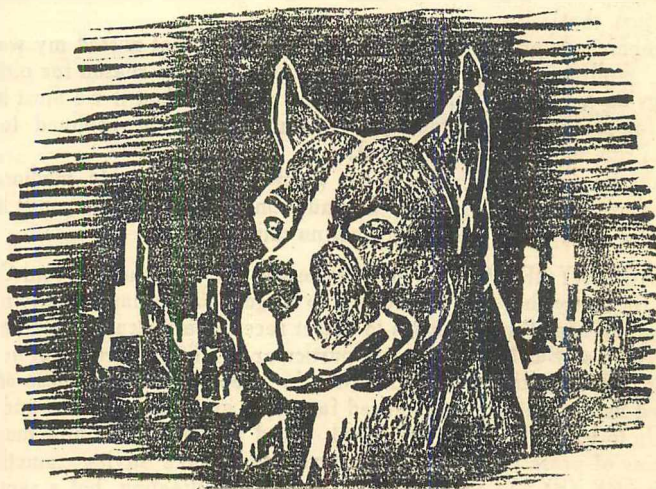
The man's steps slowed. On the verge of the outer circle he paused and called the dog's name. Bayard didn't even move.

The collie turned its head and looked straight at David, and there was no mistaking the expression of unutterable boredom on its face. It held his gaze for a time then turned and shot a quick glance in Bayard's direction.

Bayard rose at once and ambled slowly over to the two humans. A yard from them he stopped and looked up. He looked first at the man then at the woman, then he shook his head.

There was no mistaking the compassion in his eyes.

Then he turned his back on them and regained his place in the circle.



COMMENT

BY CLIVE JACKSON

CHEWING THE CRUD. An issue of SPACEWARP passed through my hands some time ago. While it was passing I caught a glimpse of some words of wisdom by one Redd Boggs. If I had a name like that I'd quietly change it by deed poll, wouldn't you?

It seems that Mr. Boggs is incensed by fanzines that print fiction, the elegant NEKROMANTIKON in particular. He prefers articles. Fair enough, but if his own article is representative of the whole, I don't. Let us indulge in a quiet spot of vivisection.

After being very harsh with Mr. Banister's excellent production he passes on to tell us that he recently received a chain letter of standard content. We are then treated to his views on some anti-Catholic propaganda sent to him by the Puritan Church, and to a description of his extraordinarily childish method of 'hitting back.' (Being neither a Catholic nor a Puritan I've no interest in either side of the question. Nor am I a Moslem, Buddhist, Koscirucian, or Seventh Day Adventist, come to that. I'm what might be described as a person found wandering without any invisible means of support.)

Then we get some 'Forgettable Facts.' Believe you me, friends, they're just that!

Ploughing determinedly on, we come to 'Notes that missed my waste-basket.' Well now, if you can't throw straight I see no reason for picking the things up again. Let 'em lie, Redd, let 'em lie! And if we must have adverts for Messrs. E.P. Dutton's publications, let them be confined to self-titles. 'Pride and Prejudice' indeed!

In the final paragraph Mr. Boggs seems to rocket up to mediocrity, but that was written by one John E. Anderson. Sorry, Redd, you'll have to do better than that! And next time, no split infinitives, eh?

THE BRADBURY EFFECT. Some people worship the Martian from California so fervently that they're inclined to forget that he has a pretty nasty mind too. Or had, for one seems to detect recently a welcome breaking-in of cheerfulness. But I'm thinking in particular of a little collection of nerve-wreckers under the title DARK CARNIVAL. Reading some of these one is fascinated as by a horribly disfigured face or a grotesque dwarf, and it's impossible to leave the story unfinished. And yet one of the most memorable pieces of prose in modern literature, and that's saying something occurs in THE NEXT IN LINE. Almost physically nauseating, but a remark

able piece of writing. How does he do it?

I think Bradbury's style depends on understatement for its effect rather than on powerful descriptive passages, and he often links a succession of quick phrases or single staccato words together with conjunctions in order to carry the mind forward with a sudden rush to some climax. This 'flat dimension of speech' is common to many American authors: in fact it is the American idiom.

Personally I like it. I think it's a very good form for s-f, if only because one can make one's puppets live without going too deeply into their emotions and mental struggles, which must tend to give them a present-day characterisation. It seems to me that to give persons engaged in interstellar travel the same character-structure as mid-twentieth century people is all wrong, yet it's constantly being done. Many of Dr. Smith's All-American half-backs would be more at home fighting Indians with Winchester repeaters than they are chasing Boskonians with Lenses.

[These views on the great Smith are not those of the typesetter, J. White.]

HOLLYWOOD ON THE MOON (AND MARS) Being something of an addict of the cinema, that well-upholstered dispensary for the drug of dreams, I've been waiting with bated breath for the appearance of **DESTINATION MOON**. But **HORROR!** What is this? I learn that a cheapjack production called 'Rocketship XM' or 'Expedition Moon' has been rushed out to cash in on DM's publicity. Apparently it is a 24-carat stinker. This is an extraordinarily dirty trick, even for Hollywood, the dirtiest I have heard of since RKO bought up and destroyed all the copies of the fine French film **LE JOUR SE LEVE** because it showed up their inferior remake. One feels like doing something about things like this, but what? One can of course urge the public to stay away in droves, but what's the use? The distributors would just assume that s-f films were a dead loss, and the producer, one **ROBERT LIPPERT**, will make his profit anyway, seeing that this kiddie cost him only 150,000 dollars and ten days time. (Evidently it looks it: I quote Miss Dilys Powell, Sunday Times.)

. . . The party are fortunate to get anywhere, and they know it. Luckily the leader happens to be looking out of the window when a large cardboard globe, slightly mouse-eaten, floats into view. He recognises it at once, 'Our most congenial planetary neighbour, Mars!' he exclaims; and another savant echoes the cry: 'Well, Mars, whaddya know!' The terrain, which appears to consist entirely of stalagmites, is judged suitable for landing; the rocketship, which a moment ago was travelling at 25,000 miles an hour, bumps to earth, or rather Mars, and the party alights in gasmasks. Mars turns out to be just like Arizona, only mauve, and equipped with an invisible orchestra performing on saws. . . .

And so on, with hideous inevitability, to Martian cavewomen wearing sarongs. Most of the other reviews are in tones of tolerant resignation, and seem to indicate that the critics, and presumably the public, were ready to welcome a serious film about interplanetary flight. The damage this film will do to the chances of *DESTINATION MOON* is incalculable. I suppose it was inevitable that s-f films should come to be classified by the public as trash, just as the prozines are, because the worthwhile productions will be lost from view under the usual pile of rubbish. But if DM had had a fair chance we might have seen some more of such honest work. I should have loved to see just one of Dr. Smith's space operas on celluloid, if only to find how they conveyed to the average audience that the Lensmen were about to sling a contra-terrene planet at the enemy through a hyperspatial tube!

SEX AND PARSECS. I came across a few notes the other day by one Ing. Guido von Pirquet about a little thing which seems to put the kybosh (whatever that is) on normal methods of interstellar travel. Numerous little things in fact, cosmic dust motes. A ship travelling at one third light speed would receive 3 hits a second serious enough to damage the hull. So it looks like spacewarps or nothing! I thought I had better mention this in case any of the readers of *SLANT* are surreptitiously building interstellar ships.

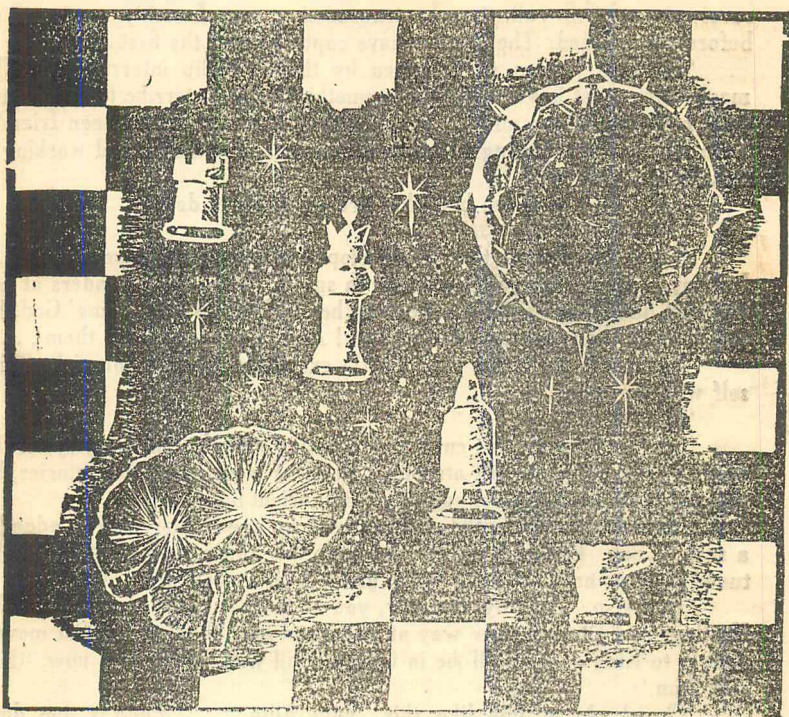
But I'm afraid I see another barrier to our reaching the stars. Did it ever occur to you that possibly the most important fact in the world is that mental activity inhibits sexual potency, an influence which will always tend to lower the IQ of the race? Not to mention that the intelligentsia practise birth control, so the intellectuals of the future are 'condomed' to death before they are born. Between dense motes and dense mites the outlook is grim: sometimes I feel like developing the nova effect and committing race suicide! But sometimes I think there must be counter-influences working for the race. Are oysters, wine and highbrow pornography saving mankind?

NO MORTGAGE ON A COFFIN. In closing I must say that if anyone is entertaining notions of homicide as a result of this column I am protected by an impenetrable screen of Mr. Cobbe's Z rays. I'll have to think up some other defence against Mr Boggs: if his brain exploded he probably wouldn't notice.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE OF 'SPACEMATE.'

White King	played by	Phillip Crown
White Queen	' '	Alita Crown
White Rook	' '	Turtle Delmar
White Bishop	' '	Jim Hastings
White Knight	' '	John Knight

Action takes place on Earth. Thought action takes place on Earth, Pluto, in Space and on a Vegan moon.



SPACEMATE

H. KEN BULMER

Philip Crown was shaving himself on Earth when John Knight's call came through from Pluto. Unhurriedly continuing his shave, he opened his mind and allowed the thought from Pluto to enter.

'Philip, they've got Alita!'

'Got her? What do you mean, got her?'

'I mean got her, physically.' Knight's thought was almost frantic. 'I

received an S.O.S. call, thought transmission was horribly weak and cut before she finished. The Vegans have captured her, the first . . .'

'The first human to be taken by them,' Philip interrupted. 'That means they must have developed something pretty terrific to overcome a fully matured human mind. We've played ball with them, been friendly, even done a little trading. They must have been planning and working on this thing for years.'

'Yes, that's obvious; but what are we going to do?'

'Get her back.'

'But if this weapon they've developed can nullify a human mind . . . I always disliked her gadding about in space. 'Seeing the wonders of nature first hand' she called it. 'Keeping her body from atrophying' God, her ship'll be in their tightest clink by now! And so we can't blast them . . .'

'No, we'll have to . . . blast!' exclaimed Philip as he nicked himself with the razor.

'Do WHAT!'

'Sorry, nothing. Just cut myself shaving. Maybe that's my system for ensuring my body doesn't atrophy. None of your fancy depilatories, but shaving with a micro-steel edge like the ancient boys.'

'Micro-steel edge nothing. They used an open razor with an edge like a saw. Look, Philip, if the Vegans have this thing of theirs it's probably tuned in to us now. Pluto to Earth gives them a good wide coverage.'

'That's so. Say, by the way, you know that game of chess that Jim Hastings and I have under way at the moment? Well, my latest move is Knight to King one. He'll be in Central Hall waiting for me now, this'll slay him.'

'Chess! At a time like this, with Ailita . . . Pluto is too damn cold anyway.'

Philip cut off from Knight and, wiping his face with a paper towel, called Jim Hastings and 'Turtle' Delmar. On a three way hook-up he sketched the position, finishing as he clambered into his gyro-car. It took him half an hour to thread the villa-dotted parkland to Central Hall. He raced four at a time up the steps.

'Why the hurry?' came an anxious thought.

'No hurry, Jim, just exercise.' Philip strolled into the vast library and shook hands vigorously.

'Exercise!' wheezed Turtle Delmar round a fat cigar. 'It will be the death of you yet.'

'Not exercise; but these Vegans might. What they have is a complete unknown. They could be eavesdropping on us now, so any plans we might make would be nullified before we had finished thinking.'

'John knows nothing more?' enquired Hastings.

'Nothing. Blank, Jim,' said Philip seriously. 'Ready? Right, Knight to King one.'

'That's a stormer of a move,' boomed a hearty voice and John Knight strode serenely into the library. 'How you hounds can play chess without cheating beats me.' Knight did not appear the panicked individual of the Pluto call.

'Just a matter of will-power, John,' smiled Philip. 'Shall we commence business, gentleman? You all know the importance of this operation. The Vegans have captured Alita, are holding her somewhere on their system. We can't blast until she's out: so we must liquidate the minds of the Vegans. We can't do that until we know what their new weapon is, or of what it is capable. That's assuming that we CAN extrapolate from the fact



that they've snatched an adult human. On the face of it, that's the final bell, all they need to do now is to come in swinging. But we must extricate Alita . . . I use that word in preference to rescue . . . first. The Vegans are still scared of what we can do, but we must box crafty. The Vegan weapon is an unknown. Jim?

'Bishop to Queen's Bishop seven.' The tone was more one of enquiry than statement.

'Mmm,' Philip mused, 'That's a strong move . . .'

'You and your paltering chess!' Turtle's forthright voice was strong

with indignation. 'If you must play the blessed game, Rook to King eight strikes me as the best move.' Turtle wheezed a lungful of smoke. 'I suppose you realise that Alita is rotting in chains in some foul dungeon?'

'Can I forget it?' Philip's face shadowed. 'Anyway, Rook to King eight is a rotten move, he would be blasted before he landed.'

With a decisive snap of his fingers he said: 'The frontal bluntness of a Rook is useless here. If the Church will pardon, Episcopal diplomacy is needed. Bishop's move it is; but he'll have to watch the diagonal from Queen's Knight eight.'

Leisurely, Hastings stood up and said: 'Excuse me a moment, boys, be back directly.' He strolled casually from the library.

'Diplomacy!' snorted Turtle. He glared after Hastings. 'Fiddle, cunning or graft, I call it.' Bitterly he decapitated a fresh cigar and the three lay back comfortably in their armchairs.

Three hours passed before a thought brought them upright.

'Bishop to Queen's Bishop seven, that's a black square, yes?'

'That's right, Jim,' answered Philip. 'How black is it?'

'As the Duke of Hell's riding boots.'

'Well, I daresay the old boy could do with a bit of spit and polish. Is that check?'

'Check it is. I'll risk telling you the awful secrets of my chequered career, if you care to listen.'

'We'd be charmed. Any pawns in the district?'

'The three ball boys are all missing. Better get this on a tape, my public would never forgive me if I checked out before checking it in.'

Philip passed a hand across his eyes. 'O.K. Jim, shoot the sordid details. Take care, and luck, boy,' he finished softly.

'Luck, Lady Luck, now she's a chancy miss. She kept me poor, but free from Black Kings, I was always scared of them. Even as a child I can remember seeing out of the nursery window a pitted ball covered with row on row of small, domed excrescences. Lunatic, they said I was. I could never do sums in my head, always had to use a computing machine; it's funny, but one day I had the notion that all these little domes were full of adding machines, all joined up. Think of that! All those little cells working busily away, all their output concentrated into one telescope; at least it looks, looked, like a 'scape. It seemed to swing right at me, big as a blunderbuss. I think the Black King has twigged . . .

The thought in the three Earth minds blasted in, clear and keen, rising to a crescendo of passionate power.

'Don't you see it? Millions of mechanical cells, each a complete unit, all coupled together to form a master mind . . . and it is a master mind! Every cell a human mind duplicated, and increased, swamping by very mass! It covers half a moon! This is it, chaps, Bishop's move into the

pawnshop

In the quiet library on Earth three men caught the chill despair that throbbed with the speed of thought from far Vega. They knew that the Vegans' mighty mechanical brain, a mechanical mind that had been specifically designed to batter down any human mind by sheer mass, by cell multiplication over the cell capacity of man's brain, they knew that that insentient but sensitive colossus had also picked up that thread of despair.

Which was a Grade A gambit.

'O.K. Jim, Bishop's move fine, open up. Knight, Rook, King: Horse, foot and guns coming in!'

Star dappled space looked imperturbably on, noted nothing amiss, as four minds linked as one and one single stream of pure thought flashed out. The jet of thought poured into the opened mechanical brain like a Tommy gun burst into a can of tomatoes.

'Queen to King eight!' ballooned the four.

'Queen's move completed and open!' a crystal, peculiarly feminine thought responded.

And through Alita's receptive mind the beam of thought spewed forth, fled from dome to dome across the surface of the satellite, disrupting the minds of the Vegan warriors crouching over their machines, whiffing them into their primal atoms.

The three in the library lay back in their chairs and Turtle blew a perfect smoke ring.

'Bingo!'

'Got 'em!'

'Mate!'

A dainty thought came in, a feminine bouquet. 'Say, you conceited lugs, that was a hefty handling to give a lady!'

Philip laughed aloud in sheer joy. Could an Earthman feel remorse over Vegan entities? A little perhaps, but

'Alita, you darling, are you all right?'

'Of course I'm all right. They slapped a screen round me with their silly machine but they couldn't get at me themselves. When that fabricated brain went blooey I was quite relieved to contact you so-called he-men. I'll orbit with Jim, be seeing you in three hours, though heaven knows why I should want to.'

'Righto, Queen!'

'I'll give you Queen when I see you. My head's still buzzing from that drainpipe effect, what do you think it is, garbage disposal day?'

'I trust you mean the Vegans, pet. We knew they had something and that mass brain of theirs was pretty damn dangerous, but it just crumpled under the onslaught of FOUR homo sapiens.'

'Why pick on me? It'll be a long time before I let you talk

me into getting captured again.'

'Well, we needed a relay right on the spot, my heroine!'

'Thank you, King. But why a lady?'

'Because, my sweet, men are not so used to handling suggestions!'

THE AMATEUR EDITOR [III]

COME IN, THE WATER'S LOVELY!

We like it here on the lunatic fringe of the lunatic fringe, but think well before you start a printed zine unless like us you have no choice. People not only expect more from print, they think you must be a bit upstage, and you can't be controversial because you publish seldom enough to be attacked with impunity. Besides, handsetting is hard work, and reviewers tend to voice this profound thought instead of casting about for something nice to say: the implication is that of Johnston's remark about the woman preaching, 'Sir, it is like a dog walking on its hind legs. It is not done well, but you are surprised to see it done at all.' Another thing is that handsetting tends to make your style terse and cryptic. This is bad, because the only people who read fanzines carefully are rival editors and BNFs looking for their own names.

Well, whether your zine is mimeoed, printed, handwritten, or carved on lumps of stone, you'd better have some stories or something to keep the cover from getting torn in the mails. You could ask people who write for other zines I suppose. (Being unsure of the ethics of this I have never done it myself, except for European authors in American zines whom I consider fair game.) But it's long odds they will come up with something rejected by another fanzine. Fanzine rejects can be pretty bad; and if you return material, however nicely, it is a law of nature that the author will never speak to you again. So better write the entire first issue yourself. This is customary, but don't make it too blatant. And don't worry if it's not all good. Every zine may contain one really bad item to encourage the authors. This can be overdone, but bear in mind the immortal words of 'The American Courier.' 'The Courier is forced to admit that it prints in each issue poems that should never see print, yet they do serve a purpose in that they make readers appreciate the really good poems with which each issue is sprinkled.' Poignant, isn't it, Mr.M?

After your first issues you will probably be delighted with letters like this: 'Dear Sir thank you for your fanzine I thought it was very good, much better than X, all the stories were very good especially Y, Z was good too but I think I read something like it before, the illustrations were very good I don't know how he does it with just a razor blade I'm sure I'd never have the patience.' In time even this heady stuff begins to pall, and the law of diminishing returns applies strictly to fanmags: so unless you improve you will attract less and less attention until you fold your mag and silently steal away. Tamam Shud.

MANLY BANISTER

EDITOR OF NEKROMANTIKON

The enthusiasm which greeted the appearance of NEKRO was greatest among those who know something about the difficulties of amateur publishing, but it will still be shared by anyone who has seen the magazine. To those who haven't, NEKRO is an amateur-produced fanzine which it is faint praise to call 'like a prozine.' Its format, illustrations and contents don't need any allowances made for them. It seems to be characteristic of Banister that whatever he thinks worth doing he does extraordinarily well, but this is really a remarkable feat.



Portrait by JACK SANDERS

Banister is 36 years old and lives, with his wife and two little daughters, in Kansas City, Missouri. During the war he served for three years with the Marines in the Pacific area where, at Guam, he made the acquaintance of noted fan author Wilkie Conner. In civilian life he worked for some time as continuity writer and director in radio and is now employed as planner and copy writer in the advertising department of a big auto supply company. One of his co-workers, and a friend of the family, is Marjorie Houston, talented author of THE HUMLING in NEKRO 1. Banister himself has been writing since he was thirteen: his published work includes a novel, several stories and novelettes in WEIRD TALES, and numerous articles in other magazines. Recently he has written only for his own amusement, and the ingenious little story in this issue of 'Slant' was the only one he had bothered to submit to a promag in the last two years.

Banister took no active part in fandom until last year, when Mrs. Firestone asked him to join N3F. Since then he has become widely known not only for setting a new standard in fanzine production, but for his generous encouragement and help to aspiring authors and editors. But my own guess is that fandom has still to feel the full impact of this remarkable personality.

OFFICIAL REPORT (continued from page 4.)

has been under observation by the saucers from space for a period of 210 years, while the strangers waited for our technology to arrive at such a point that scientific and commercial intercourse between our two systems would be practicable. It is the opinion of the writer that these extra-system human beings are now convinced that our civilization has reached that desired stage.

8. The Bureau of Semantics, in a preliminary report on the sonal system of inter-personal communication of the strangers, which they call speech, states that the native name of the spacemen is Terrestrial, the native name of their home planet is Earth, and their sun-system is called Sol. Our 14th of Zonor, Year of Skronos, the date of the first extra-system space ship to land formally on our planet, is their 22nd February, Numerical Year 2510. The date of the landing was chosen by them in commemoration and honour of an ancient lawgiver named George Washington, whose birth date it is.

Hagar Skrin
Colonel

Air and Ground Military Forces of Skvald

THE GOOD OLD DAYS (continued from page 6.)

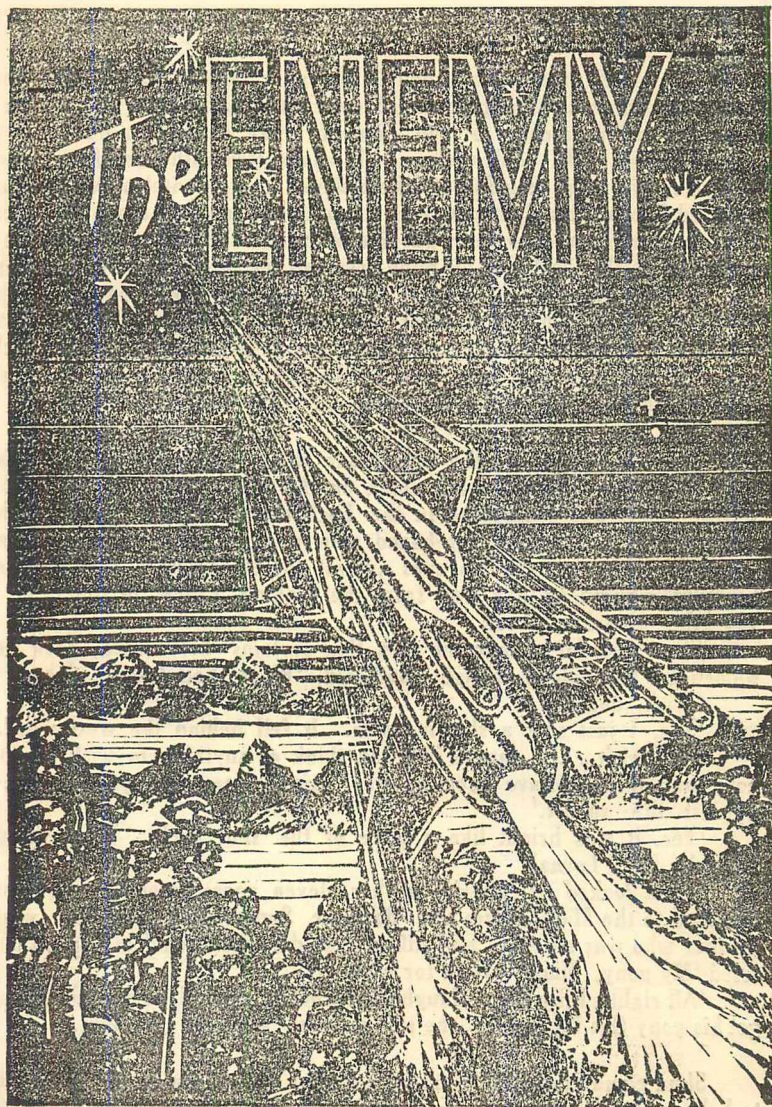
disappeared and he saw flashes of color. These, he assumed, were the vibrations of Nap's wild cries increased until they entered the realm of vision. Then there was a puff of smoke, an instantaneous glare of fire, and Edgar knew that Nap had literally ignited, due to his friction with the air.'

FROM THE READERS' CORNER, ASTOUNDING STORIES OF SUPER SCIENCE, March 1932.

'I will now proceed to write down a poem I composed especially for ASTOUNDING STORIES:

'Twas just a half a year ago, when first I came to know
That interesting magazine, ASTOUNDING STORIES.
In weeks to come it brought me dreams of other worlds
And all such things, of great adventures out in space.
That is the readers' paradise, ASTOUNDING STORIES.
It is a magazine which one can buy without too much
Uneconomy, ASTOUNDING STORIES.'

Henry A. Ackerman, aged 12.



BY CLIVE JACKSON

The small creature slumped in the pilot harness stared at the shattered instruments with pain-dulled eyes and fought back the waves of nausea that threatened to rob him of what control he had over his crippled ship. His golden-brown pelt was matted with blood from a deep wound in his right shoulder and he believed that a vital nerve had been severed because his right paw was numb and he could not move the fingers. Pilot Leader Skua knew fear, but like all religious Martians he was able to seal it off in that sector of his mind reserved for such primitive emotions.

At intervals, a high keening whistle told him that he was passing through the fringe of the enemy's atmospheric envelope. Without instruments, but aided by his unerring time sense, he estimated his grazing orbit from the duration and frequency of the contacts and set the automatic controls to land the ship. This done he could only wait and hope.

The last rays of the setting sun slanted through the gay chintz and gilded the blue and white china on the supper table in the kitchen of the O'Riordan farmhouse in the backblocks of New South Wales. John O'Riordan, a lean, big-boned man with yellow hair and a humorous face, screwed up his eyes against the strong light, and Barbara, his wife, paused on her way from the cooking range to the table to tug the curtains across.

She stood for a moment with the curtains half-closed, dark hair haloed by the golden sunlight, and said, 'What shall I wish, John?'

'Wish, dear?'

'Yes, I just saw a shooting star. It fell behind the west wood.'

'Oh, wish . . . darned if I can think of anything to wish for just now, and it must have been a very bright one, for you to see it against the sunset.'

'Yes, it was bright like a piece of the sun itself. What should I wish for, Lorna?'

Lorna looked as superior as her eleven years would allow and referred to the Middle Ages and Barbaric Superstition, and her young brother who was only five and still professed a token belief in Santa Claus, cried 'My pony, Mum! Wish for my pony!'

'All right, Billy Boy,' laughed Barbara, and 'I wish William will get his pony this Christmas,' she said solemnly with her eyes shut.

Skua came unsteadily from his wrecked ship. He found it difficult to believe that he was still alive and almost wished he was not, but the will to live was strong in him. It was the same spirit of self-preservation that had driven his ancestors to span the arid surface of their planet with

great canals, using only hand tools. It was also the reason why no Earth colony could ever be established on Mars while any Martians were yet left alive.

In addition to his wound he now had to contend with a thick, hot atmosphere and a much higher gravity, although the greater amount of oxygen acted as a stimulant. He knew that he must find a secure hiding place and first aid materials, for his own kit was beneath an impenetrable tangle of wreckage. While it was possible that his landing had gone unnoticed if this was a sparsely populated area, it was almost certain that the ship which had been chasing him had marked his landing place and radioed the nearest military.

So he set out to put as much distance as possible between himself and his ship, and when two minutes had almost passed he crept into a dark hollow until the time bomb in the ship exploded, leaving nothing but a few twisted scraps of metal spread widely around a twenty foot crater in the forest.

John O'Riordan had pushed back his chair and was lighting his favourite pipe when the explosion slammed against the kitchen window and knocked a plate off the rack by the sink. He and his wife looked at each other questioningly. The match burned his fingers. He got to his feet and took his rifle down off the pegs in the wall and pulled the zipper up the front of his jacket and made sure his pipe was burning evenly. Barbara said, 'Be careful, dear,' and stood on tiptoe to kiss him before he strode out across the darkening farmyard. A thick column of smoke hung in the still evening air, silhouetted like a solid bar against the red glow of the sunset.

Skua glanced back uneasily at the tell-tale smoke as he plodded laboriously through the wood. Perhaps it had been unwise to blow up the ship, but the orders in the event of a forced landing were explicit. He realised he could not travel far; even now his muscles were tiring under the unaccustomed weight and he had to stop every few minutes to lie down and regain his breath. He had discarded his uniform harness and anklets before leaving the ship, retaining only the ceremonial collar that carried his badges of rank and concealed the small jewelled knife that was his last recourse in event of capture.

Hearing a faint sound ahead of him, Skua melted catlike into the forest. His eyes though colour blind, were sensitive in a certain degree to infra-red, and it did not occur to him that the large biped moving past him along the trail with such a clumsy lack of silence might not possess similar vision. Skua noted the long metal object under its arm

which was almost certainly a weapon, and wondered if it was a member of a military patrol called out by the pursuing ship. He was puzzled by the heat and smoke issuing from the stumpy object in the creature's mouth; surely they were not fire-eaters? He had never seen one of the enemy before, and he was disconcerted to find it so large and powerful. Although he was of the officer caste, the propaganda which was disseminated for the benefit of the warriors and workers had inevitably made some impression on him.

He waited until the biped had passed by and slipped back onto the path again, and as he did so he was arrested by a sudden brilliance that flared into life high above the pall of smoke that marked the grave of his ship. The landing jets of his pursuer.

John halted and shaded his eyes as the forest became a bizarre confusion of harsh white and impenetrable black, of silhouetted branches and trunks indistinguishable from their own shadows. The scaring light sank earthwards, slowing; dropped below the level of the trees and went out, leaving him groping blindly with weird patterns burned onto his retina. He could not go forward, so he sat down with his back against a tree and smoked philosophically until the persistent vision faded. Then, knocking his pipe out on the trunk, he rose and continued towards the thinning smoke that now hardly obscured the early stars.

Presently, he came to the crater, which smelled of pungent explosive and was surrounded by uprooted trees and broken branches. He kicked at a shiny shard of metal. It slid down into the crater, and at once he was caught in the white beam of a flashlight. He squinted against the light at the two uniformed men that came towards him round the lip of the crater carrying tommy guns cradled in their arms.

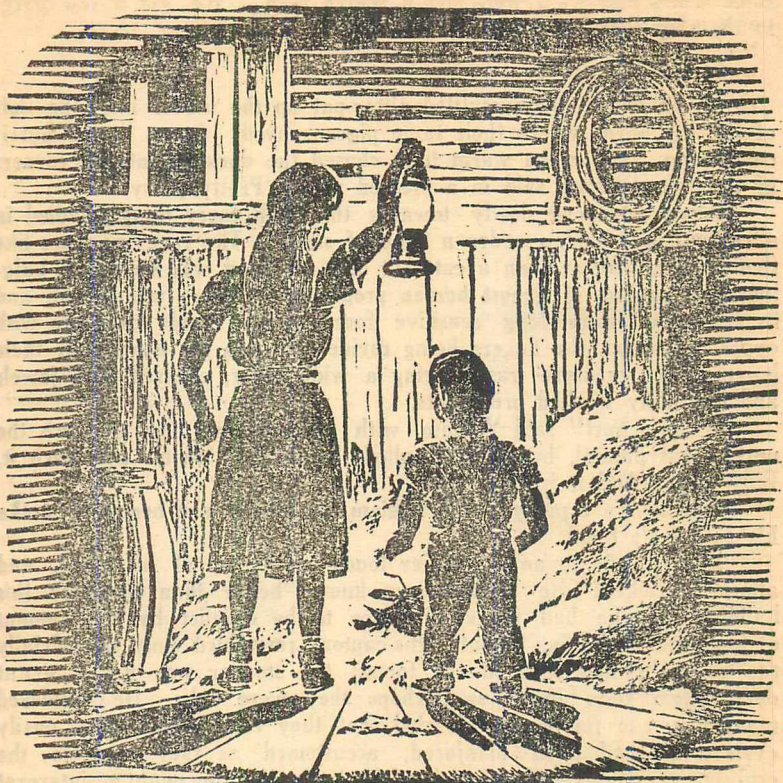
The man carrying the flashlight directed it at the ground and said, 'Hullo there! Seen anything of a Martian around here?'

'No, I haven't, but if this was its ship I don't think you need worry about it. My name is John O'Riordan.'

'Glad to know you. I'm Captain Wayae and this is Lieutenant Monetti,' said the Captain, sticking his hand out. 'Ow do you, Signor,' said the Lieutenant politely, bowing smartly from the wait.

'It's our opinion Mr. O'Riordan, that the Martian left its ship before she blew up,' explained the Captain. 'There was an interval of a couple of minutes between the landing and the explosion. That little stinker could have gotten clear away if it wasn't hurt.'

'I see. Well naturally I'm at your disposal, gentlemen. The



nearest neighbours are seventeen miles to the south: I suppose you've already contacted the army!'

'Yeah, but it'll take them all of two hours to fly out here, I never saw such an isolated spot!' The Lieutenant's teeth gleamed in the darkness and he slapped the barrel of his tommy gun. 'Signor, eef we don't-a catch that leedle skunk censide two hours, I eat-a my helmet. You betcha!'

'Now, I think I'd better go and tell my wife to lock all the doors and windows; I have a couple of children too. Its only a few minutes walk.'

'That's very wise of you, Mr. O'Riordan. Me and Monetti will

come along and we'll work out a search plan. We got a few flares in the ship that may come in handy.'

Lorna and William scuttled pitter-pat up the ladder into the loft of the big barn, where their tame pigeons lived. Lorna lit the hurricane lamp, and as the warm light chased the darkness into the corners of the loft, William said in a pleased voice, 'Pretty pussy!'

Lorna advanced slowly towards the small furry thing huddled in a corner, half hidden under a heap of straw. The face was more like that of a marmoset than a cat, but the forehead was wide and bulging, the cranium of almost human proportions. There was no tail, and its fore-paws were long sensitive four-fingered hands complete with opposed thumbs, the fingers being divided in two for about half their length. The creature was wearing a wide collar, covered with jewels and delicately worked ornaments.

'Pussy's hurt!' said William with concern, and bent to touch the unconscious animal, but Lorna pulled him back. 'Better not touch it, Billy Boy. And it isn't a pussy.'

'Course it's a pussy,' said William, scornfully, and began to stroke his new pet's head.

Skua awoke to an unfamiliar touch on the top of his skull, and almost panicked. He should have known better than to enter this building, but he had judged the place to be derelict by the amount of junk and dirt lying about. His captors resembled only superficially the giant he had seen in the forest; the smaller was not a great deal bigger than himself, so perhaps they were cubs. He considered making a run for it, but decided that they could catch him easily even if he had been uninjured, accustomed as they were to the crushing gravity. He also thought of his knife, but they might misinterpret his action, and if they were fast-moving, kill him before he could commit suicide. So he remained quite still and awaited developments.

'Look, Lorna. Pussy's woke up!' cried William happily, and his sister, forgetting her caution, knelt by the little animal and examined the ugly wound in its shoulder.

'Whatever it is,' she said, 'We must give it first aid, and the vet's calling to-morrow, so we can have him look at it.'

Skua correctly identified the peculiar piping sounds as speech, and guessed they concerned his wound by the close scrutiny the larger human was giving it. It was almost more than he dared hope, but could these creatures be friendly? He found the stroking action of the smaller one strangely pleasant. Some sort of therapy, perhaps. Certainly the terrible headache that had resulted from his head striking

the instrument panel was almost gone, and a perceptible sense of well-being was entering his tired body. He began to relax.

'Now you stay here, Billy Boy, while I go and get some hot water and bandages.' Lorna turned to go, and the little animal suddenly reached out and weakly gripped her arm. It placed one finger of its other paw over its mouth and its great brown eyes looked at her with such trust and entreaty that her affectionate heart was touched.

'Why look at that, the poor thing doesn't want us to tell anybody it's here. Of course I won't, pussy,' she said, imitating the gesture of silence. 'Don't let him move if you can help it, Billy Boy.' She shot down the ladder, out of the barn and across the farmyard, where she collided with her father.

'Woa there, girl! Gentlemen, this is my eldest, Lorna. Now step inside and meet my wife. Barbara! Barbara, we have visitors!'

They went into the kitchen, blinking in the light, and Barbara came forward, wiping her hands on her apron and saying, 'Well, come in, come in! My goodness, soldiers with guns! You boys sit down by the stove and I'll get you some hot coffee. Lorna! Get some cups, dear.'

'Thank you, ma'am,' said the Captain. 'Say,' he said, nudging his companion, 'This is O.K.!'

'You betcha!' sniggered Monetti, running his eyes over Barbara's figure. He sprawled back in his chair and opened his tunic.

John suppressed his resentment and said, 'Barbara, this is Captain Wayne and Lieutenant Monetti. They are looking for a Martian that crashed near here.'

'A Martian! That must have been my shooting star. What are they like?'

'Oh, they're like some unholy cross between a cat and a monkey. Quite small, but as cunning and vicious as a jaguar,' said Wayne.

'An' they got claws like-a razors an' teeth like-a sharks, an' eef they catch-a you they torture you so it take-a two-three days for you to die,' added Monetti with relish.

'They're stinkers,' concluded Wayne.

'Heavens! No wonder you're armed to the teeth. Are we in any danger here?'

Lorna, busy with cups and saucers, tried to reconcile this graphic description with the pathetic creature in the hayloft. Her young mind, impressionable and with a child's trait of instantly liking or disliking a person, was already antagonised by these swaggering officers. She was determined to help the Martian, and began to contrive a way of getting back to the loft in order to explain the situation to her brother.

Soon the kitchen was hazy with smoke from the cigars which

the officers were continually chewing. They sprawled and sweated and boasted and spat on the stove and showed no inclination to forsake the warmth of the kitchen to hunt the Martian in the cold dark forest.

'Anyways you look at it,' drawled the Captain, 'Them Martians are finished. We got the ships and we got the weapons, and one good American is worth ten of them stinkin' monkeys. What goddam right have they got to say we can't land on their lousy planet anyhow? They aint even got a democracy! I'm telling you . . .'

'Mummy!' cried William, 'Mummy, pussy's hurt!'

For several seconds everyone stared at the small boy in the doorway with the Martian clasped to his chest, and then Lorna said 'Billy!' with her voice full of reproach, and the tension in the room snapped like a drawn violin string. Monetti screamed something in Italian and dived for the tommy gun on the table.

When Skua saw the big human scoop the weapon from the table his first thought was to get clear of his friend and he wriggled from William's arms even as the Lieutenant snatched at the cocking handle and then he was out of the door and across the yard as fast as his straining muscles would carry him.

Monetti reached the door in a single leap, bowling the child over. The tommy gun roared and spat and jumped in his hands and the dust spurted around the running Martian, caught in the yellow rectangle of light from the kitchen. The bullets stitched the writhing body to the wall of the barn and the boy screamed in terror and grief and pummelled the man's thighs with his tiny fists and Monetti laughed and snarled and emptied the bucking gun into the small tattered corpse of the Martian.

THE THINGS THEY SAY

HUH?

'I doubt if any fan ever decided not to subscribe to a fanzine simply because he couldn't get it at a discount: I believe many fans have subscribed to zine; which they would otherwise have passed up, because they saw the N3F discount mentioned.' r-t Rapp.

WATERING THE PLANT?

'While the plant went into action and started high-speed production, Mel poured over the sketches, fascinated by their crudeness and mystery.' Amazing, Sept., 1950.

THE RETORT COURTEOUS.

'His attempts to insult me didn't even take. After all, what does one expect from the rear end of a horse but windbreaking?' F. Towner Laney.

THE PRYING FAN

THE OTHER FANDOM. In this town of 400,000 odd inhabitants there are apparently only three who are odd enough to admit to an interest in s-f. Yet every month great heaps of s-f magazines come into the shops, and vanish instantaneously, like cream. No one ever sees who buys them. The few times I have surprised persons in the act they seemed to flee in terror at my approach as if I had three heads instead of only two. My spies tell me that this state of affairs exists all over Sol III. **WHO ARE THESE MYSTERIOUS PEOPLE?** Shocking though it may be to our self esteem, there is only one answer. Behind fandom as we know it, using it as a screen, lurks the **OTHER FANDOM.** To this vast organisation of super intellects we are but morons, fit only to be used as unwilling catspaws in their machinations. It is through us that they press their views on editors and publishers, most of whom have learned by bitter experience the peril of ignoring them. How else explain the powerful influence of the apparently impotent minority of actifans? These mysterious intelligences, whom I refer to as the **TENDRILLESS FANS**, have their own secret conventions and fanzines, and for all I know, proziaes too. Their number constantly increases. You have wondered why it is that actifans often retire at the very peak of their powers, why fanzines no sooner get really good than they fold? Obviously, they have been **ACCEPTED!**

CELTIC LAMENT. As you'll have gathered, the fan population of Ireland can almost be counted on your thumbs. The other day our hopes were raised by a notice in the Belfast Newsletter about a **SLANS SPORTS MEETING** but it turned out to be just a normal race meeting at an obscure village in the County Down. Disappointing. So was the **MONSTER MEETING** advertised here recently. I hear that very few monsters took the trouble to turn up: they must be very poor sports!

DUE CREDIT. Although we seldom get any acknowledgement from the people we praise in **SLANT** (Anthony Boucher, J.W. Campbell, Professor Einstein, Doris Day) while those we criticise show a startling sensitivity, we still feel that fanzines generally are too misanthropic. Hence these few belated bouquets: **TO NIGEL LINDSAY** for running the chain mag scheme with quiet efficiency before and since the BFL got into the soup. He stuck to his post through thick and clear. **TO FORRY ACKERMAN** for helping fan authors to become pros. **TO KEN BULMER & VINCE CLARKE** for preventing London from being the dead centre of British fandom. Their SFN is always worth waiting for. **TO D.R.FRASER** for making such a beautiful job of **EUSIFANSO**. **TO MIKE TEALBY** for fine work with **WONDER**.

ABSOLUTELY NO DECEPTION, by Chuck Harris.

As a special treat Mr. Davidson had taken his wife and children to Coney Island for the day. The kids, replete with candy-stuff, ice cream, peanuts, and hamburgers were standing on the boardwalk, gazing in awe at an enormously fat man spilling the crowd towards his concession.

Gather round! Roll up!' he cried. 'See M'Gombi, the albino wizard from mysterious Africa! Thrill to the magic of the one and only M'Gombi!'

Succumbing to the excited urgings of his children Davidson bought tickets, and herded his little flock inside to the front row of benches. When the tent was filled the lights were dimmed; the spectators hushed as the curtains swished open.

In the middle of the stage stood the great M'Gombi, awe-inspiring in multi-coloured robes and feathered head-dress. After demonstrating prestidigitation, conjuring, and fire-eating he worked up to the climax of his act. He strode to the centre of the stage and addressed his audience:

'Ladies and gentlemen, for this, my final miracle, I shall saw a lady in half. Being a widower myself, I shall require the assistance of a lady from the audience.'

Before he had finished speaking, Mrs. Davidson, who had always wanted to 'go on the stage' slipped from her seat and was standing by his side.

'Thank you, madam,' bowed M'Gombi. 'But are you sure your family will not object?' He looked inquisitively at her husband and children.

'Not at all,' laughed Davidson. The children giggled. The audience cheered and applauded while Mrs. Davidson dimpled prettily and blushed.

M'Gombi pulled from the wings a long box faintly reminiscent of a coffin. He helped Mrs. Davidson into the box, which was so arranged that her feet stuck out from one end, and her head from the other. After closing the lid, he sawed her in half.

Mr. Davidson didn't mind because he had her insured, but the children were unhappy for a long time, and the police made an awful fuss about it.

[Reprinted from the ISFCC's EXPLORER by kind permission of Ed Noble, Girard, Pa., editor of that lively and enterprising fanzine.]

AMENDE HONORABLE. In S3 I made some impetuous remarks about Mr. Marwin's review of our second issue, and though I took it all back in the next breath, next page, and my impulsive way, I must mention that I went badly off the rails in taking exception to his calling our illos 'pseudo-woodcuts.' I thought he meant pseudo in the sense of 'phoney,' but I now know that this is a recognised technical term in the printing trade. Sorry.

**THE VERY WORLD ITSELF MAY BE
ONLY A SUDDEN FLAMING WORD
MID CLANGING SPACE A MOMENT HEARD** [Yeats]

OFF THE CUFF. Pairs to Palmer for printing WAY IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SKY. And HOORAY Bradbury! . . . Our votes for nicest story of the year go to DEAR DEVIL in OW (Russell never lets you down): most remarkable, SCANNERS LIVE IN VAIN, FANTASY BOOK, by some genius called Cordwainer Smith . . . If there IS a convention in South Gate in '58 it will be the first with rhyme for a reason . . . A correspondent, after reading Dianetics, suggests that when you beat your wife you should never say 'Take that!' or the child will be a kleptomaniac. Say 'So you can't take it!' and he will be a model citizen . . . American opinion is ranking NEW WORLDS up with ASF: and quite right too . . . I see Merwin admits his artwork is unmentionable . . . AMAZING & FA have improved right enough; about time someone helped Phillips carry the load . . .

The article on p. 25 is the first in a series of illustrated biographies of British and American fans. There would have been more in this issue if we had been able to have the photoengravings made in time, but each future issue of SLANT will contain from two to four of them. Any nominations?

. We know de Camp couldn't write a really bad story if he tried, but must he try so hard? . . . We asked Campbell to fold our ASF's with the cover outwards so it wouldn't get creased and he actually does it (usually). Is this just for us or has everybody benefitted? . . . Little men make great fanzines. Sub to the RHODOMAGNETIC DIGEST and see . . . What other fanzine had an illustration like a pro ice's? ASF for June, 1942 in fact, p. 24. Stephen Leacock worked in this issue without knowing it, as well as Schneecman. Tch Tch.

SLANT TELLS ALL! Some time ago we began secretly to circularise new fans, getting their names from the prozine letter columns. 'You too can be a BNF!' we said. 'You want egoboo? We can supply it. For modest fees we will do your fanning for you. We undertake all the duties of an artfan, letters in your name to prozines, fanzines and fellowfans, and publication on your behalf of any type of fanzine. Why work your brain to the bone when you can make use of our specialised services? Write at once to PROXYBOO Ltd. . .'

The project was an immediate success, and the time has come for us to make a startling disclosure. WE ARE FANDOM! Daily for some ten years fleets of vans have brought us sacks of letters to be answered on our battery of typewriters, and taken away great stacks of Fanscients,

Gorgons, Operations Fantast, Slants, Spearheads etc. etc. for distribution by our customers, with countless letters, articles, columns, stories, poems, artwork, editorials etc. carrying the names of Ackerman, Boggs, Laney, Grossman, Sneary, Riddle and dozens of others, each of whom thinks he is our only client.

But all this must stop. After today we regret to announce that there will be no more fandom, except for some poor wretches who were unable to keep up with their payments. We are sorry not to be able to finish off our various 'controversies,' like Laney-Metchette and Banister-Boggs (especially when the bidding was getting so high) but pressure of work has forced us to close the fandom department. Our prozine commitments are getting far too heavy.

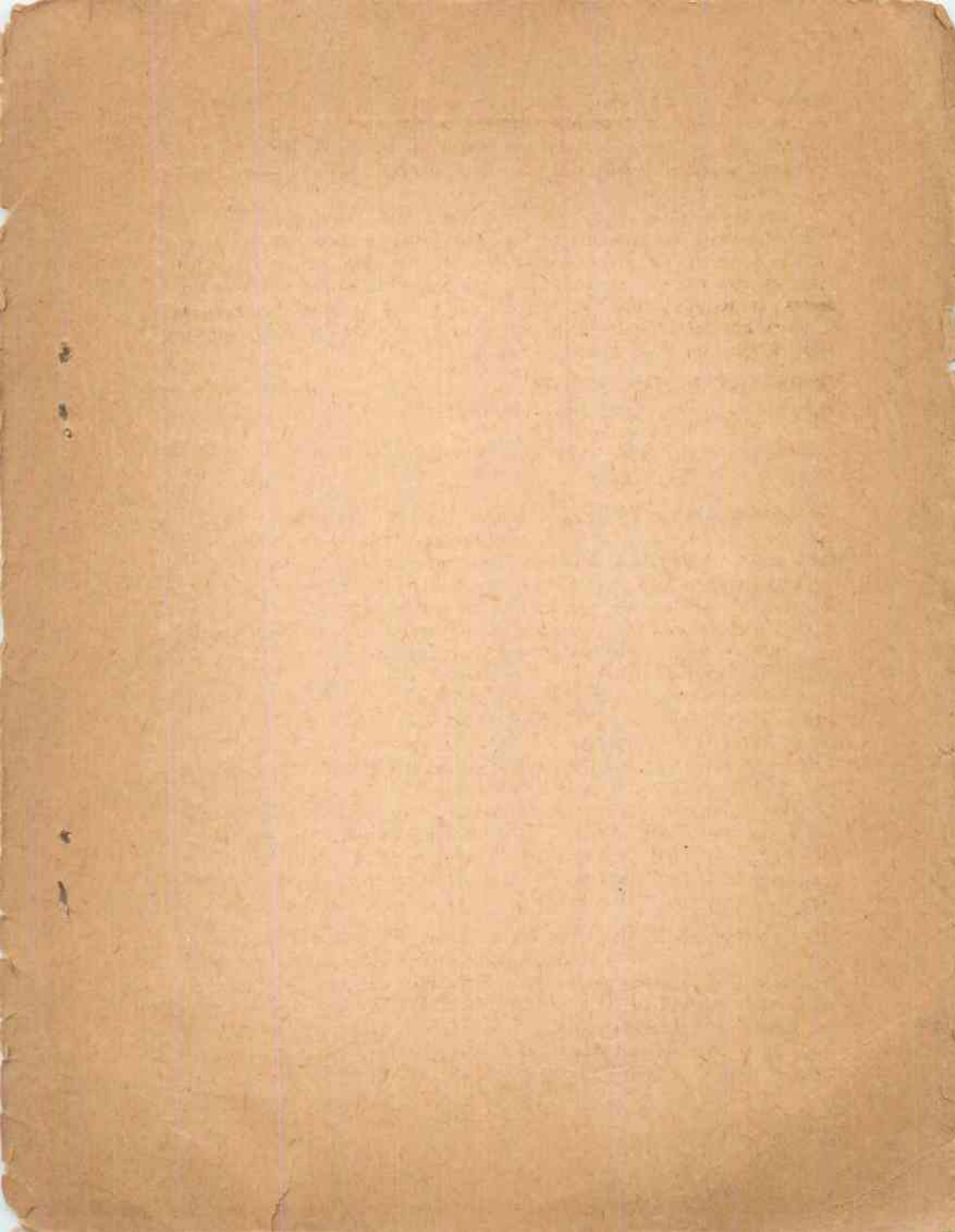
QUAINT AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS.

They don't care for THRILLING WONDER
Down under
And when they see a PLANET
They ban it.

PHYSICIAN, HEAL THYSELF! Judging him by his works, I wouldn't have thought Hubbard fit to treat anyone's mind. Sympathy, kindness and understanding are some of the qualities needed, and there was no sign that Hubbard had them. Quite the reverse. His stories, disregarding the juveniles of 'Rene Lafayette,' showed such an unhealthy worship of sadistic power and preoccupation with violence and cruelty as to make me feel that if he was 'clear' I'd rather stay opaque. That brutish callousness is an heroic quality and the mass murder of people with different pigmentation is an heroic action are ideas only too easily acquired without Hubbard's help. Reader Robb in 'Brass Tacks' said of dianetics: 'None but the meanest, most callous, and least worthy of men could offer such a blessing to mankind without assuring himself of its validity.' It could have been such a man who wrote GREED.

But if Hubbard is so far no advertisement for dianetics, Campbell is, and if only out of respect to him we must take it as more than just another 'mystery.' And first impressions of the book are that although it is emotionally and unscientifically over-written, Hubbard is, to give him his due, absolutely sincere. You should read it for yourself, and decide.

OFF THE OTHER CUFF. No, Wilkie Conner, Britain is NOT workshy or bankrupt, whatever your papers say. She's producing and exporting more than EVER before and only short of dollars because of 6 years of war . . . RECENT ARRIVALS: 'Egoboo', Banister's astounding counterblast to Boggs, a satirical fantasy well worth reading in its own right. Second issue of Roy Loan's adult fanzine, 'Talisman.' Morton Paley's 'Reelzebub', new fanzine by one of fandom's best authors.



Roger Nelson

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The present rate is 2 issues of SLANT for one 25c prozine, 3 for one 35c prozine or pocketbook. Current issues preferred, but any issue of any s-f prozine will do.

Magazines or books mailed as 'printed matter' (i.e. in ungummed envelope or wrapped with open ends) go at one and a half cents for each 2oz. No customs declaration is necessary.

Nos. 1 and 2 are out of print. A few copies of No. 3 are still available, and can be included in your subscription at the current rate.

Members of the SFS of GB will continue to get their copies free, but they must write and ask for each issue. To non-members the sub. is 9d. per copy.

We are always on the lookout for original material, preferably stories of 3,000 words or less, but longer stories and short articles will be considered. If your work is accepted you will receive copies of or extracts from all readers' comments and reviews in which it is mentioned. Also ten separately printed copies, if you want them, and a life subscription to the magazine, (your life or ours, whichever is the shorter.) Our present circulation is 280.

SLANT does not carry paid advertisements, but small ads will be inserted free of charge for subscribers if space is available.

We want subscriptions to various prozines, including Other Worlds, Imagination, Mag. of Fantasy & SF, Amazing. Also these ASFs:

1940 July Oct. Nov. Dec. 1941 March April May
1942 March, May, June, Nov. Dec. 1943 March, April 1944 July

In exchange we offer:

World of null-A, Van Vogt
Death's Deputy, Hubbard
The Purple Twilight, Groom
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A Century of Horror
UNKNOWN, first five issues
WEIRD TALES '38 Jun. Jul. Sept.
'39 July, August

Please address all correspondence to:

Walter A. Willis
170 Upper Newtownards Rd.,
BELFAST, Northern Ireland.

ATTENTION, LISEURS FRANCAIS! Depuis longtemps je tache de trouver des amants du s-f dans la France. Si vous en etes un je vous prie de m'ecrire afin que nous puissions echanger des periodiques etc.

'R.A.H.', California, wants nail and hair clippings of Robert Lippert.

YOUR SUBSCRIPTION EXPIRES WITH ISSUE NO. 12.

This is issue number four.