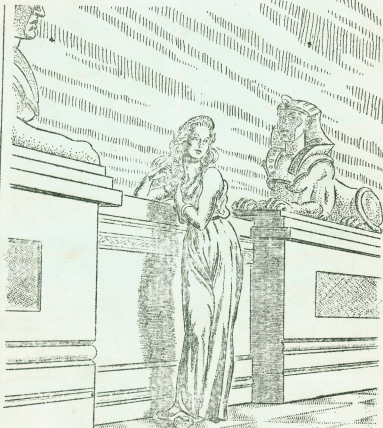


ZENITH



Harry
Turner

"NOCTURNE"

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EDITORIAL...

PROVIDING that I am not claimed by the RAF for a few more weeks, that ARP work doesn't claim too much of my time in the dark nights to come, that the paper ration is not cut down, that there is a sufficiency of material contributed, that funds for the publication of Zenith are available, that someone likes the mag, and providing all other provisos that may arise from present circumstances, I expect to inflict the mag on Fandom at intervals of six weeks. It is my pious hope that the next issue will be ready during the first week of October. I think I can safely guarantee a minimum of three issues and for the time being will not accept subscriptions beyond that number.

In the meantime, I should be pleased to have your comments on this issue; it hardly fulfils the sparkling specification given in Fantast, but still . . . ! The usual ratings (so many points out of a possible ten) on all items would be very useful in determining your tastes, so do please write. Pending your opinions, no definite editorial policy has been adopted; personally, I have no objection to fans airing their views on anything and everything.

(Continued on page 9)

MR. WELLS AND MR. HUXLEY

By JOHN F. BURKE

IN a recent article Mr H.G. Wells, discussing, as usual, the world of the future that is to be built on the ruins of the present system, declared that his new world would have no room for people like Aldous Huxley. Mr Wells, the eternal optimist, is revolted by the pessimism of the poor unfortunate who could see no way out of the "Brave New World" but suicide. There is little doubt that he would be equally appalled at Stanley Weinbaum's "New Adam". Are we to accept Mr Wells's optimism as the best way out of our troubles, or must we admit that Huxley is right?

Whatever possibilities the future may hold, there can be little doubt that Aldous Huxley's books are much more realistic and derived from everyday life among certain classes of people, despite their satirical extravagance. His highly- (perhaps over-) educated intellectuals commit suicide with more conviction than Mr Wells's innumerable Little Men - the Kipses, the Lewis-hams, the Britlings, and all that monotonous family - face up to life. Huxley's defeatists are sensitive; Wells's optimists have the optimism of stupidity: he insults the class he is endeavouring to glorify by making its representatives in his books mere puppets, all turned out in the same mould. We are apparently faced with the alternative of a death self-inflicted because of over-sensitivity, or a blind, futile, unesthetic life that only goes on because the race is too dull to realise its own ugliness.

Somewhere there must be a compromise. If the purpose of "Brave New World" was to persuade readers that they must forsake science and take up life on the land, using bows and arrows to catch their food, it must be dismissed; I do not think it was written with such a purpose. If Mr Wells, on the other hand, thinks that his world, like that of a somewhat earlier philosopher, will be better off without the writers - and particularly writers like Aldous Huxley -- then Mr Wells cannot expect much praise from the discerning.

It is possible for the intellectual to compromise, because the well-educated man has an intelligence that will, sooner or later, show him he is wrong and must make some adjustments; but for H.G. Wells's puny heroes, stuck in their rut, there is no compromise or alteration possible. They have dogged determination? Say, rather, stubborn incomprehension. They have not the necessary intelligence to achieve the change, even if they could be persuaded to recognise how essential it is.

The Little Men who run in and out of the innumerable pages of the books of H.G. Wells can be made useful; they are ideal material for dictators to shape into automatons, but they are also potential helpers for the thinkers of the world. The Huxleyan philosopher, wild as he may be at times, is trying to find his way out by attacking the more obvious faults in the world, until

he is left with something that will stand up to his attacks and thus provide a satisfactory basis for reconstruction. In the work of reconstruction he needs labour, and here is where the Wellsian legions come in. Let Mr Wells forsake his happy dreams of a mid-Victorian Utopia peopled with replicas of Mr Polly. One hopes that all those silly little nondescript men are creations of an author's imagination; if they are real, and if the future of the world is in their hands, then let us sit down and weep.

The Wellsian optimist will give you life, but no opportunity to see the beauty there may be in life; the Huxleyan pessimist will see all the potentialities of this "world, unfathomably fair", but realise that in the midst of such crass materialism he will never have an opportunity to use those potentialities.

If you are satisfied with the plodding, unambitious life, you will not be appalled by Mr Wells.

Woe betide the unbeautiful stodginess of his optimistic future world if there is "no place" for Mr Huxley's analytical satire.

DEMONSTRATION

By MAURICE K. HANSON

THE teacher looked grimly at his class. Inside himself he laughed.

"The subject of our studies now", he said, "is death".

He paused.

"We cannot turn you into sane, responsible citizens if you are but half-educated. You have studied life and living things yet you know nothing of death and dead things. A knowledge of one without the other is useless, a horrible distortion of truth. You are all alive and you are aware of the basic processes of life - how you eat and drink, breathe, grow, excrete and reproduce. Now you are to learn how you die".

His back was turned to the class as he moved over to the demonstration bench. The students were silent; his discipline was good.

"One thing I must impress upon you. There is nothing distasteful about death. It is part of a logical sequence. Life - death, life - death, life - death. It is not to be avoided. If the interests of the community demand your death you must die".

He opened a drawer in the desk and took out a revolver.

"You have studied the history of education and you know that our educational system is the best, the finest, the most powerful and productive the world has ever known. It will not be improved, it is perfect. You know that it is based upon one simple principle, on one word. Experience. 'Live and learn' our forefathers said in the twentieth century: 'live to learn' we say in the

twenty-first".

His grim eyes wandered speculatively over the class as he began to load the revolver.

"And so today, for the benefit of the State, one of us will experience death. He is the fortunate one who will learn most; the rest will participate only at second-hand in the role of observers, but they too will be rewarded by knowledge gained. We have not much time before the end of the lesson and if there should be any among you who fear death I must ask them to step out in front of the class immediately".

No-one moved.

"Good. Your hypno-psychological training is such that you could not lie; even if you wished. We will now proceed with the demonstration. Watch well how death takes the place of life".

Again he laughed inside himself for the sheer joy of the moment. Carefully he placed the revolver to his head, pressed the trigger and died.

Outside a bell rang softly. The class rose and filed out. School was over for the day.

END OF THE CRUSADE



Wisdom and war, said Merlyn,
And never the twain shall meet,
But once in a generation
Savage the war-drums beat.
And then, drawing dole, I meet
You standing in the street.

Squeeze the orange, said Halifax,
Until even the pips must squeak.
Not knowing a law of dynamics
Which makes strength out of the weak.
There are other pips now that squeak.
Blessed are the meek !

This is your world, said Wells,
The future is yours, as the past
Crumbles away in its spells --
The magician enraptured at last.
Learn from the arrogant past,
With youth as your flag at the mast.

C.S. YOUNG



. . . a wild weird clime that lieth, sublime,
Out of SPACE - out of TIME.

Edgar Allan Poe.

THE REPRINT RACKET

By TED CARNELL

THERE'S going to be plenty of opposition to this article. I can feel the ozone burning even before the darn thing's written, but it may give some of you "lifers" an opportunity of turning me over on the other side to fry. This article, by the way, is directed at the heads of the readers and newer fans, who have too long been pushed around by the old-timers like a ghost in a thick fog.

Mild, gentle, harmless reader -- don't let 'em fool you with their droolings of "classic" stf stories of the past. Don't let these letters in the Gasbag Section of the prozines, raving about "The Skylark of Delirium" and other 'great' stories, turn your head and make you think that stf died about 1935. Don't, because the dopes worship at the shrine of Grandfather HOW, think that there haven't been any new ideas. You're being kidded along by a set of fossilised grannies who haven't changed with the times --- yet the secret ambition of these guys is to become authors !

Take a look at some of the reprinted "classics" of recent years, now running in the Munsey mags. You - and you - newcomers since 1938; can you honestly say that they bog you down with their masterfulness ? That compared with the epics of 1924 and 1934, today's stories are senile ? I doubt it very much. You probably think the same as I do. That those earlier stories were exceptionally good, considering how stf was in its infancy, but that they seem just - well, a little old-fashioned in style. That is, the writing technique, not the plots which the master-minds evolved. Agreed ?

There is a great gap between the stories and style of ten years back and the present-day equivalent, and it is this gap that is the stumbling block to a better understanding of the advancement of stf. Probably the greater majority of readers and fans haven't realised that there has been much of a change. Stories still deal with Space and Time and the host of other interplanetary adventures and inventions used a decade ago. But firstly, the writing technique has altered enormously since Merritt penned "The Moon Pool" - compare his literary style as then written, with say, van Vogt's "Slan". Secondly, those interplanetary adventures and ideas have been written about so long and often that they are almost second nature to us now. It would be useless to give us a graphic description of the first take-off from Earth on a round-the-moon trip.

The greatest fault with those older stories is that their plots did not warrant the length to which the stories were written. The stories were over balanced - top-heavy with excess verbiage. Merritt, in particular, over-wrote all his lengthy stories. At times, there are whole columns of so-called illuminating descriptive matter which slow the stories down, and the reader finds that he is wading thru paragraphs flooded with words irrelevant

to the action on hand.

In today's stories, American streamlined writing calls for Action, the cancellation of superfluous wordage (at so many cents a word), and concise explanations of any sciences involved - not the long-winded variety as previously doped up. This is the point which brings classics to the fore - the adherents to the past cannot bear the modern streamlining, and they clamp down on every new story that is rated as exceptionally good. If Smith's "Galactic Patrol" and "Gray Lonsman" had been published six or seven years ago, they would have frothed at the mouth with excitement, and the entire "Skylark" series would have mushroomed into angelic heights. If you haven't read the "Skylark" series yet but get an opportunity later on, you'll be very disappointed in them. They are but milestones along the road . . .

This brings me to the title of this article and to my contention that the reprinting of the older stories is nothing more than a racket for publishers to make a rake-off without a very high overhead. The Munsey mags - ADVENTURES and NOVELS as they were until recently - pegged third place in recent American polls (ASTOUNDING and UNKNOWN being first and second respectively). You'll admit that, apart from WEIRD, the competition drops away after those two have been eliminated. The vast majority of voters on that poll were ardent fans, many of them long-term readers. Be that as it may, those earlier stories were good, and still are, providing comparison with modern yarns isn't brought into play.

Therefore, the reprints honorably earn third place as the best stories, you'll say. I'll agree with you there, but the old ARGOSY hasn't sufficient good sf yarns to be able to make a reprint sf mag - they have to include weird, fantasy and horror stories to fill out the pages. Doesn't it strike you as strange, too, that Miss Caspinger seems to be having such a lot of trouble standardising her mags (now fused as one, I believe?). Despite the fact that she has had to pay out very little in authors' fees the magazine has been more erratic in price, publication and make up, than any other we've had. I think that the general reading public are not taking too kindly to the reprints, despite the eulogies from the fans. The style is too obsolete to pull the mag into higher circulation figures.

The exceptionally good stories have all fallen at times when there have been "highs" in sf: 1928-32; 1934-36; and, believe it or not, from 1940 up to the present. Today's stories may rate as "classics" in another five years or more, but I hope new readers then won't be fooled into believing that we were having super-stories in 1941. Such stories as "Slam", "If This Goes On...", "Final Blackout", "The Stars Look Down" and many others will be spoken and written about then as we today speak and write about "The Comets", "Skylark of Valeron", "Three Thousand Years" and "Rebirth" today. Or of earlier stories such as "The Moon Pool" and numerous others of the 1928-32 era.

So - don't let them fool you. Science fiction is as good today as it ever was, probably far better, owing to the rise in the literary standard. The war has shaken the publishing world quite a bit, both here and in America, and it will probably be shaken a

lot more before things are finished. But we don't have to go back to reprints as our sole means of support.

THOUGHTS OF THE GREAT...

IN Edward Garnett's excellent book of criticism, "Friday Nights", there is one chapter, written in 1914, in which he refers to the "insatiable appetite of the public for an art of sensational shocks and sentimental twaddle", adding a footnote - "We quote an American publisher's advertisement: 'The Book of Thrills', DARKNESS AND DAWN. By George All an England'; and so forth. 'Also you have a wonderful wooing under perfectly unheard-of conditions; an ideal love, pure, tender, unselfish. . . Beatrice's abduction, Allan's fight with a giant gorilla, the air-ship wreck, the thrilling defence against a horde of half-animal savages, and the building up of a new world and a beautiful idealistic civilisation on the ruins of a blasted planet - these but suggest the possibilities of entertainment of this big romance,' and so on". JFB

EDITORIAL . . . continued

Indeed, I should welcome discussion and at the suggestion of Sam Youd have started a series of articles on the Future of Civilisation, (on the admittedly optimistic assumption that it has a future), just to get things warmed up. Contributions to this series are invited and should attempt to trace present trends and determine the position that the arts, science and religion will assume in the world of tomorrow. A correspondence section will be included in the next issue, which will be enlarged slightly to accommodate this feature . . .

Whilst I have some good material on hand, articles, short stories, verse, drawings and even suggestions are welcomed for use in future issues. I hope some of the fans in the States will take the hint - I'll always be glad to hear from them. And to those American fans who are tempted to take out a subscription to the mag, I might whisper that current pro- and fanmags are most acceptable as payment, in lieu of hard cash . . .

In conclusion, I should like to thank those fans who have helped in the production of Zenith - in particular Mike Rosenblum and Doug Webster for their helpful adverts in Fido and Fay, and Art Williams for kindly sending along the contributions he had on hand when ill-health forced him to relinquish the publication of his fanmag.

HET

next issue... "PELICAN ISLAND" by
Marion F. Eadie

THE FUTURE OF CIVIL

ARTICLE 1 - The Town of Tomorrow

"We cannot build a good town while we hate the town, while we degrade it by regarding it only as a workshop from which to escape as often as possible, as a mere place of amusement or commerce, never as a home. The good town, therefore, must exist as an idea before it can be created as a fact. For it is more than a mere material fact, far more than an economic organisation. It is also, and perhaps principally, an attitude of mind. The good town will never be built until people again believe in the possibility of its being built. That belief, after a hundred years of the worst kind of town building, may be difficult to achieve. But upon its achievement rests all the hope of the future".

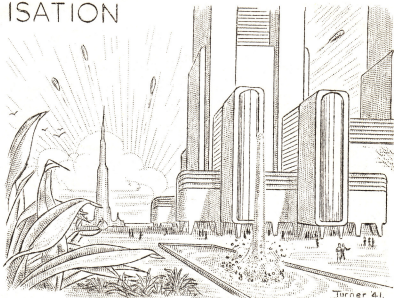
Thomas Sharp in Town Planning.

• • • • •

WITH the advent of the Industrial Revolution, social welfare became a subsidiary factor in the organisation of production - the quantity and quality of that produced was more important than the life that production involved. As a consequence of the feverish industrial activity of the last century, we have the oppressive congestion and absence of amenity in modern towns, the dismal rows of slums and careless intermingling of grim and grimy factories, railway yards and gasometers with shops and houses. It is not surprising that town dwellers should seek to escape from these degrading relics by departing to more open surroundings. But this exodus only results in the gradual encroachment of the town upon the rural districts with a ragged fringe of suburb and the whimsical disorder of ribbon development. Valuable agricultural land and beauty spots are remorselessly absorbed; time, money and traffic space are wasted on suburban travel and those unfortunates forced to remain in the town find the real countryside slipping further out of their reach every day. Those living in the suburbs find they have not only lost direct contact with the social excitements of the town - the crowds, shops, theatres, music and art - but with the pleasures of the countryside.

The semi-dispersal of the population in suburbs is no answer to the problem presented by our archaic towns. It has been suggested that the concept of suburbs be carried to its logical conclusion to bring about the "disurbanisation of the towns and urbanisation of the country". Such an absolute decentralisation and dispersion of urban districts is in some respects desirable, but under normal industrial conditions impracticable. It might be possible if we were an agricultural community; but we are mainly dependent on an industry based on mass production which demands the concentration of the workers at specific points. This complete union of town and country would only accentuate the economic and

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social disadvantages of suburbia; industry could not be run efficiently under such conditions.

It would seem that, despite such superficially attractive alternatives, the present division of town and country, suitably adapted to modern needs, is the ideal solution to the problem. By erecting small self-contained towns and transforming the old towns to make them healthy and efficient, we can put an end to the urban expansion that is despoiling the countryside.

But it is patently obvious that successful post-war reconstruction of the towns cannot be left to the whim of individuals or influenced solely by the profit motive; that only means a repetition of the sins of the Victorian age. There must be rational planning under national control, with social welfare as its essential motive. The town dweller should be provided with a home and work planned for his needs, so that his life is as rich and varied as he can make it - he should be emancipated from useless labour, wearisome travel and drab surroundings. Though in contact with the excitements that only urban life can produce, the citizen can only appreciate them to the full if the complementary pleasures of the countryside are readily accessible from all parts of the town. This means that the old towns must grow smaller and more compact, and must have far more open spaces and green belts in them. Those of our architectural beauties and historical relics which do not seriously interfere with the proper growth of national life will, of course, be preserved.

To have the towns compact and at the same time provide plenty of open ground can only be achieved through height and obviously calls for flats or skyscrapers. Both types of dwelling have been used in the wrong way; the mention of flats usually evokes visions of gloomy, stuffy tenement buildings - of skyscrapers, the ravine-like streets of New York's business quarter. But the proper use of flats or skyscrapers is not necessarily to crowd more people into a limited space, but to preserve most of that space as open land. If, in a certain area, nine out of every ten houses are built on top of the tenth, then no more people have been crowded into the area, but the ground that would have been occupied by those nine houses is extra open space. By adopting this principle at least 90% of a town could be open space, the remainder being given over to buildings distributed in an orderly pattern and at a considerable distance from each other over landscaped parkland.

The actual form of a town will be largely determined by geographical and economic factors, but it seems likely that the larger towns will be divided into two specific sections; one the business area, the other the residential area. The garden cities at Letchworth and Welwyn provide examples (but not entirely satisfactory ones) of how industrial and commercial enterprises can be included as units in a planned community. We are used to the idea of the heart of a town being the busiest place, but obviously a town centre is the most impractical place for traffic congestion. The residential and civic buildings might take the form of a central group with the business areas and main highways forming an outer ring, so transferring the town 'centre' to its borders and removing any possibility of traffic congestion.

The primary consideration in planning the central region is to get as much sun and air into the buildings as possible. So far as flats are concerned, the courtyard principle is unsuited to our climate; we need the benefit of the maximum amount of sunlight and the best arrangement to ensure this is to place the flats in lines running roughly from north to south with, say, a 30 degree light angle. Thus one face of every flat receives the benefit of the sun during the morning and the other face is sunlit during the afternoon. The small houses will be arranged in ordered groups, on the same lines, around the large apartment and civic buildings, combining variety with unity.

The towns should be designed for beauty as well as convenience; there should be no necessity to resort to a bogus 'modernistic' style or imitate some architectural style of the past. The newly evolved technique using steel and ferro-concrete has produced a new aesthetic of expressive massings and plain, clean lines. The radical innovation of suspending floors from a steel skeleton disposes of the need to pile up masonry to support the weight of a structure. Weight-bearing walls can be replaced by an outer wall that is no more than a protective skin, that can be glazed continuously without structural interruption if needs be.

Whilst not an immediate likelihood, it does seem probable that in the not-too-distant future, great blocks of apartment buildings will supersede the house as a home in the main cities. Most of the continental rehousing schemes have resulted in the erection of impressive blocks of flats; in this country, the flat colonies arising from the sites of demolished slums are symbolic

of the new era. These flats are more than mere dwellings - they are miniature towns housing thousands, with their own shops, schools, amusement, welfare and recreation centres, communal halls, libraries and gardens. Similarly, in the more distant future, the "town" will be concentrated into one huge building -- Olaf Stapledon draws a picture of such a development in the chapter "An Americanised Planet" in his book Last and First Men. Each "town" will take the form of a huge pylon, perhaps half a mile in diameter at the base and tapering to a height of two or more miles. Around the pinnacle of the structure will be platforms for the use of commercial and private aerial traffic; residential floors will occupy the mid-portion while business offices, shops, theatres and so forth, will be placed on the lower floors.

These gigantic columns will be spaced over the country, between industrial and agricultural areas, parkland and wild reserve. A system of broad thoroughfares and speedy monorail transport will link up the "towns", while mails and heavy freight will be sent by pneumatic underground tubes.

However, while it is interesting to speculate in this manner, we must not lose sight of the fact that present-day science and technology have provided us with the means of restoring order to our out-of-date towns - of transforming them into places planned for beauty and efficiency, for cleanliness and comfort. We should seize that opportunity . . . --

HET

Don't forget

that the next issue of ZENITH
is due out the first week in October !

With names like these, you can expect ZENITH to hit the zenith !

Don Doughty
DR Smith
HK Bulmer
Doug Webster
Marion F Eadie
Ted Carnell
H Gottliffe

Look out for their
contributions !

