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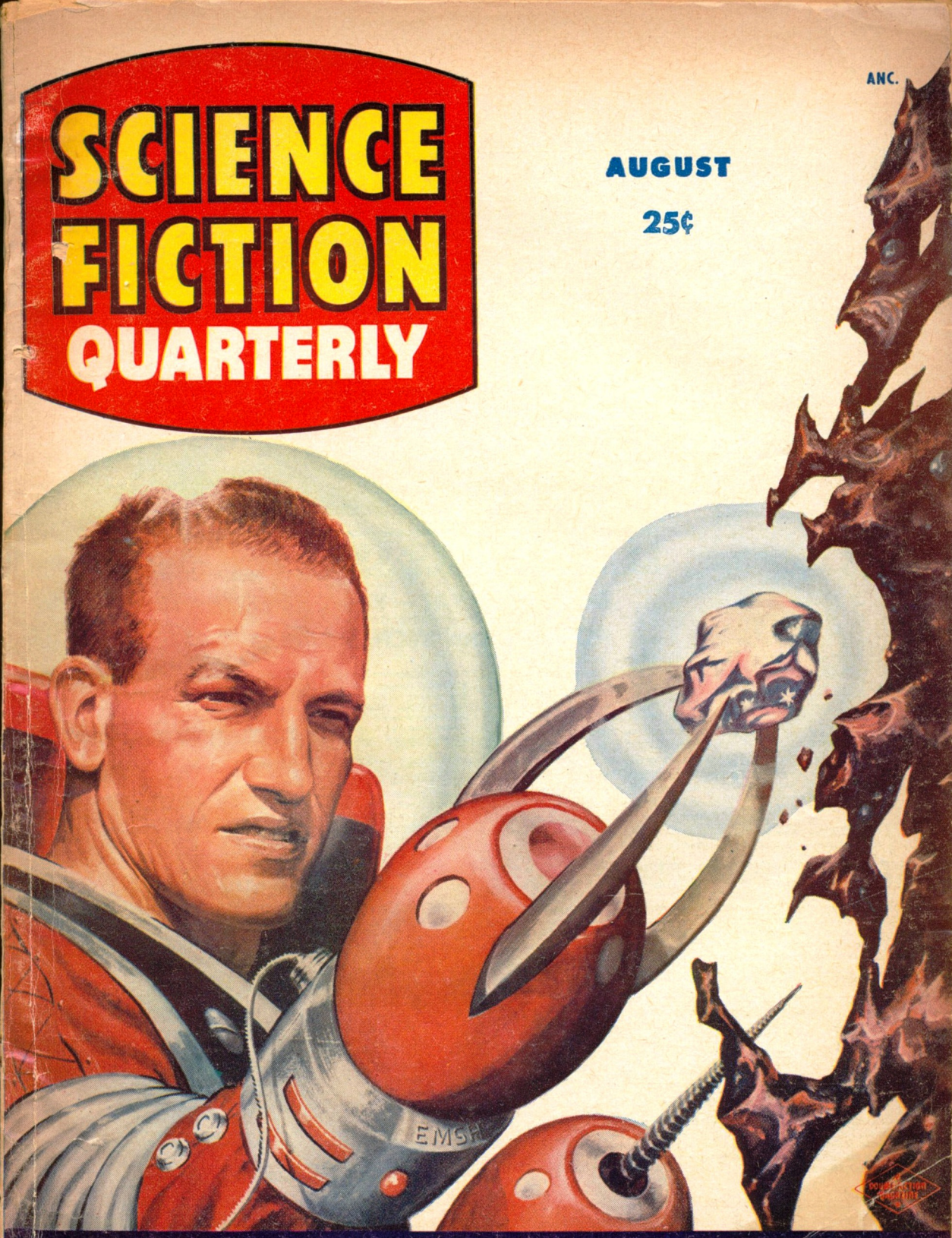

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Volume 3 August, 1955 Number 6

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY, August, 1955, published February, May, August, and November, by COLUMBIA PUBLICATIONS, INC., 1 Appleton Street, Holyoke, Mass. Editorial and executive offices at 241 Church Street, New York 13, New York. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at Holyoke, Mass., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Single copy 25¢; yearly subscription $1.00. Manuscripts must be accompanied by self-addressed envelopes to insure return if not accepted, and while reasonable care will be extended in handling them, it is understood that they are submitted at author's risk. Printed in U. S. A.

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"Good Lord!" Ben exclaimed in an awed whisper. . . . The woman's left forefinger rested on some sort of button . . .

There's no telling what you'll find, once you discover that an old legend is quite true...

BEYOND THE DOOR

Featured Novel Of Yesterday's Secrets

by SAM MERWIN JR.

illustrated by Freas

CONNIE SOMERS looked across the rusted round iron tabletop at Ben Warren. The bronzed outdoor-hardened version of him, so new to her, was washed in gold by the sunset. She decided she preferred this Ben Warren to the pale-faced, dedicated young assistant professor whose image had stapled itself to her heart in the reassuringly-familiar environment of Brattle Street and Beacon Hill.

Reading correctly the fond approval in his eyes as he returned her gaze, Connie felt all of her uncertainty, all of her unsureness, fade. She was glad now that she had followed him shamelessly to this desolate village in the Asturian hills, a pursuit flimsily masked by pretense of a routine pleasure jaunt to Paris and the French Riviera.

She knew that he knew the real purpose in her coming—and felt no trace of shame. If she was wearing her heart on the saffron sleeve of her tweed jacket, Ben was too much the gentleman and—she sensed with a small stir of excitement—too fond of her rudely to brush it off. But for all of her relief and happiness, Connie was not at ease. She scented a mystery—and she was a young woman who loathed mysteries.

Regarding more somberly the sharply-planed contours of his handsome homely face she said, "Ben, why won't you tell me what this is all about?"

One of his heavy eyebrows, bleached yellow by months of outdoor living, rose a fraction of an inch toward his straight-across hairline. He said, "But Connie, I *am* telling you. You're a breath of clear beauty, and an undeserved solace to a very lonely sinner like me. If you hadn't dropped out of the sky today I would probably be drunk by now—or making passes through sheer boredom at one of the mustachioed senoritas in the plaza."

Connie leaned back in the uncomfortable iron chair and made a small gesture of impatience, then brushed a strand of dark brown hair—cut newly short in Paris—back from her smooth low forehead. She said, "Ben, I'm not really the prying type—but I'm exceedingly—interested in you. I'm also exceedingly curious, and I can't understand what an assistant professor in Ancient History at Harvard is doing over here."

"And you want me to tell you." There was a faint suggestion of detachment, almost of mockery, in his half-smile—a suggestion that made her feel like a meddlesome puppy. She

wanted to embrace him and choke him at one and the same time.

"I want you to tell me," she echoed gravely. "Ben, if you must run halfway around the world to track down an obscure legend, why the legend of Don Lorenzo? Why not look for the Welch mountain, beneath which King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table are supposed to be buried?"

He hesitated, toyed with his glass. Then he said simply, "Because I think they're buried here."

For the moment, Connie was stopped by this apparent absurdity. She allowed her eyes to range the exotic panorama that surrounded them. They were seated at one of the two tiny tables on the weedgrown flagstone terrace of the tiny town's only inn. Like the rest of the ancient community it overlooked, this primitive tavern was built on the side of a hill.

Behind Connie, and to her right, rose the gaunt and forbidding barrier of the eastern Pyrenees. To her left and in front, the world itself seemed to fall away from her. She could look out over an erratic fairyland foreground of red-tile roofs and toy-block chimney pots, out over El Greco lowland meadows, to a distant turquoise triangle that was the Mediterranean Sea.

Connie, seashore-bred, had never cared much for mountains. To her they looked always a trifle dangerous, a trifle too dramatic for reality. In this case they wore a nightmare garment. Sitting on the wee terrace was like sitting on the rim of a world that was flat. She was unable completely to stifle a fear that, if she moved hastily or carelessly, she might fall over the edge. And the mountains at her back seemed almost to be pushing her toward the brink.

A MAN AND a woman—short, swarthy, hot of eye—passed slowly by on the steep road at her right elbow, the road that wound its way to extinction beneath the tiled roofs and chimney-pots. They walked with tired careful steps, leading a donkey whose hoofs clattered sharply on the cobbled pavement.

They and their ancestors, Connie thought, had fought stubbornly and savagely, and without quarter, against invaders from the mechanized legions of Mussolini to the shakoed grenadiers of Napoleon—and before Napoleon against the Moors—before the Moors against the Visigoths—before the Visigoths against the Romans—before the Romans...

Man, woman, donkey—they gave her a sense of utter timelessness. They made her feel singularly small, singularly unimportant.

Ben shattered her reverie. "Going to stay over for the festival next week?" he asked idly.

"What?" she asked, briefly lost. Then, "What festival?"

"Big deal," he told her. "The town's been getting ready for it for months. They hold it every ten years; haven't you read your travel folders, Connie?"

She shook her head. "I threw away my Baedecker," she said. Then, returning to the real matter at hand, "What makes you believe this Don Lorenzo is buried here?"

"It's a long story," he told her; "I don't want to bore you."

"Ben Warner!" she said severely, "I'm not quite an idiot. I want to know. And since I'm here I think I have a right to know."

"Very well." He frowned and turned his wineglass slowly on the rusted table. "I'll try to make it as brief as I can. Terse, succinct—that's me." His smile tugged at her heart. He added, "When you mentioned King Arthur, you supplied part of the background."

"I don't understand," she said, puzzled. "What has King Arthur to do with this part of the world?"

"He's another branch of the legend," he said, hesitated, then went on with,

"In England you have the old story of Arthur and his Knights waiting within their secret hollow hill for a summons to aid their country in its hour of greatest travail. Drake's Drum is merely a more modern version of the same story. There are like legends all over Europe. In Denmark—remember your Hans Christian Anderson?—in France. In Central Europe, it's Barbarossa. And always the hollow hill."

He paused, peered at her in the fading sunset, added, "Doesn't it strike you as strange that the same legend should co-exist in so many scattered places?"

"Wish-fulfillment," said Connie, who had taken a senior course in psychiatry at Radcliffe, to go along with her Junior League hospital work.

"Perhaps." He frowned again. "Or perhaps there is an underlying core of truth that awaited the finder—some protoplasmic reality, upon which all of the legends are based."

Connie opened her mouth to scoff at such superstition, then closed it quickly as she recalled the German professor who, acting on belief and legend alone, had uncovered the nine ruined cities of Ancient Troy and proved legend, in that instance, to be based on fact. "But why Don Lorenzo?" she asked.

"I stumbled on a lead in the British Museum, when I was taking my sabbatical in London two years ago," he told her. "I found a document that revealed the Don Lorenzo legend was very much alive in the days of pre-Caesarian Rome. The Romans called him Laurentius, and his lady Marna instead of Donna Marina."

He hesitated, seeking plausibility, then said, "There was a feeling of truth to the matter-of-fact Roman report—I can't put it any more clearly than that. Furthermore they actually named the hill in which, according to the natives, Don Lorenzo and Donna Marina were supposed to have retired, to wait until the world was ready for their re-emergence. It was legend even in their day—but at least the Romans pinpointed it."

"How would the Romans have known?" Connie asked, curious.

BEN SHOOK his head and smiled faintly, then looked down. He stamped a foot on the flagstones beneath him. He said, "The stones in this terrace were once part of a great Roman road. You may not believe it, but this was once a major link in one of the world's super-highways. The Romans mined gold and silver in these hills."

"You sound like Hopalong Cassidy," Connie said tartly.

"When you say that, smile," Ben told her. Then, again serious, "In ancient times the natives regarded this particular hill as sacred; they wouldn't walk within a Roman mile of it without taking special pagan precautions."

"I still don't think you're telling me the whole truth, Ben," Connie said bluntly. "It sounds like a wildgoose chase to me."

"There's a good chance you're right, of course," replied Ben. "But think, Connie, how little we actually know about the pre-historic development of Western Europe. Oh, we know there were civilizations of sorts here long before the Romans took over—the Carthaginians and the Phoenicians tell us that.

"But we don't know where these peoples came from. One school has it that they migrated across the Great Northern Plain from the Caucasus and the River Oxus. Another school has it that they came out of Ancient Egypt. Still another believes that the primitive Western Europeans were survivors of a lost cililization that flourished in what is now the Sahara Desert. But nobody actually knows—and think of what it will mean if we can turn up a clue to the truth!"

Connie looked at him and sighed and shook her head. She said, "Ben,

you're still not telling me the whole truth. Why is Consolidated Metals backing this field-trip of yours, if your purpose is purely archeological?"

For a moment he looked startled. Then a corner of his mouth quirked upward in what might have been a half-smile. He said resignedly, "So you know about that too, Connie."

"I'm sorry." She was unable to meet the accusation in his eyes. "I guess maybe I shouldn't have—but, Ben, I *had* to know. Why are they backing you, Ben?" Her voice was soft, pleading.

"You win." He lifted his glass, drained it. Then he said, "I know you're not a talker, Connie—but it's so damned hush-hush. The crux of the matter goes back to Don Lorenzo's magic sword. He had one, you know."

"Like King Arthur's Excalibur?" she inquired, puzzled.

"Probably—perhaps it was even the same sword. You see"—he leaned forward, his face alight with eagerness in the twilight—"the magic sword legends *are* real. Generally, these swords were the result of somebody stumbling on a hunk of meteoric steel. When they forged a blade from this accidental high-alloy composition, it cut through the iron and bronze blades and armor of the era like butter. So these occasional super-swords were tagged with magic."

"Logical," said Connie. "I had no idea. But still..." She hesitated.

"Not all of them were meteoric in origin," Ben told her. "In the Middle Ages, a large vein of volcanic nickel vanadium steel was discovered in Central Europe. Much of the supremacy of the Teutonic Knights and the Holy Roman Empire was founded on this natural alloy. Nothing around them was able to stand up against their weapons. And with superior arms and armor, they controlled most of the continent."

"I think I'm beginning to understand —a little," she said. She felt a vast relief that there was so practical a purpose underlying Ben's apparently whimsical research. If Consolidated Metals thought enough of the idea to put up the money...

As if he could read her thoughts he said, "Consolidated Metals got a prospector's confidential report on a trace of vanadium found near here in the Eastern Pyrenees. That was back before the Nazis invaded Poland and started the mess. It was all very top-secret."

"Of course." She smiled and reached across the tabletop to touch her fingers to the back of one of his sun-browned hands. She said, "Have you found anything yet, darling?"

His blue eyes glowed, either from the question, from the term of endearment or both. He said, "We're on the trail of *something*, never fear. Mack—that's Mack Douglass, our geologist and a damned good one too—Mack is satisfied that we've uncovered proof of an ancient landslide on the south slope of our hill. Erosion has worn the top-soil pretty thin. We ought to be breaking through the slag-layer beneath any day now."

"I want to be there when you do," she said simply.

He shook his head again and sighed again—but his eyes were still aglow with double excitement. He said amiably, "Connie, for an arrogant, interfering, driving busybody female, you are probably the loveliest woman I have ever met."

"And for a pedantic, text-book-ridden, intellectual snob, darling, you are undoubtedly the loveliest man," she replied, wrinkling her slightly-tilted nose at him.

"Come to think of it I *am* quite lovely," he assured her.

"Oh, shut up," she said, pushing back her iron chair. "Come on—let's take a walk through the town before supper."

2

THREE DAYS later Connie sat alone on a gaunt windswept hillside, still awaiting news of the first break through the layer of shale. She wore pale blue slacks and a tan angora sweater, and a red kerchief tied around her head to keep her short-cut hair from blowing into her eyes. She sat, as she had sat through most of the two previous days, on a double-folded plaid automobile robe, held down to windward by a wicker picnic hamper.

Yet Connie was not bored, despite the mounting tension and frustration she felt among the men on the job—especially Ben and Mack Douglass. It was pleasant to have a ringside seat under the golden Spanish sun. She enjoyed opening the hamper and listening to Ben and Mack growl shoptalk at one another during lunchtime. And there were always the evenings to think about, when she and Ben were alone, whether they walked through the noisy streets of the ancient town, or took off somewhere in her rented MG.

The town itself was stirring visibly, shaking itself, preparing for the festival. Its excitement more than matched the mounting tension of days at the hill. It was, Connie thought idly, happily, a good thing to be Constance Somers, a good time to be alive.

She lifted her brown eyes from the diggings, a scant brassie-shot away across a shallow much-eroded ravine populated by low olive-colored shrubs and occasional jackrabbits. The hill in which Don Lorenzo was supposed to have taken shelter rose like a flat-crowned derby in front of her.

Behind it rose other hills, each topping the other in a pattern that reminded Connie of an artichoke, mounting ultimately to the gaunt crests of the Pyrenees. Beyond this mountain barrier Connie could, without closing her eyes, envision the incredibly turreted triple walls of Carcasonne and, beyond Carcasonne, the sunswept tiles and mullions of Nimes, the immense crumbling papal palace of Avignon, the olive-planted and gentle slopes of Provence.

She sang, very softly for her voice was not true, and she disliked making public whatever she could not do flawlessly—

Sur le pont, d'Avignon,
l'on y dance, l'on y dance.
Sur le pont, d'Avignon,
l'on y dance, tout en ronde.
Les grands messieurs font comme ca, et puis encore, comme—

She stopped, shivering, as a chill breeze from the north swept through the gentle valley, reached for her tweed coat and gathered herself close together within its loose-woven woolen folds. She really should, she thought, have brought along her furs. This high in the mountains it was cold for a Mediterranean July.

Her eyes strayed to the ugly brown gash in the hillside where local laborers, under the guidance of Ben and the shrewd seasoned Mack Douglass, were slowly cutting their way through the skin of the magic refuge of Don Lorenzo. She closed her eyes, seeking a mental picture of the legend upon which its magic rested.

First in neutrals greys, then in bright technicolor, she could see quite sharply the mythical Don Lorenzo—or Laurentius as the Romans called him—betrayed by his miserable followers and finally overwhelmed in battle, despite the mystical powers of his magic sword. She saw him, wounded and bleeding copiously, borne back to the hidden refuge within the hill upon a floating palanquin steered by the goddess known to local legend as Donna

Marina. She could visualize Donna Marina even more clearly than her wounded consort—a great-limbed Valkeirie of a woman with long flowing blonde hair—holding at bay her lover's filthy troglodyte foes until he was safe within his magic refuge.

It seemed to her that she could actually hear the shouts of barbarian triumph as the fierce hairy bowlegged skinclad little men surged in upon their prey—and then, with a start, she became aware that the shouts she heard were not part of a vision or dream. They were real—real and close at hand, Ben's voice triumphant among them. She heard him call her own name.

Opening her eyes, she saw that he was running toward her, panting his way up the slope to where she sat, beckoning wildly. His voice was borne to her on the wind—"Connie, come on! We're *through*—we've *found* it!"

She got up and walked toward him and then he reached her and grabbed an arm and yanked her down the slope toward the magic mountain. She stumbled and almost fell over a small rock and cried out but he refused to let her go. "Come on," he said, gasping. "Come *on!*"

AT THE DIGGINGS, even the usually inarticulate Mack Douglass, a whipped-steel and rawhide Texan, was giving vent to shrill Rebel yells and pounding the chunky little chief digger on the back. He saw her and shouted, "There'll be a hot time in this old town tonight, Miss Somers. Yipp-*eeeeeee!*"

Ben grabbed her other arm and hugged her and lifted her high in the air, ignoring her pleas to be put down. He was laughing like a runny-nosed brat at a surprise birthday party. Still holding her aloft he kissed her roughly and squeezed the breath out of her and said exultantly, "Honey, I never thought we'd make it. The whole inside of the hill is hollow."

The whole business, now that it was actually happening, seemed thoroughly unreal to Connie. Yet the excitement around her was infectious. She felt its spur as she scrambled through a shored-up shaft at the base of the hill, stooping to avoid bumping her head.

Save for Mack's electric lantern it was dark and dank, and faintly noisome—and all at once she knew she was afraid. It was true, of course, that Mack and the head digger had entered the hill and emerged unharmed. But still...

"It's okay, Miss Somers," said Mack in his reassuringly soft West Texas drawl. He put a supporting hand beneath her elbow, added, "There's nothing in here to hurt a flea."

She laughed, a trifle nervously, but went on. Ben, who had plunged ahead of them, was standing bolt upright at the end of the diggers' shaft, examining with the aid of a flashlight the jagged edge of a thin metal door through which Mack and his miners had been compelled to blast.

He said to nobody in particular, "Unless I'm crazy, this is made of some sort of stainless steel. How do you make it, Mack?"

"I don't know—yet," replied the geologist. "We're gonna have to send to the Madrid office for some metallurgists."

"But good Lord, Mack—think what it means!" Ben exulted. "It means there was a prehistoric civilization here that knew the secrets of modern metal alloys and casting and rolling. It means the complete overturning of all accepted archeological theories."

"Wait till you get inside," cautioned Mack. "It may mean more than that, Ben. Me, I dunno what it means."

Ben stared at him, his eyes a little wild in the gleam of the flashlights. Then, grabbing Connie's near arm again, he drew her on inside the blasted metal door. His flashlight made weird ovals on walls and floor and ceiling until Mack came through after

them and set up his lantern to give steadier illumination.

Connie, standing alone, found herself clutching her throat. She was within some sort of large circular chamber, smoothly floored and walled and ceiled with unrusted metal. Dark ovals at regular intervals suggested that a half-dozen passages spoke out from this central hub. There were odd-looking pieces of metal furniture along the walls here and there, and even stranger machines, that reminded Connie of modernistic sculpture mobiles.

"What are they, darling?" she asked in a small scared voice. She asked the question, not because she expected to be told, but because the strange room frightened her and she felt the need of hearing not only her own voice but someone else's. The air was still edged with the foulness of thousands of years, though the hillside passage had been open for more than half an hour.

Ben stooped to examine a deceptively simple complex of shining plates and wires and tubes. He shook his head and said without looking at her, "Who knows? But you can bet your bottom dollar that we're going to find out before we're through."

"We better get us some pictures before anything happens," said Mack. He went back to the entrance and began yelling orders to the men outside the hollow hill in execrable but intelligible Spanish.

Ben went on exploring and Connie, terrified of being left by herself, tagged at his heels. They explored a passage that led to even larger and stranger looking machines. They explored a passage that led to what must have been a barracks or living quarters of some kind—although bedding and mattresses had long since crumbled to nothingness.

Connie numbly toed a small heap of what looked like dirt on the floor. "What's this?" she asked. "There are a lot of these all over the place. There doesn't seem to be any reason for them."

Ben looked at her, his face strangely somber in the distorting glow of the flashlight. He said, "Connie, those were probably people once—perhaps people like you and me. Ashes to ashes..."

"...and dust to dust," Connie murmured for him. She withdrew her huarached toe quickly from the remains of what might once have been a man—or maybe a woman. She shivered and took Ben's arm and hugged it tightly with both of hers.

"Come on, honey," he said matter-of-factly. "Let's take a look at the next passage."

IT MIGHT have been one of the others—save that it ended abruptly at a transparent door that looked and felt like glass. "Funny!" muttered Ben. He flashed his light around its edges, which were flush with the corridor wall. Then he raised the beam and sent it straight through the glass barrier to see what lay beyond it.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed in an awed whisper.

Connie said nothing. The woman on the other side of the glass door was seated in a simple and comfortable-looking chair, poised over some sort of instrument panel against the right hand side wall. Her left forefinger rested on some sort of button, one of a row along a horizontal extension of the vertical panel, an extension that swung desk-like out over her lap.

She seemed to be regarding Ben and Connie with a sidelong glance of mild alarm. For one horrifying moment, Connie thought she was alive. But though the pale green eyes glittered in the beam of Ben's flashlight, the eyelids never blinked—just kept on regarding them with silent mild alarm.

Her generous lips were slightly parted, as if she were about to speak. Pale red hair fell to smooth white shoulders without a strand misplaced. Even seat-

ed, this woman was obviously tall, and still more obviously beautiful. Her only garment, a singlet of some metallic light green cloth, clung to the magnificent slim opulence of her figure.

She was a big woman, big and strong, yet perfectly proportioned. She was Juno, Hera, a queen among goddesses. Despite the alarm in her face, behind it lurked strength and pride and courage and poise. She was, Connie realized, with a shaft of sudden annoyance, the very stuff of which men's most passionate dreams have been made for millennia.

"Marna—Donna Marina!" Ben exclaimed softly. He stared at her through the glass door as if hypnotized. Connie, painfully conscious of her smaller stature—and suddenly unattractive darkness of hair and eyes and skin—had to tug hard at his arm to regain his attention.

And when Ben smiled down at her his smile was vague, and a trifle pitying—as though, having seen the vision through the door, he found Connie and all other women unreal. He said in oddly hushed tones, "It's incredible—incredible! After thousands of years! Who is she, and where did she come from; and why?"

"It won't interest Amalgamated Metals," Connie said tartly, and could cheerfully have chewed off her tongue at the roots.

But Ben merely smiled dreamily at her and said, "What we have stumbled on here is worth more than all the vanadium ore in the world."

It was so obviously true that there was nothing more she could say. She felt vast relief when Mack appeared, with a couple of the Asturian miners, thus provoking bi-lingual conversation. She gathered that the other three corridors were blocked by steel barriers like that at the outer entrance.

"Better not blast now," Ben told his colleague quietly. "Lord knows what we've fallen into! We need experts before we go further."

"We can keep on photographing," said the practical Mack. Then, casting an eye on the now-floodlighted beauty at the instrument panel. "Brother, what a dish! I can get her message without a receiver."

For one awful moment, Connie thought that Ben was going to hit him. She could feel the muscles of his arm tense against her own. Then Ben shuddered and relaxed and said, "Dish is hardly the word."

"Make it a ten-course meal then," said Mack. He turned to a couple of the miners, who were staring goggle-eyed at the redheaded woman, and issued a string of orders in his wretched Spanish.

3

BEN WAS unusually quiet late that afternoon when they got back to the inn. Instead of the enthusiasm that, to Connie, would have been normal at having successfully pulled off such an apparently crackpot achievement as actually finding the hollow hill of Don Lorenzo, he revealed a self-withdrawal that amounted to moroseness.

"...and where do you suppose they came from?" Connie asked the question for the third time across the rust-topped table.

Ben's eyes came briefly into focus. He shrugged, replied, "Who knows? Maybe Mars, maybe Atlantis. When I think of that girl..."

"Girl!" said Connie sharply. "Strictly empress-size. Why, she must be almost as big as the mountain."

But Ben was not listening and Connie perforce lapsed into discontented silence. She tried to tell herself that his behavior was entirely understandable—that there were so many things to do,

so many decisions to reach, that so much of possible world import hung upon his making those decisions wisely...

There was the matter of keeping the find a secret. This had involved Mack Douglass' setting up a camp at the hill and offering triple pay. It would never do to have word of the miraculous find leak out in the town, especially at fiesta time. And most of the miners had wives and children, or girl-friends.

There had been coded wires to send to Madrid, coded cablegrams to get off to America—for the telephone lines were far from safe. And there would be more of them to send. No, having made his discovery, Ben's work was just beginning.

He said, more to himself than to Connie, "Eli Cooper is on his way from New York. I almost wish we could seal up the hill again." He clenched a fist tightly around his wineglass, until Connie feared it would shatter under the pressure and cut his hand.

She felt a rare moment of near-psychic affinity with him. It was as if his head were laid open and his mind unfolded like a book before her. Eli Cooper was just a name to her—a name associated with huge industrial combines, with Consolidated Metals.

And Ben resented his coming, as he would have resented the intrusion of any other man. He wanted the red-headed woman behind the transparent door for himself. Mack and the diggers he had to accept. But he wanted no one else in on his discovery.

She said, merely to break a silence that had become unbearable, "I've heard of Eli Cooper; this really is big, isn't it?"

He looked at her vaguely, replied, "Probably the biggest thing in recorded history. We can't even begin to estimate its importance."

"It's a good thing the government finally got friendly with Franco," she said idly.

He shrugged again, said, "Let's eat."

Mack came in and sat down as they were finishing their eels in oil and rice. Connie was actually grateful, though heretofore she had resented any intrusion upon her time alone with Ben. He said, "Well, we're finally operating. It was worse than pulling hen's teeth, but old Esteban finally convinced the men they'd better stay. I've got to go into town after dinner and pass the word to their families."

Ben grunted and Mack looked at Connie with lifted brows. "What's got into him?" the geologist wanted to know.

"He's in love with Donna Marina," said Connie and once more wished she could buy a zipper for her mouth.

Ben looked up at her mildly, said, "Hah!" and put his attention back on his plate. Mack's food arirved then and put an end to any further table talk. They had figs for dessert and the swarthy innkeeper interrupted Ben with word that he was wanted on the long-distance telephone. When Ben had gone he lingered by the table, obviously aburst with curiosity.

"You find something today?" he asked in what passed with him for English.

"We hit a pocket of metal," said Mack. "It may prove valuable."

The boniface looked from Mack to Connie, seeking to read their faces. He said, "You find Don Lorenzo maybe?"

Mack chuckled and shook his head. "We definitely did not find Don Lorenzo," he said, winking at Connie. Then, when their host had retired in confusion, "Better take a walk downtown with me, Miss Somers; it looks like Ben's gonna be tied up for awhile."

Automatically Connie started to refuse the invitation. Then she thought, *Why not? Ben doesn't even know I'm alive*. She got up from the table, saying, "I'd love to—thanks, Mack. And call me Connie for Lord's sake. I'm not quite as dead as that woman up there." Her eyes turned toward the currently-invisible hill of Don Lorenzo.

CONNIE had not ventured into the town for a couple of days and was surprised at evidences of preparation for the coming fiesta. The ancient community seemed literally to hum with excited anticipation, reminding her of a swarm of bees that had settled in an apple tree in the yard of her family's summerhouse at Cohasset.

Vivid bits of bunting, forerunners of the colorful display of the day after the morrow, were already fluttering from upstairs windows of some of the grey-stone houses. The reds, yellow, oranges and greens that dominated the local spectrum seemed exotic to Connie, accustomed as she was to a lifetime of red, white and blue.

Bevies of laughing senoritas, with coal-black hair and dancing eyes and not-yet-fat voluptuous figures, swayed along the cobbles, making giggling way for dark-skinned males—some of them clad gaily in advance of the fiesta, but most looking strangely drab and somber in ill-cut black suits and round black fedoras.

Older people, many of them obviously well-filled with wine, made smiling way for the younger folk who filled the street, along with occasional horses and donkeys, and one brass-fronted Model-T Ford, whose driver squeezed a rubber-bulbed horn with futile exasperation.

Mack made his call, and found Esteban's wife in, and reported the state of affairs at the diggings. Which reminded Connie that up in the hills sat a magnificent redheaded woman, as she had sat for untold centuries, looking her alarm at something that had turned to dust all others who were with her.

His business concluded, Mack took her to a tiny bistro, where they were lucky enough to find a table at the rear. Over a bottle of bitter red wine, and a dish of black olives and pickled peppers, she said, "Mack, just what did you find up there today?"

He sighed and said, "I'm trying not to think about it, Miss—Connie; I'm not even sure I believe it. After all, I'm just a simple Texas boy, and I'm not used to opening up hills and finding them hollow and packed with gismoes that haven't even been invented yet."

"Where do you think they came from?" Connie asked him. "Ben talked a lot of nonsense about Atlantis or Mars."

"His guess is as good as anyone else's," said Mack seriously. "They didn't come from any known scientific culture, that's for sure."

"What about *her?*" Connie wanted to know.

Mack plucked the pit of an olive from his mouth, deposited it carefully on the table in front of him. He said, "We had a couple of cats on our place when I was a tadpole. They used to present us with a fine litter of kittens four times a year. I was crazy about those cats. My Uncle Zeb wanted to make me a present one Christmas. He kinda fancied himself as a photographer—had all kinds of gear.

"So he took a picture of Miss Alamo—that was the tabbycat's name so we wouldn't forget her—and had it tinted up and framed it and gave it to me. I hung it up on the wall of my room." He paused and looked quickly and searchingly to see how Connie was taking it.

Then, "You know, this is kinda hard to credit but old Rubbers—that was the tomcat's name, he was so soft of foot—fell in love with that picture. He used to lie on my bed and look at it and wouldn't give Miss Alamo any time at all. She like to have pined away.

"But one day when I was playing ball in the yard I hit a ball right through my bedroom window and busted that picture to smithereens. After that the cat-life around the place went back to normal; but it was sure rough for awhile."

In spite of herself Connie smiled. She said, "Mack Douglass, you know as well as I do that cats can't see two-dimensional pictures."

"Miss Connie, these were *Texas* cats," Mack said gravely.

This time she laughed out loud. When she finally stopped, the geologist said, "You know, that's the first time I've heard you laugh, Miss Connie. It's a right pretty sound."

"Thank you, Mack," said Connie. "You're sweet." Then, after a pause, "But didn't Miss Alamo do something about it?"

"She did what she could," he replied. "And while Rubbers was having a fling with the picture, she presented us with the darnedest looking messed-up litter of kittens I ever did see. Some of us kids thought she got tangled up with a coyote that was howling around the place after dark." He hesitated, added, "Not that I'm suggesting . . ."

"It's all right, Mack," she said softly. "The only hitch is that Rubbers fell in love with a picture of his own mate. But I'm afraid I'm outclassed by Donna Marina—if that's who she is."

"It's a pity she's not alive," Mack said thoughtfully. "Then maybe she could be induced to cut her own throat. But this way. . ."

"Then all you suggest is that I sit it out?" she asked him.

He nodded. "For the time being," he said. "A lot of things can happen—a lot of things are gonna happen about what we found today."

"Let's hope some small boy hits a homerun," she replied.

"Excuse me," said Mack. He got up and crossed to the door, where a cute little sloe-eyed senorita was standing. Managing to watch, without looking too obvious about it, Connie saw her tiny hand caress his sleeve as he talked to her. Evidently, she thought, Mack was managing to get along well in town. And she thought, *Why not? He's a mighty attractive rasher of man.* She wished, almost bitterly that she weren't so hopelessly stuck with being in love with Ben.

And that damned redheaded Valkeirie, dead as mutton behind her transparent door, untouchable, inviolable and—to Ben, irresistible. She recalled how close Ben had come to striking Mack, in the mine that afternoon, when Mack had referred to Donna Marina as a dish.

SHE SIPPED at her wine and repressed a gasp as a tall man, clad in a tunic of coarse burlap with a fur skin of some animal worn over one shoulder and a battered helmet ornamented with two curving horns entered the bistro, pushing past Mack and the girl. He looked like the embodiment of all Viking legends.

What, Connie wondered, was a Viking doing in these southern hills? For a moment she was stumped. Then she realised that this must be a member of the fiesta, perhaps just out of a fitting or a dress rehearsal, attired as a Visigoth. And then she thought, *But he's not really so ancient. The Romans were before him, and the Carthaginians, and before them the Phoenicians. And Donna Marina was a legend even to them.* She wondered when the woman had come, and why, and whence.

Mack came back and sat down with a muttered, "Sorry; just a little business to attend to."

"Nice business," Connie told him. "Don't let me stop you."

"I won't," he said frankly. "Maybe we'd better mosey on back to the inn when we finish this bottle."

Connie smiled and made some meaningless rejoinder. She was suddenly and for the first time in her life overwhelmed with a sense of being out of place, of not belonging. And it was a sensation she disliked acutely. For she had always been assured of her place.

Generations of proper and improper Bostonian ancestors had seen to that. Her place as the only child in her family was assured from birth. Her place in Miss Windsor's School had likewise been set, as had her ultimate Junior League and Vincent Club memberships,

followed by election to the Chilton Club.

Even away from Boston, in New York or Baltimore or even San Francisco, that place was assured and waiting for her whenever she chose to occupy it. It even extended to pleasant circles in London or Paris or Rome; there were always people who knew her and her family, and were willing to welcome her hospitably.

But here, in this little town in Iberia, no one knew Connie Somers or her family—no one save Ben. And now Ben was lost to her, had forsaken her for a dead woman in a hollow hill. She felt alone for the first time, truly alone. And she hated it.

She said, "Mack, you go ahead and keep your date with the senorita. You've got plenty to celebrate and I'm a bit funereal for such a festive occasion. I'll walk back to the inn alone."

"You sure you'll be okay." he asked her chivalrously.

"I'll be okay," she said. "You go on and have kittens."

"Miss Connie!" he exclaimed reproachfully.

When she got back to the inn, the magic had gone from the starlight. They were just cigar butts burning in a huge black ashtray. Ben had turned in, but had left a note for her. Hopefully she opened it and read —

Connie —

Be an angel and drive to the airport tomorrow at ten and pick up Eli Cooper, will you? I'm afraid I'm going to be tied up at the diggings, so after you get him settled here at the inn, bring him on out there to meet us. Thanks,

Ben.

She tore it up and dumped it into the vase that served as a sort of lobby catchall. Then she went slowly upstairs to her room. What bothered her most was the knowledge that she was going to do as Ben asked; she would do anything he asked. She didn't like herself very much just then.

4

CONNIE had heard and read stories about the United States Air Force's effort in Spain—about the bases that were being built or built-up to give the Powers a foothold on Europe, south of Pyrenees. But when she pulled the little rented MG to a halt shortly before ten o'clock the next morning, after a bumpy ride over a half-paved road whose surface resembled a map of the moon, she saw that the Air Force rehabilitation program had not reached this particular field.

Perhaps, during the civil war years of the Thirties, it had been a busy airport, efficiently managed by one or another of the European nations who used that war as a laboratory field-test for their latest death-machines. But it looked as if it had scarcely been used since; even the windsock needed darning.

Eli Cooper's plane put in its appearance close to the end of Connie's second cigaret, and wobbled into a bouncy landing on the grass-grown strip. When no baggage truck appeared, she started the MG and wheeled it out onto the strip alongside the cabin-monoplane.

Cooper got out, took a single large suitcase from a handler inside and deposited both bag and himself in the little sports car. He smiled at Connie with his teeth and said, *"Gracias, senorita."* She noticed he glanced quickly at her left hand before saying *senorita.*

Connie was tempted to go along with the gag, but decided her Spanish wasn't good enough. So she said, "Ben Warren asked me to get you settled at the inn, and drive you out to the diggings."

He turned in his seat to look at her

more carefully. This time he smiled with the skin around his eyes as well as his teeth. He said, "Hel-*lo!* A fellow American. What are you doing in this godforsaken end of the earth?"

She shrugged, told him, "I'm a friend of Ben's; and there's this festival thing coming off tomorrow."

"Oh, yes—the festival. I'd forgotten about that," said Cooper. Then, "Ben didn't tell us anything about *you.*"

"He didn't know about me," she said curtly; "I just arrived."

As they drove toward the inn she tried to make up her mind about Eli Cooper. At first she had thought him an unexpected example of her kind of man. Sun-tanned, wearing tweed jacket and slacks, with an Aquascutum all-purpose coat over one arm, he had looked like an apt replacement for almost any of the Boston gentlemen she knew.

But cracks in this facade were quick to appear. His tweed jacket was not quite of a correct pattern and there were actually creases in his sleeves; his trousers were too well-pressed; his lowcut Oxfords a trifle too fancy. His necktie looked hand-painted.

Furthermore, there was a taut intensity about his manner that bespoke a restless insecurity. And a trace of nasal flatness in his accent suggested the equally flat, if not so nasal, prairies of Kansas or Iowa. Connie's total reaction was one of distrust, blended with a very definite distaste. Here, she thought, was a selfmade man.

How, she thought, could you trust such a man? His ambition, and the utter self-interest demanded to achieve its aims, rendered him utterly insensitive to any respectable standards of conduct. The fact of his evident importance, while still apparently on the sunny side of forty, merely added to his untrustworthiness.

He said little during the ride to the inn and Connie did nothing to relieve the silence. Once or twice she caught him looking at her covertly, frowning slightly as he sought to size her up. It gave her a certain degree of amusement to realise that his distrust of her seemed at least to match hers of him.

HE PAUSED in the room prepared for him only to drop his bag, then called Madrid from the lobby to report his safe arrival. Then he said, "I hate to put you to the trouble, Miss, but I'll need a lift to the scene of operations."

"That seems to be my job," she said, putting out her cigaret in a clamshell that served as an ashtray.

When they reached the diggings, he said, "Would you mind waiting a moment, Miss—?"

"Somers," she said and he nodded acknowledgement as he got out of the car and walked up toward the gash in the magic mountain. He revealed his ambition even in his walk—quick, short steps with head thrust slightly forward, as if he were unable to wait for his feet to convey him to his destination. She smiled at a dark-skinned miner who seemed to be on sentry-duty at the entrance. He smiled back, revealing twin rows of amazingly white teeth.

She wondered how Ben would take Cooper's arrival on the scene; until now, the entire project had been Ben's baby. From now on it would be less and less so, as various types of officaldom moved in to study and exploit his findings.

She thought about the woman behind the transparent partition and wondered how *she* was going to enjoy having her long solitude further disturbed. It was, Connie discovered, difficult for her not to think of the redheaded Valkeirie as alive. But dead or alive, the cave-woman was a rival for Ben's emotions.

She wished she had a gun or some sort of weapon with which to shatter the glass barrier. For once it was shattered, the redhead would crumble to dust, like the other denizens of the hollow hill. This was no sleeping beauty to be wakened with a kiss.

She had heard of cases like it—of

long-dead folk forgotten for centuries in mediaeval dongeon or oubliette, who had looked to be alive when come upon, only to crumble to ash within minutes after coming in contact with fresh air.

She would like nothing better than to give the redhead a good airing; that would put an end to her problem with Ben.

She grew tired of waiting. She knew it was wrong to intrude just then, but she had to know what was happening inside the hill. She scrambled out of car and trudged up the side of the ravine to the diggings' adit. Esteban, the foreman, appeared in the gateway and bobbed his head and smiled at her.

He said, "I am sorry, *Senorita* Somers, but you cannot come in here now —only vouched-for members of the operation."

Eli Cooper, she thought, hadn't wasted much time. Even the words Esteban spoke in his heavily accented English sounded like the words of a Cooper. She said, "It's okay, Esteban. I just want to pay Mr. Warren a visit; after all, I'm working for him too."

"But you are not vouched for, *Senorita,*" said Esteban, looking distressed. "I am sorry, but—"

"Get Mr. Warren," she said. "He'll vouch for me."

"*Senor* Warren is busy," said Esteban unhappily.

But he went. Connie waited restlessly, kicked at a clod of yellow dirt. A few minutes later Mack Douglass came hurrying out, looking more distressed than Esteban. He said, "Sorry as hell, Miss Connie, but Ben's all tied up with Mr. Cooper."

"I'll be a mouse," said Connie. "I just want to know what's going on. After all, I was here when you opened it up."

"I know," said Mack. He sighed. "Mr. Cooper has given orders. We're all sealed up; *no*body gets in here without an okay from him." He paused, then blurted, "Look at it this way, Miss Connie. He doesn't know you from Adam—"

"Then he's even dumber than I thought," said Connie acidly.

Mack grinned. "Make it Eve then," he said. "But look at it this way. We don't know yet what we've uncovered here but it's gonna be tremendous"—he drawled the word. "Some of that stuff in there is gonna revolutionize a whole lot of our industrial development."

"Do I look like a spy for General Electric?" Connie asked.

Mack was patient. "No," he said, "but a lot of what we found may be military. And a helluva lot of people are gonna be interested in that. If they find out you've seen it, they may be after you. So for your own sake, Miss Connie, the less you see of it the better."

"I could grow a long black mustache maybe?" said Connie.

"I know how you feel," Mack assured her. "But that's the way it is."

"You know nothing about how I feel," said Connie angrily. She felt unwanted, pushed out of things. She glared at Mack, who dropped his eyes but stood his ground determinedly. Then she turned away and walked back to the car, put it into gear, drove back to the inn.

IF SHE HAD any sense, she thought, she'd pack her things, pay her bill and keep right on going. After all, what *was* she doing here, in this forlorn corner of Iberia? Nobody seemed to want her here; and she had a proper Bostonian distaste for intruding where she was not wanted. If she had any sense, she'd drive back to the Riviera—perhaps on to Rome, perhaps to Capri. She had friends who had taken a villa on that beautiful island. *They* wanted her, even if Ben didn't.

But she couldn't bring herself to do it. She spent the day sulking around the inn, watching the swelling stream of arrivals for the morrow's fiesta, trying to read a wine-stained and broken-backed E. Phillips Oppenheim omnibus some previous visitor had left there.

The men got back from the diggings at five-thirty. Ben said, "Hey, Connie, how come you didn't bring us lunch? We had to chisel food off the men."

"I was barred from the diggings," she said bluntly. "Your friend Mr. Cooper's orders."

Ben looked disturbed. He said, "Hey, Coop, you can't do that. Connie's our commissariat; she's been in on it right along."

Eli Cooper, still looking too neat and well pressed, even after a day at the diggings, stepped forward wearing an expression of solicitude. He said, "Miss Somers, I had no idea who you were this morning. Until Douglass told me, I didn't know you were a Boston Somers. I can only say I'm terribly sorry; I'll try to make it up. I hope you'll try to understand why I acted as I did."

"You thought I was a nasty li'l ole Commie spy, didn't you?" said Connie, enjoying his discomfiture. Even in this, Cooper was running true to his last, she thought. A Boston Somers—which meant ten thousand shares of Consolidated Metals Preferred. Which meant that a word from her in the right quarters could slice his professional throat.

"I didn't know, of course," he said. He hesitated, was saved from further embarrassment by the bell—in this case a telephone call from Madrid. Mack looked after him, shrugged, and then winked at Connie.

Ben said, "Well, I'm glad it's all fixed up."

"Sure," she said, "you'll get a basket lunch tomorrow;" she was feeling unusually mean, and with cause.

He looked hurt—but only briefly. Then, turning to Mack, "We'd better get washed up and fed, and get going on that report Coop wants."

Dinner was hardly a festive occasion. To Ben's abstraction over Donna Marina, had been added the new interests introduced by Eli Cooper's arrival. Mack was quiet, anyway. Both men seemed to feel that they had been robbed of something peculiarly their own, and were visibly unhappy about losing it.

Cooper tried to make conversation. He talked of the crack team of experts from America due to arrive the day after the festival to start making tests, to disassemble and pack and convey the mysterious machinery within the hill—or such of it as proved portable—to better equipped and protected testing grounds.

He talked of his career and acquaintances, which seemed to run largely to millionaires, sports figures, and an occasional show-business name. Nobody else talked much at all.

Finally he said, "I'm not satisfied with the guards. How are you going to keep them on the job during the fiesta?"

"Esteban's reliable," said Mack quietly. "He'll keep the others in line; we're paying them enough for it."

"I hope you're right," said Cooper. Then, "Still, I'd feel a lot better if we had a few of our own guys here for the job."

"You and me both," said Mack. And that was that.

After dinner Ben and Mack disappeared to work on the report, and Connie found herself stuck with the still-apologetic Eli Cooper. Finally, to avoid boredom, she suggested a walk into the town; he accepted the bid with alacrity.

Most of the ancient houses that crowded against the narrow winding main street wore their fiesta bunting. In the street itself were more senoritas, more swains, more drunks, more animals, more hopelessly traffic-mired automobiles. Fire and cannon crackers sounded a steady if irregular tympany to the occasion.

"Not much like the county fairs back home," said Eli Cooper, looking the scene over from the vantage of a doorstep.

"Not much," said Connie. "They've been at it a bit longer."

Someone tugged at her sleeve. She looked down into the coal-dark eyes of a *senorita* who looked vaguely familiar. In broken English the girl whispered, "Tell me, *Senorita*—is it true they have found Donna Marina inside her mountain?"

Connie looked quickly at Eli Cooper, who was staring the other way at the antics of a group of street dancers. She remembered the girl now, remembered her standing in the bistro doorway with Mack. She said, "I'm sorry but I don't know."

Mack, she decided, must have talked in his sleep.

5

HE TOOK Eli Cooper to the bistro, wondering the while how much gossip of the hollow hill was rife in the town. It seemed to her that there was an added element of excitement about, more than a mere fiesta could justify. She wondered...

Cooper spurned wine for the raw powerful brandy of the region. He confessed, "I've never been able to stand wine—not since I was a kid. Champagne once in awhile on a party—it means whoop-de-doo. But still wine—no thanks. I'd rather drink grapejuice."

"Why don't you?" she asked, thinking that his confession was entirely in character.

"Because I'd rather drink liquor," he said, refilling his glass. Then, looking hard at her, "You don't like me, do you?"

"Not much," she told him bluntly.

"It wasn't really my fault about this morning," he said. "After all you didn't tell me who you were. How was I to know?"

"I suppose you'd like to have people walk around wearing badges that state their names and fortunes and social status," she said, "like men at a hotel convention."

"It *would* save a lot of confusion," he said. He went on to tell her about himself, about how he had come to hew out an upward path in the cities of the world. He was, it seemed, a crack industrial coordinator, with degrees in civil engineering and inorganic biochemistry.

"How did you ever find the time for that?" she asked him.

"I worked nights," he replied, taking a third drink.

"Are you married?" she inquired.

"I was." His face was briefly shadowed. "My wife ran away with a tenant farmer I kept on a place I own in Connecticut. I had him jailed for selling livestock he didn't own, then got a divorce."

"Where is she now?" Connie asked, wincing inwardly at the vision she derived from his words of an unloved young wife, turning to the farmer for affection, of the revenge that had followed.

He shrugged. "How should I know?" he asked. "I've forgotten her. If she'd taken to anyone but a farmer..." He was silent.

Connie had heard of such things; the papers at home were full of them, but she had never come in such close contact with one of them. It made her almost physically ill. She was grateful when Eli Cooper began to talk of what Ben and Mack had found in the hill.

"Then it's really big?" she inquired.

His eyes became fluorescent. "It's tremendous!" he replied. "Those machines—unless I'm all wrong, one of them is some sort of ray weapon. I've got a pretty powerful hunch our boys are going to be able to make the Russkies sit up and take notice, when they get it operating proper."

"What sort of rays does it shoot?" Connie asked him.

"It looks like it'll shoot about any

kind of stuff you put into it," he replied. "Mind you, I'm just guessing—but I got a pretty powerful hunch it can atomize and project just about anything from gamma rays to solid gold. How'd you like to have me gold-plate your enemies, Miss Somers? Wouldn't *that* be something!"

"It sounds expensive," said Connie. She realised that Eli Cooper was getting slightly drunk—probably, she decided, because he kept his nerves constantly at such high-singing pitch.

"And some of those other items," he went on, pounding the table gently with a fist, "I got a pretty powerful hunch they're going to turn out mighty useful. I'll lay ten-to-one odds we find some brand new kind of power plant, once we cut through the remaining walls. We dug us out a major find, that's for sure."

CONNIE was thinking of Donna Marina, safe behind her transparent partition, of the red hair and magnificient figure and green eyes, of the legend, so unexpectedly embodied, that had taken Ben from her just when he seemed to be hers. She said, more to make converstion than because she was curious, "How do you suppose it happened anyway? The hill, I mean."

"I got a pretty powerful hunch," said Cooper, "that this holy hill was part of an old fault—geologically, that is. The whole terrain looks like it was a fault. Probably, when those critters, whoever they were, hollowed it out, they weakened the foundation. Along came some kind of a shock and—*bloop*—the side of the hill falls right over their entrance. They're sealed in for good."

"If that is so," said Connie, "why wasn't their cavern knocked out of shape when it happened? Why weren't they crushed?"

Eli Cooper finished his fourth drink, pushed a stray strand of hair back from his forehead. "I'm not sure yet," he replied. "But I got a powerful hunch the metal they lined their dugout with was too tough to give way. The hill dissolved around them, but couldn't crush it; we'll have that metal analysed tomorrow.

"And once we do"—his eyes narrowed as he refilled his glass—"we'll have something to plate our tanks and planes with. If I play it right, it ought to be worth three stars. I only had one during the war and I had to sweat to get it."

"What about Ben Warren?" she asked. "What will he get?"

Eli Cooper shrugged, made a deprecatory gesture. "Ben's okay," he said with a trace of contempt, "but he's a dreamer. Mooning over that damned dame behind the glass door. He should have cracked it a couple days ago, and found out what that calculator or whatever it is she's sitting at is about. No, Ben's work is about done; it's time we took over. We handle this okay, and we're sitting on top of the world; right up on top of the world."

Connie changed the subject quickly. "Tell me, Coop," she said, "where you think they came from?"

For a moment his expression lapsed into vagueness. Then he laughed and shrugged again. "Who knows?" he said. "Your guess is as good as mine, Connie. Who cares where they came from as long as we got what they brought with them? Let the eggheads worry that one out."

"You don't like eggheads, do you?" she said to him.

"Lord no!" he replied. "Always fouling things up."

"But you've got a couple of degrees yourself." she suggested.

"Maybe—but I got degrees I could cash in on—not stuff that just tangles you up. Have another drink, Connie?"

"Well—all right," she replied. "Just a short one."

When she finally got a stumbling and semi-articulate Eli Cooper back to the inn it was past two in the morning. She

hesitated, considering the lateness of the hour, then knocked on Ben's door. He poked a sleepy head around it, said, "Connie! Wait till I get a robe," finally admitted her.

"I just got to sleep," he said. "Mack and I worked till one. What's up?"

"I am," said Connie. She sat on the one chair while he blinked at her sleepily from the edge of the ancient bed. She said, "Ben, I've just had a session with Eli Cooper in the village; he's going to take the credit for this discovery right out of your mouth."

"It doesn't exactly surprise me," he said. "Still, he can't take all of it. And the important thing is the discovery itself."

She clenched her fists in frustration. "Dammit, Ben," she exclaimed, "can't you see what he's planning to do? He's going to turn every one of those things you've discovered into a weapon. He's going to see that they are used destructively, rather than for any good purpose. He's even going to crash the glass door to see if that board Donna Marina is sitting at can be used for pushbutton warfare."

Eli Cooper hadn't actually said as much, but Connie knew she was not lying; the implications had been there for her to read. Her fighting blood, derived from generations of clipper ship captains and Indian fighters, was up.

"He wouldn't do that." Ben's face looked suddenly drained of blood. "He wouldn't do that—he couldn't."

"He could and he would," Connie told him. "Frankly, I hope he does and your precious redheaded goddess crumbles to dust. Then maybe you'll wake up to what's going on around you."

"I won't let him," said Ben, looking like a little boy defending his toys from a much larger bully intent on taking them away.

"You're going to have a time stopping him," said Connie. She knew she was probably going about it all wrong; but, after two days of inaction, she had to do something.

To her dismay his eyes hardened. "I'm not going to let him," he said, almost in a whisper. "All I have to do is let a whisper of this get out in the right places and—bingo!"

"And 'bingo'—right into a Congressional investigation for you," she told him. "You're caught in a Security risk, Ben." She got up, added, "Sweet dreams," went back to her room and, for the first time in fifteen years, burst into tears.

SHE SLEPT until noon the next day. After lunching on *sopa gallino*, *paella* and stewed fruit, she spent most of the afternoon sitting on the tiny inn terrace, watching fiesta visitors trooping over the cobbles into the town. The men, of course, had gone to the diggings. Connie toyed with the idea of paying them a visit. She was pretty sure she would be allowed inside, but the thought of looking again into the half-startled eyes of Donna Marina deterred her.

When the men got back for supper she was glad she had elected to stay away. From their behavior and attitudes, it was evident that the day had not passed without friction. Eli Cooper, first out of the pickup truck, gave Connie a barely-curt nod as he strode past her into the inn and tried to get Madrid on the telephone in the lobby.

"He won't get through for two days," said Mack with faint amusement. "Not with the fiesta on; they've closed up shop."

Ben mopped his face with a handkerchief and sat down across from her. He said, "The son tried to bust open the glass door; he's trying to get us pulled off the job."

"Think he can do it?" Connie asked.

Ben poured himself a glass of wine, tasted it, put his glass down, said, "I don't know. Maybe. He's pretty sore."

"That's very smart, isn't it?" said

Connie. "You put this thing over, you and Mack. You prove the incredible—that an ancient legend is true. You find an invaluable treasure. And then you let a man like Cooper rob you of it, merely because you're in love with a dead woman."

"Just like I said." Mack pulled up a chair, reached for the bottle. "It ain't worth it, Ben."

"Can't you understand?" Ben asked them fiercely. "Can't you see that the survival of Donna Marina is more important than the rest of our find put together? She may be the cause of a whole new theory of human evolution. Suppose she, or someone like her, is the real missing link they've been searching for. Suppose we really come from extra-terrestrial origins. Suppose Atlantis were true."

"That's a lot of supposing," said Mack.

"I understand," Connie told him. "But Eli Cooper doesn't; and I've got a hunch the Pentagon won't either."

"Damn the Pentagon!" Ben exploded. "The Spaniards have an interest in this, too. Do you think they're going to let Coop destroy such a miracle for highly problematical military reasons? Their representatives will be here tomorrow sometime."

"Why do you think Coop was so anxious to get in there today?" Mack asked drily. There was no answer.

Eli Cooper came out, fuming. He sat down at the other table and said, "Maybe you think I'm not going to raise hell about this, when I get through to channels. The way you've been acting, both of you, is downright obstructionist, if not seditous. I'll see you're both yanked off this job and sent home in disgrace. I'll see you're blacklisted in every corner of America."

Connie entered the fray. She said "Mr. Cooper, you're a very ignorant man, aren't you?"

He goggled at her. In his anger he appeared to have forgotten her presence. It was, she thought, typical.

She said, "And Mr. Cooper, I believe you are employed by Consolidated Metals—am I right?"

He bounced a fist off the table. "Dammit to hell!" he exploded. "This is a whole lot bigger than Consolidated Metals. It's too big for you or anybody else to stop now."

Connie just stared at him, stared at him until his face colored, and his angry eyes fell before hers; he drained his glass and got up quickly and disappeared into the inn.

Ben's hand covered hers on the table. He said, "Thanks, Connie—thanks a lot."

Mack chuckled and said, "Nice going kid."

But Connie felt ill. Ben was grateful only because she had defied the would-be destroyer of Dona Marina. He was still lost. And worse, she had what Eli Cooper would have called a powerful hunch that the man from Consolidated Metals could do what he threatened, no matter what entrenched power she was able to muster against him.

6

THE FIREWORKS began with the sunset. A single rocket rose like a golden thread against the green-blue sky, to burst in a small shower of man-made meteorites. It had barely faded when another rocket rose, and another, and others. A faint roar of bursting cannon crackers reached them from the crowded rooftops below the inn.

Beyond the terrace, the cobbled street was filled with people, who "ooohed" and "aaahed" at the rockets; who jostled and murmured, and occasionally laughed or cried out as they kept close to the sides of the road. Wooden torches, set up at frequent

intervals along the way during the afternoon, were lighted to give the vivid scene a semblance of pagan brilliance.

"Looks like Mardi Gras in El Paso," said Mack. He and Connie and Ben were standing at the terrace edge, where they could see over the heads of the people gathered in front of them. Eli Cooper had not come out of the inn since beating his retreat before dinner.

The fireworks grew brighter and noisier, the crowd grew louder. Faintly, far below them, churchbells pealed solemnly, offering a reminder to the assembled thousands not to embark too fully upon a pagan riot. In spite of the troubles that weighed upon her, Connie felt strange emotions tugging and pushing at her shell of Boston restraint.

Then, as darkness became full, the crowd grew silent with anticipation. Preliminary shivers ran through it, like ripples of wind through a tall grassland. The torches flickered and flared.

There was a murmur, carried down from the spectators above the inn, then a deeper more menacing rumble. The fiesta parade had begun to move from its starting point a half mile above the inn. The rumble grew louder, more mechanical, as it drew closer.

Around the bend came a small battery of light tanks, left behind by Mussolini's legions in 1939. Their turret caps were unbuttoned, and from each a bereted crewman's head and torso protruded, holding aloft a torch. Behind the tanks, marched veterans of the civil war, carrying rifles, submachine-guns and automatic weapons.

Then, as history rolled past the inn in reverse, came the soldiers of other wars. Here was a troop of Napoleonic hussars, tasseled caps waving, furred jackets hanging by silver chains around their collars, followed by a small company of be-shakoed grenadiers, who looked to Connie astonishingly like the familiar Goya drawings.

Behind them, armed with glittering pikes and heavy matchlock muskets, marched the peruqued and skirted musketeers of the Wars of the Succession, their tattered gold lace shining new and bright in the torchlight as their gaitered legs beat cadence on the cobbles.

A troop of mounted Conquistadores followed, with visors down and lances held upright in stirrup boots, mounted on brilliantly caparisoned chargers. Behind them came a float, upon which St. Sebastian held the banner of the cross, surrounded by friars and kneeling nuns.

Next marched a company of white-burnoosed Moors, whose fierce warriors had once held sway to the Pyrenees and whose culture had left its indelibile stamp upon all of Spain. And on their heels marched the ill-fated men-at-arms of Charlemagne and Roland, so many of whom, in their tragic day, had perished in Roncevalles Pass.

A sense of timelessness, of history, almost overwhelmed Connie, as she watched the greaved and breastplated legionaires of Sertorius, with eagles and emblems and kilts and shields and short-swords, tramp past. She had a sudden vision of the fur-hatted Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Boston, parading on the Common; against this procession of age-old history, the Bostonians seemed as unreal and tawdry as a Shriner's parade.

Then, finally, came a capering savage group of fur-clad troglodytes, carrying their clubs and preceding the final float of the fiesta parade—a fanciful papier-mache creation built around a Citroen truck, which represented Donna Marina's famous flying chariot, on which she was converying the wounded and dying Don Lorenzo to her mountain retreat. The make-believe Marina was one of the swarthy belles of the town, whose platinumed hair, and sallow skin, and overripe figure were somehow distasteful to Connie in view of the reality in the cave.

"Not much like our Marina, is she?" Mack remarked, and Connie saw a

similar distaste reflected in the big Texan's eyes.

"It's blasphemy," said Ben shortly. He turned without another word and, like Eli Cooper, disappeared into the inn.

Connie said, "Damn him, Mack—damn him and damn her. If she were alive I might have a chance."

"I know," drawled the Texan. "It's rough."

"I'm going downtown," said Connie abruptly. Below, from the plaza, they could hear the roar of the crowd as some portion of the parade won special acclaim.

"Better not," said Mack. "You might be—molested."

"I don't care,' said Connie. "I'm going."

"Then I'm going with you," Mack said dutifully.

"Suit yourself," she replied and pushed her way off the terrace into the crowd that now swarmed over the cobbles.

SHE LOST Mack before she had gone a hundred yards. Jostled, ogled, breathed on, pulled, pushed, she wished she had not yielded to the impulse for action. But she had to have action. She could no longer merely sit still at the inn while Ben ruined his life—and hers—for a woman who had not been alive since the dawn of history.

She let the crowd carry her whither it would, in a sort of coma. Once she nearly fell, was saved by a grinning native in harlequin costume, who rattled his fool's stick at her in mock reproof, and held onto her until a plump *senorita* brushed against him in more direct allure. It was like living a nightmare, knowing she was awake.

Somehow she found herself in the plaza. A half dozen huge double-hogsheads of wine stood on racks, and men and women fought to fill cups from their spigots. The parade had broken up and the marchers, in their brilliant kaleidoscope of costumes, mingled with the crowd. Somebody thrust a cup under her nose and made her drink.

Then she became aware of a shouting voice. A man, obviously drunk, had scrambled on top of one of the hogsheads and, from this precarious perch, was haranguing the crowd. Furthermore, he was winning the attention of his audience.

It took her a moment to recognize him. Then she saw it was the mine-guard who had smiled at her from the hill-entrance—two mornings before, when Eli Cooper had barred her from the diggings. He was shouting his words slowly, for effect, and Connie was able to follow the tenor of his speech.

"...and the true Donna Marina awaits within the hill...for thousands of years...the Americans have found her...seek to destroy her for their own purposes..."

Connie thought, *That tears it,* and caught sight of desperate Esteban seeking to work his way through the crowd toward the speaker. She remembered that the miners were supposed not to come into the town until the fiesta was over. She wondered if any of them were still on duty at the mine. Probably not, since Esteban had left his post.

The crowd was roaring its excitement, like some huge sea-creature make up of a multiplicity of independent organisms. The miner's phrases were being repeated, with rising excitement, all around her. She recalled Mack's little brunette, and the question she had whispered while Connie was in town with Eli Cooper.

There was a sudden sharp roar, and Connie emerged from her abstraction to see Esteban scramble upon the speaker's double-hogshead and push him rudely off it. There was a sudden surge forward and the mob was screaming for Esteban's blood, calling him a traitor and a betrayer of his own people and their legends.

It would have been easier to swim up Niagara Falls than to breast the surge of the multitude. Connie was

swept against the hogsheads, all but crushed against one of them. Acting instinctively, in sheer self-preservation, she managed to scale the supporting platform and rise above the howling, screaming madness.

From this vantage point, she caught sight of a tattered Esteban fleeing out of sight down a narrow alley on the other side of the plaza, felt relief that faded quickly as someone tugged at her ankle. She looked down into the blazing eyes of Mack Douglass' girl who was pointing a finger at her and screaming, *"She* know—she knows where Donna Marina waits! She can lead us to her. She can..." The rest of it was lost in the clamor of the crowd.

For a moment Connie thought her time had come. She wondered, with detached relevance, if this was how Princess de Lamballe and the other victims of the Paris mob in 1789 had felt before they were torn to pieces. It was a helplessness so complete as to be near-orgiastic.

And then, looking into that sea of frenzied faces, a new and less passive impulse seized Connie and held her. She had never been a fatalist, either by instinct or environment. Man's will—or woman's—should be the determining factor in his fate.

But there was a rocketing direction to this pattern that she was unable to deny. She reached down, pulled Mack's girl up beside her, said, "You tell them to go to the hill. They won't understand me." She had to shout into the girl's ear to make herself heard.

There was a moment of sudden silence that was like a physical blow, as if everyone of the thousands around had simultaneously stopped breathing. Then the dark girl's voice rang out and from then on the mad current of events resumed its pace toward an inevitable end.

After minutes of wild confusion, while the dark girl kept a tight clutch on her arm, Connie found herself swept along toward a truck from which bedraggled traces of St. Sebastian's float still hung. Other vehicles appeared and made way slowly from the plaza toward the sloping road up into the hills.

THEY MOVED slowly, unable to get clear of those on foot, and like a flow of lava defying gravity moved on toward the magic mountain. Luckily, Connie thought, they were taking the direct road; thus would avoid the inn. She would have hated to have Ben see her in this strange procession.

They reached the ravine under a solemn, watchful moon—and the diggings were unguarded, as Connie had suspected. She was lifted from the truck and carried along up the side of the ravine toward the entrance to the secrets on which a world might well depend.

Somebody found the lightswitch and torch-flares faded before the powerful lemon glare of electricity. For the second time Connie found herself inside the hill of *Don Lorenzo*. The air was better now, but quickly grew close as crowds came swarming in around them and after them. She heard a crash and shouts as one of the mysterious machines of the mysterious hill-dwellers was trampled underfoot.

She thought of Eli Cooper's frustration and laughed out loud. It would have been easier to steal the credit for the discovery from Ben, than to put the blame on him for its destruction. After all, Cooper was on the spot and in authority; his reputation would be the one that suffered the most.

The few ahead of Connie and Mack's brunette stopped suddenly and were silent, while those behind pushed on. Ahead lay the glass door, now illuminated by a floodlight. Connie caught a quick glimpse of the redheaded goddess, with her green half-startled eyes.

Then the crowd behind was pushing dangerously. There were cries of alarm, a sudden shattering of glass. The doorway disappeared.

Again there was silence, then a gasp of horror, followed by a moan. Connie found her own knuckles thrust into her mouth as she watched the redheaded woman melt under contact with the air.

Russet tresses dropped from her scalp in clumps, to dissolve to dust upon the floor. The Valkeirie figure seemed to shrink, then to fold in upon itself, to become one with the matallic fabric that had covered it, to turn to dust. Slowly, the goddess disappeared, to become another little heap upon the floor.

Horrified, the crowd, too, began to melt away, most of its members muttering and crossing themselves. When Connie and the brunette crept out into the open air they could hear, faintly, distantly, the tolling of the church-bells in the town, borne on the night-breeze. It was peculiarly appropriate, a funeral knell for Donna Marina.

They scrambled back on the truck and were driven back toward town over broken springs. As they reached the fork from which the route to the inn branched off, Connie saw headlights coming toward them—one, two, three sets. Before they were out of sight she recognized the pickup truck, the station wagon, her own MG.

She thought, *You're just a little too late.*

She walked back to the inn from town alone.

At dawn, when a haggard Ben stumbled back into the inn she had coffee ready for him—she had cooked it herself in the inn kitchen. He sipped it and said, "Maybe it's a good thing it came out this way. They were going to handle it all wrong, anyway; maybe it's a good thing."

"Maybe it is," she said quietly.

He looked at her, seemed to see her for the first time in days, said, "Hello, Connie."

She said, "Hello, Ben."

"I think I must have been a little bit crazy," he said. "But it's all over now. We've still got the walls themselves—and the pictures. Maybe Coop and his men can make something of them."

"They'll do all right," said Connie. She stood behind him with her hands on his chest, let him lean his disheveled head back against her stomach. He said, "I dented a mudguard on the MG. Sorry."

"I don't mind," said Connie. "I don't mind a bit."

★

There was only one way to undo what had been done, and what would lead to greater horror.

THE TAINT

by John Jakes

FROG'S BLOOD dripped into the spongy black earth below the porch. Dickie Carter, crouched on his haunches, watched the legs twitch as if they had been jolted by an electric current. Then his right hand brought up the hammer.

The frog continued its leg movements for several seconds. The boy caught his breath hastily; he saw his father coming down the street, satchel in hand. With frantic motions he shoved the frog's body down into the black dirt and heaped more dirt on top of it. He smeared the black earth on his hands to cover up two small bloodstains. Pushing his hair back out of his eyes, he crawled from under the

porch, walked over to the steps, waved to his father who was coming through the gate, and waited.

Howard Carter, a thin, spare man of forty-three, with a certain savage severity about his narrow mouth, smiled as he walked up to his seven-year-old son. He rumpled the boy's hair. "Hi, Dickie," Carter said cheerfully. "What's new under the porch?"

The boy flushed faintly. "I was playing soldiers."

The man and the boy crossed the porch. Carter opened the door and stood back for his son to pass. "Better get washed up right away, Dickie. I'm hungry as a dog, and your mother will probably have supper on the table."

"Yes, sir," Dickie said, running into the house ahead of his father and racing up the stairs to the second floor. Carter paused, looking into the cool gloom of the front hall, then entered the house itself, leaving the mellow fall twilight deepening behind him.

Carter answered his wife's call from the kitchen, dropped his satchel by a chair in the front hall and put his hat on the top closet shelf. He passed back through the house, through the swinging door into the kitchen. Shrimps were french-frying in deep fat, with golden popping sounds. He kissed his slender, attractive wife Myra and sat down at the kitchen table, taking out his pipe. As he puffed it alight, he said: "Our son has been fostering global turmoil again by playing soldier under the porch." There was humor in his tone, but a faint note of sincerity, too.

Myra took a milkcarton from the icebox, smiled. "Howard, sometimes I wish you were a ditch-digger instead of a teacher. You worry too much. You get exposed to an idea, with the intellectual view of understanding it, and when you understand it, or think you do, you really don't at all. It gets you down."

"The more you learn..." Carter began through a cloud of Old Briar.

"...the less you know," Myra finished, kissing him crisply on the cheek and squeezing his arm. "There's nothing wrong with Dickie playing soldier, or bank robber or public enemy number one, for that matter."

"I suppose not," Carter murmured.

"Dickie!" the woman called through the kitchen door. "Supper!" Her announcement was answered by a clatter of feet coming down the stairs.

The electric clock on the wall above the stove said six exactly.

At this moment, a wall of force went up around the limits of the lot on which the house stood. It was invisible except for an almost imperceptible blue glow which would hardly be noticed by any persons passing by. No one could get to the house through the force wall. No one who was already within the wall could get out.

CARTER, his wife and son were eating their dinner. An announcer oozed the news from the radio in a voice thick as mineral oil. The door chimes rang twice, then twice again. Carter looked at his wife. "Who could that be?"

"I have no idea, Howard."

"Want me to answer it, Dad?" Dickie asked, already out of his chair.

Carter folded his napkin and stood up, frowning. "No. I'm sure I don't know who would be coming by right at this time. I'll see." He started through the front hall, grumbling. "Damned bad manners, coming right at suppertime anyway." He jerked the door open, then caught his breath.

The person who stood there appeared to be a man, very tall, dressed in what seemed to be a long black overcoat, much too heavy for the still-warm autumn. The stranger also wore a large hat which partly shielded his face. The face itself was thin, bony and hairless, with a kind of lemon skin, and a coldness in the faintly slanting eyes that frightened Carter.

It was inhuman.

The blankness of expression on the creature's face made Carter catch his breath. "Y...yes?"

"Mr. Carter?" The stranger had a peculiar sibilance of speech.

"That's right."

"May I come in, please?"

"What do you want?"

"May I come in, please?" The inflexible coldness of the voice prompted Carter to open the door and stand aside while the stranger came in. At the front edge of the yard Carter thought he saw a faint iridescent blue glow. The stranger stood in the hall. From the kitchen came Myra's voice: "Who is it, dear?"

Without warning, Carter said, "Someone wanting to talk to me about ...some school work. Go on eating supper; it'll only take a minute or two."

The kitchen door opened slightly and Dickie stuck his head through. The stranger was standing in a position where Dickie could see him, and the boy staggered forward through the door. His mouth came open, and he screamed a scream of agonized horror; he bolted down the hall, past the stranger, and ran up the stairs in a frantic stumbling crawl.

Carter stood rooted with fear and amazement. The stranger fastened his hand on Carter's arm and held him fast, the peculiar eyes blazing with an intensity of wordless command which the other man understood completely. From the top of the house drifted the final muffled howls of agony. The stranger pulled Carter across the hall to an open doorway, the makeshift study. Stepping inside the sliding door, he waited.

Carter caught one agonized glimpse of Myra standing in the open kitchen doorway, a fist shoved up against her teeth and her eyes rooted rigidly on her husband. Without quite knowing why, Carter waved his arm downward savagely in a gesture for her to remain quiet. He turned and slipped inside the study door, tearing his shirt collar open and pulling his tie askew as if he had difficulty breathing. The stranger stepped by him and slid the door squeakily shut.

"Who in God's name are you?" breathed Carter.

"I do not think it is necessary for you to know my name," the visitor said.

Carter staggered over to the big desk where he did most of his writing and grading of papers. He sank down in the swivel chair and touched the switch on the green-shaded lamp. The visitor's shadow sprang along the wall with a sudden, leaping movement.

"Why...did my son scream when he saw you?"

The stranger did not move. Apparently he was self-sufficient, needing no chair to prop his nerves as Carter did. The visitor indulged in no shrug or movement of his body that was unnecessary. "I do not know. I have never seen your son before. I presume he sensed in the peculiar way children have that I am here to kill him."

"You...*kill!*" Carter scream-gasped it. He rushed at the stranger, his voice rising. "Who do you think you are? Who..."

A SINGLE pencil-like gray shaft appeared in the stranger's hand, pointed at Carter's chest. Carter paused in mid-stride and peered at it, the lamplight glowing yellow through each transparent sweat dollop on his face. He stepped back not knowing what the weapon was but sensing in it as in the whole shape and being of his stranger not menace exactly but purpose which could not be turned aside. Then Carter whirled and scrambled for the phone, jamming the mouthpiece against his teeth.

"Police, police..."

"It is impossible for you to use your telephone, Mr. Carter; I have set up a barrier around this house. You and your family are in effect prisoners here until I complete my mission."

Carter let the phone fall silently,

dangling. It made no sound, no buzz or whir came from the receiver. Once again Carter took refuge in his chair. "And...what..." he said with labored breath, "is this...mission?"

"To kill your son. I assure you I will do it painlessly, in a matter of an instant; it will be like turning off a switch, that is all."

"Why my son? What has he done?"

"At this moment, nothing. In nineteen years, however, he will be married, and he will have a male child. Thirty-three years after that, the male child will go berserk and kill four people. I am here to see that this does not happen."

Carter's mouth dropped open, his eyes filled with the horrible dawn of understanding. He walked slowly across the room, still slack-jawed, and this time the visitor did not stop him. Soundlessly Carter reached up and flipped aside the stranger's hat brim, knocking the hat from the swollen ivory-yellow hairless head. "You..." Carter said hoarsely. "You..." Saliva glittered in a film coating on his teeth, his tongue, his lips.

"I am from three hundred years in the future, Mr. Carter; I am from a society which believes in perfectability. Only recently have we developed the ability to bend time to our own devices, making it possible for this project to be carried forward. Your son is not the only one who will die. Hundreds, perhaps even thousands will be sacrificed."

"Oh my God, I...oh my God..." said Carter, staring in horror at the book cases lining the room. The visitor bent and replaced his hat on his head. He walked to one of the book cases and took down a volume and opened the cover. *"The Case for Sterilization,"* he read, *"by Howard Carter, Professor of Psychology, State University.* You have no idea, Mr. Carter, how important your book has become. Damned as it has been in critical, intellectual and spiritual circles of this time, it has become the core of our new way of life—the road to purity."

Shaken beyond belief, Carter once more retreated to his chair and ground his palms against his eyeballs and twisted, rocking side to side while the visitor talked on, explaining.

"Your theory, not new but dynamically presented, Mr. Carter, we have put into practice. And not only in our own period, but as far back as the study of the past permits us to trace the roots of crime and insanity. We remove, however, rather than sterilize; we merely pluck a thread out of the tapestry and purge our society, as well as past societies, of damaging human elements. To this extent we can safely alter the past and thereby the present, our present, and the future. Our ability to see the past enables us to see what changes the life of one individual will bring about. An alteration in the pattern whereby a diseased strain is removed can be considered an improvement."

"But my boy!" Carter cried softly, raising his hands wide into the air and gazing at the strange face from three hundred years hence. "My son, Dickie..."

The stranger replaced the volume on the book shelf. "I lack your emotions, Mr. Carter. I can feel nothing."

CARTER reeled up out of his chair, slamming his chest with his fist. "Kill *me,* then, kill *me.*"

"That is useless. First, we would have to remove you at a point in time before you were married and had your son. Second, this point in time would also be before you wrote the book so important to our society. Thus the whole scheme to cleanse society of madness and criminal deviation would never come into being." Slowly the stranger shook his head. "No."

"But it's wrong!" Carter screamed softly. "It's...immoral...it's. ."

"Frankly," came the stranger's voice with the emotionless sting of a

whip, "I think you are making yourself appear ridiculous. You espoused this doctrine, did you not? Are you so weak and intellectually ill that you refuse to stand by your convictions?"

"I didn't think," Carter said, pounding both fists onto the desk in a drum beat of fury. "It's all right on paper, but I never saw before. Never *saw*. Not until tonight. Not until now. I've been blind for a long time but I'm not blind now. Not any more. You can't wipe out human beings like you erase figures on a blackboard; if you've got any sort of decency inside of you, you can't do it."

"If I could speak with the emotion of contempt," the visitor replied, "I would do so now. I am repulsed by your weakness. I find in studying the intellectual climate that the whole weakness of your system is this duality, a hypocrisy of words, a hiding on paper that is safe because it will never have to be tested. We, my society, do not indulge in such a hypocrisy."

For the first time the stranger made a movement that was irregular and jerky, a mere shake of the head. Carter began the breathe slowly. It was the first sign the visitor had made that he was a product of evolving humanity, still ridden with the tag-ends of emotion which he seemed determined to suppress. Carter saw it as a gesture of impatience.

The visitor drew a small gray metal object, about the size of a cigaret case, from somewhere in the black depths of his coat. He pressed this close to his mouth and spoke: "Slight difficulties. Allow fifteen more minutes. Then shift back to April third, nineteen forty-two."

The stranger replaced the object in his pocket and said to Carter: "I must go find your son. I have spent enough time discussing matters with you. We had hoped to find you approving our plan. Nevertheless..."

On wary feet Carter advanced, lowering his voice to crooning persuading. "Tell me one thing. *Why* is my grandson going to be a killer? I don't know myself. Can you tell me?"

"We deal only in what is, Mr. Carter. But I imagine it has something to do with the supposed joke which I find common among intellectual circles of your day."

Step, step, Carter advanced, face glowing his interest. "And that is?"

"Psychology and sociology professors especially raise unbalanced children because they have so much of the theory of what is correct at their fingertips that they become involved in incessant worries."

"Too much worry about psychosexual development, say, and not enough about whether they're learning the rules of baseball as a game, and not as a stage in the development—something like that, eh?" Carter's eyes burned. Step.

"I find your attitude strangely altered, Mr. Carter. *Carter!*"

But Carter had leaped, hands to the visitor's throat in desperate savagery. He bore the stranger back, back against the book cases, and he pummeled the gasping visitor's head against the wall, time after time. Once the stranger nearly succeeded in removing the pencil-like object from his pocket, but Carter stamped his foot on the grasping hand and heard bone crunch. "Haven't changed that much in three hundred years, have you?" Carter half-laughed, in wild delirium, as he swayed back and forth with his fingernails chewing into the yellow ivory skin of the throat. At last he released the stranger, who did not move when he struck the floor.

CARTER took his own book from the shelf, *The Case for Sterilization*. He stared at it, then closed the book and threw it down. From the visitor's pocket he took the strange pencil-like object. It had a small knob on one end which seemed to turn.

"Careful!" Carter breathed, thrust-

ing the pencil into his shirt. Then from the folds of the black coat Carter extracted the instrument which appeared to be a cigaret case. Sweat stood out on the tip of his nose as he knelt with the object pressed close to his mouth.

"Howard!" called Myra. "Howard, are you all right? Howard, please answer me. *Please!*"

Into the flat gray instrument Howard Carter spoke softly but clearly. "Shift to August twelfth, nineteen thirty-seven."

From deep in the box an unreal voice said, "Is this a correction?"

"Howard! Answer me! Are you all right?"

"Yes, this is a correction. August twelfth nineteen thirty seven..."

THE PORCH swing creaked in the summer darkness. Stars looked down across the blue-ebony sky like a shower of silver rain. From the far side of the campus, the tower bell chimed eleven. Howard Carter sat with Myra Ford on the swing. For some time they had been talking about the idea uppermost in Carter's mind, the idea that society would be immeasurably improved if all criminals and insane persons could be sterilized to make sure they would not procreate. Myra had argued, though not with any great seriousness, that she did not care for the idea. Besides, had Carter invented it? No, but if he could someday put it into a forceful book, perhaps it might begin to be seriously considered.

Now they were occupied with other things, Carter's hands warm on her body, Myra's body pressed up against his and the smell of her fresh in his nostrils.

Carter said haltingly: "Myra...I ...I've only got two more quarters on my doctorate...I don't think I'll have any trouble getting it...well...Myra ...will you marry me?"

No answer. Their mouths locked and their bodies shook in young awkwardness and they talked for a while longer after that, having decided now on marriage. At eleven forty-five Carter said he had to leave. Myra walked with him to the edge of the porch.

She touched his chin teasingly. "You won't sterilize *my* children, Howard Carter."

He laughed. "No, I won't try."

They kissed again, and again, but finally Carter took his leave, moving slowly down the walk, out the gate and along the street.

A few feet this side of the streetlamp on the corner, a voice called softly but sharply from the drowsy black shadow of a thick tree: "Carter!"

"Yes?"

A figure stepped out to face Carter, and he saw the face, one-half of it glowing with reflected light from the corner lamp. He moved back a pace, his mouth suddenly limp. "Who... who are you?" said Carter.

"My name is Carter."

In the hand of the figure from the shadows appeared a peculiar object which Carter saw to be some sort of pencil. Then an infinite cold took hold of his vitals, and his mind slacked off and his heart, pumping one instant, no longer pumped the next. Without a sound he fell onto the lawn under the trees.

Carter took the flat cigaret-case instrument from his pocket and crossed to the gutter. He lay down on the grass and dropped the instrument down a sewer grate, hearing it *plop* faintly in depths of water at the far bottom. Then, with his stomach on grass and his hand out over the sewer grate so the pencil object would fall through and disappear when his hand went limp, Carter turned the cold switching-off weapon upon himself. A touch of the knob was sufficient. His hand relaxed. Another echo of solidness striking water sounded from below.

In darkness, under the trees, the two Carters lay there feet apart. From the far side of the campus, the tower bell rang twelve.

READIN' AND WRITHIN'

Book Reviews

by L. Sprague de Camp, Damon Knight, and R. W. Lowndes

THE LIST of non-fiction books of interest to science-fiction readers is short but significant this time. First is the cloth-bound edition of Sam Moskowitz's definitive history of science-fiction fandom, from its beginning in 1930 to the entry of the United States into the Second World War: "The Immortal Storm: A History of Science Fiction Fandom" (Atlanta: Atlanta Science Fiction Organization Press, 1954, xiii + 269 pp., illustrated, printed by photo-offset, $5.00). This is Sam's great labor of love: 130,000 words about fanmags, factions, friendships, feuds, and fights among the Futurians and other early fan-groups—culminating in the first world science-fiction conventions of 1939-41.

This is required reading for anybody interested in organized fan activity, and the social historian will find much of interest. Stretches of tediously detailed accounts of fannish intrigue and schism are relieved by lively climaxes. The atmosphere is rather like that of religious controversy in the Byzantine Empire. There is the same frantic maneuvering, the same picking of quarrels for the fun of fighting, the same fanatical devotion to trivial points of doctrine, the same transparent disguise of paranoid egotism as selfless altruism and devotion to justice, the same occasional resort to force —as when the Athanasians settled the nature of God at ecclesiastical councils by setting upon the Arians with clubs and beating them senseless.

I was struck by Sam's efforts to be objective (not wholly successful, but whose would be?); by the smallness of the contending factions (the whole number of active fans in the thirties being a low two-digit number); and by the incorrigible factiousness of mankind as shown here in miniature. My only complaint is that, on page 61, two fans as well-known as Robert D. Swisher and John D. Clark should be described in the caption of a photograph as "unidentified."

For the sociologist and social psychologist, the book is an outstanding (if unintentional) study in small-group dynamics. As such it should be brought to the attention of sociology and psychology departments of the nation's universities. (I mean that seriously.)

THE CURRENT DEAN of active science-fiction editors, John W. Campbell, Jr., undeterred by previous experiences in embracing new and spectacular doctrines, has lately been pushing Dr. Joseph Banks Rhine's theories of ESP with his usual impetuous enthusiasm. The things that Dr. Rhine says happened in the course of his experiments in telepathy, telekinesis, and precognition, says Campbell, are *facts*. To deny these is to take an attitude of bigoted orthodoxy, such as oppressed Galileo. But that's what the benighted scientists are doing...

As ESP has been exploited ad nauseam (at least ad *my* nauseam) in recent years in the SF press, many readers will no doubt take Campbell's word that there really is something here that science has not accounted for.

But there is a difference of opinion about

this. It is a fact that Dr. Rhine *says* that certain things happened, e.g. that one of his subjects called a whole pack of twenty-five Zener cards without a mistake. Well, maybe it happened and maybe it didn't. Dr. Rhine might be misinformed, hoaxed, deluded, or otherwise mistaken. There are many possibilities, and in a case that involves such a drastic upset in everything we think we know about man and the universe (for instance, that there is no organic function without a corresponding organ to perform it) we cannot ignore any of them to save anybody's feelings.

Dr. Bergen Evans, who some years ago amused many with "The Natural History of Nonsense", has brought out "The Spoor of Spooks" (N.Y.: Knopf, 1954, 296 + x pp., $4.50), another book of conscientious if witty and often hilarious debunking. In his second chapter he takes a searching look at Dr. Rhine's claims. He points out: That nearly all those who have repeated Rhine's tests elsewhere have gotten negative results. (The fact that the tests were repeated at all explodes Campbell's contention that "orthodox science" is wilfully ignoring ESP.) That the atmosphere of Rhine's tests is not such as to bar fraud and hoaxing, but to encourage them. That Rhine's choice of subjects—undergraduates of enthusiastic, jovial, extroverted, "salesman" personality, rather than conscientious, objective-minded skeptics—encourages fraud. That Rhine himself is not a man of skeptical and objective personality, but a devout idealist committed to proving the existence of something corresponding to a spiritual world—and therefore the kind of person easily imposed on.

I might add that, while I don't know Rhine, I know people who do know him. They describe him as not only an idealist, but also as a man so good, kind, lovable, and trusting that nobody could bear to disillusion him—even if they caught his jolly young men and women deceiving him. Oliver Lodge and Conan Doyle were men of just this kind, and so were mercilessly hoaxed by Spiritualist mediums whom less amiable investigators caught in flagrant chicaneries.

Other targets of Evans' scornful realism are historical fables like the Black Hole of Calcutta; the glorious medieval Age of Faith; Dr. Guilloutin's death by guillotine; Lucrezia Borgia's poisons; the defeat of Napoleon's army by the fearful Russian winter; common misattributions of quotations, like *"Everybody talks about the weather..."* and *"Go west..."* falsely ascribed to Mark Twain and Horace Greely respectively; and popular fallacies about law, sexual crimes, disease, and narcotics.

HARPER AND BROS. have been issuing a series of popular books on science somewhat like Willy Ley's books, but translated from the German. The first was "Gods, Graves, and Scholars" by "C. W. Ceram" (Kurt W. Marek). It was of spotty quality—good about Classical and Near Eastern archeology, superficial about American archeology, and omitting the archeology of Farther Asia altogether. Now comes Richard Lewinsohn's "Animals, Myths, and Men" (N.Y.: Harper, 1954, xviii + 422 pp.). As it got good reviews, I opened it with high expectations, but these soon turned to horror. It is an appallingly bad book: a mass of errors, inaccuracies, half-truths, and confusing or misleading statements. And it is not even well-written, at least not in its translation.

BIBLIOPHILES of imaginative fiction will want Donald H. Tuck's "A Handbook of Science Fiction and Fantasy" (Hobart, Tasmania: Donald H. Tuck, 1954, paper, iii + 151 pp.; available for $1.50 from Howard De Vore, 4705 Weddel St., Dearborn, Mich.). This is a mimeographed publication of awkward shape (8 x 14 inches) which still contains much valuable information. The author has listed many books, magazines, series of stories, and authors, all in one alphabetical listing with a paragraph of information after each entry.

MY PREVIOUS reviews in this magazine have dealt with non-fiction. But as the list of these titles is short this time, and as the subject of what's wrong with science fiction is now lively, I should like to deal with fiction.

As to what's wrong—that is, why magazine publication has shrunk so drastically in the last two years—several people have advanced reasons. At a recent conference in New York, somebody (I think Asimov) said there had been too many stories about this little average guy, and his little wife, and their little kid, and their little helicopter, and they have a little trouble, and who the hell cares?

Schuyler Miller, in his column in the January, 1955, *Astounding Science Fiction*, asks what has happened to the adventurous component of science and other kinds of fiction. He suggests that it is disappearing because so many readers don't want adventure—either in their fiction or in their private lives. They want security. They can't identify themselves with a hero in the old and literal sense of the term, but only with a cringing "little man", whose sole function is to be ground to pulp by a hostile universe.

Miller also suggests that the decline of fantasy may be caused by most readers' being more literal-minded than litterateurs have thought. When they believed in ghosts and goblins, they could enjoy stories about ghosts and goblins; now they don't, they can't, and are embarrassed to be seen reading "that stuff." The "suspension of disbelief" that we have been talking about is a rare thing, possible only to intellectually sophisticated readers.

My own diagnosis is not inconsistent with these. During the last four decades, American fiction has seen four fashions come

and go. In the twenties there was the lost-generation story. In the thirties there was the proletarian story. In the forties came the patriotic story. Now in the fifties we are in the vogue of the subjective or psychological story.

This last is nothing new. Henry James was writing psychological novels, and Joyce and Proust were experimenting with the stream-of-consciousness technique, in the early years of this century. It is only that the fad has just come into full flower. Other kinds of fiction were, of course, published during this time, but the kinds named were those that the critics took seriously and the leading writers made their reputations on.

Now, it happens that the big expansion of science fiction coincided with the rise of the subjective-psychological story. Since science fiction expanded to take in many readers and writers of main-stream fiction, and since publishers wished to cater to main-stream tastes, science fiction has been forced to assimilate the outlook and methods of the subjective-psychological story. This means an extreme subjectivity or introversion of view; intense interest in pathological psychology; a use of the formless slice-of-life structure (or lack of structure) in stories; a concentration on the trivial minutiae of commonplace matters; a tendency to make all characters "little people"—so little in fact as to be practically microscopic—and a flood of excruciatingly dull stories. You know, all these stories that begin with maw and paw looking at television while little Ernie plays in the yard. No more glamor than a glass of milk.

Well, nothing lasts forever. Nobody knows what the next fictional fad will be. Perhaps it will be an epic, portraying the clash of cultures in Toynbeean terms. Such a fashion would, I think, fit imaginative fiction better than the present one. Asimov has been doing just this for years.

Meanwhile, if you would like to read for a change about heroes who *are* heroes; who have adventures and overcome fearful odds; who are implausibly strong, brave, and clever; but who at least go places and do things and don't give a damn whether they are maladjusted, insecure, or frustrated—read some of the better romantic adventure-fantasies: stories, usually with an imaginary pre-industrial setting, lying mostly on the borderline between fantasy and science fiction, but tending towards the former. There aren't many of them and the market is not large—a case of reciprocal cause and effect. Many have glaring literary faults. But at least they are *fun*.

PERHAPS THE GREATEST is E. R. Eddison's "The Worm Ouroboros". Originally published in 1926, it has recently been reissued (N.Y.: Dutton, 1952, xviii + 446 pp., $5.00). The jacket, for some curious reason, has the advertisements on what would normally be the front side and the title on the back. It tells of a wonderful war between two nations of Viking-like barbarians, in resounding Shakespearean prose, with swordplay and sorcery.

Eddison adopted some curious and unsuccessful literary devices. He starts off with a character named Lessingham (the hero of some other fantasy-novels by Eddison) whose spirit goes space-traveling to Mercury, of all places. There he witnesses the actions of the nations of Mercury, who are called demons, witches, ghouls, elves, and so on—though they seem to be just human beings. Then the author (fortunately) forgets about Lessingham and Mercury, and plunges into his stirring tale of high adventure.

A RECENT BOOK with an atmosphere reminiscent of Eddison and comparable to it in quality of high adventure is Poul Anderson's "The Broken Sword" (N.Y.: Abelard-Schuman, 1954, 274 pp., $2.75). This tells in saga-like style how, in the ninth century, Orm the Strong sets out from Jutland to win land. This he does by surrounding the house of an Englishman and burning it with its inhabitants. The Englishman's mother curses Orm, so that when his first child is born, the elf-earl Imric steals him and leaves a changeling. The human child, Skafloc, grows up among the elves while the changeling, Valgard, grows up in Orm's family. The broken sword is one the Aesir sent as a naming-gift to Imric's foster-son, with the word that in time of need it can be mended by the giant Boelverk. As a result of the curse, Skafloc unknowingly becomes his sister's lover, while the trolls—with their allies the goblins, the vampires, and so forth—set out to conquer all the elves in the world.

Anderson is a "natural story-teller" who can make any theme come to life. This one, told in a vein of furious action and high tragedy, will hold you.

ROBERT E. HOWARD was a kind of bush-league Eddison, and the last of the five volumes of his Hyborean Age stories is now out: "Conan the Barbarian" (N.Y.: Gnome Press, 1954, 224 pp., $3.00). Gnome Press, which has given us several titles in the romantic adventure-fantasy genre, has also brought out the second volume of C. L. Moore's sensuous, moody, and at the same time adventuresome stories of Jirel of Joiry and Northwest Smith: "Northwest of Earth" (N.Y.: Gnome Press, 1954, 212 pp., $3.00).

"Conan the Barbarian" is chronologically the second book in the series. Howard's faults and virtues, both large, have been discussed at length for years, so I won't go over them again. For those who don't know Conan, suffice it to say that these are rip-roaring adventure-fantasies about a gigantic soldier of fortune, Conan the Cimmerian, in an imaginary and sorcerous "Hyborian Age" between the sinking of Atlantis and the beginning of recorded

history. The tales are as subtle as a kick in the belly, but never dull.

This volume deals with Conan's adventures in the little kingdoms bordering the pastoral lands of Shem, in the steppes around the Vilayet Sea, and on the islands in that sea. Two of the stories, "Shadows in the Moonlight" and "Shadows in Zamboula," are among the best of the twenty Conan stories. "A Witch Shall Be Born" contains the scene where Conan is crucified, and when a vulture attacks him on the cross he bites its head off. You just can't get a hero tougher than that.

Unfortunately, the publisher got the paragraphs from the biography of Conan by Clark and Miller fouled up, so that they follow the chapters they should precede; and one has been squeezed out altogether. This is the kind of slapdash editorial carelessness that has long tempted me to make a waxen image of Martin Greenberg, and stick pins in it.

There is vague talk of Gnome's publishing another volume in the series, using either other Howard material (more or less revamped) or new copy. For bibliophilic Conaniacs: the British edition of "Conan the Conqueror" has been published by Boardman at 9/6. Printed by photo-offset from the Gnome Press edition, it naturally includes the grotesque typographical error on page 137.

As for the Moore volume, reviewers wondered why its predecessor, "Shambleau and Others", mixed the novelettes about the interplanetary adventurer Smith with those about the medieval warrior-girl Jirel. Well, Greenberg's intention was to end the series with the story in which both Jirel and Northwest appear: "Quest of the Starstone" (from *Weird Tales*, Nov. 1937, with Henry Kuttner). But the new volume lacks this story, and neither does it contain "Nymph of Darkness" (ibid, Dec. 1939, with Forrest J. Ackerman) or two other Northwest Smith stories ("Werewoman" and "Song in a Minor Key") which appeared in fan magazines. When, feeling swindled, I taxed the publisher with these outrageous omissions, I learned that the fault was that of the author herself. She had decided, forsooth, that these stories were not good enough for hard covers. A hideous curse on you, Miss Moore! I shall make another waxen image for *envoutement*. If one likes a series of stories well enough to buy a book of them, one wants the complete series —regardless of unevenness. However, the collection is worth getting despite its deplorable gaps.

PERHAPS THE GREATEST living master of fantasy is Lord Dunsany, who at seventy-six is still turning out some of the best. The tall, goateed, fox-&-lion-hunting Anglo-Irish peer has just published a collection of short stories chosen by Lord and Lady Dunsany out of the formidable mass of his previous writings. These comprise sixty-odd volumes of fiction, plays, verse, and autobiography. The new book is "The Sword of Welleran (and Other Tales of Enchantment)", (N.Y.: Devin-Adair, 1954, 181 pp., $3.00). Of the sixteen stories, the title story and "The Distressing Tale of Thangobrind the Jeweller" fit most securely in the class of fiction I am discussing. Others include a ghost-story with a Dunsanian switch, "The Return"; an Irish fantasy about a boy turned into a wild goose, "The Widow Flynn's Apple Tree"; and some of his plotless and dreamy prose poems like "Idle Days on the Yan" and "Bethmoora." Two are from "The Book of Wonder" (1912), my favorite of the Dunsanian collections.

Dunsany, a giant in the small sub-genre of modern fantasy, influenced the Lovecraft-*Weird Tales* school of fantasy-writers that flowered in the thirties. Admittedly the trend of the last fifteen years has been away from the kind of fiction he represents. But trends do not last forever, and Dunsany is worth collecting, both as a historical influence and in his own right. As most of his works prior to the last three or four volumes are out of print, a worthy collection will take time and money to get; but you can well start with this latest book.

My only complaint is the illustrations: squiggly line drawings by Robert Barrell that do not compare in beauty and suggestiveness with the wonderful pictures by S. H. Sime that decorated many of the original editions of Dunsany's stories. In the present tyronic illustrations, the spider-idol Hlo-hlo has the head of an obvious ant, and the artist does not even know how many wheels a hansom cab had.

FINALLY, one of the most singular novels of this class has just appeared: J. R. R. Tolkien's "The Fellowship of the Ring" (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1954, 423 pp., $5.00). This is a big, leisurely, colorful, poetical, sorrowful, adventuresome romance laid in the author's own long-ago, when the map was different and men shared the earth with elves, trolls, and other supernaturals. Professor Tolkien's central characters (he teaches English at Oxford) are hobbits—a species of pudgy, hairy-footed dwarf that may be described as a cross between an English white-collar worker and a rabbit. The destiny is laid on one of these unawesome creatures, Frodo Baggins, to destroy a magical ring sought by the Dark Lord, Sauron, who wants it to enslave the world and who sends out shuddersome hobgoblins to search for it:

Three rings for the Elven-kings under the sky,
Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone,
Nine for Mortal Men doomed to die,
One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.

One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,
One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.

The only way for Frodo to destroy the ring is to take it to a volcano in the heart of Mordor, Sauron's country, while trying to resist the temptation to use its evil powers to protect himself.

This gives only a faint idea of what a performance the story is: enchanting and gripping by turns. Though it is very long—over 200,000 words—it is only the first of three, or rather the first third of a single epic, for this one ends just when things are getting really fearsome. There is a fine map (a necessity in stories of never-never lands).

I was interested in the review of this book by Orville Prescott of the *New York Times*. Prescott thought it pretty good, but complained that the heroes, the hobbits, were too cute, feckless, rabbitty, and unheroic for a tale of this kind. Now, that is a sound criticism; I too found Tolkien's "dear, silly old hobbits" too dreadfully sweet for my drier taste at times. But the irony of Prescott's criticism is that Prescott himself is as responsible as any one man for the literary fashion of "little people." For fourteen years my eminent colleague has been harping in his column on *character*. Few novels have a profound enough study of character to suit him. His idea of a perfect novel seems to be one of those subjective studies of an average adolescent girl, growing up in a very dull family, in some obscure small town where nothing ever happens. He panned one of the better novels of the group I am discussing, "The Well of the Unicorn" by "George U. Fletcher" (Fletcher Pratt) on the usual ground of its not having enough characterization, and the "Well" ended up on the remainder-shelves. I don't say Mr. Prescott was responsible, but after all he is perhaps the world's most influential book-reviewer.

Anyway, I await the successors to Tolkien's novel, "The Two Towers" and "The Return of the King", with the most avid eagerness. And after this perhaps we fantasy-writers had better swear off magical rings for a while. "The Worm Ouroboros" had one; so did "The Phoenix on the Sword" in "King Conan"; so did my own "Tritonian Ring". 'Nuff said.

—*L. Sprague de Camp*

PHILIP VAN DOREN STERN'S 1943 collection, "The Moonlight Traveler," recently reissued as "Great Tales of Fantasy and Imagination" (Cardinal, 35¢), would ordinarily get only a brief mention here. This column is concerned with current work in science-fantasy, and work which has strongly influenced current s-f, and the present book is neither. But I'm going to use it, if I may, in hopes of illuminating one of the bitterest arguments that has ever divided science-fantasy fans: which is better, or more important, fantasy or science fiction?

This book is a collection of traditional fantasy stories; the editor, who speaks with loathing of "the wretched things found between the gaudy covers of pulp magazines," has avoided science fiction as the plague. Within the limits he set, it's a notably good collection. Let me go down the list first, with brief comments:

"The Celestial Omnibus," by E. M. Forster. This much-reprinted story is exquisite but a little thin: something's missing.

"Desire," by James Stephens. Grim irony of a type that's become common: but never again has it been done so sharply and powerfully as this.

"Enoch Soames," by Max Beerbohm. This elegant, gentle little thing is quite perfect; there are not many stories in this book, or anywhere else, to set beside it.

"The Man Who Could Work Miracles," by H. G. Wells. One of his best, and most familiar, comic fantasies.

"The Bottle Imp," by Robert Louis Stevenson. A rattling good suspense-mystery-adventure story, by a master of the form.

"Adam and Eve and Pinch Me," by A. E. Coppard. Coppard, it seems to me, was an inveterate old tale-spinner who had no more idea than a monkey what he was at most of the time; but he happened this once to strike a chord so lovely that people have been admiring it ever since.

"Lord Mountdrago," by W. Somerset Maugham. The characterizations are fine, as they ought to be, considering that Maugham squats down in the middle of his story for six pages until he has done with them. The story has a mild little horror plot that suggests a fantastic situation, but neither justifies it nor does anything with it; there it is, heavily embroidered upon, but still the same old original lump.

"All Hallows," by Walter de la Mare. This is a muted masterpiece—nothing so vulgar as a horror story, not even especially frightening, though it has all the props of horror and fear: a drowsy twilight story, no more.

"Our Distant Cousins," by Lord Dunsany. This is the book's nearest approach to science fiction; it deals with a lie about a trip to Mars. Dunsany *will* make his fantasies ridiculous in order (as he supposes) to keep the reader wondering whether the narrator is making them up or not.

"Cobbler, Cobbler, Mend My Shoe," by Jan Struther. Eminently capable, but one wonders why she bothered to do what's been done so often, well enough, before.

"The Man Who Missed the Bus," by Stella Benson. This one, another often-encountered reprint, is artistically irreproachable; but for my money, it is one of the most dismally soporific stories ever written.

"Sam Small's Better Half," by Eric Knight. Everyone, I hope, knows Knight's stories of the Flying Yorkshireman. This is one of the middling-good ones.

"Mr. Arcularis," by Conrad Aiken. Horror again, very like the long patient approach of "Desire," better written, and nearly as shocking.

"The Diamond As Big As the Ritz," by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Not a conventional fantasy at all, but a wonderful display of savage, unbridled wit.

"William Wilson," by Edgar Allen Poe. A Victorian morality tale—Poe at his gaudiest and most tedious.

"The Curfew Tolls," by Stephen Vincent Benet. This masterful *if* story could pass for science fiction, but Stern is correct in labeling it fantasy.

"The Most Maddening Story In the World," by Ralph Straus. This exists in numerous versions, in print and out; I first heard it as a shaggy-dog story from your editor. Of all the versions, if my recollection serves, this is the clumsiest.

"Phantas," by Oliver Onions. Here's another that could be crammed into the science-fiction category, if we were so minded, as a time story; but Onions wrote it as part of the ghost-story canon, where it shines like a good deed in a naughty world.

"Roads of Destiny," by O. Henry. Still another familiar piece on the *if* theme.

"Wireless," by Rudyard Kipling. This compelling story, about a *second* consumptive English druggist-poet, would have been a ludicrous mistake in any less expert hands.

"The Music On The Hill," by "Saki." The usual Pan story, stripped down to essentials.

NOW, IF you've been bearing with me, the point of all this will emerge. Some of these tales are as sharp and compelling now as ever (which in one or two cases is not saying much)—the Beerbohm, the Wells, the Coppard, the Benson, the Knight, the Aiken, the Fitzgerald, the Benet and the Straus. These nine stories lack one thing in common: not one, when written, depended for any part of its effectiveness on the reader's belief or half belief in any particular supernatural thing.

Six more stories are beginning, if ever so faintly, to show their age: those by Stephens which contains a demigod who can grant wishes); Stevenson (a literal hell); de la Mare (hell, demons); Onions (ghosts); Henry (predestination), and Kipling (the same).

And six stories are obsolete: the Forster, with a literal heaven, full of shades of the departed great acting as coachmen; the Maugham, on general principles; the Dunsany, for contradicting Willy Ley in every paragraph; the Struther, for a footsore ghost; the Poe, for conscience incarnate; and the Saki for—of all absurdities—Pan.

These are now stories for the student, who can make the effort to think as his granddad did; not for the general reader who knows it's impossible. Something that was in them for a former generation is not in them for us—because the authors never put it in, they left the reader to do that.

"Dracula," for example, is a rewarding experience—but not because it makes you believe in vampires. It couldn't; it wasn't meant to. But imagine how effectively terrifying a novel "Dracula" must have been to people who *already* believed in vampires!

"A little fantasy," Stern remarks in his introduction, "goes a long way." True; pure fantasy becomes "fancy"—elves in the bottom of the garden, knitting doilies out of spiderwebs. A very little of that will turn a man's stomach. We want fantasy, to be sure, but we want a little stiffening of what we regard as fact in it. Now, time was when the stock equipment of traditional fantasy provided just that stiffening; because many people believed, or half-believed in sheeted ghosts, devils, revenant saints, a literal heaven and hell, and the rest of it.

Today, not so many do. Ergo, fewer ghost stories—and more rocket stories. . . . Which is as it should be.

—*Damon Knight*

"EDITOR'S CHOICE in Science Fiction," complied by Sam Moskowitz, The McBride Company, New York, 285pp, $3.50.

On the surface, this appears to be a collection of stories selected by various science-fiction editors, as representative of their highest standards for science fiction—the particular choice being what the individual editor considered the best of the lot.

As anyone with experience in the publishing business knows, such an anthology is not put together quite so simply. The matter of length has to be considered; the question of obtaining rights to a particular story arises; the problem of whether a given nomination balances well with the rest of the volume comes into the matter—after all, if several editors pick the same type of story, then no matter how good each one may be, the collection as a whole may suffer from family resemblances; an anthologist usually wants to give as broadly-representative an offering as is possible.

Further, there are three judges in a case like this, not just one: the editor, the anthologist, and the publisher—or his representative, literary editor, etc. The anthologist may feel that a given editor's choice is not as representative of the editor's highest standards as it might be; the publisher's representative may not feel that, in a given instance, the best is good enough for the publisher's standards. And so on, until an editor may have to nominate quite a number of stories before all the parties are satisfied that this is *the* one for inclusion.

All this, let me say, is natural and normal. There shouldn't be any complaints *if* those in final authority know the field in which the anthology is being made, and care enough about it to insure a reasonable degree of excellence—not only in regard to the worth of the individual stories, as stories, but in respect to their appropriateness as specimens of the type of fiction they're supposed to represent.

All this sounds so elementary that you may wonder why I bother to bring it up. I raise the issue because the present volume has demonstrated that, however elementary it may be to the consumer, it is obviously anything but elementary to the producers of "Editors Choice in Science Fiction". And since Mr. Moskowitz knows science fiction well enough, and cares about it deeply enough, not to pass off fantasy and weird tales as science fiction (excluding occasional honest differences of opinion), we cannot saddle him with either the ignorance or the contempt that the present collection perpetrates upon the public.

THE BOOK starts off with "The Wall of Fire", by Jack Kirkland, from *Bluebook* (selected by Donald Kennicott). A well-written and moving fantasy, this is a fine example of the "why not?" type of speculation. It has nothing to do with science fiction.

"What Thin Partitions" by Mark Clifton and Alex Apostolides, from *Astounding Science Fiction* (selected by John W. Campbell), takes the "why not?" approach towards poltergiests. There was good enough reason for Campbell's selecting it for his magazine—as an offtrail story, which involves interesting philosophical speculation. But it is *not* science fiction, since it is based upon phenomena excluded by science—without offering any solid basis for their inclusion.

"I, Robot", by Eando Binder, from *Amazing Stories* (selected by Howard Browne) is science fiction, dealing as it does with a conscious robot. It is not an outstanding story—though readable. It's debatable whether this story, or Lester del Rey's "Helen O'Loy", which appeared a few weeks later, set the trend for the sympathetic robot story; in any event, the del Rey story is a far better speciment of its type.

"And Someday To Mars", by Frank Belknap Long, from *Thrilling Wonder Stories* (selected by Samuel Mines) is a product of the "let's-take-the-science-out-of-science-fiction" school, although one of the less insulting varieties.

"Wall of Darkness", by Arthur C. Clarke, from *Super Science Stories*, (selected by Elijer Jakobson), is a well-written science-fictional treatment of such weird tales as "The Long Wall".

"All Roads", by Mona Farnsworth, from *Unknown* (selected by John W. Campbell) is an excellent story, which should have been anthologized in some fantasy collection long before this. A "why not?" story, it could have appeared as another of *Astounding's* usually-welcome off-trail offerings (the important thing is that this type of story can be fine when it appears occasionally, and not under such circumstances as to appear the norm).

"Exit", by Wilson Tucker, from *Astonishing Stories* (selected by Alden H. Norton) fits in to the pattern of this volume: spurious speculation, with an attempt to look at the phenomenon in a scientific manner, or a slick overlay of pseudo-science. The "let's-take-the-science-out-of-science-fiction" boys mostly can't tell the difference—and usually don't care.

"The Sublime Vigil", by Chester D. Cuthbert, from *Wonder Stories* (selected by Hugo Gernsback) is an earlier example of the human interest story, well handled, dealing with phenomena for which science does not yet have a satisfactory accounting. (Strange disappearances.)

"Far Below", by Ralph Barbour Johnson, from *Weird Tales* (selected by Dorothy McIlraith) is a horror story, about fearful beings that supposedly dwell inside the earth. Why not? But one of the differences between science fiction and fantasy is that in science fiction, the author must explain *why!* "Why not?" is the hallmark of mysticism, superstition, etc.

"Death of a Sensitive" by Harry Bates, from *Science Fiction Plus* (selected by Sam Moskowitz) is a story that Mr. Moskowitz himself described as a "sport", or quite atypical. While it is by no means as unique as the anthologist seems to think it is, the story is well done, and would be a worthy example of the offtrail story in a truly representative science fiction collection. If you read these stories in order, as I did, the mystical qualities of the Bates novelet seem to fall into the same general framework as a number of the other selections. Its individual excellences are blunted by the overall sameness of most of the selections.

For "The Demoiselle d'Ys" by Robert W. Chambers, from *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* (selected by Mary Gnaedinger), there is not the slightest excuse in a book with the title of the present one. "By any standards, it is a fine story," concludes the introductory blurb. Granted. By any standards, the "Book of Ruth" from the Old Testament is a fine story. On the basis of what *was* included, I can see no reason for having excluded this fine story, except perhaps the problem of which editor could legitimately "select" it.

The final selection in the book, chosen by Oscar J. Friend, is "The Stolen Centuries", by Otis Adelbert Kline, from *Thrilling Wonder Stories*. On the level of sheer formula-mechanics in story construction, this is probably all that Mr. Friend says it is; on any other level it is best forgotten. It can be read and enjoyed on the lower levels of competent hackwork, as an entertaining "biter-bit" story.

[*Turn To Page* 69]

The way Captain Storm figured it, two men were needed for the expedition — but only one set of brains. His, of course!

PERFECT DISCIPLINE

by RUSS WINTERBOTHAM

ALWAYS it had been human failure, rather than mechanical failure, that had prevented earthmen from reaching Pluto. No matter how perfect the spaceships and the atomic power that propelled them, man had not quite measured up to the standard of his machinery.

But in Captain David Storm was nerve of iron, a will of steel and a heart of diamond. If any man could make the voyage successfully, he could do it. "But what about the crew?" the Director of Interplanetary Exploration asked the captain.

"I'll need only one man," said the captain.

"Ah," said the director, whose name was Fairchild, "that's the weakness. Where will we find another man who has the determination to reach Pluto at all costs and return safely? Where can we find the intelligence to cooperate fully, to obey blindly, and to trust every decision you make?"

"You're talking about two different men," said Captain Storm. He was a big man, bulky muscular and broad shouldered. There was not an ounce of fat on him. His eyes blazed and they

seemed so hot that people wondered why they did not scorch his cheeks.

"Two men?"

"I have the determination to reach Pluto at all costs and return safely," said the captain. "All I ask of a crew is perfect discipline; a man who will obey orders, and trust my decisions, and who will ask no questions."

The director shook his head. "Such a man would be quite stupid."

"I want a stupid man. That's where we have failed before; we've tried to pick intellectuals. Only one brain is needed."

"But one brain might be wrong."

"One brain might be right. There is twice as much chance of making a mistake with two humans aboard a ship, both of whom are capable of independent thought. To err is human. The more humans you have, the more error."

"You want an imbecile to accompany you to Pluto?"

"I want a man who trusts and obeys. His grade of intelligence doesn't matter."

And so a search ensued. Every physically-fit male listed by the draft boards of a nation was screened and tested. It was a long, dull and uninteresting process, but at length one candidate, one man in millions, was found who seemed to be able to do what he was told, without questions, without fail. The man was hardly a man—just a skinny, dull-eyed youth who had spent ten of his twenty-three years in reform schools. He was not mentally retarded, but neither was he mentally alert. He had always been led by others; he was weak-willed, wishy-washy and spineless. But when he was told to do something he did it, without question.

And strangely enough, for a lad who had spent almost half of his life in penal institutions, he was honest, in a twisted, thwarted way. There was no spark of rebellion that sometimes breeds dishonesty. His life of crime had been sparked by others. When they told him to steal, he stole; when he was told to lie and cheat, he lied and cheated. He had no moral fiber to do otherwise. Had he been told to be honest and upright, he would have become a useful citizen; his environment had been against him.

And his name was Donald Tinge.

Captain Storm tested Donald. He gave him a pistol and pointed to a policeman. "Shoot him!" he said.

Donald raised the pistol and pulled the trigger. The gun was not loaded, but Donald hadn't known this; he had obeyed without question.

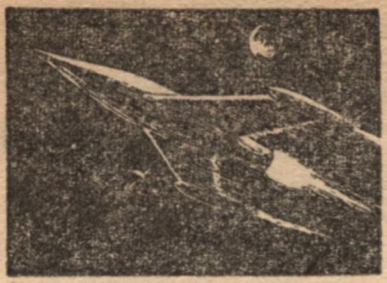
Donald was taken to a penthouse on top of a 20-story building and told to jump. Donald walked to the edge of the building and jumped. Nets placed below caught him, but Donald had not known the nets were there. He had simply obeyed a command. He hadn't thought of the consequences to himself; Donald was the perfectly disciplined man.

"The voyage cannot fail," said Captain Storm.

And so with civic pomp, patriotic fervor, speeches, flag waving and band music, Captain David Storm and his one-man crew took off for Pluto.

THE SHIP functioned perfectly. Donald behaved better than the machinery; Donald obeyed orders. He did not become moody and mutinous, as men are inclined to become in space. He worked at his tasks, he did what he was told to do, and he never asked questions. And Captain Storm, with his determination at high pitch, sat in his cabin with every fiber of his iron will bent toward reaching the objective.

Months passed and Pluto was reached. Captain Storm landed, explored, took samples of soil and atmosphere, which lay frozen on the ground. Donald Tinge assisted; he performed the chores that Captain Storm designated.



And the captain glowed inwardly. Perfect planning had made the voyage perfect. If he could have the same luck on the homeward leg, it would be an easier trip than the short flight to Mars.

But the odds against a perfect voyage even to the moon are too great for such a hope to materialize.

Centuries before Captain Storm's voyage, a scientist had made a mistake of three seconds in calculating the time of Pluto's rotation on its axis. Every figure that Captain Storm used in calculating his journey had been checked and double-checked, but somehow this small error had escaped detection. Or, if it was detected, it had never been corrected.

And when Captain Storm took off on his trip homeward he was three seconds off. A small error indeed, and one hardly likely to make much difference on a short journey through space. But Pluto was well over four billion miles off and in that distance a three-second error was enough to throw the entire orbit of the spaceship awry.

The three-second error had made no difference on the outgoing voyage, since Pluto's rotation on its axis had nothing to do with the spaceship which had started from the earth, and whose movements had to be corrected in respect to the earth and the sun. But on the return trip, Captain Storm's spacecraft was for all practical purposes a native of Pluto and it was entirely governed by that planet until it reached a spot near the gravitational field of the earth.

Captain Storm sat in the control room, watching the stars and keeping his will inflexible when he noticed that something was wrong.

A huge black object seemed to blot out the stars ahead. A second later a rock, larger than a mountain missed the spacecraft by inches. And far off to the right a moving light twinkled.

"Asteroids!" the captain blurted. "How in Lord's name did we get into the asteroid belt?"

His route had been carefully planned to avoid this dangerous area in planetary travel, but within minutes it became apparent that his spaceship was plowing right through it. Before days had elapsed, a collision would be inevitable.

There was nothing to do but to extend the orbit, and then correct it for a new path toward the earth. The spaceship had to be lifted above the asteroid belt at all costs. It would take fuel, but there was a little to spare and the captain hoped it would be enough. Otherwise, this trip would fail, like all the others.

GRASPING the controls, the captain fired the rockets. The ship trembled silently as it accelerated through space. Black rocks sped by and flashed their sunlit sides after the spaceship passed. The ship moved upward and outward till it seemed to form the apex of a triangle with its base as a line between Jupiter and the earth.

Then Captain Storm cut the rockets. "Donald," he called, "fetch me the charts."

Donald had been preparing a meal, but as the order came, he put this aside and slipped silently into the chart room. A moment later he brought several bulky volumes to the control room and placed them on Captain Storm's desk.

"That will do," said the captain; "go back to your work."

"Yes, sir," said Donald. And he went away.

For hours Captain Storm labored, sighting Jupiter, the earth and then computing the speed of his ship. A large correction would be needed to reach the earth, for the error in Pluto's rotation already had thrown them days off their course. Added to this was the acceleration that had taken them out of the asteroid belt.

Captain Storm computed his fuel supply and the amount of energy needed. By God, he could make it; but there wouldn't be much to spare. Even then he'd have to jettison every bit of excess weight.

The bunks would have to go; they could sleep on the bare floor. Much of the food could be dumped. They could live on half rations. Some of the water, too, would be thrown out.

There were personal items such as books, phonograph records and a record player that had been used to entertain the captain and Donald on the long voyage. These could be spared.

Donald brought in the meal. He placed it on a tray in front of the captain.

"Bring your own meal in here, Donald," said the captain. "Join me today."

Heretofore, in the interest of strict discipline, the captain had never fraternized with Donald; but this was an unusual event. Donald did not ask questions. He brought his own tray and set it on the desk, opposite the captain.

"Eat hearty," said Captain Storm. "This may be the last square meal we'll have in many a day."

"Yes, sir," said Donald. Although he was not hungry, he ate a hearty meal.

"Drink your fill of water too," said the captain.

Donald obeyed, as he always did.

"Now," said the captain, "I have something to tell you." Slowly the captain outlined the situation. Every item aboard the spaceship that was not needed for the successful completion of the voyage must go overboard. The one exception was the samples and the records they had gathered and made on Pluto.

"Everything goes," said the captain. "Understand?"

Donald nodded. "Yes, sir. I understand."

"You have four hours to complete the task. I've set the automatic controls for acceleration four hours from now. I don't trust human hands for such a delicate task of putting the ship back on an orbit that will take it to the earth. The acceleration and *Brennschluss* will be automatic. Understand?"

"Yes, sir," said Donald.

"Food and water will be cut to the absolute minimum to preserve life. You will not like it, but you must accept it as necessary."

"Yes, sir," said Donald.

"You may not like it, but I don't think it will kill you. After reaching the earth, you will be famous, and you can eat and drink anything you want."

"Yes, sir," said Donald.

"I have foreseen everything," said the captain. "Even the fact that by the time the ship reaches the earth, lack of food and water may make it impossible to operate the landing controls properly. And so I have computed the time of arrival, and set robot mechanisms to take over."

"Yes, sir," said Donald.

"Now get to work; remember, everything that is not needed, goes overboard."

"Me too, sir?" asked Donald.

"Great Jupiter," said Captain Storm. "This is no time to ask questions! Did I say you were to jump out?"

"No, sir," said Donald.

"Okay, then; get started."

The first thing Donald did was to throw Captain Storm overboard.

★

When what we call "natural balances" are upset — look out!

IT'S IN THE AIR

by WINSTON MARKS

"CHRIS? THIS is Collins. I'm down at Entomology. They're not quite through, but Hauser says without a doubt it's hit the whole Class Insecta; ever see a passionate potato bug?"

"That," said Dr. Christian Land, "is just great! Tell Hauser to fire up a report fast." He flipped off the interphone and sank back in his swivel chair.

His secretary looked up from her typing. "More trouble?"

The biologist nodded heavily. "The bugs. The whole damned insect world is on the make. There goes the grain surplus we just got under control; they'll take care of it."

This would blow his budget sky-high. He envisioned the trainloads of sprays and poison baits, the aircraft and flame-throwers and super-sonic gear, the armies of shovel crews.

First it had been the bacteria, the protozoa and the algae, then the whole botanical world. North America was a veritable jungle of vegetable fecundity. Now this gigantic leap up the ladder of Phylogeny. If the mysterious growth factor took hold as prodigiously among the insects—well, he'd earn his fifteen thousand a year.

At 31, Land's appointment as Chief of the coordinating bureau had been a heady honor and a tribute to his outstanding organizational abilities. But his brilliance had been sorely tested. Back in 1956, when the President asked Congress for money to establish the Bureau of Biological Radiation Control, there had been only the lichens and mosses to contend with.

But the past four years had seen his small staff burgeon into an army, the modest quarters in the Pentagon outgrown and transplanted to a five-story building in suburban Washington D. C., and the problems multiplying always just beyond his budgeted funds.

As Director of the BBRC, Land's function was to coordinate the government's battle against outraged nature. At this late date, the President's wisdom of concentrating the power of positive action in the hands of one man was manifest. The prestige inherent in his position allowed the biologist to

cut red tape, requisition men and materials, and act, unhindered by the blizzard of paperwork that normally strangles inter-departmental cooperation.

Under one roof, he had gathered experts in all relevant sciences. His own laboratories were staffed with botanists, chemists, radiologists, ichthyologists, entomologists, zoologists, ecologists and even agricultural economists.

He sucked at a cold, briar pipe and stared around the modest office that become a veritable prison for him. It was only 20 by 30, lined with gray, steel filing-cabinets and contained two desks. His own, at the left end, was a clutter of telephones and inter-coms. The broad window on his left ran the room's length and looked down five stories to the over-lush, cultivated parks and fields bordering the suburbs.

Fifteen feet before him sat the only redeeming aspect of the coldly efficient office. Jean Lee had come over with him from the Pentagon, and not a week had passed that he hadn't breathed a prayer of thanks for her quiet presence.

At 30, she was at the peak of her secretarial career, a bachelor like himself, and except for the potent distractions of limb, breast and brow that are built into the chosen of her sex, Jean Lee was the perfect office aide. She dressed to minimize her disturbing femininity, but nothing short of dyeing her chestnut hair and plastic surgery could have disguised the magnetic effect of her salubrious genes.

BEING A biologist, Land recognized fully the pitfalls of sexual proximity, but being a man as well, he had gradually succumbed to them. Dr. Christian Land, after three years, was prudently but solidly in love.

He knew she was aware of it; months ago she had looked up and surprised him staring at her. For a long minute their eyes had locked and spoken—his, with all the pent-up yearning of the lonesome years, hers, with a quiet depth of understanding, yet a disturbing emotion akin to fright. Tiny wrinkles puckered her forehead, and her head moved in a little negative motion that revealed a timidity he had never suspected.

Land had felt then that to speak of his love would have cost him her services, and he couldn't bear to take the risk. As he watched her now he wondered how long his restraint could last.

The interphone buzzed and as he picked it up Collins, his assistant, entered the office. Land said, "Yes?"

It was Hauser in Entomology, and even while he spoke, the delivery tube thumped at Land's elbow. "There's the preliminary report. Ecology will have fun with this one."

"Don't relax," Land warned. "Ecology will have an order-of-priority worksheet for you before your crew is ready for it. So keep punching, man."

He selected a number from his encyclopaedic memory and dialed Ecology. "Hanson? This is Land. According to Hauser, the insects declared war today. I have the full report here, but we have to make a beginning, so why don't you start by establishing priority order for us to work on? Check first with the Health Service for a list of the human and animal disease carriers such as the Anopheles and the ticks. Then get a line from the Department of Agriculture. Shoot it through to Entomology when you finish."

He hung up and as he dialed again he nodded at Jeff Collins. "Hi, boy. The report just landed. Too thick. Buzz it for me and dictate a digest to Miss Lee, will you? Hello! Let me speak to Senator Carlson, please. This Dr. Christian Land of the BBRC. That's right. Thanks, I'll wait."

He tossed the long messenger tube to Jeff and glanced over at Jean. She was poised at her electric typewriter, ready to transcribe. He unrolled the sheaf of papers, scanned the first page and began dictating. Chosen by Land

for his PhD. in General Semantics, Collins was an opposite physical type from the head biologist. Land was brunet, tall, lean and rather loose-jointed, while Jeff Collins was a compact little fair-skinned, freckled and pot-bellied fellow. The pace at which Land drove him left his face with a chronic sheen of perspiration, and his stubby fingers were almost continously running through his sandy hair.

As Jean began her staccato accompaniment, Land reached his party. "Hello, Senator. I've got the ammunition you asked for the other day—you know, to get a budget increase for the BBRC. The radiation has set the insects off. If this one doesn't take half a billion to handle I'll eat your Cadillac. We'll send over a digest this evening. Right! Thanks, Senator."

Beside his warfare with Nature, Land fought a running battle with Congress for funds. It was a treacherous, shifting conflict. Perpetually aligned against him were the avid supporters of the AEC, which hogged so much of the budget. This, although it was the AEC and its earlier A-bomb tests that had brought this whole biological nightmare into being.

THE CUMULATIVE effect of the years of mushrooming radioactive particles into the atmosphere had finally triggered the mysterious life-growth acceleration. Land's job of coping with the effects of the radiation included avoiding feuds with varying sectional oppositions. When the fecundity hit the wheat belt, economic ruin almost overtook the grain market before Land could convince the Senators from Kansas that they must once more submit to Federal control of acreage again.

And when the Protozoa and Bacteria ran amuck, he had to move fast to jam through extra appropriations for the Health Service before pandemic diseases gained a foothold. That time he found himself branded as a proponent of "socialized medicine."

Always working against him was the prejudice and distrust toward his youthfulness. Were it not for the extraordinary powers inherent in his post, matters could have easily gotten out of hand.

He made a few more laconic phone calls then strode over to the rapping typewriter and ripped off a section of the continuous paper. Returning his lank frame to the leather chair he studied the meaty digest from Ecology, as filtered through Jeff Collins' sieve-like mind.

Spot checks in almost every family of the Class did indicate that the whole Class of Insecta was affected. Cautious, painstaking research was not for the stand-by labs of the BBRC. They were a slash-bang crew of apparatus vandals with one specific instruction: spot radiation effects, estimate the magnitude of the control problem and supply the quickest and most feasible answers. Land's empirical methods got results. When he told a subordinate to, "Get with it!" he either "got" or found himself replaced before payday.

Hauser's report stated that the larval and pupal stages of the insects seemed unchanged, but the sex-lives and egg-laying activities were accelerated some four-fold.

His phone rang and he snatched it up impatiently. It was the Senator. "The committee is in session, Chris, and Spaulding of California is jumping mad. Says he just got a whole batch of telegrams from his orchard constituents out there, and the fruit flies are raising the devil. He wants to know why this thing wasn't anticipated."

Land said, "Put him on."

The receiver banged once in his ear, then the Californian was sputtering at him indignantly. "What're you doing with all the money we send over there, anyway? Do you always wait until these things get out of control?"

"No, Senator. We—"

"If all that money had been allotted to the State of California for local re-

search, by Gadfry, things would be different."

Land let him blow steam then finally broke in tersely. "Sorry, Senator Spaulding, but it is impossible to predict where this thing will strike next. It's not working its way up through the life-forms in an orderly pattern. We simply can't guard against every possibility; there isn't that much money in Fort Knox."

"You might have known that the insects would—"

"We don't know anything until it happens, Senator. We had hoped that none of the higher life forms would be affected. Class Insecta is the first highly orgainzed animal to respond. Now, I'm afraid the lid is off; anything can happen. Our hope is to keep ahead of them and establish control before another group begins this fantastic breeding."

The Senator was not to be soothed. "The least you can do is to figure on the biggest trouble spots, like these fruit flies, for inst—"

"Senator Spaulding, I suggest that you study your Phylogeny, then put on a blindfold and see where you'd pin the donkey's tail." He slammed down the phone with an oath.

It was after six before Jean had dispatched copies of the digest to all affected departments. Collins had gone, and on impulse Land asked her to stay and have dinner with him. She stiffened slightly at his remark, touched the little lever and watched the typewriter sink into its recess.

"Thank you," she said quietly, "but my sister is expecting me." Her eyes flashed to the small door at the end of the office that led to Land's private living quarters.

Land realized the inference she had taken. "No, I mean downstairs in the dining room. They broil a delicious steak," he trailed off, knowing he hadn't improved his blunder.

"Would you believe it?" she said with a nervous smile as she moved hurriedly to the exit, "that's what we're having for dinner tonight. Broiled steak. Good night, Dr. Land."

AS USUAL, he had his dinner sent up and he ate off the tray in his office. At midnight he finished the stack of progress reports that had arrived this day, went out into the corridor and sought the stairwell to the roof. It was a lovely August night. The lights of the capitol twinkled hardly brighter than the stars overhead.

Land stared into the darkness pensively. For months he had skirted the edge of an overwhelming loneliness, fighting it off with the antidote of ever-increasing work. Tonight his solitude choked in on him. This was a job for a bachelor, all right, but was he the bachelor for the job? He filled his lungs with the warm night air and fanned a little cloud of mosquitoes.

The persistent, bloodthirsty little devils dragged his mind back to his job. He descended to his living quarters, took a tepid shower and went to bed. After an eternity he fell into a troubled slumber and dreamed that the insects were ravaging the country. The boll weevil had wiped out the cotton crop and the corn-borer was desolating Iowa. Senator Spaulding's California was one, great, denuded citrus grove.

Then a pair of rabbits bounded into view followed by others, many others. The prairies were jumping with rabbits and he was wading among the jacks and cotton-tails, firing a rifle into their midst—never hitting, always missing.

He awoke sweating, hoping that his dream wasn't prophetic. His watch said six o'clock. He got up, cold-showered, made coffee, himself, and took it into his study to watch the early news videocast.

The whole nation was jumpy over this insect thing. There was wild speculation with a rash of fictional reports of unusual rat populations, flocks of predatory birds and similar scares. He

knew they were false rumors. Every member of the animal kingdom was under constant scrutiny down in Zoology and out in the field. With their longer periods of gestation, excessive mating tendencies would be noted and reported long before their populations increased noticeably.

There was the story of another religious sect marching on Washington to demand cessation of all nuclear power experiments. For once Land found himself near sympathy with the crackpots. Nucleonics had been to blame originally. Yet who could have predicted that such infinitesimal concentrations of radioactivity could have the long-delayed effect upon reproductive life-forces?

Atomic explosions on the continent had been banned several years ago, but the damage was done. Decontamination was impossible, and nuclear experts declared that it would take almost a decade for the decaying dust that was now largely washed into the soil to diminish appreciably.

HE ENTERED his office and played back his phone monitor that guarded the wires during his rest hours. There was only one message. He was to call Zoology. Risling was up early!

He dialed the number. "Jake? For Pete's sake don't mention rabbits to me. I dreamed about them half the night."

Jacob Risling's job was to keep in touch with the zoological gardens throughout the country and to keep tabs on the smaller animals in BBRC's own little zoo. He said, "No, the rabbits are no worse than usual, but it looks like Classes V and VI, are on the glory road. The snakes, lizards, toads, birds and like that. It's not spring, but mister, love is in the air at the aviaries and the snake-houses."

"Good Lord, now the Vertebrates!" Land bit some new dents into his well-chewed pipestem. Copperheads and crows, alligators and pigeons—

"Right! And before you get up on your hands and knees, I'd better mention that the Carnivora are suspect, too. San Diego sent the alert; they've been snooping on their wolves, foxes and bears. Nothing definite yet, but I passed the word around to the other zoos."

"Good! Keep with it." Land hung up and buzzed Ecology. Frank Hanson yawned a good morning. "Frank, San Diego is suspicious of the Carnivora. What's the biggest threat there if they prove out?"

"Oh, me! A little hard to say. The cats would be a hell of a nuisance, for sure. It's into the Vertebrates, eh? That means the rodents will probably be along shortly, and there goes your old ball game. They'll finish what the insects leave."

"What I was thinking. Start digging priority classifications on the whole shebang, Frank. Get some Wildlife boys over to help you if necessary. And stand by for a conference at ten."

Jean came in at nine and found Land talking into two phones. He pointed his elbow at the pile of pencilled memos, which she scooped up and began transcribing. Finished with his calls at last, he stepped over to her desk intending to give her his itinerary of conferences for the day, but as he looked down at her, her nearness tongue-tied him for a moment.

In that brief particle of eternity, unaware of his presence behind her shoulder, Jean Lee twisted her swivel chair and stood up to get something from the files. Her action was so quick that Land had no time to retreat. She bumped into him, face to face.

She gave a startled little cry, and instinctively Land's hands went to her shoulders. She swayed away from him then, unexpectedly, leaned to his chest to hide the tears that sprang to her eyes.

"Jean! I'm—I'm sorry I startled you." He wanted to slip his arms around her and crush her to him, but

he held her lightly. Her nearness was almost overpowering, and he hoped against hope she would give him the slightest encouragement.

A tremor passed through her, then she squared her shoulders under his hands and stepped back from him. She smiled and dabbed openly at her eyes. "It was silly of me," she said in an unsteady voice. "I'm—I'm a worse old maid than my sister."

"Jean—"

"Yes, Chris?"

"You're a lovely—old maid. I want you to know how much I—I appreciate you."

She tore her eyes away from his, deliberately refusing to acknowledge what was in them. She moved around him to the files. "Thanks, Chris," she said with head averted. "Sorry I'm such a skittish character. I guess my proximity fuse was installed backwards. The further I am from—from a man I like very much, the better I feel. Crazy, isn't it?"

Land understood, but it didn't make him any happier. She had made her own way so long that she had confused her independence with her security. What threatened her independence disturbed her sense of security. To force himself on her would only drive her away, he knew. His shoulders sagged, and he left for his first appointment with a feeling of deep frustration.

IN SUCCESSION he met with Ecology, Entomology and Bio-chemistry. When he dumped the results on Risling in Zoology he threw up his hands and declared he'd need an ornithologist and a herpetologist—or better yet, full departments in each specialty. Land left him and met with his administration staff to arrange for the new personnel and their working quarters.

It was after five when he returned to his office feeling near defeat. The complexity of the problem was mounting at a geometrical rate.

Jean was gone, but a high stack of notes on his desk bespoke the activity of his office in his absence. Congressmen from four more orchard states were on record as repudiating Land and the whole BBRC for failure to protect their fruit. The biologist fumed at this. Only a few months ago they were moaning over the surplus yields which were driving down the market for their products dangerously.

The Department of Agriculture had phoned in alarm at the prospect of a nationwide grasshopper plague. And what plans had he for tick control? The cattlemen were screaming for action. Land wondered what they would say when they found out about the Carnivores, the mountain lions, wolves and coyotes.

Jeff Collins came in, his face sunburned and his shirt wet with sweat. "It's not official yet, but I'll make book on it," he puffed. "The meat-eaters are on the way. Three zoos called in, Risling says. Even the lions are mooning around out of season. And the dogs! Everywhere you look."

He sprawled in the extra chair and scrubbed his kinky, blond hair with both hands. "I'm scared, Chris; it's snowballing on us."

They reviewed the day's events, and Collins got up to leave shaking his head. "You must have icewater for blood. You sit there smoking that damn pipe while the country turns into a crawling jungle." He slammed the door after him.

Who was he to play God to all these creatures—he, a bachelor who couldn't even claim a mate for himself? Count the sparrows and the grains of corn and the rattlesnakes—add them all up and make sure they come out even—make certain that Senator Orangehead's lemon grove isn't molested and the garter-snakes don't frighten the constituents up in Maine—but mind you, Buster, let's not be hollering about funds all the time—that kind of talk leads to creeping socialism.

THE PHONE rang. It was Risling. "Your dream about the rabbits? Well, you didn't miss it by much. The white mice are honeymooning tonight. Sorry to bother you after hours, but I thought you might like to know."

Land clutched the phone with white knuckles. "Stay there a minute, will you Jake? I'll be right down."

The sun was low on the horizon and slanted redly through the dozens of cages arranged along the perimeter of windows of the zoological wing. Risling waved him in.

Land said, "We must be very sure about the rodents; how can you tell?"

Jake shook his bristly gray head. "Don't question me, young fellow. I know my animals. Look at those females over there. See how aggressive they are?"

Land approached the cages and studied the tiny, agitated rodents with the white fur and pink ears. Jake said, "Watch this little female, now. See? It's the males do the chasing always before. Look at the shameless little hussy!"

"How about the rats?" Land asked trying to light his pipe with unsteady hands.

"They're beginning to stir around, too. By morning I expect your rabbit dream will come true, and if it follows the same pattern, you can throw in the chipmunks, squirrels and the rest of the whole Order. Hide the cheese, momma. We got mice!"

Land thanked him for waiting for him and went back to his office. He clenched his cold pipe between his teeth and stared out at the fading pink sky. With the jump all the way from the Insecta to the Carnivora, and back to the Rodentia all in one day, he knew that the radiation effect was rapidly approaching totality. How could they hope to cope simultaneously with this monstrosity of fertility?

He spent the evening poring over Ecology's quick classification of the various species and families that would pose the earliest and most destructive threats to the nation's health and economy. First, came the insects, then the rodents, then some of the smaller carnivores with quick growth cycles. In the Northern States the birds and reptiles wouldn't pose much of a problem until next spring, but in the South! The southern and far western crops would be doomed.

As each life-form passed in review he mentally tried to conceive the means and estimate the cost of controlling it. The means? Yes, man knew how to destroy any organism on earth; it was one of his proudest skills. But the cost!

His words to Senator Spaulding came back to him. *Was there* enough money in the treasury to control the insects, the birds and the beasts in the field simultaneously? Or would they roll over the continent in an uncheckable, voracious tide, stripping the land and driving the people into the waters and wastelands of the poles?

It was a paralyzing thought, but he forced back the feeling of panic from his tired brain. The key lay in selective control, he knew, not sheer, mass destruction. True, "Mother Nature" was paying mankind back for abusing his privileges and taking liberties with Her very atoms. But "Mother Nature" wouldn't destroy her favorite son just out of revenge—not if he could use the brains she had bestowed upon him.

The most voracious of all insects were the crickets and grasshopppers, and for the most part, all species had life-cycles that extended through several seasons. By then the birds would be hatching—the wonderful birds. This time man wouldn't wait for the Mormon miracle of the sea-gulls, he'd arrange it.

Swiftly, his mind ran through the hundreds of obvious natural checks and balances among the various life-forms. Even certain insects, such as the mantis family, would be worth breeding for their insatiable appetite for grasshoppers.

The real danger, he sensed, lay in the possibility of panic. Ecology must work out the details of selective control quietly. It would devolve upon Christian Land, however, to handle Congress. The expense would be enormous, and the discipline of selective control extremely difficult to enforce at various stages. Many Congressmen would be incapable of grasping the necessity of sacrificing a whole crop of certain grains, for instance, to encourage the super-breeding of certain birds who would later eradicate a given insect. At the outset, even the reptiles must be endured. How else stem the rodents?

FOR HOURS he worked on his strategy for handling the Senate investigating committees. He dare not let the thing break wide open on the floor at first. *This was his job,* selling the plan to Congress without precipitating national chaos. He felt he could do it, and he was suddenly grateful for the four dreary years spent cultivating influential friends in government, from the President down. It would take the best efforts of all of them to put it over. But succeed it must!

It was past midnight, now, but somehow he felt better. He had faced the worst and had forseen at least the possibility of eventual victory. He flipped through the few remaining memos of the pile Jean had left on his desk.

He came to the last one on the bottom, and the taste of victory turned to ashes in his mouth. It was a typed resignation signed by Jean Lee—effective immediately.

Clipped to it was a pencilled note: *"Today when you touched me I realized how I felt about you. I know it's cowardly to run away, but the thought of giving in to my feeling terrifies me, Chris. Choose my replacement carefully, darling. Don't tear yourself apart again over another neurotic career girl."* (signed) *Jean.*

His pipe slipped from numb fingers, spilling cold ashes on the strewn papers. What a prize damned fool he'd been, trying to win her love by concealing his love! He should have gambled while he had her in his arms this morning. Then, if he'd lost he would have lost cleanly, positively—and maybe he'd have won.

What was the use of this whole damned struggle, anyway? On whose behalf? On the behalf of a frustrated, inhibited culture that couldn't face the facts of life? On behalf of a Congress full of big-bellied politicians who put re-election above the common good?

Must the whole struggle be for someone else? Was there *nothing* in this for him? Nothing but slavery and damnation and loneliness? What was *his reward* for fighting the good fight against Nature? What was the payoff? What was the use of anything?

IT WAS MORNING again. He stalked hollow-eyed into his office at ten minutes to nine and stared down at the tentative plan he had laid out. It was a good plan, but he had no stomach for enthusiasm. He looked at his watch. When Jean got here in ten minutes he'd—no, she wasn't coming. Funny thing, habit. Hard to break. Damned hard.

The interphone buzzed, and he snatched it up. It was Risling again. "I got three calls on the Carnivora already. No doubt there any more. And listen to this. Chicago called in to report on the monkeys and apes, and the Bronx Zoo just confirmed it. You can count on the Primates to hold up their end, too. In Chicago they're acting so naughty they've closed up the zoo to the public."

"So what?" Land muttered. "Primates aren't indigenous to the United States. Let the zoos worry about them."

"Think again, bub," Risling laughed strangely and hung up. Land was staring at the phone in puzzlement when Collins burst in. "Gawdamighty,

Chris!" he exclaimed mopping at his pink face.

"What's the matter with you?" Land asked grimly.

"Coming out on the bus. I been winked at, whistled at and even pinched—you don't suppose the Primates have—"

Land came erect in his chair. "The Primates! Yes! Risling just called that the monkeys and the apes—"

Collins sank into the chair the picture of dismay. He was a confirmed bachelor and proud of it. "Chris—do *you* feel any different?"

Land shook his head. "Do you?"

Jeff said, "Hell, no! But those women—"

A direct line phone jangled loudly. Land picked it up almost fearfully, but it was only Senator Carlton. "Dr. Land, I have bad news. The committee has been in session all night. What a wrangle!"

"I suppose they cut my appropriation in half," Land said bitterly.

"Well, they didn't increase it any, that's for certain." He launched into a long list of violent complaints. Collins waved a hand of sympathy at Land and opened the door to leave.

In the doorway, when he opened it, was Jean Lee. Unaware of her resignation he simply said hello and went on out, but Land bolted to his feet.

She closed the door behind her and stood hesitantly facing him. She moved over to him slowly.

Carlton was saying, "There's even some talk of demanding your resignation, Dr. Land. Now, if you could just show a little quick action on this fruit-fly thing, I think I could—"

Good Lord, Land thought, *they are still harping on that.* Then he realized, they had no idea of recent developments. Jean was before him now, looking up into his face with the same timid little wrinkles between her eyes, but there was something else in them.

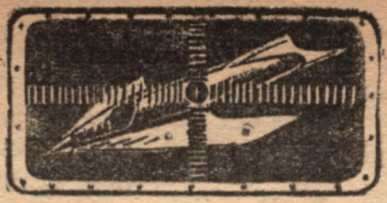
Her arms came up and around his neck, and suddenly the dam broke. She buried her wet eyes against his shoulder and hugged him to her. "Chris. Chris—I was wrong. I do want you. I love you very much. I—I want to have a baby."

Land wrapped one long arm around her to make sure she was real. The receiver in his left hand barked. "Senator Spaulding keeps yelling that the insects are going to inherit the earth if you don't get a move on. He claims the odds are against us. Say what's that woman's voice and all that blubbering?"

Land had to clear his throat twice before he could make a sound. By then he was grinning, ear to ear. "That, Senator, is 'Mother Nature' evening up the odds."

He dropped the phone in its cradle to stop the fuse-like sputtering. He had more important things to do at the moment. And the first project required both hands.

★



INSIDE SCIENCE FICTION

A Department For The Science Fictionist

by Robert A. Madle

PROJECT FAN CLUB

IN THE past we have discussed various types of science fiction organizations. Last issue, some of the Southern local groups were mentioned; other local organizations, such as the Los Angeles Science-Fantasy Society and Philadelphia Science Fiction Society were covered in previous issues. And in earlier departments, clubs like the National Fantasy Fan Federation and the Fantasy Veterans were noted.

As indicated, there are many, many different s-f clubs in existence, with many different purposes. There is the ordinary, informal discussion group (most local organizations fall into this category); there is the national and world-wide correspondence group, which is aimed primarily at introducing general readers of science fiction to fandom; there is a fan club composed entirely of the female of the species; there is a philanthropic organization whose purpose is to supply books and magazines to fans in the armed services; and there are several groups of amateur publishers, each of whom publishes a magazine which is distributed to the other members. Perhaps the oddest of all the organizations is the one we are devoting a few paragraphs to this time, "Project Fan Club".

About four years ago Orville W. Mosher, then a college student, became actively interested in science fiction clubs. He observed that information concerning most existing clubs was difficult to obtain, and only the barest of facts relevant to the early fan clubs was available. Orville knew that many readers of science fiction would be interested in attending meetings of clubs in their localities—if they but knew such clubs existed! With this thought in mind, Orville started "Project Fan Club" and, almost entirely through his own efforts, has accumulated reams of information concerning every facet of s-f fan organizations.

To obtain this information, detailed questionnaires were sent to members of existing and defunct organizations. (It was felt that it was just as important to know why an organization failed as to know why one succeeded.) These questionnaires inquired concerning the name, age, and purpose of the club; number of members; requirements for membership; types of programs presented; how often meetings were held, and so on. The many replies were the basis for several publications devoted to the establishment of a science fiction club. These pamphlets are invaluable to anyone desiring information on how to start and successfully run an s-f club.

Probably the most important result of Orville's several years of labor is the fan-club list he possesses. It is the most complete available anywhere, and many s-f readers have been introduced to clubs in their own neighborhoods when they wrote to Orville for information.

Right now Orville is working hard on a "fancard" file which will contain salient information concerning all s-f fans from whom he can solicit such information. This file will be available to all participating s-f readers, particularly to those interested in organizing a club. Another function of Project Fan Club is the publication of *Crifanac*, a newszine to which all fen are invited to contribute. And PFC also has a moving picture of past science fiction conventions available. This film may be borrowed by bona-fide active science fiction clubs.

Inquiries concerning Project Fan Club are invited. It is suggested, however, that a stamped envelope be enclosed with any such

inquiries. Orville W. Mosher's address is 429 Gilpin Avenue, Dallas 11, Texas.

SCIENCE FICTION SPOTLIGHT

NEWS AND VIEWS: Donald M. Grant, who published "333—A Bibliography of the Science-Fantasy Novel," is now compiling a "Lost Race" bibliography. If comprehensive, this should be an indispensable collector's tool. ...The revival issue of L. B. Farsace's *Golden Atom* will probably be the costliest to produce of all amateur s-f publications. It will consist of 100 pages, printed on the best grade of paper available. Among the authors will be Harold Hersey, F. Orlin Tremaine, David H. Keller, Stanton A. Coblentz, Greye La Spina, and Clark Ashton Smith. The cover will show a dazzling blonde model holding a copy of the original fantasy magazine, *The Thrill Book* (1919). Information is available from 187 North Union Street, Rochester 5, New York.

Plans for the 13th World Science Fiction Convention, to be held at the Manger Hotel, Cleveland, Ohio, September 2, 3, 4, and 5, are now shaping up rapidly. Isaac Asimov, topnotch writer and s-f enthusiast, will be the Guest of Honor. The committee also announces a "Collector's Panel," consisting of L. A. Eshbach, Sam Moskowitz, Forrest J. Ackerman, and others. Rare publications will be displayed to the audience by means of a projecting type reflector. One of the high-spots of the affair will be the presentation of achievement awards to the author of the best novel, short story, editor of best magazine, and so on. The presentation of these "Hugos" proved to be very popular at the 1953 Philadelphia Convention. Another feature will be a premiere of a Class "A" science fiction film. Right now the committee is dickering with Universal Productions and, in all probability, the high-budget film, "This Island Earth," will be shown.

To get in on all of the latest information concerning the affair, you'll need to receive the progress reports, and other periodic news releases. So if you plan to attend, or if you desire to help make this convention a huge success, send $2 for your membership to: 13th World Science Fiction Convention, P.O. Box 508, Edgewater Branch, Cleveland, Ohio.

Speaking of science fiction conventions, there is a campaign now being conducted by Rog Phillips in his department, "The Club House" (*Other Worlds*), to discredit the New York group in its efforts to obtain the 1956 World Convention. Not content with his column of several issues back in which he consumed several pages, in a mass-distributed s-f medium, degrading the Philadelphia World Convention, Rog now deems it necessary to cast dark aspersions on the combined groups which are working toward the New York affair. Let's face it: Rog may be a very good s-f writer, but the sources of information from which he derives his concepts of fandom are pathetic indeed. We are unable to delve into this in detail, but take it from one who has been attending s-f conventions from the *very first one*, the combined talents of contemporary New York fandom (with such leaders as Sam Moskowitz, David A. Kyle, and Joe Gibson) are capable of planning and organizing a World Convention which will be second to none. *New York in* 1956!

The Scientifilms: Guy Madison will star in "The Beast of Hollow Mountain," the beast being a brontosaurus out of the dim past. The studio calls the film "the first science fiction western," but they're wrong by twenty years. Gene Autry's first film was one dealing with a super-scientific city under the western plains, "The Phantom Empire". ...Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer have announced their first s-f film. Apparently a high-budget venture, it will be laid in the year 2200, will star Walter Pidgeon and Anne Francis, will be called "Forbidden Planet". ...Forrest J. Ackerman, the scientifilm wizard, informs us that several producers are still interested in A. E. van Vogt's "Slan," and one company is considering filming the popular David H. Keller short novel, "The Solitary Hunters."

The Pocketbooks: The latest from Ace Books is a 25¢ original by Robert Moore Williams, "The Chaos Fighters," and a double-novel for 35¢ consisting of Alan E. Nourse's original "A Man Obsessed," and a reprint of Andre Norton's "Star Rangers," under the title of "The Last Planet". ...Lion Books have issued "Hell's Pavement," an original by Damon Knight, at 35¢. ...And Bantam have come up with two 35¢ reprints: Karel Capek's classic, "War With the Newts," and 13 selections from Richard Matheson's "Born of Man and Woman," under the title of "Third from the Sun". ...Dell Publishing Company have a 25¢ edition of "The Body Snatchers," by Jack Finney, on the stands now. This was a very popular *Colliers* serial several months ago. ...A good buy for a quarter is Pocketbook #1045, "Science Fiction Terror Tales," edited by Groff Conklin. ...And the best explanation of the scheme of things we have ever read is "The Nature of the Universe," by Fred Hoyle (Mentor Books, 35¢).

THE FAN PRESS

DURING the past three months a large number of fanzines were received; far more than can possibly be mentioned. Some were hektographed, some mimeographed, a few photo-offset, and one or two printed. They vary in size from as few as two pages to as many as 100 pages; they vary in price from 5¢ to 40¢; they vary in value from worthless to invaluable.

The best buy (quantity-wise) this quarter is the special San Francisco Convention issue of *Abstract* (25¢ from Peter J. Vorzimer, University of California, 104 Toyon, Goleta, California). About one-half of the 100 large, hektographed pages are devoted to the 1954 World Convention and, in years to come, will prove to be an invaluable aid

to fan historians. Robert Bloch, Don Wegars, and our very vociferous editor, Vorzimer, contribute the convention features. Four large pages of photos of the many attending celebrities are included.

In addition, there are reports on several regional conferences, an autobiography of active fan Carol McKinney, a controversial column by Claude Hall, stories, fanzine reviews, and letters. There is as much reading matter in this issue of *Abstract* as is contained in the average digest-size prozine.

The best buy (quality-wise) is the fantasy-index issue of *Destiny* (35¢ from Earl Kemp, 3508 North Sheffield Avenue, Chicago 13, Illinois). This contains 64 photo-offset pages of bibliographical information covering the entire science fiction field of 1953. Edward Wood indexes every science fiction magazine published in America in 1953, and Earl Kemp comprehensively covers the book field. In addition, Edward Wood's "White Paper" discusses in detail the trends of the science fiction field, as he sees it, replete with graphs, diagrams, and tables. *Destiny* plans to do this once a year, so there will be three excellent issues of the magazine chock-full of stories, articles, and departments, and one invaluable bibliographical issue. This one is a must for every enthusiast and collector.

Another commendable example of bibliography is the latest issue of IT (25¢ from Walter W. Lee, Jr., 1205 South Tenth Street, Coos Bay, Oregon). Editor Lee has compiled a thirty-page checklist of science fiction, fantasy, and horror films which, to our knowledge, hasn't been done in recent years. The checklist, which is preceded by a short summary of what has, is, and will happen in the fantasy film world, is but another example of a fan-inspired work of permanent value. In a future department we intend to devote a section to the fan bibliographers and their labors of love. Editor Lee makes no pretense that his checklist is complete and, in reading through it, we noticed that such films as "Just Imagine!" (1930), "It's Great to be Alive" (1933), and "Trans-Atlantic Tunnel" (1935) are missing. If all film fans who notice any missing items would inform Mr. Lee, he would be very grateful. Naturally, IT is recommended.

Can you imagine a fanzine being published for 217 issues? Hard to believe, but that is the number of the latest issue of *Fantasy Times* received. (10¢ for a sample, $1 a dozen from Fandom House, PO Box 2331, Paterson 23, New Jersey.) For fourteen years Jimmy Taurasi and Ray Van Houten have been mineographing this indispensable s-f news gazette. It appears bi-weekly, and whenever anything occurs in the s-f world, the newshounds of *Fantasy Times* are the first to know about it. In addition to the lead stories of magazines appearing or folding, convention news, and forthcoming lineups of the prozines, staff columnists cover such facets of the field as book news (Stephen J. Takacs), general news and gossip (Forrest J. Ackerman and Arthur J. Cox), slick science fiction (Donald E. Ford), and book reviews (Wm. Blackbeard). Not only is FT the "World's Oldest Science Fiction Newspaper," it is also the only one of which we are aware.

Undertakings is a neatly mimeographed magazine of general reader interest. (15¢ from Sam Johnson, 1517 Penny Drive, Edgewood, Elizabeth City, North Carolina.) H. Maxwell is represented with a piece of burlesque in which the various pro editors are starred and George T. Wetzel (a bibliophile who has done a remarkable amount of work in the field of Lovecraftiana) quotes numerous newspapers concerning strange occurrences which can only be attributed to "The Poltergeist Puzzle." There is a very long column of readers' letters, fanzine and book reviews, and a history of *Astounding* from its inception in 1930 to the present—all in three pages! John Voorheis, the author of this history, is supreme in the art of condensation.

Capsule Reviews: *Psychotic* (a copy will be mailed *free* to anyone requesting one—Richard E. Geis, 2631 N. Mississippi, Portland 12, Oregon). Now photo-offset, *Psychotic* continues to be one of the top three fanzines. Current issue features a long article on the 1954 World Convention and book and magazine reviews. It is difficult to understand why Geis doesn't like *Mad*: *Psychotic* is the "*Mad* of the Fanzines." Take advantage of this free for nothing offer.

Rhea (25¢ from Fred Malz and Gilbert Menicucci, 675 Delano Avenue, San Francisco 12, California). Twenty multi-lithed pages of interesting stories, articles, and columns by such as Calvin T. Beck, Mari Wolf, and Robert Bloch. In addition to s-f, Beck's column very interestingly delves into politics. Worth trying.

Epitome (5¢ a copy from Mike May, 9428 Hobart Street, Dallas 18, Texas). Editor May obviously makes no profit from the publication of his 22 page mimeod fanzine. Boob Stewart eulogizes *Science Fiction Plus;* Dean Grennell tells all about the Rex-O-Graph process of publishing; and Sam Johnson presents some oddities from the news. At twice its price *Epitome* would be a bargain.

Phobos (5¢ from Lee Anne Tremper, 1022 North Tuxedo Street, Indianapolis 1, Indiana). This is a bi-weekly (one of the many to emanate from the Indiana Science Fiction Association) of about a dozen mimeod pages. J. T. Cracket and Robert Coulson cover the book and pocket-book field rather thoroughly each issue. There is also a column of foreign s-f news, short stories, departments, and some clever cartooning by Dave Jenrette.

Starlanes, "The International Quarterly of Science Fiction Poetry" (40¢ from Orma McCormick, 1558 West Hazelhurst Street, Ferndale 20, Michigan). This is the bard's delight: 24 printed pages of nothing but s-f

and fantasy verse. Garth Bentley, A. Kulik, Edith Ogutsch, Robert E. Briney, and many others appear each issue. If poetry is your forte, this is definitely for you.

Varioso ("A dime incurs the editor's favor, a dollar his adulation"— John Magnus, 203 Noah, Oberlin, Ohio). This is another general interest fanzine, often slanted a little to the humorous side of things. Vernon McCain, Editor Magnus, and Dick Clarkson are featured in the issue we have on hand. Magnus always issues a very neat, literate fanzine, one that deserves your sampling.

Fanzine editors are requested to send review copies of their publications to: Robert A. Madle, 1620 Anderson Street, Charlotte, North Carolina.

THE WAY I SAW IT...

IT WAS with a great deal of pride that I viewed Paramount's latest science fiction creation, "The Conquest of Space." And why not? With me were twenty-five members and guests of the Carolina Science Fiction Society, all seated comfortably in the screening room of Paramount Studios of Charlotte, North Carolina. For Paramount had accorded our year-old organization the honor of being the first group in the south to view the film.

This is George Pal's fourth scientifilm for Paramount and, like the preceding three, is certainly not a low-budget production. It is produced in Technicolor by George Pal, and directed by Byron Haskin. The cast, as in Pal's previous films, consists of no big names—the concept and technical effects are expected to sell the picture.

The idea for the film was derived from the science-factual book, "The Conquest of Space," by Willy Ley and Chesley Bonestell. The concept of the earth-satellite space station and the construction of a space ship utilizing this satellite is followed explicitly, as described by Wernher Von Braun, and popularized by Willy Ley and Bonestell. But there any similarity to the Ley-Bonestell volume terminates.

The story takes place approximately twenty years from now, immediately following the successful establishment of an earth-satellite 1200 miles above the planet. From all indications, the satellite is UN-manned (although this is not made too clear) and, as described by Von Braun, it rotates about the earth every two hours, but it is not employed for military observation: the original intention of the earth-satellite sponsoring body was for the Army volunteers to build a spaceship for Lunar observation.

Several awe-inspiring sequences showing the satellite (affectionately termed "The Wheel" by its inhabitants) and the construction of the spaceship are shown. Even before the picture gets well under way the Wheel moves through a meteor swarm, which does very little but toss everyone hither and yon about the station. The technical effects are marvelous and, with Bonestell backdrops, you will view the almost-collision of the space ship with an asteroid; accurate depictions of Earth and Mars as seen from comparatively close distances; a meteor tearing through the spacesuit of one of the intrepid volunteers; and the landing on Mars. Oh yes, the plot calls for a Mars voyage rather than a Lunar trip. And the plot (hindered considerably by the sometimes pathetic dialogue) unfortunately does not compare with the technical effects.

The group chosen for the Mars voyage consists of the General (who originally devised the idea of the space-station and spaceship), his commissioned son, two young scientists (one Japanese, one Austrian) and, you guessed it!—a self-educated electronics expert from Brooklyn! He speaks with an exaggerated Brooklyn accent—but as hammy as it all sounds, Mr. Brooklyn does add some zest to the unfortunate story.

George Pal has now made the same mistake twice. In "The War of the Worlds" he overstressed the religious angle—almost sickeningly. This time he has the General spout the usual guff about blasphemy, desecration of the heavens, and so on. The General eventually goes mad and, in an attempt to destroy the spaceship after it has landed on Mars, is accidentally killed in a scuffle with his son.

At any rate, the shots of the red planet are eerie enough, and the boys do manage to make it back to Earth, minus the General and the Austrian scientist, who was killed when his spacesuit was struck by a meteor. Incidentally, the most effective scene in the film shows the General, after giving last rites to the spacesuit clad body on the hull of the spaceship, pushes the body away from the ship toward a blazing sun in the background. This is sheer beauty.

From a science fiction fan viewpoint, the picture cannot be missed. The technical effects are well worth the price of admission and, because of these technical effects, you will find the picture intensely interesting. A person not interested in Bonestell's solar picturizations, however, might not be too happy about the whole thing.

★

The time was ripe, and Bill was a good writer. So, in his non-fictional space-travel book for teen-agers, he included a chapter entitled: "Become a Spaceman — Now!"

BETTER THAN WE KNOW

by William F. Temple

IT WAS ONE of those bitter rows, of which we'd had too many lately. Probably the old basic frustration was still the cause, but this time it was well disguised. A woman had come between us: Lola Castros, Californian adventuress.

"A rag doll!" scoffed Joanna. "Lola Montez with acute anaemia. Amber between beds; sugar without spice; not wicked—only naughty. Will you never understand women?"

I had lived with Lola Castros for many months. She was real to me. I'd even given her the hot, black Spanish eyes which now mocked me.

"Will you never understand good literature?" I stormed back. "I—" But the rest of it jammed in my throat through sheer rage. I'd put my best into that novel; it was a kind of offering to her. And she'd trampled on it.

"Go on," she taunted. "Tell me the rest. I'm ignorant. I'm a cruel Spanish she-dog. Listen—if you'd put me in your book, instead of that gutted fish, you'd have had a *real* bi—"

I slapped her. "Stop that sort of talk!"

Then we were both very still, staring at each other. I had never hit her before; probably no one had hit her before. Her eyes were still defiant, but tears were gathering in them.

Then the phone trilled beside us.

I picked up the handset automatically. My passion was spent; I wanted to say I was sorry. Instead, I said, gruffly: "Brewster speaking."

"Hello, Bill. Tom here."

It was Tom Blood, my agent, phoning from 'Frisco.

"Don't tell me you've sold Lola already," I said.

"Lola?" echoed the tiny voice in metallic surprise. "Oh, you mean your new novel; haven't had time to read the thing yet."

So now Lola was a "thing." "Then why the devil are you ringing me?" I said, coldly enough to freeze his ear.

"Usen't you to be connected with the Rocket Society, way back?"

"Way back, yes; why hold my childhood against me?"

"What's eating you today, Bill? Ain't the weather right? Look, have you kept up with this space travel stuff?"

"Astronautics? I read the papers. I used to edit the Society Bulletin; I still know most of the people in the game. So?"

"The kids can't get enough space-travel dope these days. Rudledge just rang me. They want a 60,000 word book, non-fiction, covering the field in simple language for 'teen-agers. But it must be authentic—the kids know their onions. I thought of you. Like to try?"

"Ten years ago I'd have jumped at it, Tom, but I'm a big boy now. They can fly to the Moon, Jupiter, where the hell they like, so long as they leave me my patch of good old Mother Earth, Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, Dreiser, and wine—the worthwhile things."

"Money's worthwhile, Bill. Rudledge

offered three thousand advance; they plan a big edition. Marchiori's been signed to illustrate. But if you're not sold on space travel any more—"

"I'm not. But wait." I thought for a bit. Then: "Let me talk it over with Joanna; I'll ring you back."

"Good. But make it today."

"Well?" said Joanna, distantly. Her eyes were dry again.

I told her what Blood had said, and asked: "What do you think?"

"Do the book."

"Look, Joanna, we left the big city because we couldn't take the phonies any more. I came here to write books I believed in; now you and Blood want me to be just another phoney."

She regarded me steadily. "You've already decided to do the book because we need the money. Why put on an act? We're no different from the Greenwich Village crowd. We have our principles; we also have our price."

"It's not quite like that. There are another hundred and three installments to pay on this place, and I've got to have someplace to work."

"All right, then—you've talked yourself into it."

I hesitated, and knew that even my hesitation was a show. I grabbed at the phone angrily. After I'd told Blood I would do the book, I walked miserably out of the 'dobe cottage. The mist over the Sierras was thickening; the wheat stirred a little. A long freighter came crawling down the line towards Calzada, smearing the sky with black smoke.

And I'd come right out here to find peace of soul!

I felt pretty much of a flop on all counts.

Presently, an arm stole about my waist from behind. My first impulse was to reject it. But there were special reasons why Joanna could be spiteful. I had to make allowances for her moods —and mine. My hand closed gently on her arm.

"Sorry, darling," she whispered.

"It's okay, girl... I think it's going to rain."

LATER, I collated material for the space book. Wryly, I quoted some of my old ingenuous editorials. "Listen to this, Joanna. *'Men will step from planet to planet, and at last fly out into the great sea of interstellar space...'* Boy, could I mix a good metaphor in those days!"

"The kids will love it."

"Sure. How about this? *'The research goes on. The secrets of space travel are falling one by one into Man's hands...'* Oh, youthful optimist! The truth is, we're stymied; with the best of chemical fuels it'd take a four-step rocket near as big as the Empire State to land a two-bit ship on the Moon. Or, using orbital technique, the number of ferry rockets needed would drain Fort Knox. As for an atomic rocket, the problem of heat transference is insoluble; a uranium reactor is only going to melt itself, trying to heat the propellant to the degree required."

"Just what they told Chris Columbus, and the Wright Brothers, and—"

"False analogies, my clever girl," I said, but laughed. Then, seriously: "Never mind the technical blind alleys. Let's put first things first. Let's conquer ourselves before we try to conquer space. The proper study of mankind is Man. That's my real work; that's what I believe in. I'm betraying my own philosophy to spread this junk."

Joanna sighed. "Okay, Faust, get on with it, sell your soul—and then let's forget it."

I got on with it. I wrote it in four weeks. I began with Lucian's fictional trip to the Moon, and finished way out in extra-galactic space, among the fictions of the astronomers.

I remember that as I was trying to convey some idea of the size of the universe, so Palomar wobbled in its faith in the Cepheid method of measuring extra-galactic distances, and kept doubling up on its estimates. I strove to keep abreast of them—it was like Alice having to run twice as hard as she could to remain in the same place—with a series of footnotes which became progressively more ironical about the "expanding universe."

But that was the only time the tongue in my cheek really showed.

I wrote about orbital techniques and space-stations, meteor hazard and lunar bases, the whole claptrap of it, as though they were matters as vital as birth, marriage, and death. I disinterred the now petrified enthusiasm of my youth, painted its wan cheeks red, and paraded it as though it were still living and breathing.

Never was I more sanguine than in the chapter headed "Become a Spaceman—Now!" Gravely, I pointed out that a spaceman wouldn't be a sort of cosmic cowboy, wearing a space-helmet instead of a sombrero, but an individual with brain and self-control. And he'd never be through studying. Mathematics, three-dimensional navigation, rocket engineering, atomic physics, astronomy—he'd have to have more than a grounding in them all. It was up to the younger generation; space travel was just around the corner. Now was the time.

I finished that chapter on a note of earnest admonition: *"You can't start learning too young—r e m e m b e r, a spaceman is soon too old."*

Rudledge liked it, anyhow. They even agreed to take "Lola Castros" if I'd prune 20,000 words from it. The space travel book sold like hot cakes; the emasculated "Lola Castros" sank without a ripple.

I REFUSED to do any more space travel books. I'd made enough out of that one to pay off the mortgage and add another fifty acres of good wheatland to my holding. But the bad taste in my mouth would never quite die away.

I tried to cleanse myself with renewed sincere attempts at the Great American Novel. In the next ten years, I rode into the literary tilt-yard nine times. I was unhorsed without fail at each event, but sometimes the critics applauded the fight I'd put up. I still felt the novelist's craft was the highest possible calling; I regretted none of these efforts to help man understand himself. What worthier cause was there?

Yet, I remember leaning forlornly against the gatepost in the evening of my forty-fifth birthday, smoking a pipe, and trying to make an assessment of my life as it passed its prime.

It ran something like this: Loving wife, one. House, one. Acres, sixty. Employees, four. Self-betrayals, one. Broken bones, fifteen. Laurel crowns, none.

Were the scale-pans level? I thought not. As I strove to gauge their juxtaposition, I noticed a cloud of dust rising far along the road and approaching steadily. It took my attention. Strangers were events in these parts, and I could already see that it wasn't a car belonging to the district.

It slowed as it approached, and it became apparent that it contained only the driver—a man. He stopped the car level with me and leaned out. He was a young fellow, thin-cheeked and tired-looking. "Is Mr. William Brewster's house along this way?"

"This is it. I'm Brewster."

"Oh." He looked at me oddly for a moment. Then he asked diffidently: "I wonder if you could spare me a few minutes?"

I was in the rare mood to be glad to see anyone, even a salesman. It was my birthday, and I hadn't had a visitor. "Sure. Driven far?"

"From 'Frisco. Your publishers, Rudledge, told me you lived at Calzada."

"Good Lord, I'll bet you can use a drink; come right in."

"Thanks, Mr. Brewster."

When he got out, I saw he was a little chap, and thin all over; but he looked wiry.

"My name's Mappin," he offered, accompanying me to the door. It didn't mean a thing.

There were surprises awaiting both of us inside. I'd been lounging around outdoors for nearly an hour, and Joanna had packed a lot into that time. The table was laid with unusual delicacies and our best china. In the center of it stood an iced birthday cake with nine red dwarf candles burning on it in a ring (four of them larger than the others), flanked by two tall bottles of Asti Spumante. I'd anticipated none of these things.

The other surprise was nicest of all. Joanna came smiling down the old staircase wearing the beautiful dress which her great-grandmother had brought from Castille at the time of the Missions, a masterly fusion of silk and black and white lace.

Her jet-black hair was drawn up and graced by a pair of shining Spanish combs and a vivid poppy.

She was three years younger than I, but in the candlelight she seemed to undercut me by another dozen.

Mappin was obviously impressed by her appearance, and that pleased me too. I'd always been proud of Joanna.

"Joanna, this is Mr. Mappin, from San Francisco."

They shook hands, and asked each other how they did, and Mappin said: "I'm not really from 'Frisco—it just so happened I landed there."

"From sea?" I asked, and he nodded.

I opened one of the bottles—the cork hit the rafters. I poured three glasses that hissed and bubbled.

"If you don't mind," said Mappin, awkwardly, "I'd rather have coffee."

I was hurt. "But this is a celebration," I protested.

AGAIN HE looked at me oddly, and I wondered if he were holding

something back. "Of course, Mr. Brewster—I'm sorry," he said. "The fact is, I've never touched alcohol before—liquor is bad in my line. But you're right: this is a celebration. I'll be glad to drink your health."

"Thanks." We touched glasses and drank, and I looked at the candles and asked whether I was supposed to be nine or ninety. Joanna laughed, and turned to Mappin. "Just what is your line, Mr. Mappin?"

"I'm a pilot."

"Then your abstinence is understandable, even commendable—but not usual," I said.

"Air or sea?" Joanna probed.

"Neither, Mrs. Brewster," said Mappin, and looked away from her bafflement towards my bookshelves. "Pardon me," he said, and began to scan them. All booklovers act that way. They seek common ground with their host by approaching him through his book-titles. So I watched him indulgently, and liked him the more when he concentrated on the shelf of my own works. But he turned with a look of disappointment.

"I don't see your space travel book here, Mr. Brewster. I was hoping you had a spare copy, as it's out of print."

"It's out of print because it's out of date," I said. "I believe I've a couple of old copies upstairs somewhere, but it's not a book I'm proud to show."

He looked astonished. "Why not?"

"I've written better," I said, evasively. "Surely that's not all you've come to see me about?"

"More or less, Mr. Brewster. You see, I've lost my copy—the one I've had since I was a kid. It went down with my ship, to the bottom of the Pacific. There are sentimental reasons why I'd like to replace it."

"Well, that can be attended to easily enough." I went upstairs to the study and rummaged in the closet. I was mistaken; I had but one copy left. The dust was grey on it, and the wrapper torn. When I opened it, I saw the pages were becoming tinged with yellow. It smelt slightly musty.

If Mappin felt sentimental about it, I didn't. He could have my last copy. The bottom of the Pacific seemed an admirable place for the book. It was rot to begin with, and now it was becoming rotten tangibly. But I cleaned it up before I took it down and gave it to him. His eyes quite lit up at the sight of it. He looked at the opening pages, then shut the book gently.

He stood there holding it as carefully as though it were a First Folio of Shakespeare, and then said shyly: "I wonder if you would mind inscribing it to me, Mr. Brewster?"

"Not at all." I took it, and got my pen out. "Er—what's your first name, Mr. Mappin?"

"N-Ned." He stammered like a small embarrassed schoolboy. Covertly, Joanna caught my eye, and grinned. Silently, she managed to convey the caption: *"Famous author pictured with a young admirer."*

On the title-page I wrote *"For Ned Mappin, this relic,"* and signed it.

"How old are you, Ned?" I asked, giving it back to him.

"Twenty-three."

I NODDED, absently. It was a pity. He was likeable, but I was beginning to weary of him. Like all authors, I soak up intelligent adulation whenever it's offered—rarely enough in my case. But this sort of doggy approach from the mentally retarded was not at all flattering. "Does your girl friend read that sort of stuff?" I asked.

"I haven't got a girl friend; I hadn't the time..."

"You mustn't neglect your education, Ned. Have you read 'Lola Castros'?"

He shook his head. I pulled the copy from the shelf and gave it to him. "You can begin learning all about women from that," I said.

Joanna frowned her disapproval but said nothing.

"Thank you. I've always wanted to read novels, but, you know—" He broke off.

"No time?"

"No time." He went on, awkwardly: "How much do I owe you, sir?"

"Oh, forget it; have another drink."

"No, thanks. Look, Mr. Brewster, I feel I ought to make you some sort of return." He fumbled in his jacket pocket and laid something on the table. In the dim candle glow, it looked to be just a small shapeless lump, like a piece of coal. I picked it up. It was a jagged piece of porous but quite heavy stone, dark grey in color.

"What is it, exactly?" I asked.

"It's a piece of lunar rock."

"*What* rock?"

"Lunar rock. I brought a few pieces back from the Moon. Sort of souvenirs. Had a lot more specimens, but they were in the ship. It's nothing to look at, but I thought you might like a bit for a paperweight."

I held the stone in my hand and looked helplessly, and possibly foolishly, at Joanna. But she gave me no aid; she stood and enjoyed it. It was a long time since we'd last encountered the lunatic fringe, and that was back in Greenwich Village.

"Well, thanks, Ned," I said, at last. "I'll treasure it; when did you get back?"

"Yesterday. I sure muffed the landing. I'm scared to go back and face 'em at HQ. When the launch brought me in, I ducked and ran. Just anywhere at first, and then I thought of you—I'd heard you lived down this way. I rang your publishers for the address. I've wanted to meet you ever since I was thirteen. If it hadn't been for you, I'd never have been the first man to reach the Moon. So I hired a car and came out; I'm glad I did."

"I'm glad you did, too," I said, falsely. "But what did I have to do with it?"

"Your book. I saved up to buy it when it first came out. I learnt it by heart. And I took your advice. Do you remember the chapter called 'Become a Spaceman—Now!'? You pointed out that there was so much for a spaceman to learn, that he'd better start in young. So started in. I was studying right to the day I took off. They picked me because I knew the most. Well, perhaps, too, because I was light and wiry—the best build for a spaceman, as you said."

I didn't know what to say to that. Joanna put in quietly: "So that's why you had no time for anything else?"

"Yes, I guess so, Mrs. Brewster."

She stared at him for some seconds. Then she said: "Well, don't start wasting it now. I've just remembered, Bill—I promised to lend that copy of *"Lola"* to Margaret. Sorry, Ned."

I was going to say, "Who's Margaret?" but realized in time I wasn't supposed to.

Mappin gave *"Lola Castros"* back without any show of reluctance, but he held tightly to the other book. He tapped it, and smiled ruefully at me. "Wish I'd remembered another piece of your advice: that bit about keeping a cool head in all circumstances. When I was gliding her down to the water, I got so excited over getting back safe, I clean forgot to close the watertight covers to the vents. The ship should have floated, of course; as it was, the empty propellant tanks got waterlogged, and she sank—gradually enough for me to scramble out with a lifebelt, but nothing else. But the launch knew where I was, roughly—they'd been waiting around, and tracked the ship down with radar. I was only an hour in the water."

"You know, I haven't seen any story in the papers about a Moon trip," I said, putting a slight malicious emphasis on the word "story."

"There will be tomorrow, I guess," said Mappin. "It's sure to get around tonight—if they lift the security blanket. I suppose they will, now that the thing's in the bag. But I expect you

can guess why they didn't want to risk making a public flop of it."

"Oh, sure. But I still don't get it. So far as I know, no country has yet put a space-station up. Did you do the trip in one hop?"

"Yes. It was an atomic ship, you see; the propellant was liquid hydrogen."

"Is it a state secret how the hydrogen was heated by the reactor?"

"It's the closest kept secret of all time," said Mappin, solemnly. "But I can trust you, Mr. Brewster, because I *know* you through this book. It only became possible through the discovery of a new principle in atomic physics. There are such things as 'Sympathetic molecules' which, in an electrical field, can be made to transmit their current state of—"

"Please, Ned, some other time," Joanna cut in firmly.

"Yes, of course, Mrs. Brewster—I guess I'm keeping you from your little party. It's sure some mouthful to explain, anyhow, and I don't understand all of it myself. I'll be getting along back now."

"Do your folks know where you are?" asked Joanna.

"Haven't any folks—not now. Reckon there's no getting away from it—I've got to go and face up to reporting how I lost my ship, or the police will be trailing me out here soon. It was nice to meet you, Mrs. Brewster, and you, sir."

"I'll see you out, Ned," I said; "sure you won't have something to eat first?"

"No, thanks—I'm still too excited to eat."

I WENT WITH him out to the car. He paused with one hand on the door handle and looked around. The full harvest moon was rising, and adding its own gilding to the wheat. There was a faint golden glow coming from the cottage window too. Joanna, in her splendid attire, was going round

the room gravely with a taper lighting the candles in the tall brass sticks, which themselves shone with reflected light. The rows of bright-covered books and the daintily spread table added to the cheerful cosiness.

Mappin looked so long and silently at it all that I felt constrained to say something, however pointless, to break the spell.

"It should be a bumper harvest. We grind our own grain and bake our own bread; I'm sure looking forward to some nice new bread."

Mappin was not a handsome fellow. He had a long nose, and at the moment he looked like a wistful weasel.

"Is this your land?" he asked.

"Sixty acres of it."

He sighed. "I envy you, Mr. Brewster. A happy marriage, a home, land... Roots. You create fine books. You grow your own food. You have everything."

"Not quite everything," I said, quietly, but he didn't hear me, and went on: "It's a pity everyone can't grow their own food, but there isn't much land. There are two thousand, seven hundred million people in the world today, and they're increasing at the rate of a million every two weeks. But you saw that problem coming—you mentioned it in your book. You said we'd have to move out to the planets if only to find more land to feed the surplus population. Well—we've made a start."

He climbed into the car and reversed it. "Goodnight, Mr. Brewster. Thanks

for the book—and happy birthday!"

"Goodnight, Ned."

He drove off slowly, as if he were savoring the beauty of the late evening. I went back into the house thoughtfully.

Joanna was waiting for me. "What did you make of him?" she asked.

"A nut; but a nice nut; not quite so dumb as he appears."

She laughed, and switched on the radio. Then she kissed me lightly on the cheek and said: "That's an absolutely perfect self-description."

"Oh, phooey. You half believed him, didn't you?"

"No," said Joanna, soberly. "I wholly believed him. Not at first; but when I'd looked right into him, I realized that young fellow's done exactly what he said he did."

"And you really—" I began, and was drowned out by a voice from the radio as it warmed up. It was announcing the nine o'clock news. Then it went straight on to tell us dramatically that it was a day of glory for the United States...

AFTERWARDS, I found myself gazing down at the silly little candles on the still uncut cake, blurred of mind and of sight.

Slowly, I stirred myself to fill two of the glasses with Spumante. The remaining empty glass, which Ned had used, was a silent reminder. "A celebration!" I muttered. "Good Lord—if only I'd known! My dear—"

We raised our glasses to him, and drank.

"He did it all alone, too," I said, presently. "A one-man ship. The guts of him!" A thought occurred to me. "Why, he must have taken my stupid book with him all the way to the Moon and back!"

"No one can claim their books had a more far-reaching effect than yours," Joanna goaded gently.

"Gosh, I feel like a heel when I think how I thrust that pallied pornography on him—thanks for saving me there."

I reached for the fragment of lunar rock, and examined it fondly.

Joanna sat gazing into the shallow bowl of her champagne glass. "He was only twenty-three," she murmured. "He could have been our son."

I looked at her sharply—just as sharply as the stab of that old pain of self-reproach went through me. But she had not deliberately tried to hurt me; she was lost in her dreams.

I stuffed the stone into my pocket, got up abruptly, and wandered past the book-shelves. These were my children, the only kind, it seemed, I could produce. And they were all stillborn.

Except one—which wasn't there, which I might never see again.

I moved to the window and stood looking moodily out at the great golden moon, fingering that piece of it which was in my pocket.

And I looked at the ghostly plain of wheat. Bread. But the bread I had cast upon the waters, which had returned to me after many days, seemed more important now. For what credit could I take for nourishing this good land which nourished us? I had not fought for it. If action had been left to people of my sort, the Indians would still be hunting here.

Yet people of my sort had their uses. Maybe they didn't always originate the ideas; maybe they didn't always believe in them. But they kept them alive by circulation, until at last the seeds took root.

"Joanna," I said, "what was that line in Wells' 'Anatomy of Frustration' you read out to me one day last week—something about a pattern?"

I had to repeat my question.

"*'We make a pattern better than we know. Keep on with it,'*" said Joanna, quietly.

"Better than we know—that's right," I said.

★

EDITORIAL

Super Science vs. Pseudo-Science

PRECISELY how much "science" should go into science fiction has been a moot point for many years, and will probably be a subject for dispute so long as science fiction exists. Obviously, the right amount varies with the story to hand, but there still remains the question of whether a particular story has too much or too little.

On the quality of the science in science fiction, there is less disagreement; a decided majority of science-fictionists agree that whatever the proportion of science to fiction, it is super-science, not pseudo-science that is wanted. (The minority can hardly ever tell the difference, and doesn't much care, anyway.)

Super-science we define as extrapolation upon what is known, what is confirmed by evidence. It may be just some simple projection that is bound to come into effect within a few years—the most direct kind of "prophetic fiction". More likely, the speculations are likely to be long-range and the extrapolations very broad; but no one minds if the author has thought out his background thoroughly, and presents a convincing picture which does not flatly contradict —or indicate sheer ignorance of—simple scientific facts of the time when the story was written. (A story, for example, based upon phlogiston would make very amusing reading today, but would have been legitimate super-science had it been written when the phlogiston theory was still considered ueful. Which is one reason why science-fiction often dates itself into oblivion much earlier than comparable stories of other types.)

Pseudo-science is, of course, false science; and by this I do not mean outdated facts, but the treatment of subjects which are *not* sciences as if they were sciences, for one example. (Such subjects as astrology, dowsing, Marxism, Lysenkoism, dianetics, etc.) This type of tale isn't too hard for the alert to spot, if it's a pure specimen. When pseudo-science is run in with sound super-science, or when super-science entangles with mysticism, or when super-science shades off into sheer double-talk—often of a nature where only an expert can spot the humbug—then it's a little more difficult to finger. The glib practitioner of scientific-sounding double-talk can often hoodwink one. (Just consider toothpaste and soap ads on TV, for example.)

For example, back in 1934 there was a story by John Russell Fearn, entitled "Before Earth Came". I'm indebted to William M. Danner for a letter pointing out a particular example of balderdash which just reveals the author's ignorance. Danner notes: "Speaking of 'Miranium', Fearn produces this brain-wave: *'Opaque and heavy to the eyes, but transparent and magnetic to light-waves, it gathers the faintest possible radiations of light to itself for a distance of ten billion miles and brings those light-waves to itself without the faintest trace of distortion or fading.'* Well! Well! Does Fearn not know that all any lens does is to transmit light-waves? And does he not know that ten billion miles is but 0.0017 light year, and that we now (*in* 1934—RWL) have telescopes that make pictures of stars hundreds of light-years distant?" ("Miranium" I might add, was Fearn's own invention, Element Number 104, and was called the master-element. All of which would have been fine if Fearn had known enough about what had actually been accomplished at the time he wrote the story —and done without any master-elements. In the hands of fakers, super-science becomes stupid-science.)

Most distressing, however, are stories largely concerned with super-science, which are suddenly flawed by a shot of pseudo-science for extra-special effects. An outstanding example of this type is Dr. David H. Keller's "The Human Termites". Based on Maeterlinck's "Life of the White Ant" (it was written in 1929), the story explores the unresolved riddles of termite existence; and suggests that the termites are ruled by central intelligences, which act as the single brain of an entire colony—the various workers, warriors, queens, etc., all being discrete appendages of the central brain. A very interesting theory for fiction. The story-line has an entomologist finally contact one of these central intelligences, with the result that the Great Termite decides that the time has come to get rid of these two-legged giants who pester termites. All fair enough—except that, in the process, a special warrior-termite is evolved, which is *twenty feet high*. Biologically, such a creature could not exist, as an insect—and these are supposed to be termite warriors magnified. (Aside from the weight-mass problem, there is also the very elementary matter of an insect's breathing apparatus. It's

perfect for a creature that size; a termite twenty feet high would suffocate as quickly as an insect can suffocate, if it could stand up at all—which is questionable.) Then the final touch is added by making the human race ruled by central intelligences (evil old men in caves—16 years before Shaver), too.

Curiously, both science fiction editors in this period (1929) insisted on accurate science in the stories, and made much of the pedagogical values of science fiction. Yet, if you look through the letter departments of the old *Amazing Stories* (1927-1929) you will find numerous complaints about what amounted to liberal doses of pseudo-science in the stories—absurdities as flagrant as the ones noted above. From the editor's replies, you'll find that this was not regarded as reprehensible, so long as some correct scientific facts appeared in the story, too. (In fact, the presence of palpably correct scientific facts was a necessity; in those days, the editors did not *object* to good writing and good story technique—but the science came first.)

What was overlooked, of course (in addition to story values), was the fact that perhaps not all—and in some instances not even a majority—of the readers could separate the wheat from the chaff. When the author presented an entertaining story, convincingly done, it followed that he tried to make the pseudo-science sound as good as the super-science—and sometimes the author made it sound better.

OFTEN, OF course, a little pseudo-science is just inserted for color, and in such a way that there's no ground for serious objection. When E. E. Smith's characters want to latch on to an opposing spaceship, they're likely as not to turn on a "tractor ray". (In another kind of story, they'd rub a lamp, or a ring, or recite a spell, and it would be just as plausible.) This sort of gimmick has become to so common in science fiction that few notice it any more; and quite a repertoire of standardized items and devices has been built up. (Someone once asked a group of science fiction authors what was the difference between hyper-space and witchcraft. Everyone laughed heartily, and no one tried to answer.)

But some authors, although not enough, consider that even such a function as that performed by the "tractor ray" is worth thinking out, and treating as super-science, not pseudo-science. John W. Campbell, Jr., did this in "The Mightiest Machine". Our heroes see various ports in enemy spacecraft opening, and objects being ejected, which are connected to the ships by wires. A little while later, the boys realize, from their own ship's reaction, that tractor rays have, indeed, been put on them; those objects were king-size electromagnets!

There's been a lot of talk about a missing "sense of wonder" in science fiction of the last decade—but I haven't come across much attempted analysis of what makes for this missing ingredient. Yes, the oldtime stories—even some of those riddled with pseudo-science—had this quality; and one thing that made for it was that attention to detail Tyler mentioned in our February issue. John Russell Fearn, as we have noted above, was a charlatan when it came to science and super-science—*but* he did have a wonderful knack of inventiveness, and attention to details, when it came to building up a picture of his dubious marvels. He did not—prior to 1938, at least—simply depend upon using the gadgets and devices of other men, throwing in a term here and there in the expectation that the reader already knew what it meant—and that he no more had to describe a spaceship, for example, than in ordinary fiction one might have to describe the hero's new De Soto.

In part, this was a reaction against the thousand-word lectures that used to go on whenever anyone wanted to describe anything in a super-scientific way; but the day of that type of science-fiction writing is so long gone that further reaction against it is pointless. Besides, most of the sins of pseudo-science in science fiction come from ignorance, laziness, or just the urge to make a fast sale—not from any principled opposition to early faults in the medium. RWL

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READIN' and WRITHIN'

(*continued from page 42*)

In his introduction, the anthologist states, "As to concepts, it should be emphasized that these selections comprise a strikingly off-trail group of stories, even for science fiction." I'm not sure, however, that this can be taken as sufficient warning to the unwary reader that, in its flagrant misrepresentations, "Editor's Choice in Science Fiction" is a breathtaking example of that "arrogant ignorance of science fiction, and overweening contempt for the medium, posing as superior comprehension of it", I have spoken of elsewhere.

The present volume is one which I would have enjoyed recommending, not only because Sam Moskowitz is as sincere a fan as one could expect to find anywhere, but also to demonstrate that I bear him no grudge for not having invited me to make a "choice" for it. After reading, however, I can only express my gratitude at having been spared. *R.W.L.*

★

The forms that life on this planet of Mira took were embarassingly appropriate...

REUNION

by Carter Sprague III

illustrated by Emsh

IT WAS NOT the fact that the landscape was alien that caused Willoughby to feel a small knot of unease grow beneath his ribcage. On the alien planet of an alien star, the exotic was normal. What bothered the commodore was the familiar in such a landscape.

Frowning slightly, he glanced at his second in command, Space Captain Hans O'Brien, trying to read signs of a similar reaction on his ray-burned baby-faced countenance. But O'Brien, as usual, might have been guarding a kings-high full house in a sky's-the-limit poker game.

O'Brien caught the commodore's look and said merely, "Thank God for some air we can breathe."

Rocketman Shaw, the crew, said nothing. But while his face, too, was expressionless, there was what could only be described as a glow in his usually somber dark eyes. He stood there in front of the ship, a little apart from the other two, clad only in boots, aluminum fabric coverall and armsbelt, fondling the scrap of living fur that nestled at the base of his neck.

The commodore had to say something. So he said, "This is one for the book, all right."

That it was. According to official records, the *Stardust IX* was the first starship ever to set down on the seventeenth planet of Mira's twin suns. She was the first *manned* ship ever to explore this sector of the galaxy.

As planets went, *Caronia*—which was what the astronomers had christened it in advance for reasons known only to their pedagogical minds—was a jewel; at least superficially. The temperature was mild, the air eminently breathable to humans, the mauve sky almost cloudless. Around them and underfoot, a soft, heavy pink moss stretched over gently rolling terrain to a low chain of hills thickly forested with dark purple trees. Perhaps a kilometer away, a pond gleamed its unruffled orange reflection of the greater of the two suns overhead.

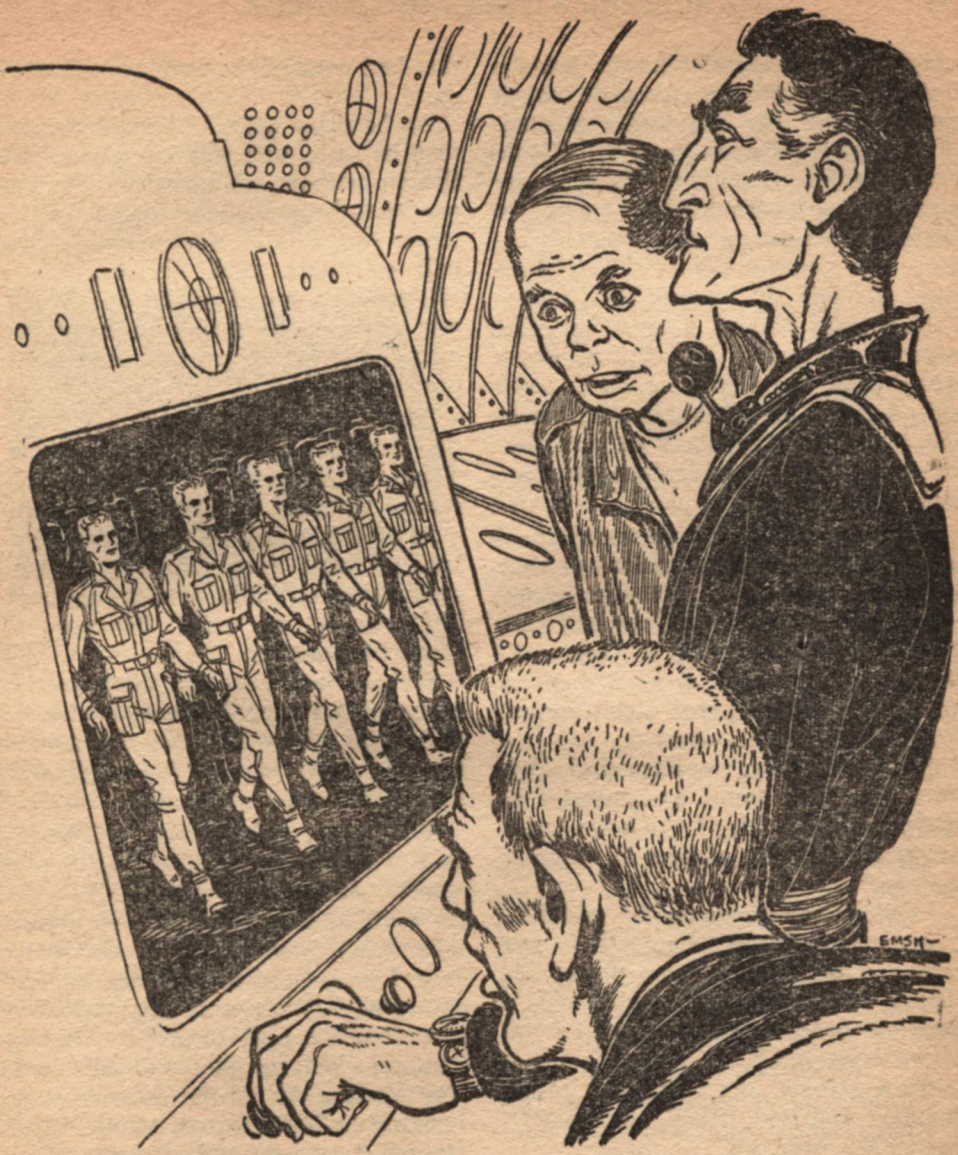
Yes, Caronia—Mira XVII—was a gem.

But Commodore Willoughby felt the worry within him grow. For there was an element of the grotesque present—and he had long since learned to suspect the grotesque as a potential prelude to horror. He glanced again at Rocketman Shaw, who was murmuring unintelligible baby talk into the ear of his alien pet, then turned back to O'Brien and said, "Smoke."

O'Brien produced a skinless gasper, which Willoughby stuck between his lips. He inhaled and the tip lighted automatically. He said, "Well, Hans, what do you make of it?"

O'Brien inhaled on a gasper of his own. He permitted himself a flicker of one pale eyebrow and said, "Ours not to do or die, ours just to reason why. Your honor, commodore."

Willoughby removed his gasper and



Schmidt said, "I must be out of my mind." "I'll be damned!" cried O'Brien — "They're all Lance Gordons!"

said, "I feel like one of those characters we read about in Earth-History III, back in space-school. Remember that *Kilroy was here* business way back in World War II? The man, or men, who scrawled that legend all over the Pacific?"

"I see what you mean," said O'Brien, exhaling a cloud of smoke that was pink in the alien sunlight.

THE MOSSFIELD—if it was either moss or a field—that extended itself on all sides of them was dotted, at irregular intervals, with odd-looking objects. Some appeared properly alien

vegetable or mineral—but at least a half dozen within easy eyeshot looked unmistakably like the works of man. One was a perfect, pointed Gothic arch, leading to nothing. Another resembled, and resembled accurately, a surface pleasure car of Earth, of perhaps two decades before. There were also a chair of impeccable Chinese Chippendale design; a small, needle-nosed, out-moded rocket; a single white cube, some two meters on each side bearing unmistakable dice markings—and what appeared to be a life-sized statue of a man in deep-space armor.

O'Brien said, "This reminds *me* of one of those surrealist paintings they used to drag us to see in the museum."

Willoughby turned to Shaw and said, "What do you make of it, Tommy?" When you were four men, locked together in a starship, rank didn't matter. You were four men—period.

Shaw's leathery, ray-burned, deeply-lined face was almost as impassive as O'Brien's. He said, "I think we ought to get the hell out of here as quick as we can."

"Unfortunately, we can't," said Willoughby in tacit agreement. "If it ever came out that we'd given a planet like this a brush-negative, Interstellar'd have our hides—and sooner or later it *would* come out."

Shaw stroked the furry pet on his shoulder and said, "Well, Commodore, what's the order?"

"Back to the ship for now," said Willoughby. "I want Schmidt's opinion on it."

"Hold it, commodore," said O'Brien. "Somebody's coming."

Half-unconsciously, Willoughby's fingers strayed to the twin hilts of the hand-blasters on either side of his belt. Somebody *was* coming. Incredibly—or perhaps not so incredibly in view of what they had already seen—it looked like a man striding easily toward them across the pink moss, making his way through the sparsely scattered items that had aroused the commodore's worry.

As he drew near, Willoughby noted that he, too, was wearing a coverall, though without an armsbelt. He appeared to be of medium height and his stride was that of a young man. His hair was dark gold, his features... Willoughby glanced quickly at O'Brien, was rewarded by seeing an expression of utter incredulity on that usually impassive face.

There could be no non-recognition of the creature coming toward them. Those dark eyes, that sensitive, absurdly youthful countenance, that almost girlish mouth—like O'Brien, Willoughby must have viewed it a thousand times on vidar screens, in book illustrations, on tridi blowups of Earth's immortals.

He stopped perhaps three meters away, smiled a familiar one-sided smile and said, "How do you do, gentlemen?" Even his voice—well-bred, slightly husky—was familiar.

Willoughby came to rigid salute. He said, "Star Admiral Gordon, I presume." And cursed himself inwardly for making it sound like a very stale joke. For this could only be the legendary Lance Gordon, the long-lost genius who, almost single-handed, had pioneered the path to star-travel, who had unlocked for mankind the doorway leading out of the Solar System. Looking at his apparent youth—since Gordon must be a man crowding fifty—Willoughby, thinking of his own bones beginning to creak at thirty-seven, understood for the first time why the greatest of all human heroes had chosen to disappear at the very summit of his glory.

But his moment of understanding was short-lived; the stranger said, speaking excellent Tellurian, "You honor me beyond my desserts, sir. I am not Lance Gordon, though I am proud to number myself among his greatest admirers. My name is—" he hesitated briefly, as if working out an intelligible

translation—"Par*tens*." The accent fell on the second syllable. "We have been awaiting your arrival eagerly, ever since Lance Gordon left us, long ago. Welcome to"—again the pause—"Pran*tu*." Again the accent on the second syllable.

WILLOUGHBY was about to reply when Rocketman Shaw's pet—the usually tractable *Pfft*, a Xanthian coalet he had picked up years before on that plundered planet of Proxima Centauri—rose on its hinder and began gesture and squealing unintelligible gibberish. The stranger cast a perplexed glance at it and Shaw quickly cuddled it in his arms, uttering soothing sounds as incomprehensible as the animal's noises.

"Keep her quiet!" Willoughby snapped at Shaw. Then, to the stranger, "Thank you, Par*tens*. We come in peace and in search of information. May I ask if your presence is official?"

The other looked puzzled. Then he said, "I have been asked to extend the greetings of the planet to the Earthmen, if that is what you mean, sir. Are you in need of anything we can give you?"

Willoughby heard O'Brien mutter at his shoulder, "Six months on this stag party and he asks *that?*" He tossed a quick scowl at his second-in-command. Then he said, "We shall appreciate meeting with your leaders as soon as it can be arranged. We bear a message from the Interstellar Congress, offering membership to all qualified beings, offering opportunity to attain qualification for those not as yet prepared."

"Leaders?" Again the non-comprehension. "We have no leaders; but I believe a popular audience could be arranged. I hope that will be satisfactory. I shall communicate your request and return."

He saluted, with an oddly familiar looseness of gesture that stirred memory chords and increased worry in Willoughby. Then he turned and walked easily off across the pink moss prairie.

"Come on," said the commodore, leading the way back to the ship.

Fifteen billion credits worth of armor and machinery, weapons and supplies, the most complex and perfect engine built by man—that was the *Stardust LX*. With her five sisters, she was extending the knowledge, the power, the lebensraum of humanity farther into the stretches of the galaxy than the most powerful telescopes on Ganymede had been able to reach scant decades before.

And without Lance Gordon, these starships could never have been built—nor any ships capable of one percent of their capacities. For it was the incredibly brilliant young Gordon, generally acclaimed the first truly creative inventor since the Wright Brothers, who had mastered the secret of controlled, faster-than-light drive.

It was Gordon who, discerning the value of the generally derided quantum theories of Marcus Chan, had first applied the long-dead scientist's research into the trough of the quantum waves and had found a practical answer to the greatest problem ever to face humanity, outside of man himself. It was Gordon who, possessed of immense inherited wealth, had been able to obtain a license for an experimental starship and who had, with the aid of a few devoted and able technical assistants, built the *Stardust I* and with her cut a sharp chord through the hitherto impenetrable curve of interstellar space.

The living quarters in the center of

the hundred-meter-high egg that was the starship were compact but not cramped. The rest-chairs were of soft Arcturian leather over vegetable foam from the ninth planet of Viga. There were screens on the walls for vidar entertainment as well as a 360-degree viewing panel midway around the way. Since the intricate engines and instruments that surrounded the living room were automatic, there were only two rows of eight buttons each, beneath a half-dozen gauges, which ran the vessel.

SCHMIDT was awaiting them there in an obvious state of agitation. Rated one-two-three with the finest engineers in the service, he was a volatile, articulate man with bald head, bush eyebrows and an apparently endless flow of humor and wisdom. At the moment, he was breathing hard and his fists were clenched with excitement.

"I saw," he said. "Why didn't you bring him aboard? I saw."

Willoughby took pity on him. He said, "If I'd known in advance, I'd have left Shaw on guard and taken you with us in his place. But for your information, he denied being Lance Gordon. The name he gave was Par*tens*. Amazing resemblance, though."

"I tell you it *was* Gordon!" was the reply. "I had the viewer tuned all the time. You think I wouldn't know him? After working two years with him on the *Stardust I?*"

O'Brien cut in with a drawled, "I'm beginning to think maybe this great Saint Lancelot may not have been such a saint after all. Quite a resemblance."

"Watch your tongue, Hans!" said the engineer sharply.

"Knock it off!" Willoughby told them. "We've got problems and no mistake; what sort of a report are we going to send in?"

O'Brien snorted. He said, "Better hold it, commodore. I've got a hunch they'll think we're all Section-Eight or stewed to the gills. I still don't believe it."

"You're probably right," said Willoughby. "For now, I want each of you to write a full report of what you saw and heard. You, too, Schmidt, since you were watching. I'm going to do the same."

"Think we were hypnotized, commodore?" asked O'Brien.

"Just want to make sure we weren't," was the reply.

Later, perusing the reports in the cubicle that passed for his private office, Willoughby ruled out hypnotism. There were just enough variations in the eyewitness report to put induced group visions out of the question. He sat back, wishing for the moment he were still a boy on Earth, with no such problems confronting him.

His mind roved back to the Lance Gordon legend. Here was a man, a still-young man, who literally had the universe in his pocket—fame, wealth, worship, power beyond the dreams of Alexander—yet he had chosen to vanish without trace. There had been no question of foul play, for Gordon had left a note behind him, explaining that his vanishment was wholly voluntary.

Why had he done it? Had he been one of those to whom life in the public eye was unbearable? Hardly—until the day of his disappearance, he had seemed to enjoy the limelight. And had he not, he could always have had himself assigned on solitary missions. Had he suffered a breakdown? There had been no sign of it, according to the records. Perhaps, Willoughby thought, his genius had burned out early, like Newton's; perhaps Gordon had been unable to face life among his fellows without it.

He glanced outside. O'Brien and Shaw were asleep in their rest chairs, Shaw with his furry little pet curled up on his chest. Its tiny black eyes regarded Willoughby watchfully. Willoughby stroked its soft dark fur gently, received a faint chirrup of thanks, then crossed the room to where Schmidt was standing, looking out

through the viewing panel at the night-side landscape it revealed. Two pale green moons gave added unreality to the unreal panorama.

Willoughby said, "Schmidt, what's your theory about Lance Gordon? I'd forgotten you knew him."

Schmidt turned slowly. He was obviously still in the grip of great emotion. He said, "I have no theory—but I know why Lance Gordon chose to disappear. He left another letter behind him, one that was never made public. I saw a photostat of it—never mind how."

"I'll be damned!" said Willoughby. "In view of what happened out there a few hours ago, don't you think you'd better spill it?"

The engineer scowled unhappily. He said, "I am sworn to secrecy." Then he shrugged. "But in view of what happened, and since I know you will not talk..." He told the story in simple words.

It was a tale of appalling betrayal. When he sold, or rather gave, his invention to the world government, Gordon had done so only upon receipt of solemn promises that new planets available to humanity as a result of his discovery would never be exploited to the detriment of any intelligent inhabitants they might hold.

"He meant it," said the engineer quietly. "He knew the discipline such a contract involved would not only save peaceful worlds, but would mean the salvation of mankind in the long run." He paused, added, "Well, you know what happened when we hit the Centaurians."

Willoughby nodded, feeling a faint sense of shame for his species. He had seen and visited those sadly gutted worlds, with their natural balance wrecked, their resources looted, their natives reduced to shambling beggary. "And that was it?" he asked.

"That was it," said the engineer. "Feeling himself responsible for a crime against the universe, Lance Gordon elected to do penance the only way he could—by disappearing and forfeiting any sort of personal profit. We know now that he must have come to this planet. Maybe that wasn't Lance Gordon who came to meet you—but the existence of such a copy proves that he is here, on this world."

"*Partens* admitted Gordon *was* here—a long time ago," said Willoughby. "Hello." He stooped down and scooped up Pfft, who had left her master's bosom and was rubbing, catlike, against his ankles. Then, to Schmidt, "What do *you* think we should do?"

"I think we should get out of here, and forget we ever found the place," said the engineer fiercely.

"That was Shaw's suggestion," said Willoughby. "Unfortunately, even if we did cut and run, it wouldn't do this planet any good in the long run. Besides, we haven't been asked to leave. There's to be some sort of meeting soon."

"I don't like it—haven't we done enough to him already?"

THERE WERE barely four hours of darkness on Caronia-Pran*tu*, thanks to the speed of the planet's rotation. After a brief two-hour slumber, Willoughby awoke to the automatic arouser, took his shower, dressed and viewed the rapid run-through of the infra-red night-vidar while he ate his fabricated eggs and bacon and drank his fabricated coffee. The vidar record, stepped up to 25 times actual speed, both for safety and to reveal slow movement, caused him to lose his appetite halfway through the meal.

A few—a very few—of the strange objects that littered the moss prairie had changed position. Or was "position" the word? Certainly, some had changed; a few of the odd creations vanished and, now and then, a new one appeared on the record. He sensed someone close to him, turned to find O'Brien there, impassive as usual, though his baby face seemed to have

added a year or two during the brief night.

"What do you think, commodore?" the space-captain asked him.

Willoughby shrugged. "Don't know yet," he replied. So far, he hadn't come up with any theory applicable to this surrealist planet. Apparently, judging by Par*tens*, it was on a high level of culture. Yet there were no roads, no dwellings, no artificial means of travel or communication, no tilled fields.

O'Brien said, perching on the edge of his chair with a plate of simulated liver and hashed-brown potatoes, "Remember that salute that Grover Whalen gave us when he walked off? Who does it remind you of?"

"Probably Lance Gordon," said Willoughby. Then, frowning as memory stirred, "But...Oh, hell, I don't know."

"Yeah," said O'Brien, talking with his mouth full. "Me, too."

Rocketman Shaw emerged from the shower and got into his coverall. Pfft scrambled to her usual perch on his shoulder. In response to a chirrup, the rocketman fed her some of his own cereal. She sat up on her hinder, nibbling it daintily from between her furry forepaws. Interstellar considered it good policy for each ship to have at least one pet aboard. Pfft was quite famous on the inhabited worlds—having been the subject of a syndicate vidar-story shortly before the *Stardust IX* took off on this, her fourth exploration tour.

"Oh, oh!" said Schmidt, who had forgone breakfast and was watching the screen. "Company coming—lots of it."

"You can say that again," said O'Brien, tossing his plate into the redispenser. "Must be that meeting our pal promised."

Willoughby saw that the ship was at the center of an ever-narrowing circle of thousands of advancing men. They looked like an army—all in coveralls, all moving with matched strides. As they got closer, Schmidt said, "I must be out of my mind!"

"I'll be damned!" cried O'Brien. "They're all Lance Gordons!"

Willoughby spoke crisply. He said, "Hans, you and Schmidt go on out and meet them. Don't let them get too close; I want to make an entrance—an impressive entrance. Shaw, you're to guard the ship."

"Aye-aye, c o m m o d o r e." O'Brien tugged at his armsbelt. Without visible change of expression, it was evident he was pleased at the assignment. "Come on Tuan."

Schmidt followed him into the elevator. When the door had slid softly shut behind them, Willoughby said softly, "I'm beginning to think Tuan Schmidt's a bit of a liar. *Is* he?"

Shaw dropped his gasper into an ash receptical. His mouth twisted into what might have been a smile, but was not. He said quietly, "I wouldn't call him exactly a liar, commodore. He *did* put in a couple of years at the Gordon plant. But he couldn't have seen me more than a half-dozen times."

"I see," said Willoughby, frowning. "Then you think he's merely enlarging on his memory."

"Undoubtedly," said Shaw. "He has a good heart—and he's a good engineer." He paused, then added, "How'd you find me out?"

"You can thank O'Brien for that," said Willoughby. "He jogged me about the way Par*tens* saluted—said it reminded him of somebody. And that got me thinking about something else—the way Par*tens* walked. You are Lance Gordon, aren't you?"

And, when Gordon nodded, "But why *this* disguise?"

"It seemed the safest—and it was," said the man who had masqueraded as Rocketman Shaw for twenty years. He made a self-deprecatory gesture, added, "The idea wasn't mine. There was an Englishman a couple of centuries back—a man named T. E. Lawrence—

who got something the same deal I did. He joined the British Tank Corps as Private Shaw."

"Lawrence of Arabia?" Willoughby racked his way rapidly through half-remember history lessons. He recalled enough to understand—in part. He said, "Well, Star Admiral Gordon, what's the score?"

GORDON looked at the commodore. He said, "Of course, we aren't going to let you leave; I managed to get enough of the facts through to them yesterday."

Willoughby was thunderstruck. "But how, man? Did you use telepathy? You never said a word to Par*tens*."

"I didn't have to," was the response.

"Pfft!" said the commodore. "*She* told him. When she stood up and chattered."

Gordon permitted himself a smile. He said, "You're a very discerning man, commodore. Pfft is a native of this planet. She came back with me from my first trip here. You might, to use an old Earth-expression, call her my wife."

"Your *wife?*" Willoughby was incredulous. "That crea—" He caught himself barely in time, decided Gordon must be insane. But there was no insanity in the glowing dark eyes that regarded him closely. The commodore shrugged it off, added, "And how do you propose to keep us here, Gordon? You may outrank me homeside, but I'm in command of this vessel."

"*I* don't intend to do a thing to stop you," was the unexpected reply. "As a matter of fact, it's already been done." He nodded toward the gauges, which were flashing red alarms.

Willoughby reached for his blasters —too late. Covering him, Gordon said politely, "Hand them over, please."

Disarmed, the commodore stared at him helplessly. He said, "What's going to happen to us? Incidentally, you committed a nice bit of treason by letting a native in to sabotage the drive."

"*I* did?" Gordon shook his head. "Not I, commodore. You signed the native on yourself, back at Xanth."

Again Willoughby said, "Pfft!" Even in his despair, he was aware of the absurdity of uttering the creature's name under the circumstances. He repeated, "But what about us?"

"You," said Gordon, "are going to have the time of your life. Had I had the slightest idea of how my discovery would be used, I'd never have returned from my first voyage. As it is, it's taken me almost twenty years to get back to Pran*tu*. I don't intend to leave a second time."

"Sooner or later," said the commodore, "Interstellar is going to find out what's happened. Then what's going to happen? You'll be destroying your own legend."

"It won't be sooner," was the reply. "Commodore, you don't understand this planet. It's the garden spot of the universe. Just one species of organic life, with all needs provided by nature, plus the ability to assume any shape they wish. You may have noted those odd-looking objects out there."

WILLOUGHBY nodded. He said, his voice a trifle hoarse, "What are they?"

"Pran*tu*-ans—asleep," said Gordon. "The cycle here is three years of wakefulness to one of sleep. It's part of the chemistry of the planet. The only reason you and I aren't asleep ourselves is because we're here in the ship, breathing artificial air. But we were both outside yesterday."

"But the shapes," said Willoughby, "the archway, the—"

"I nearly burst into tears when I saw them," Gordon told him. "Some of them still remembered things I'd taught them—and when Par*tens* appeared, looking like a very young me... Well, it was close." He paused, added,

[*Turn To Page* 98]

Index To Volume Three

MAY 1954 — *AUGUST* 1955

(Would you like us to print the indexes to Volumes One and Two? Drop us a line and let us know.)

IT SAYS HERE

A Department of Letters and Comment

As I Was Saying...

OUTSIDE of pretty general agreement on De Vet's novelet, "No Time For Change", it's hard to choose the order in which your votes placed the stories. I think the safest, and fairest, way to call it is to consider "The Fission of Mr. Custer" by Winston Marks, and "Possession" by L. Sprague de Camp, as in a tie for second place; "Giant in the Forest" by Frank Belknap Long, and "The Adventurers" by C. M. Kornbluth tie for third. The article received almost as much comment as the stories; and, by the way, we're wide open for letters on the general subject of what's wrong with science fiction.

If Martin Schellenberg will kindly get in touch with me, we may be able to give him an original of his choice; the other two for February will be sent out without waiting for selections.

It's been a long time since a letter in the readers' department has brought forth as warm replies as has that of Mr. Harold W. Miller; a couple arrived early enough to appear in the last issue, but most reached me in between deadlines. The moral seems to be, write early if you want to talk back first!

SHATTERED

Gentlemen:

When your reader, from Newark, Ohio, whose letter you published in the February issue under the heading "Spacecraft Speculations Etc." said, "—I will astound my readers", he immediately made himself eligible for, in my opinion, the annual award of "The Understatement of the Year". How anyone could be so completely, utterly uninformed did more than "astound" me; it shattered me.

Let's take his arguments step by step. He said, when discussing a rocket, "Their motion is attained by exhaust gasses thrusting against an atmosphere—" Let's see now, just how *do* they obtain their thrust? Let's take a rocket in an operating condition. Inside the rocket chamber there is a tremendous pressure built up by the burning fuel which is pushing against the walls of the rocket in all directions. Now in the lateral plane (right angles to the fore-aft axis) this pressure is pushing against the walls of the rocket at each and every point, but diametrically opposite of each point there is another point which also has the same pressure applied with an equal force but in the opposite direction; therefore while there is a tremendous force pushing to the right, there is an equal force pushing to the left. This is true of all points in the lateral plane—therefore no motion. In the forward direction, this same force is

pushing forward against the front of the rocket chamber; but let's look at the rear. There is no wall to the rear, so there you have no force pushing the rocket chamber in that direction. (This, of course, is not exactly a true statement, as there must be some compromise between rocket chamber pressure and the size of the opening to the rear). Now you have a force applied in the forward direction and none to the rear, so as there is no pressure to the rear there is no cancellation of the forward pressure—with a net result of a tremendous force being applied in one direction only. This causes the rocket to move forward, if not restrained.

Now let's look at the "—atmosphere is necessary for operation" idea. The amount of force necessary to *move* the atmosphere *out of the way* is actually cancelled from the force existing in the forward direction. Thus it can be seen that the presence of this atmosphere is a loss rather than a gain. In space, no atmosphere exists; so no force is needed to push it out of the way—presto, a rocket is more efficient in that environment.

Now his second statement—he is correct in saying that 25,000 MPH is considered the "escape velocity", but does that mean one must be going at that speed to get away from the earth? Hardly. Fact is you could go from here to Mars at 1,000 MPH—500 MPH—or any other speed and get there—eventually. This "escape velocity" is the speed at which an object would need to travel to keep from falling back to earth—if no further thrust was applied. When you reached that speed you could turn your rocket motors off and coast; or, if you're circling the earth, you would become a satellite. Let's look at this 25,000 MPH figure. He says (and so do you, dear editor) that such an acceleration would be fatal. What acceleration? 25,000 MPH doesn't specify any acceleration—just velocity or speed. But let's put some acceleration figure in the problem—say 5 G. Now 5 Gs is not an impossible figure at all; it can be survived quite easily. Now, how long would it take to *reach* the 25,000 MPH at this constant 5 G acceleration. Unless my decimal point betrayed me, it would be a little less than 4 (four) minutes. So you start from the earth and hold a constant 5 G acceleration, and in approximately 4 minutes you would be traveling at your escape velocity of 25,000 MPH and be approximately 12,000 miles above (sic) the earth.

Let's proceed on to, in his words, the "debunking". He says, "—who can prove (the) earth has a gravity"? Oh brother! I thought Sir Isaac figured that out years ago—and had a bump on his noggin to prove it. To continue he says "—these (smoke, fumes, etc.) have no weight—to be controlled by gravity". If my daughter hadn't known, by the time she left the sixth grade that "smoke, fumes, etc." had weight I would have strangled her. Someone please tell him that *everything* that has mass has weight—and that includes some things we don't ordinarily consider as having mass, such as light. Smoke has weight; electrons have weight; molecules have weight; atoms have weight; fumes have weight; and, as I said, even light has weight.

Reading farther in his letter, I come to this, "Absolutely nothing moves through an airless medium, after an initial momentum has been expended—". Is he willing to conceed that there is "an airless medium" inside a vacuum tube? If so, how about the electrons which form a floating cloud around the filament until the plate voltage is applied, when they certainly start to move? Anything, anywhere, space or otherwise, will move if a force is applied of sufficient value to overcome any restraining factor such as friction, inertia, etc. Gravity is such a force. He admits that the earth is going around the sun because of its velocity, and the gravitational pull of the sun, but says "—it is—highly improbable for any particular planet, such as the earth, to have a gravity pull of its own". If he is willing to concede in the case of the sun and the earth, hasn't he ever noticed that quite a large hunk of rock is floating around our earth in much the same manner. Maybe before I leave this fifth grade subject, I should quote Newton's law of Gravity—"any two bodies attract each other with a force that is propertional to the product of their masses, and inversely as the square of the distance between them".

Now for the last statement, concerning the time required to travel to any other planet. There he *may* be right, but before I went on record as saying so I would want to study what Mr. Einstein has to say about "Space Time". Mr. Einstein is not a man to disagree with lightly, as a lot of people have found out in the past.

Now don't get me wrong, I am not saying we will be flitting around in space tomorrow, next year, or ever, but I *am* saying if we are not it *won't* be for *any* of the reasons mentioned by the gentleman from Newark, Ohio. Fact is, there is only one real reason why we are not at least trying right now—and that is the lack of a suitable rocket fuel. Some of you wiseacres figure that one out, and "away we go".

Incidently you have a fine magazine.

DON M. WHERRY, Box 306, Camarillo, California

The way I've heard it, Einstein wasn't as dogmatic about speeds exceeding that of light as others—including science-fictionists, both amateur and professional—made him out to be. What seems to have been established is that (a) light travels at a constant speed—very useful, so long as true (b) so far, nothing has been observed to travel faster than light. This is somewhat different than making an eternal dogma to the effect that nothing, no nothing, does or ever can exceed the speed of light.

PREJUDICED?

Dear Robert:

This is our first letter to your rag. Great

Jehosephat, what a break for you. Being the famous team that we are, and we are that, are...ah...we...that are we? Oh well, anyhoo, we decided to break down and out of the kindness of our hearts, make your magazine outstanding by having one of our letters in it. Now isn't that a dandandy contribution to civilization? Since we have many criticisms to express, we better settle down for a long winter's continuous attack of nausea.

Beginning with the cover. We noticed (not at first glance, of course) that it is made entirely of, *Gaah!*, paper. This is more commonly known as a paper cover. This is *bad*. Paper covers must *go*. Why not use clay tablets? The Egyptians got along with those pretty well for centuries. What's the matter, you predjudiced or something? As far as the art is concerned, you could have at least hired Rembrandt, or maybe you're stuck up. Either way, it was a pretty miserable bit of henscratching, if we do say so ourselves; and we usually do just that.

The stories, to our horror, were printed with drab, dull, black ink. What's the matter with green ink; or even better, pink ink? Or better still, chartruesepink ink?

Scare you a little bit, eh, Bob? We always like to start our letters off in a shocking way. It helps to keep up our reputation (we're banned in Boston, you know).

Ah well, be humor (?) as it may, we now turn our malformed minds to the issue at hand. Since this is a "first issue" for us, we can make no comments as to how the current issue stacks up against past issues. But, anyhow, here's how we rate the stories:

First, "No Time for Change". One of the best space operas we have read in the current year. We might have even gone as far as to say it was *the* best, except for the ending.

"The Adventurers" comes in second.

"Possession" (nine tenths of the law) is thrashing it out with "Giant In the Forest" for third place.

"The Fission of Mrs. Custer" staggers in fourth. There is a good plot in this idea somewhere, but the boy who wrote this has some half-cocked ideas about Biology.

Damon Knight hacks and chops his merry way through the season's books in his best style. "Inside Science Fiction" has been brought over from *Future Science Fiction* hasn't it? Are you going to drop that magazine?

About the only thing that is lacking is the letter column. Well, that about winds it up.

JOHN MUSSELLS and RALPH BUTCHER, 4839 Shelby Avenue, Jacksonville 10, Florida

Having feet of clay, we feel that using clay tablets for our magazine covers might lead to frightfulnessess.

SHOCKED

Dear Sir:

It is seldom that the urge to write a letter to the editor overpowers me, but such an occasion is clearly at hand. The cause: The letter by H. W. Miller on "Spacecraft Speculation, etc."

Such an epistle cannot go unchallenged, for who knows how many thousand readers might take it seriously and thus go through life filled with false information? Therefore, in the interest of truth, which is science, permit me to go over Miller's letter step by step, correcting his statements as needed.

Item:
1. I for one, was not astounded but shocked.
2. Rockets can drive spaceships through space as we know it.
3. *Let's* look at the rocket principle, and clear it up for once. Imagine a cylinder with a crossection area of 1" square. Both ends of the cylinder are closed. Inside the cylinder is gas at a pressure of one pound per inch square. This cylinder, comparable to any compressed airtank, has obviously no tendency to move, as all forces acting on its inside are balanced. But now, let's remove one of the end plates. The p r e s s u r e forces on the cylinder wall are still balanced, but the pressure on the remaining end plate is no longer counteracted. Therefore, for a moment, the cylinder is pushed by a force of one pound in a direction away from the open end. If the gas pressure is maintained by the rapid burning of a fuel oxygen mixture, the result would be rocket with a one pound thrust rating. This reaction is independent of the presence or absence of any surrounding medium, though the rocket will accelerate more rapidly in a vacuum due to the lack of any friction.
4. Jet engines are useless, not for the reason stated, but because they depend on atmospheric oxygen for combustion of their fuel.
5. Escape velocity is neither an expression of power nor of acceleration. To reach escape velocity, any suitable acceleration may be used.

Now to debunk the debunker:

Item: 6. The fact that most planets

[*Turn To Page* 84]

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including earth manage to hang on to moons, just as the sun maintains planets, should be valid proof that earth has gravity. Experiments carried out many years ago, which involved lead spheres weighing thousands of pounds and cork balls weighing grains, proved that all things have gravitational forces whose strength depend on their mass.

7. A light year is a measure of distance *not* of speed.
8. Mr. Miller writes: "Suppose a given planet is a mere ten light years distant from earth." I wonder which planet he is referring to? The distance to the moon is just a few light seconds. To Mars or Venus it's a matter of a few light minutes at best, and to reach the outermost limits of our system is a question of light hours. This is a far cry from ten light years. If on the other hand Mr. Miller is talking about crossing the galaxy, I agree that at present there is no conceivable means of contemplating such a trip. But then, my grandfather could not possibly visualize a way of going from New York to L. A. in six hours, either. Professors now state that nothing can surpass the speed of light, but I remember my old physics prof teaching that man would never surpass the speed of sound; and I have read that when railroads were invented, wise men of that day stated that man could never survive the horrible speed of 25 M.P.H.

Let's face it. One hundred years ago a speed of ten miles per hour was considered tops. Today man has traveled in excess of 1000 M.P.H. If we keep on going this way, space travel will be with us pretty soon, and let no one think that the major powers of this globe area not very much aware of this fact.

Now to the final bone of contention. Mr. Miller tries to clinch his arguments by bringing in the Bible. This is a rather common device, which is supposed guarantee the withdrawal of any opposition.

"Does anyone take the Bible lightly?" asks Mr. Miller. If you really want a truthful answer, it is: Yes, about two billion people certainly do. Christians are in the minority, you know.

If the question is supposed to indicate that the Bible must be accepted as absolute truth, word for word, Mr. Miller has another shock coming. Some of our largest and most honored Christian churches do not agree with him.

In concluding I would like to state that I have never produced any fictional material, my writing being restricted to scientific reports. My work is connected with jet and rocket engines. But permit me one final remark in answer to H. W. Science is one thing (it is willing to accept any newly found truth); the Bible is another (its scientific aspects were the latest, when it was written a few thousand years ago; but for some reason are supposed to remain frozen forever, even to the point of burning at the stake all who disagree). But the virus was here first (of all life forms) and will probably survive us all.

G. F. RADEMACHER,
701, *4th Avenue,*
Bay City, Michigan

There are hidden reservations in that assertion, "Science is willing to accept any newly found truth." First of all, the scientific requirements for "truth" are more rigid and specific than non-scientific types. (A hundred thousand men swearing to an event does not constitute scientific proof that they are telling the truth, even though they all may believe what they say.) Secondly, there have been times when otherwise reliable "scientists" have behaved in a very humanly understandable, but hardly scientific manner when confronted with a newly-found discovery—which later proved to be truth, insofar as there is truth in science. (We often think of truth as something eternal and changeless—"true" forever and ever. There is no evidence that any such thing exists in nature.)

FEUDIST

Sirs:

Let's have a feud!

I just finished reading Harold Miller's letter in your February, 1955, issue.

[*Turn To Page* 86]

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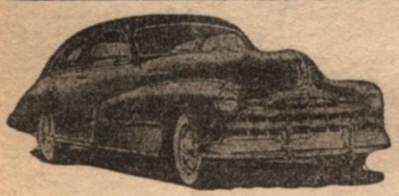

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Compression Readings—1945 Dodge Truck

	Cylinder 1	Cylinder 2	Cylinder 3	Cylinder 4	Cylinder 5	Cylinder 6
Before	87 lbs.	75 lbs.	75 lbs.	60 lbs.	75 lbs.	85 lbs.
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Compression Readings—1948 Pontiac

	Cyl. 1	Cyl. 2	Cyl. 3	Cyl. 4	Cyl. 5	Cyl. 6	Cyl. 7	Cyl. 8
Before	105 lbs	95 lbs	107 lbs	120 lbs	110 lbs	115 lbs	95 lbs	123 lbs
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I would like to set him straight on one or two points.

Let's consider his first statement about the rocket principle. He says, "Their motion is attained by exhaust gasses thrusting against an atmosphere...". Hmmm. I'm afraid that Mr. Miller does not know what he is talking about. A rocket's motion is not attained in that manner. How, then? Let's let Newton answer that with his third law of motion: *For every action there will be an equal and opposite reaction.* When the exhaust gasses of a rocket motor come out of the exhaust nozzle, there is an equal and opposite reaction which pushes against the front of the combustion chamber thus driving the motor forward. For proof of this, I refer you to rocket-expert, Willy Ley's book: "Rockets, Missles and Space Travel." If this should prove to be too advanced, read the articles that *Collier's* put out on space travel not too long ago. If nothing else, see the old movie, "Destination, Moon." In that Woody Woodpecker explains it quite simply. By the way, jets also work on the same principle.

As for what Mr. Miller said about escape velocity; he is absolutely right. No human body could stand such an initial acceleration, *from a standing start.* Nor could any conceivable rocket we could build, ever reach such a speed within any short distance. If nothing else the ship would burn up from its friction with the air molecules. But it does not matter how long it takes the ship to reach escape velocity; all that matters is that the ship does reach it! Once there, the ship can cut off its motors, and gravity will not pull the ship back to earth.

So much for that.

Beyond this point, I agree with the editor: I'm not exactly sure I follow him.

He clouds the issue with a few basic and contradictory facts and then he sneaks the Bible in on us, daring us to argue with it.

One cannot argue with an inanimate object, nor can one argue against illogical reasoning.

BOBBY KATZ, Box 356, Alpine, Texas

Take care, before branding someone's reasoning "illogical", that you aren't confusing "illogical" with "irrational", or some such similar term. If Mr. Miller challenged you to find flaws in his logic—that is, his line of reasoning from his basic assumptions—could you find any? You could not question his basic assmptions, *if your aim was to show his reasoning illogical, but only show that his arguments did not follow in an orderly and inevitable manner. Logic, you see, is just a tool and is as good, and useful, as the person who employs it. But since logical reasoning can proceed from any basic assumptions whatsoever, you can't always trust an argument just on the ground that it may be logical. It has been pointed out often that some of the finest logicians alive are permanent residents of mental institutions; their arguments are logically unassailable, but their basic assumptions are so far out of this world that they can't make their way in it.*

IN PROTEST

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

I protest! Last summer I sent in a subscription to *Future Science Fiction* because of all your magazines I liked it best. I received two copies of *Future*, and from then on I have been receiving *Science Fiction Stories.* Now I have no complaint against SFS—it's a very good magazine. However I see by the latest issues of other magazines of yours that you still advertise *Future.* In my mind, *Future* had more personality than SFS even pretends to have. I liked its features and its stories. Especially did I enjoy the letters column. Even the format was better, I much prefer a two column page to the one.

Are you still publishing *Future*, or not? If SFS is taking its place, as I judge by the volume and number it now carries, why don't you give it some personality and restore the old features. Especially the letters column, "Inside Science Fiction", and "Readin' and Writhin'".

I write this about *Future & Science Fiction Stories* to *Science Fiction Quarterly*, since it has the only letters department and editors' comment of the three, and figure you might answer for a lot of us readers who wonder the same questions.

Have just finished reading *"City of Glass"* and must say I enjoyed it very much. The entire layout of the book was good. Much better than the novels your two leading competitors, *Galaxy* and *Imagination*, publish. I hope this is the first of many that you plan on publishing. Bimonthly publication of these novels would not be too often to suit a lot of us, I'm sure.

And now to *Science Fiction Quarterly.* I won't say all of your stories in this magazine are of classic stature. However, I always manage to find a number of them that are highly entertaining and worth reading. The high and the low of the February number were featured on the cover. "No Time For Change" was the best of the issue; "Possession" was the worst. But then I have never cared for de Camp's stories.

This particular magazine is the only one of the lot that has a definite personality at the present time. Its features and letter column help a lot in carrying this over to the reader.

I would like to see it in the digest size, however—so much easier to read and handle. Not however, if it meant combining it with your other magazines. If this has to be done, why not make it into *Science*

[*Turn To Page* 88]

GAIN MORE WEIGHT IN 10 DAYS OR YOUR MONEY BACK!

SKINNY

MEN ARE OFTEN ASHAMED TO STRIP FOR SPORTS OR FOR A SWIM!

GIRLS ARE NOT ALLURING AND DON'T HAVE EYE-CATCHING CURVES!

CHILDREN WHO WON'T EAT AND ARE UNDERWEIGHT, OFTEN CALLED SKINNY!

Now at last More-Wate plan that puts firm, attractive pounds and inches on your body, chest, arms and legs.

Amazing New Way developed by modern medical science to put on weight on lean bodies. **Guaranteed** to give you up to an **extra pound a day!** Or **your money back!** Why should you dread going to parties and socials, simply because you look scrawny and spindly? Why ever feel self-conscious about your body again? If you're **underweight*** . . . or just a little on the thin side, due to faulty appetite, or bad dietary habits, you can **put on up to a pound a day** of **attractive weight** without exercise . . . dangerous drugs . . . or special diet . . . and more quickly, more easily than you ever dreamed possible . . . with MORE-WATE. MORE-WATE contains no dangerous drugs . . . you **eat it like candy!** Yet . . . if you were to have this same prescription compounded to your order, it would cost you many times more. However, through this introductory offer, you can obtain **4-way** MORE-WATE tablets . . . a full 10 days' supply . . . for just $1.00 or a 30 day supply for only $2.98, plus a 10 day supply free, with an absolute money-back guarantee! Yes, try MORE-WATE for TEN DAYS . . . and if not entirely delighted with weight gained, return the unused supply for full refund! You've nothing to lose . . . and **weight to gain!** Act now! Stop being the guy or the gal that everyone calls "skinny." Stop being the guy or the gal who dreads summer and going to parties and socials because it means everyone will enjoy themselves and you won't. Don't be a wall-flower, because you have a figure like a broomstick! **Gain more weight!**

10-DAY SUPPLY ONLY $1.

The 4-way MORE-WATE tablets are **unconditionally guaranteed** to put on weight . . . or it doesn't cost you a penny! MORE-WATE is a **delicious,** full strength, 4-way tablet . . . that combines not just one . . . or two . . . but 4 of the most amazing aids for **gaining weight** known to medical science. MORE-WATE is not a liquid . . . not a powder. It's delicious, **pleasant-tasting tablet!** It contains vitamin **B-12** . . . the **amazing red vitamin doctors** give many **underweight patients in hospitals** . . . It contains Iron that helps correct iron deficiency, anemia and builds rich, red blood. It contains appetite-building vitamin B-1 . . . and it contains nutritious easily assimilated malt, the amazing ingredient that helps your body turn much of the food you eat into **well rounded flesh** instead of being wasted. **That's the secret of putting on weight.** Now you can help your food to **add new pounds** to your **arms, chest, hips, thighs,** and **legs.** Now you don't have to be skinny . . . or afraid to be seen socially and be ashamed of your figure! **You must achieve the figure you want . . .** or **don't pay anything.** Act now!

Not one child yet has failed to go for and ask for more MORE-WATE tablets! Stop worrying about children not eating enough, give them MORE-WATE tablets—it stimulates their appetite . . . they eat it like candy!

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Mail the coupon now! Test the amazing MORE-WATE tablet plan for 10 days at our expense. If after 10 days your friends, your mirror and your scale do not tell you that you have gained weight and look better you pay nothing!

MAIL THIS NO RISK TRIAL COUPON NOW!

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318 Market Street, Newark, N. J.
Just mail us your name and address, and $1.00 cash, check or money order. You will receive a 10 day supply of MORE-WATE tablets and plan, postage prepaid.

☐ Send me 30 day supply plus an extra 10 day supply (that's a 40 day supply) for $2.98. I understand that if I am not delighted with MORE-WATE tablets and plan, I can return the 30 day supply in 10 days for full purchase price refund, and keep the 10 day supply without charge.

NAME..... ADDRESS.....

CITY..... STATE.....

SENT ON APPROVAL—MAKE AMAZING 10-DAY TEST

Fiction Stories—leaving in the features and get *Future* back on the newsstands in a hurry.

Your editorial in the past couple of issues has been of great interest to me. Since I like to write science fiction, I have found the information you give of great help. Maybe someday I'll feel good enough to send you a story that I am working on.

As to the comments in the letters column about rocket travel not being practical at the present time with space as we know it, I have this to say. Just because we don't know any different now, doesn't mean we won't know different tomorrow. Many of our greatest aids were impossible at one time because of the meager knowledge of things that we humans knew at the time. We are always progressing in our mental capacities, or we wouldn't have the things we have now. There is a long list of these items that could be put down, but a reasoning person can hash them out in their own minds.

When our progress gets to the point where space travel is really understood, then we will have space travel. It can be hurried by the right persons thinking—that person will show the rest of the skeptics the way.

I won't go so far as to say that the United States will be the first to develop space travel, but I would be willing to put my money up that they stand the best chance of getting it first. The reason behind this may or may not have logic behind it. When you look at our *young* country and the things it has done, then look back to the *old* country, civilized hundreds of years before us, the comparison really stands out. Of course economics has a lot to do with it. But, nevertheless, a really progressive people could improve their lot if they set out to do it. I feel the people of the U. S. have what the old country lacks—the will to stick to something that will better their own standard of living.

GUY TERWILLEGER,
1412 *Albright Street,*
Boise, Idaho

Your subscription was switched from Future Science Fiction *to* Science Fiction Stories, *because the former—while not being dropped completely—was discontinued as a bi-monthly, and has gone on the irregular basis. How frequently it appears from now on depends upon the sales figures; should these justify the decision, then the book may be put back on the regular schedule. It was not doing anywhere nearly as well as* Science Fiction Stories—*which is why the front office chose SFS as being the better bet for bi-monthly publication.*

Since Science Fiction Stories *did much better (without departments) than* Future

[*Turn To Page* 90]

SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

—even though departments seemed to be liked—we decided to continue SFS without departments for the time being, and test the reaction. Personally, I like departments, and we did decide to put an editorial, and book review, into Future No. 28, *which is now on sale. We are also trying the same with the July* Science Fiction Stories—*which will be on sale by the time this appears.*

As to letters—well, I'll run them whenever you readers send me enough good ones to make up an interesting department. Fair enough?

ATTENTION, BROOKLYNITES!

Science Fictionists:

I'd like to join or form a group of *mature* science-fantasy readers in Brooklyn. Only object: to discuss provocative ideas presented in this literary field. Would anyone similarly interested please contact me? My telephone number is GE 6-0666.

ALLEN GLASSER,
71 Tehama Street,
Brooklyn 18, N. Y.

Oldtime fans and readers will doubtless remember Mr. Glasser, who was connected with one of the earliest fan clubs, and one of the earliest fan magazines—back in the early '30s.

HYPERBOLE

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

Mythfully, truthfully, last issue, Feb's, "No Time For Change," was the grandest story-novel to ever appear in Old Standby SFQ and to hit the stands. Charles V. De Vet is a noble author and also, here and there, possesses constant streaks of genius. The feature-lead compelled me as no past SFQ story has ever done.

The cover was a Lulu, believe me, the best SFQ has ever had. Mr. Frank Kelly Freas is the Magic Dispicturer I understand, and the free user of the opponent scheme of hazel blue. You have educated artists about the best, and you should feel brilliantly proud to Doomsday. I am; I'll never forget this cover, though green is my favorite color.

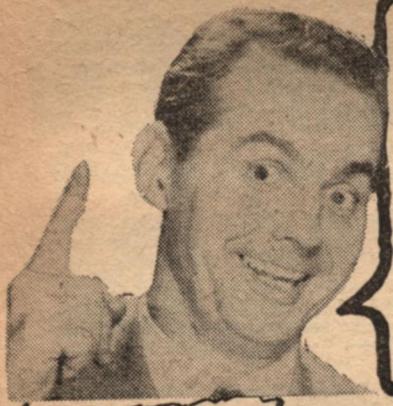
Another thing. Glad to see Frank Beknap Long inside. He's always good.

"The Adventurers", wasn't too bad and is a very fine title. C. M. Kornbluth is progressing. But don't tell him I stated so, Editor. That'll ruin him right now; let him learn it the hard way.

I have only one kick before I close this issue, and you've probably guessed it already. Every smart Editor should and you're very smart. You've scheduledly made SFQ really what it is and *means* today.

The Kick: Editor, why haven't you published that story I typed myself about a month ago, and my Aunt mailed to you?

[*Turn To Page 92*]



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"As the first prize winner of $52,000.00 in the Independence Puzzle Contest, I compliment you on running the fairest and most interesting contest I ever entered. And the check for $52,000 made our family's dreams come true."

(signed) MARION STARR
KENSINGTON, MD.

1ST Prize as much as $25,000

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Sponsored by

THE AMERICAN CHURCH UNION

Get the Facts FREE! MAIL COUPON TODAY!

Here's a wonderful opportunity for puzzlers all over the country to match their skill and compete in this latest contest for 400 cash prizes — *and help a very worthy cause* — The American Church Union. Imagine — you can win as much as $19,000 — $20,000 — or even $25,000! The choice is strictly up to you to pick the amount you're striving to win.

In addition — the fact that the National Puzzle Contest is directed by one of the country's outstanding puzzle authorities, is your guarantee that there's a barrel of fun and thrills in store for every puzzle contestant! You will enjoy the fascinating new puzzles in this contest of fun and pure skill. You will help the American Church Union in its Fund Raising Campaign and you have a wonderful opportunity to share in the 400 prizes (and the Promptness Prize) — all totalling $50,000.00!

So get all the facts and learn how you may win. Fill out the coupon below and mail today! As soon as we receive your coupon — we'll send you full details *pronto!* Just remember — 400 PRIZES MUST BE PAID! SO MAIL THE COUPON TODAY!

HOW TO SOLVE SAMPLE PUZZLE

CLUE No. 1: THE "HOOSIER" STATE.

You will see there are a SINK, a DIAL, the SOLE of a shoe and various letters of the alphabet. There are two plus and two minus signs. It is necessary to add and subtract the names and letters as shown by the plus and minus signs. First, write down SINK. Then, add DIAL to it. Next, add ONEA. All this equals SINKDIALONEA. Now, you must subtract the letters in SOLE and K. When this is done you are left with INDIANA. Indiana is the Hoosier State, so the result checks with Clue No. 1.

CONTEST OF SKILL! ONLY SKILL COUNTS! SHEER FUN! FUN TO ENTER! FUN TO DO!

The National Puzzle Contest is the type of contest every puzzle-minded person in the country has been wishing for. It's sponsored by the American Church Union, Inc., a non-profit organization and a branch of the world-wide Church Union in the Anglican Communion, to raise funds for the great variety of religious charitable activities conducted by the A.C.U. and to provide an adequate Administrative Center vitally needed for the direction of this program.

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Examine the SAMPLE PUZZLE at the left. See how much fun it is with every picture waiting to be identified! Notice this fascinating feature also. Each puzzle has TWO (2) CLUES to assist you to the correct answer. First you identify the pictures — then check your answers by a table of letter values.

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If money worries tie you down—here's your opportunity to GET ON THE ROAD TO SECURITY. Fill out the coupon and mail it to us—we will send you FREE the Entry Form, the Official Rules, the First Series of Puzzles—All the information you need to enter. So make up your mind now—decide to win! Get the facts and MAIL COUPON TODAY!!

Promptness Pays BIG BONUS!

ACTION PAYS OFF! Mail this coupon at once and learn how you can qualify to win wonderful extra promptness bonus of either a Cadillac Convertible, or a real Ranch Mink Coat, or an additional $5,000 Cash. The choice is up to you if you win.

Remember the PROMPTNESS BONUS—MAIL TODAY!

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS—MAIL COUPON TODAY

NATIONAL PUZZLE CONTEST
P. O. Box 777, General Post Office, Brooklyn 1, N. Y.

I want full particulars about the $50,000.00 NATIONAL PUZZLE CONTEST. Please mail me FREE the Official Entry Form, Rules, and First Series of Puzzles.

NAME_____

ADDRESS_____

CITY_____ STATE_____
(Add Zone, if any)

PLEASE PRINT PLAINLY

JAMES W. AYERS, 609 First Street, Attalla, Alabama.

Last time we looked, Kornbluth had already learned the hard way, and was trying to turn what he'd learned into cash.

SUCH ERRONEOUS IDEAS...

Dear Mr. Lowndes,

I enjoyed the February, 1955 issue of your magazine, but I was disgusted with the two letters you printed. I have been reading sf for 22 years, but I am sure that even in my early childhood I never had such erroneous ideas, and I certainly avoided discussing things about which I knew nothing. Your two correspondents, Miller and King, have aroused my ire and I would like to offer rebuttals.

Harold W. Miller believes rockets travel by thrusting against the atmosphere, which as any educated person should know, is not true. "Every action has an equal and opposite reaction." This law explains rocket travel, and as the editor explained, rockets work *better* in a vacuum than they do in the atmosphere. Miller thinks escape velocity cannot be attained because of the acceleration. Nonsense! Willy Ley has explained in detail how escape velocity can be reached without much trouble; certainly it is not necessary to reach the necessary speed of 7 miles per second instantaneously, and in no story I have read is such a stupid method used. Didn't Miller see the movie "Destination Moon", and notice that the moon rocket took off at very slow speed, accelerating only gradually?

As far as "proving" Earth has a gravity, a simple weight-dropping test will show that such objects drop to the ground. This is the effect of "gravity", and I don't think Miller will find anyone willing to waste time trying to "prove" it to him. He says smoke and fumes have no weight. He is badly mistaken. *All* objects, including gasses, smoke, and fumes, have weight. Weightless objects do not exist on earth. Objects or forms of matter that happen to weigh less than the medium they are in will rise, due to being forced upward by the inward flow of the heavier medium—just as a cork will rise thru water, or smoke will rise thru the air. Meteors travel in all directions thru an "airless medium", and earth's gravity is responsible for attracting some of them in our direction, when they appear as "shooting stars".

The speed of light is an established fact, and there is no need to "accept" anyone's word. Simple experiments can determine this value for anyone. Furthermore, a light year is not a unit of speed, but is simply a distance. Light travels at 186,000 miles per second. This equals 670 million miles per hour, and not 5.8 billion miles per hour as he stated.

He suggests a planet 10 light years from earth. There is no such planet. The farthest

[*Turn To Page 94*]

COMPLETE TOOL SETS AT THE PRICE OF A SINGLE TOOL!

46 Surplus Twist DRILLS $2

Less than 4½c each. For hand or electric drills. Brand new, genuine hi-grade, hardened carbon tool steel drills. Sell for up to $6 in the stores. You get about 5 each of the most frequently used sizes from 1/16" to ¼". Tempered cutting edges easily bite through steel, aluminum, iron, wood, or plastic. Each drill designed and hardened to give 1800 drillings.

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3 pc. ADJUSTABLE WRENCH SET

Fine quality imported German steel. Nose of highly polished malleable steel. Handle is channeled for sure grip. 6", 8", and 10" wrench is mounted in a steel clip with thumbscrew for quick removal or replacement of wrenches.

$2.98 *complete set postpaid*

4 pc. CHISEL SET in PLASTIC CASE

Tang Chisels. Swedish pattern, drop forged from high quality tool steel, tempered and hardened, beveled and polished blades. Straight hardwood handles, leather tipped. Set contains one each ¼, ½, ¾, and 1" chisel, in separate transparent compartments of strong plastic kit with yellow binding.

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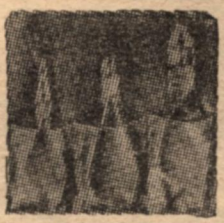
6 pc. MAGNETIZED SCREW DRIVER SET

Plastic, insulated handles, scientifically designed for non-slip grip. Blades are of highly polished, hardened and tempered quality tool steel.

1—Cabinet ⅛ x 3⅛" 1—Mechanic ¼ x 6"
1—Cabinet ⅛ x 5" 1—Heavy Duty ⅜ x 8"
1—Stubby ¼ x 1½" 1—Recess (#2) ¼ x 4"

$1.49 *complete set postpaid*

3 pc. PLIER SET



Finest drop forged imported steel. Ground and polished heads, polished finish, and knurled handles for easier grip. Individually pocketed in heat sealed plastic kit.

1—Linesman Slip Joint, 7"
1—Long Nose, 6¾"
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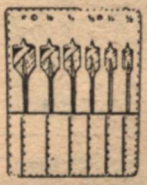

6 pc. AUGER BIT SET

Made of finest tool steel specially tempered and hardened to give years of quick, clean, easy drilling. Shanks will fit all electric drills. Packed in sturdy, heat-treated, compartmented plastic tool roll. Sizes: 3/16", ¼", 5/16", ⅜", 7/16", and 1".

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DRILL STAND

Rust proof, cadmium plated, will hold 21 Jobber or Letter Drills. Stands upright on shelf or bench. Drill sizes plainly marked on each opening. Sized by 64ths from 1/64" to 3/16"

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SEND CHECK, CASH, OR MONEY ORDER AND WE PAY THE POSTAGE . . . IF C.O.D. POSTAGE IS EXTRA!

USE THE ATTACHED COUPON FOR IMMEDIATE DELIVERY!

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___DRILL STAND @ 49¢ ea.
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___6 pc MAGNETIZED SCREW DRIVER SET @ $1.49 per set
___4 pc. CHISEL SET IN PLASTIC CASE @ $2.98 per set
___3 pc. PLIER SET IN PLASTIC CASE @ $2.98 per set
___6 pc. AUGER BIT SET IN PLASTIC CASE @ $2.29 per set

Enclosed find $_____ ☐ CASH ☐ CHECK ☐ MONEY ORDER

Send C.O.D. PLUS POSTAGE CHARGES

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SCOTT-MITCHELL HOUSE, 611 BROADWAY, DEPT. MK-3, NEW YORK 12, N. Y.

planet in our solar system, which is Pluto, is only about 4000 million miles from the sun, less than 10 light *hours*. He suggests we might be able to travel at one light year per hour. By definition, (Einstein's theory) the maximum possible speed for anything, including man, is the speed of light. Thus it would take one *year* to travel a light year, under the best of conditions.

Poor Miller thinks the Bible was here before "Science". If he thinks so, he is wrong again, for scientific ideas and methods existed long before the Bible. We have archeological evidence of such scientific things as accurate star maps, precise astronomical predictions, correct hydraulic and construction theory, and logical and useful medical discoveries, long before the Bible was ever thought of.

The editor states he doesn't follow him, and I don't blame him.

As for Murray King, he thinks the scientific method requires exact, accurate, and complete measurements before it can be useful, or even used. Such is *not* the case. The "scientific method" involves several principles, among which are these.

1. Facts are gathered, at first hand, and nothing is accepted on "authority" without evidence that can be substantiated.

2. A hypothesis is evolved to explain the facts, using known principles, and predictions are made based on this hypothesis.

3. If the predictions come true, the hypothesis is expanded into a theory, and more predictions are made. More facts are also gathered.

4. If new facts show up that don't fit into the theory, the *theory* is revised.

By contrast, non-scientific methods include jumping to conclusions without adequate facts, and rejecting new facts that don't happen to fit into the theory. Non-scientific persons accept the word of "authorities" without question; they believe in such things as superstitions, astrology, ghosts, etc., because somebody told them. They believe, often, that "after it, therefore *because* of it".

Exact measurements, or *any* measurements, are not needed to use the "scientific method" in our daily life. Read "Science and Sanity" by Korzybski, or any of the excellent books by Stuart Chase, Wendell Johnson, or Hayakawa on living scientifically. This is what de Camp was referring to.

In conclusion, I think that the magazine would be improved immensely if letters such as the two I have criticized were forbidden publication.

GORDON WILLIAMSON, Foster Street, Philadelphia 14, Penna.

Why this hostility toward Mr. Miller? Should we not, rather, thank him? Because he cared enough to write in his opinions, we have assembled in this issue and the last

[*Turn To Page* 96]

a fair-sized amount of very solid capsule information—which should enable readers to answer sensibly and clearly and simply the next time someone says—"Well, how can a rocket work in space when there's nothing to push against?"

Even if we were determined not to permit any erroneous ideas to enter into this department, we couldn't guarantee 100% purity—your editor doesn't know that much truth, and isn't that much proof against error himself.

Seriously, we receive—and I suppose the other science fiction editors receive—quite an amount of what you'd call "crank mail". Most of it is just barely literate; now and then, an interesting or provocative letter of this type comes along. And once in a while, such a letter appears in print; bi-annually I'd say was about the right proportion. The follow-ups are usually most interesting.

I'm sorry if some of you have been shattered, shocked, disgusted, or whatever. I've enjoyed it and I hope, when you've read the letters this time, you won't regret it, either.

TAIN'T SO?

Dear RWL:

Thanks for sending a copy of Mr. Gordon Williamson's letter on to me, so that I could make a defense in the same issue—providing I could beat your devilish deadline, that is.

Mr. Williamson says "Tain't so", but offers no argument as to *why;* instead, we're given a four point outline of the scientific method and are invited to accept it on authority; and at the end of the letter, we have a sizeable list of authorities to consult.

Now as nearly as I can make out, it boils down to this: if we accept Mr. Williamson's authorities, we shall be saved from such erroneous ideas (including mine) as gave him pain when he read the letter department in the February issue. If we accept other authorities, we're being unscientific. However, I hope I'm being scientific when I state that I'm not ready to accept these authorities without question, and won't guarantee to do so, even after questions.

As a matter of fact, I suspect that Mr. Williamson is not talking about "measurements" in the sense that I was.

Meanwhile, although I bear him no ill will, I trust Mr. Editor, that you will not select letters on consideration of whether or not the writer may harbor some erroneous idea that my critic has so meritoriously avoided. After all, one of the differences between what we loosely call the Free World and the Communists is that, on our side of it, a person has a right to be wrong. While over there, erroneous ideas can hardly ever be less than treason.

[*Turn To Page* 98]

PLAY GUITAR IN 7 DAYS OR GET MONEY BACK

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Learn to play the first day or it costs you nothing! Harmonica is Key of C professional type with individually tuned metal reeds. If you're not playing songs at once, you get your money back!

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Just send your name and address, and when your HARMONICA and BOOK OF INSTRUCTION and the 200 SONGS arrive, pay postman $1.98 plus C.O.D. postage. Keep for 7 days. If you are not 100% satisfied, simply return and your money will be refunded at once. Take advantage of this big introductory offer today.

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Could be I'm wrong in this instance, and am willing to admit same, when convinced. However, a mere assertion of wrongness, plus a suggestion that King henceforth be purged when showing questionable ideas isn't exactly what I'd call a winning manner.

MURRAY KING

PS: I wonder if it's safe to mention that I've read Korsybski, and while having a lot of respect for his work, am not ready to call the good Count a Saint as yet.

All right, Murray—let's you and Gordon fight; just try to keep it on an impersonal level—or non-libelous, at least! *RWL*

REUNION

(continued from page 77)

"There's everything here for the man who wants it—everything but ugliness and trouble. Even the sleep. Those odd shapes are the result of what the Pran*tu*-ans are thinking of when they drop off; they assume it. I told you they are truly protean."

"Will something like that happen to us—to me?" Willoughby asked.

"I doubt it," was the reply. "Not for a long while anyway. There will have to be—adjustments. And complete loss of fear."

"That's a relief." The commodore's attempt at humor was shaky. "I'd hate to wake up and find myself wearing four wheels." Then, after a pause, "But I still don't see how you're going to get away with it for long."

There was a trace of assurance—utterly alien to Rocketman Shaw, but somehow not offensive in Lance Gordon—as he replied, "Aren't you forgetting who I am, commodore? Plus the fact that I've had twenty years to work on the problem. Of course, they'll find Pran-*tu* again. But when they do, they won't want to come near it."

"I see," said Willoughby. To his horror, he found himself yawning, his eyelids heavy. Forcing himself awake, he glanced at the viewing panel. The ship was surrounded by packed thousands of youthful Lance Gordons. Following his gaze, their older prototype smiled faintly and said, "We'll have to do something about that."

But Willoughby wasn't looking at the aliens. He was studying the two men he had sent out to meet them, and who had made no effort to communicate with the ship, even though their commodore had taken much too long to follow them down. Both O'Brien and Schmidt were recognizably asleep. But there were changes noticeable. The burly engineer seemed to have thinned, added youth and something that looked like hair. He was not so very different from the young Lance Gordon replicas that surrounded the *Stardust IX*. As for O'Brien—the baby-faced wonder had grown more hair, too; but it was long and very, very blond.

In spite of himself, Willoughby chuckled. He was growing awfully sleepy. He yawned again, noted with amusement that Gordon, too, was covering a yawn. He wondered what had happened. Pfft must have opened the airlock, he supposed. Pfft...

She came in then, tall and dark and very beautiful—and wholly innocent of clothing. She smiled at him amiably and then went to her husband's side. He struggled half upright and said, "Darling, I was afraid I'd dope off before you got back."

Pfft—if it were really Pfft, snuggled on her husband's chest and yawned, too. "It's been a long time," she murmured contentedly. Willoughby heard the two soft thuds as his blasters dropped to the composition floor from Gordon's fingers.

He made no move to pick them up—he couldn't had he wished to. Instead, blessed sleep was overwhelming him. He closed his eyes and once again thought of being a small boy, without worries. Or had there been worries. He tried to remember—and failed.

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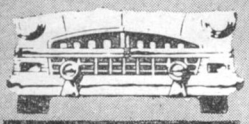

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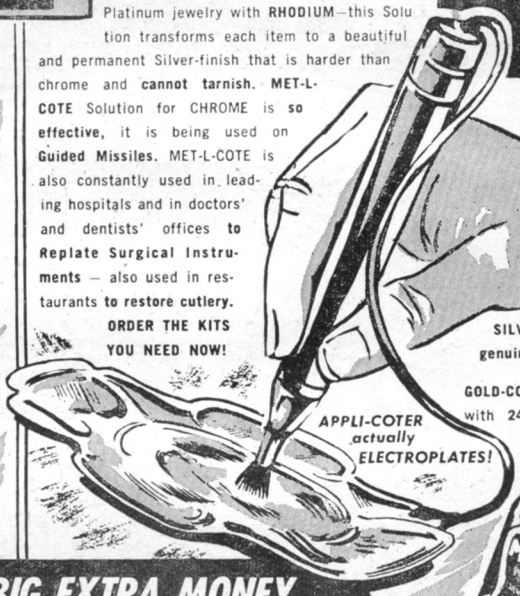

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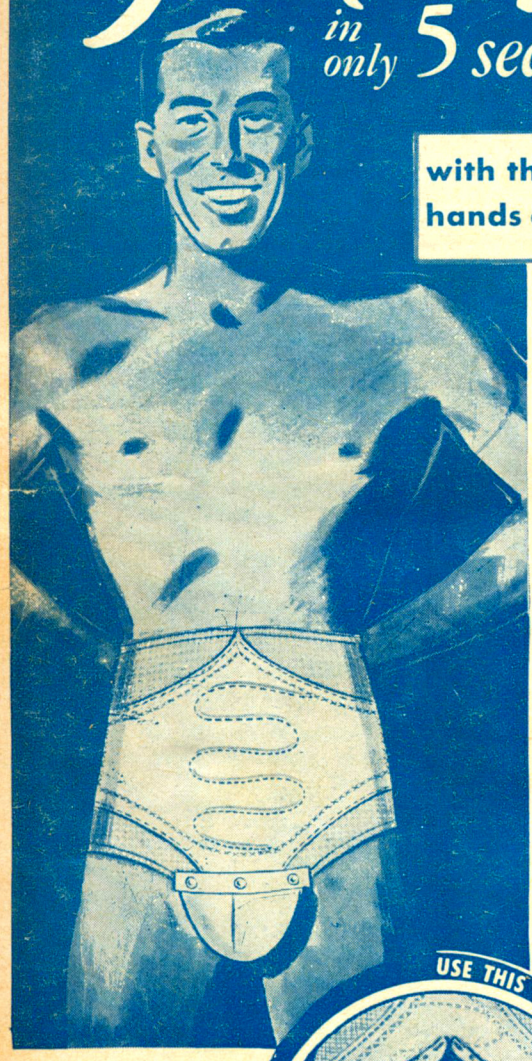

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