

SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

FEB.
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issue

THINK NO EVIL

by Harry Warner, Jr.

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I STOP ?**

by Algis Budrys



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Science Fiction QUARTERLY

ALL
NEW
STORIES

Volume 4

February, 1956

Number 2

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I thought the helmet would protect me from the Paths, but either it didn't work, or the Paths weren't what we all believed they were.

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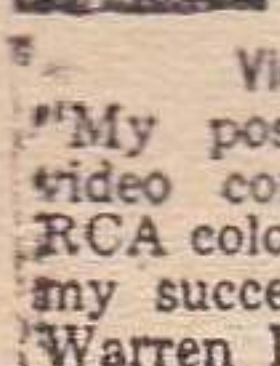
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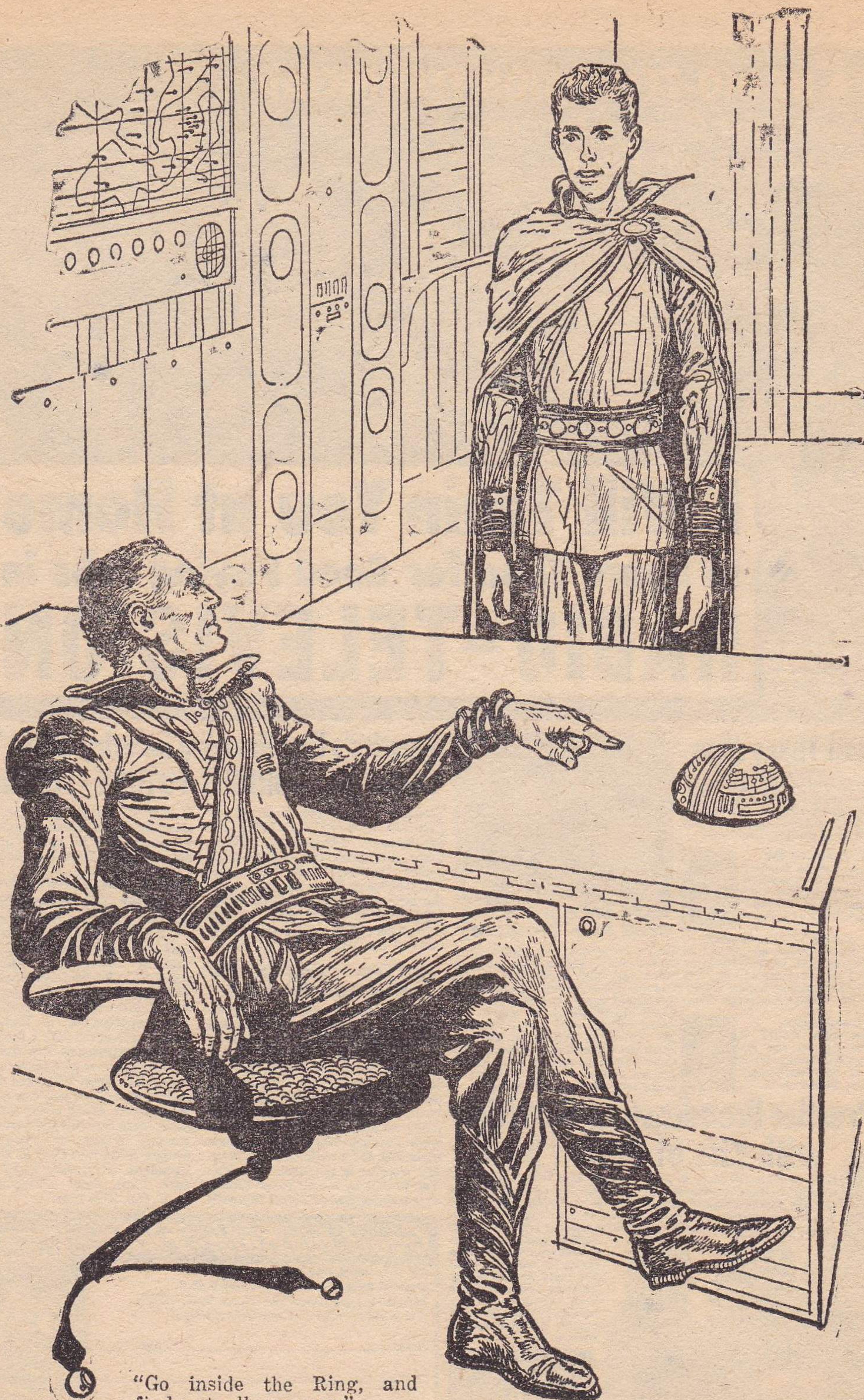
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"Go inside the Ring, and
find out all you can."

Privacy is a fairly recent thing, and Twentieth Century technology is narrowing it down more and more as refined snooping devices appear. But could people adjust to the idea that some others — regardless of their ethics — could read minds at will?

THINK NO EVIL

Featured Novelet of Days To Come

by **HARRY WARNER Jr.**

illustrated by Emsk

I DIDN'T believe what the communicator said. I punched the repeat button, and the same message barked from its two-inch mouth: "Repeating. You must report immediately to the office of Karl Kantner for special assignment."

I tried to turn down the sound. My fingers were so slippery with sweat that I knocked the gain level high enough to produce the same squeal that you hear from an accelerating airjet. There was plenty of reason for that perspiration. Kantner was chief of the whole continent's Security Guards. He shouldn't be paying any attention to an insignificant beginner in the organization—me, for instance.

Kantner's office was at the very top of the fifty-story needle that housed the Security Guards for North America. The walls clucked like well-fed chickens as I walked down the corridor of the top story. That clucking would be identification beams, search beams, recording beams, and sixteen kinds of other beams, if the legends were true.

"You're Bert Darrell? Mr. Kantner is waiting to see you." The blonde at the switchboard smiled at me as if I were No. Two man in the whole or-

ganization. I tried to memorize her curves as fast as I could, then went toward the door in the direction of her nod.

Kantner rose from behind his desk as I went in. He impressed me just about as much as if I were a kid who had actually discovered the genuine Santa.

"Sit down, Darrell. You're ready for assignment?" When I heard that voice, I might have been ten years old again, because hero-worship took command over me. Is there a kid in America who doesn't think Kantner is the greatest force for law and order in history?

"Of course. But I don't—"

"No reservations, Darrell. Never stop to weigh every consequence. Decide instantly, and act at once. That way, things get done. That's the rule I've always followed. It's worked pretty well, hasn't it?"

I thought of the manner in which North America had been turned into a land where everyone followed the rules, where anti-social impulses were destroyed as soon as they bobbed up, and saw Kantner's point.

"We're having trouble with the Paths. Your job is to find out how

they're breaking out of the Ring and infiltrating the country."

I tried to stand up, and my legs wouldn't support me. "The Paths? My job? Infiltrating?" I managed to repeat.

"It's not known to the public. You're new here; that's why I've picked you. No pre-conceived ideas. Listen. Go inside the Ring. Find out all you can. It's a promotion if you learn anything important. I need a good right-hand man."

"But—but the Paths can't get out. If they did, it would mean that some people—"

"They're slick." Kantner's eyes took on that expression of steel that had haunted me all through my hero-worshipping years. "Just think. The waitress who gives you breakfast. The policeman who stops traffic for you. My secretary out there. Any of them might be Paths! Reading every single thought! It's our sacred duty to track them down!"

"Your secretary isn't a Path," I told him. "She'd have blushed at what I was thinking, if she could have read my thoughts."

Kantner ignored that and continued to spit out instructions: "We'll get you inside the Ring. We'll dress you so you won't be conspicuous. You'll have seven days to the minute to get facts. Then you'll get out the same way you got in. You're stuck in the Ring the rest of your life, if you miss connections after seven days."

I TRIED to imitate Kantner's quick decisions, by daring objections: "But what could anyone learn inside the Ring? Paths will be everywhere. No matter what I plan, they'll read my mind and stop me."

Kantner pulled a miserable-looking felt hat out of a desk drawer, and tossed it to me. "Wear this inside the Ring," he ordered. "It has a false lin-

ing that hides a little gadget. It's a portable thought screen. As long as you wear it, you're safe. It hides your thoughts from the Paths. But don't monkey with it; it explodes if you tamper. If you're caught, the Paths won't get our best weapon."

"A portable thought screen!" It was the dream of all normal people, the only weapon that anyone could imagine against the mind-penetrating Paths. "I thought it couldn't be developed! But why can't everyone get one of these? Then our thoughts would be safe, even if Paths are around."

"You wouldn't want to wear bullet-proof armor all the time; you'd have to if thugs shot machine guns every day in the streets. It's the same thing. We've got to wipe out the Paths outside the Ring. Do your job. Any other questions?"

"Will I be the only agent inside the Ring?"

Kantner hesitated for the first time since I'd been in his office. After an instant, he said: "No; we've sent others."

"How will I recognize them?"

Again that instant's pause. If I hadn't known the kind of man that Kantner was, I'd have sworn he was ashamed to reply: "Some of them are overdue. Put on your hat. Take this private elevator to leave."

He just nodded toward the window that looked down on Manhattan. I looked as blank as the windowpane. Kantner looked impatient, walked over to the window, and yanked it. It swung away, revealing that it was a fake. There were mirrors behind it to create the window effect, and a small compartment containing a one-man elevator.

"Don't take off that hat," he repeated. "You'll be out of sight from now until you go inside the Ring. We can't have your thoughts leaking. And remember. Act, don't think."

I STEPPED into the elevator. It sank like a stone, and it didn't slow down as the figures for ground level flashed by. It must have been a dozen stories underground before it stopped. A couple of gloomy-looking men were waiting for me. They had rough-looking clothing, into which I changed; then bundled me into a subway cab. We bored under the city, toward a jetport, and I couldn't help wondering: Could these Security Guards be Paths? I didn't remove the hat; no use taking chances.

It was a ten-minute ride, more time than I needed to refresh myself on everything I knew about the Paths. The Paths were a subject that everyone talked a lot about. But when you sat there trying to assemble all your knowledge about the Paths, you realized that you had just a few facts to go with a whole storage-room full of emotions and deductions.

The geography was simple enough. The Ring was a giant circle that contained about one-eighth of the whole United States, with its center in Kansas. Here's where every Path was sent, as soon after birth as a baby was found to be a Path. The Ring was an invisible wall of power that had the ability to blanket the mind-reading of the Paths from the rest of the nation. It was the only thing that insured privacy of thoughts to real humanity.

The history books didn't say much about the origin of the Paths. I had read somewhere that they used to be called telepaths, back in the days when people thought that this was a fine gift. But in those days, two centuries ago, only a few people had a small amount of telepathic ability. It wasn't until the last part of the 20th century that genuine telepaths appeared, the kind who could read your thoughts as easily as they could see your face. The first few Paths who grew up were as popular as movie stars and baseball heroes. They were used for espionage work and oth-

er useful purposes. But already one out of every hundred babies was turning out to be a Path. All of a sudden, people woke up to the fact that nobody's thoughts would be sacred from now on if something weren't done about the Paths.

The biologists couldn't say why the new type had emerged; they called the Paths a valid mutation—as if that did any good. The sociologists said that the Paths could be integrated with the rest of humanity within ten centuries. Who's going to live for ten centuries? But the physicists had given the real help. They had figured out a vibration pattern that had served as a barrier to mind-reading. The only trouble was that this barrier could be set up only with enormous machines. So they established the Ring as a quarantine area. Every infant was given tests after it was a week old. Those who were Paths were shipped into the Ring at once. Some parents objected, as if they didn't realize that it was for the good of the greatest number.

We transferred into a fast jet at the port. The two men who were keeping me company didn't say a word. I kept my own mouth shut; maybe they had orders to see how much I'd chatter about my job. It was only noon when we swooped down over those wide, gently curving ribbons that were the only visible sign of the Ring.

The force field keeping thoughts from seeping between the Ring and the rest of the nation was invisible. But super-express highways had been built just outside the circumference of the Ring, as an additional safeguard against Paths breaking out. There were eight lanes, hooking up in a giant circle with all the other transcontinental highways. If you were driving almost anywhere, you'd probably get on the Ring to make connections with another road. The outer lanes had speed limits of 150 miles per hour. The inner lanes sometimes had to put up with old cars

that ambled along at 80 miles per hour. There wasn't any record of a Path getting across those lanes on foot. Occasionally an animal tried it and succeeded in getting past one or two lanes before being squashed. Of course, there were guards stationed on the outer edge of the highway; but they had nothing to do. If a Path had come darting across in the face of that traffic, the drivers would have fought for the honor of running him down.

WE LANDED at one of the refueling stations at the edge of the Ring. The bigger of my two silent companions hooked a thumb in the general direction of the grease pit. I walked over there and looked back at him questioningly. He pointed downward. I shrugged, waved goodbye, and clambered down the dirty side.

I felt like the rabbit at the start of "Alice in Wonderland" as I found the little hole and crawled through. It was pitch dark in the tunnel, but arrows glowed just ahead of me as I inched my way along. Every fifty feet or so I came to a swinging partition which swung only in one direction. I hoped that the chief executive in charge of swinging partitions wouldn't forget to reverse the direction of the swing just seven days from this moment when I was due to return. There was a gentle shaking of the whole surroundings as heavy trucks rumbled a few feet above me.

But I felt less like a rabbit and more like Tom Sawyer when I poked my head through a thick cluster of bushes and found myself in sunlight again. The little aircar for my personal use was so beautifully camouflaged that I didn't see it until I stumbled over it crawling down the hillside on which I'd emerged.

The disorder of the landscape was enough to make you sick at the stomach. You could tell there hadn't been a lawnmower, weed eradication program

or tree-chopping machine here for decades. It gave a shuddery feeling to realize that this had been neat farmland only a century or so ago, before it had been sealed off inside the Ring. The Paths weren't allowed to make machines, so they couldn't cultivate much of their land.

In front was a grassy stretch, dotted with thickets. Behind was a screen of large trees that completely hid the Ring's highways that were a mile or so behind them. I stared a long time at those trees, memorizing their arrangement. It wouldn't be nice to return to this general area, seven days from now, and not be able to figure out which hillside hid my tunnel for escape.

The unnatural odor of wildly growing nature bothered me at first, and I actually threw myself flat when a bird zoomed toward me, chattering crazily. I straightened my hat carefully, dusted myself off, and decided to look around before nerves got the better of me. I left the aircar where it lay hidden, and started to pick my way through that tangle of weeds and bushes toward the only artificial thing in sight, a small building whose roof reflected blindingly the rays of sunshine.

The building turned out to be a dilapidated quonset hut, dented and gray. It looked like an abandoned relic of the pre-Ring, pre-Path days. But there was a plain path leading up to it. I crept up to the window, and felt foolish when the window proved to be curtained from the inside. The door was open a crack, and I applied one eye to the crack. Right away, that eye started to blink, as if it personally were trying to clear away a mistaken image.

Because a girl was inside that building, seating on a wooden stool, which was natural enough, but she was operating a machine, which was entirely wrong. This machine was no bigger than a television set and it didn't look any more complicated. But it was all

wrong. Paths didn't have machines like this.

2



HAD PRESSED my lips tightly together, to restrain a whistle of surprise that tried to get through them. But I must have made some kind of noise, because the girl called without turning around: "Come

on in."

Never hesitate, act, Kantner had told me. I pushed the door open, and walked in.

"Has Rixey come yet?" The girl still hadn't turned her head. Her eyes were glued to a sort of twin microscope arrangement. It was hard to make out details of the machine, entering the dark hut from the glare of outdoors noon.

"I didn't pass him," I answered. There was moisture in the hollows of my palms, because I'd said him, and Rixey might be a girl.

"He's late." The girl straightened, took a deep breath, and stood up. First she stretched lazily, then turned around.

"Things look better in Boston," she said. But she took a second look at me, and her eyes widened. "Golly, I'm sorry," she continued with a grin. "I thought you were Ted."

My eyes were adjusting to the light well enough to see that her eyes were dark brown, set in a friendly and strangely relaxed face. There were a dozen spots on the cheeks, apparently the legendary freckles that women used to ignore instead of removing as soon as they learned to go to beauty shops. The hair was the oddest thing of all. It was brown, even though all girls had

been blondes the past three years, and it hung all the way to the shoulders.

"What's the improvement in Boston?" I asked, before the silence became dangerous.

"Real progress," she said, as if she now accepted my presence. "Take a look for yourself."

I put my face to the eyepieces imitated the way her right hand had grasped a dial, and stiffened. The image was a scrawled sheet of paper. It said: "The registry of births and deaths has now been fully occupied. Immediate steps will be taken to alleviate any suspicions on the differences between" and there the scribbling stopped. It was a facsimile receiver, but different from the kind I knew, and when I cautiously tried to adjust the dial to read more, nothing happened.

The girl was at the door, shading her eyes while she looked down the lane. "I can't understand what's holding up Rixey," she complained. "Are you just in from outside the Ring?"

It was a blockbusting question for just one instant. The first impression: she'd penetrated my disguise and mission. The second thought: she wasn't a Path after all. That explained the presence of the machine, and her knowledge that I was from outside the Ring. Rixey then would be a fellow-operative.

"I've been here about ten minutes," I said. "It's a good thing I ran across you. Kantner didn't have time to brief me very well. By the way, how in the deuce are you shielding your thoughts? I thought that something had to be on your head to—"

SHE HAD STARTED to walk back toward me. She stopped and put the back of one hand to her mouth, as if warding off a scream. She started to back toward the door. I leaped and got there first, blocking her way. I'd

blundered, badly. Something in her eyes told me that this was a Path.

"You sensed me in the doorway before you saw me or heard me," I told her, unnecessarily. Had my thoughts leaked through the mechanism? I reached for my pellet-gun and advanced on her, backing her toward a corner.

But she sprang like an uncoiling spring as my hand was touching the gun. She hit me like a couple of tons of superbricks, knocking me off balance. When I grabbed at her arm, she hooked a foot between my legs and gave it a sideways yank. We both went sprawling. She rolled like a cat and darted through the door, on her feet again, before I could draw the gun. I fired in her general direction, but she had melted into the wilderness as rapidly as if she were a wild animal.

I rubbed the sore spot on my leg where her foot had gone into action. I stood at the doorway, and felt utterly useless, completely stupid. I tried to tell myself that every man makes a mistake, and that I couldn't be blamed for the fact that Kantner hadn't briefed me on the Path machinery. The facsimile message meant little as a message. But its presence inside the Ring meant that the Path conspiracy was a big one. There must be a network of communications between the inside of the Ring and the rest of the nation, between the Paths who had infiltrated humanity and those still penned up in here. Things, in other words, must be far worse than even I had been allowed to know.

One course of action was simple and logical. I didn't know whether this was a key machine or just one of thousands, but I pulled back the pellet-gun's lever to full strength and smashed it into a smoking ruin.

The next job was to find more Paths. I decided that it was useless to hunt for them around here, after frightening

the girl, who was probably sending out thought messages as fast as if she were starting a national advertising campaign. The air car was needed, to take me where I could catch a Path, and try to get some straight information out of him.

But that was a miscalculation. I realized that the Paths don't scare so easy when a bunch of bushes at my side swayed oddly. There wasn't any wind. I ducked for cover, snapping a pellet at the bushes.

There was a crash—an old-fashioned gunpowder explosion. A deep voice grunted. A woman's voice screamed: "Look out, Rixey!"

I CRAWLED toward thicker underbrush to my left. Something whined inches from my head as another shot sounded. I snapped another shot toward the bushes, and dived into the cover I wanted. I landed on top of the girl. She squealed and darted away like a partridge. I let her go, because I was worried about that obsolete but deadly gunpowder contraption somewhere off in the bushes.

The forest became as quiet as fairyland. A bird hopped along a branch, three feet from my face, and stared at me. I started to shoo it away, then stopped. It seemed like a friend.

This situation was getting uncomfortable. If the Paths were mentally calling up reinforcements, I had to get to that air car. I started to crawl again, and every vine and bush seemed to have dressed itself in thorns for my sake.

The air car was a hundred yards away when it happened. A bearded giant leaped out of the tangle of thickets to my right and dashed toward the aircar. He couldn't know it was there, because of the camouflage, but he did.

I had time to take careful aim, even to realize that my thought shield must be leaking and betraying the aircraft's location, before I fired. The huge Path

stumbled and collapsed, ten feet from the aircar.

I abandoned cover and dashed in the same general direction. The girl appeared out of nowhere, and crouched over the body as if to protect it from me. Her face was tear-streaked, dirty and wild as she looked at me and moaned: "You've killed him!"

I aimed the pelletgun at the center of her faded blouse. She stared defiantly at the gun and didn't try to run. Kantner's voice was ringing in my ears: "Don't hesitate, act; don't fret over whether you're done right." Maybe the fact that this was the only woman I'd ever seen who didn't go to pieces in an emergency kept me from shooting.

As I stood undecided, the girl turned, ignored me, and tried to listen for a heartbeat in the man's chest. Then she sped the Path's foolish-looking gunpowder pistol, lying a few feet away. When she sprang for it, I chopped the butt of the pelletgun down heavily on her head. She collapsed, fingers six inches from the Path's gun. Everything was silent in the forest.

I threw the Path weapon into the thicket. Then I picked up the unconscious girl, and lugged her to the aircar. I'd made a terrific mess of my mission so far. Maybe the whole Path nation had been mentally alerted of my presence. But at least I had a Path for experimentation, and was out of immediate danger.

I put the Path into the aircar, then yanked away the branches and other protective coloration from around it. I wasn't finished when voices became audible, somewhere in the forest. It sounded like a lot of them, and they were getting louder in a hurry. So I jumped in myself, bolted the hatch with one hand, and yanked at the controls with the other. The aircar shivered and wailed for a moment, still held down by the last of the camou-

flage, as a score of men appeared on the crest of the closest hill. Then it broke free and rose. As it ascended, I tried to figure out how the men were traveling. They were aboard some kind of animals.

I set a course that would keep the aircar between the Paths on the ground and the sun and watched them scurry about below on their strange mounts. Half of them clustered around the big man's body, the rest shielded their eyes with their hands and tried to spot the aircar against the glaring, two o'clock sunshine. I was safe.

THE GIRL was breathing heavily and was beginning to twitch a little. I felt a bit sorry for her as I looked at her face more thoroughly, and realized that she'd be pretty with a haircut and with scientific removal of those disfiguring freckles. When I felt the lump that was forming on the side of her head, she groaned, and said weakly, "Don't." Her eyes flickered open.

I held her down when she tried to rise. "Lie still," I told her. "You get up, and I'll slug you again."

She blinked against the strong light that poured into the port, and saw that the ground was a hundred feet below. Her face whitened, she groaned again, and lay back, limp and beaten.

I unstrapped the chemicals kit from my belt, picked out the proper vial, and dumped half of it into a hypodermic. She drew away against the wall of the cramped little airjet cabin as I bent over her.

"Don't be afraid," I tried to reassure her. "This will make you feel better." She didn't resist when I injected the stuff into her tanned upper arm. That was another problem. She ought to have fought me, if she was reading my thoughts.

When I looked downward again, the men below had formulated some plan. Half of them were trudging away, car-

rying along the giant whom I had shot. The remainder had fanned into a semi-circle around the hut, as if on guard.

I gave the Path a glass of water, propped up her head with a rolledup spare jacket, and decided that the truth drug had time to act.

"What's your name?" I asked.

"Gerry Masters." Her voice was getting stronger. "I feel better. What was that stuff you gave me?"

"Where do you live?" I ignored her question.

"Three or four miles from here. Why did you shoot Rixey? He's never hurt anybody."

I resisted the impulse to slap her, and tried to assume charge of the questioning by raising my voice.

"What were you doing in that hut?"

"You don't have to yell," she said, then pressed her lips tightly together and simply stared at me.

That truth drug had its limitations. It couldn't make a subject talk; it merely came in handy when the subject was willing to talk. So I tried another approach: "Why aren't you Paths happy here, where you are, instead of trying to get outside the Ring and take over the world? How are you getting through the Ring?"

"We are happy here. We're not getting through the Ring."

MY JAW TRIED to drop. The girl's breathing and color were normal, despite what she had just said. I looked at my kit to make sure I'd used the right chemical. A terrible suspicion began to form. Maybe these Paths had more powers than mind-reading—ability to control the reactions of chemicals on their bodies, for instance.

"You mean to say that you were just attending to business of your own when you were in that hut? You mean that there aren't any Paths in the big cities outside the Ring?"

"That's right," Gerry said. She coughed, and began to wheeze as if my

fingers were clutching her throat. Her face grew white, and her whole body started to tremble. Her eyes half-closed in agony, and real fear glowed through the half-closed lids.

"Better tell the truth," I said. "See what happens when you lie? Is that a communication station with Paths outside the Ring?"

"Yes," she croaked. Her coughs subsided, color crept back into her face, and she lay more quietly, with new respect for me showing in her face.

"What are you doing to me?"

"You're doing it yourself. That drug simply amplified the little changes in your body's processes that occur when you lie. It's easier to use this than to take you to a lie detector. This drug simply magnifies, painfully, those little changes in blood pressure and pulse and breathing that show up on lie detectors. Now, you say you were in touch with Paths outside the Ring?"

"Yes." She sounded beaten.

"But you tell me that Paths don't leave the Ring and slip outside?"

"Yes." I looked closely and she wasn't lying.

"You aren't trying to tell me that some of the babies born outside the Ring fool the examining board and grow up without anybody suspecting them to be Paths?"

"No." She even grinned as she said that, as if she were winning a guessing game. I felt exasperated, and a little bit pleased at the fact that a girl could have that kind of courage.

"Well, I haven't anything with me that will force you to talk," I admitted. "But I can take you outside the Ring. We have gadgets out there—"

"I can just picture you, leading a Path out through your secret tunnels." She laughed scornfully. "We'd both be shot down before we went three feet. They wouldn't take a chance on you letting a Path loose in your world."

"How much of my thinking is leaking through to you?" I figured that the

question was safe. If the hat was useless, it didn't hurt to ask about it. If it was giving some protection, my question didn't reveal where I was wearing the shield.

"No comment," she said saucily. Then suddenly: "Look out! They're going to shoot us down!" She tried to get up.

I shoved her back to the floor of the cabin with one hand and risked a glance out the window. Everything looked peaceful.

"Stop trying to change the subject. Now, answer me."

She wriggled like a wild animal, trying to reach the airjet's controls. "Damn it, get this thing moving," she wailed, as if she were in command. "Those idiots don't know I'm aboard. They'll break us in two!"

The airjet bucked. There was a dull boom that sounded close.

I shoved the throttle over with the flat of my hand. The reaction threw both of us against the other wall until the ship slowed its acceleration rate. Through the port, I saw a patch of smoke between the airjet and the ground. It dispersed to show an old-fashioned piece of artillery that might have come out of a museum. Little matchstick men were dashing around it, obviously hurrying to reload a single shot mechanism.

3



I'D SEEN the old movies, and I knew that such a gun could do damage, no matter how odd it looked, at a real distance. I turned the airjet in a tight loop and aimed its nose for the weapon. If they'd reloaded by now, I was sunk. But I was definitely sunk if I tried to outrun shells.

The men around the weapon stood their ground until we were a hundred feet above them, then broke and ran for covers. If they expected a diving crash, they almost got it. I threw in the reverse jets, full-tilt. They worked beautifully, but they were meant for pilots who were enclosed in safety belts. The deceleration threw me away from the controls again. Before I could stagger back, the little craft lost headway under the conflicting efforts of its jets, careened, and dived into the thicket.

I can visualize what happened. A side of the fragile craft split open like a piece of rotten fruit, throwing Gerry and me through the branches of scrub trees onto the soft turf. Minutes or hours might have passed until I got back my consciousness.

I wiped uselessly at the trickle of blood on my cheek, shook my head to try to clear it, and pulled myself erect. People were trampling toward me, from my left. It was no time to wonder who or how many. I dashed in a crazy sort of blind stagger toward the right. Somehow I managed to keep my hat on my head. Maybe a hundred feet away from the point at which I'd started, my legs turned completely to soft rubber. I flopped down in a tiny clearing, knowing that I couldn't run another foot if my life depended on it, and realizing that my life did depend on it.

I crawled toward a group of bushes that might provide a moment's hiding, blindly, at the point of exhaustion. I didn't have enough strength to be startled when a tree gave a queer snort and moved out of my way. I did take the trouble to look up, at a monster that was roaring above me.

I rolled out of the way of the legs that I had taken for trees. Suddenly, I remembered two things. I had seen Paths riding these monsters, and I remembered the name of the monsters. They were called horses. People had

even used them for travel back in the old days.

This one was tethered to a tree. I grabbed for its mane, missed, and reached for its tail. The horse circled, bringing its mane into reach. It reared wildly, but I hung on, drawing myself up over its back. When it felt my weight, the horse went wild. The tether snapped from its bucking and it dashed madly through the thicket.

I closed my eyes for an instant to utter a little prayer, then opened them when I heard shouts. A dozen roughly dressed men were diving for cover, to get out of the way of the horse as it galloped through a glade. Two of them tried to flag it down with their shirts, ripped hastily from their back. The horse merely veered and picked up speed. After that, I concentrated all my attention on keeping myself sprawled on the animal's sweaty back, gritting my teeth to forget the concussion of low branches and the ripping cuts of thorns that we passed.

The horse reached open, grassy land, making riding a little easier. I had a chance to check the sun. It was in front of us, so the animal was heading away from the Ring.

THE SUN was half-hidden by a swell of the prairie when the animal finally showed signs of exhaustion. When it had slowed to a stumbling trot, I risked pulling myself erect on its back. That position seemed to calm the animal. It shifted into a sedate walk, even stopping occasionally for a mouthful of high grass.

I waited until it was almost completely dark before disembarking from the horse. The slow ride through the darkening country was strangely pleasant, after the commotion of the past few hours. I found myself thinking that I could almost come to like natural settings, such as this one, in more peaceful circumstances.

But my sense of calm vanished when I slipped over the side of the horse.

My legs refused to support me when I tried to walk. I propped myself against a tree and realized how completely I'd bungled the assignment. The whole countryside would be up in arms, hunting for me. I had no food. My clothing was in tatters. The airjet that was my only means of transportation was wrecked. I didn't even have a clear idea how I would return to the tunnel opening that would take me back to civilization. My hat was my only remaining resource, and that was becoming a doubtful one.

A small stream that ran at the bottom of a steep slope was easy to reach by crawling. I drank greedily, then found I didn't have the strength to pull myself back up the bank. I lay there motionless, and little animals crept fearlessly by me, coming down to drink. I wasn't quite hungry enough to try to eat them raw, and I felt somehow touched by their complete trust in me, their absence of fear.

At some time during the night, I fell into exhausted sleep. It was bright daylight when a strong hand shaking my shoulder brought me back to my senses. I blinked and looked up at the bearded face of a small, middle-aged man.

"Think you can walk?" the man asked.

I reached for my pellet-gun, determined not to let myself be captured without a fight. It was gone. I didn't know whether I had lost it in my flight or it had been taken from me while I lay there.

So I just jammed on my hat, while struggling to my feet. The knees felt as if the screws were gone from the hinges, but they held me upright.

"My name's Martin," the man with the three-inch beard said. "I live back here a piece. If you'll come along with me, I'll be pleased to feed you and lend you better clothing."

It was a funny way for a prisoner to be treated, so maybe he wasn't cap-

turing me. I didn't have the strength to debate the situation.

THE MARTINS lived in a wooden house that was divided with curtains into eating, sleeping, and living rooms. Martin introduced himself as a forest warden. His wife was simply a housewife. He couldn't introduce the children, because they were out playing.

"How did you know I was lying back there?" I asked. There hadn't been a sign of any other Paths in the area. Could my unconscious thoughts be read by the Paths while I was out cold? I wondered.

"Why, I was told that you might be somewhere around, so I went out to look for you," Martin answered. "Just part of my job. You're one of the boys from the Security Guards, aren't you?"

I jumped from my chair as if a track had just materialized in it. The open door was only six feet away. But Martin made no effort to block my way, and the half-smile that played over his face kept me from dashing out of the house.

"I thought you were. They come through here every so often. Usually they don't blunder into any trouble until they're a lot further inside the Ring than this. Too bad that you had to pick a fight before you could enjoy the scenery."

It was incredible that a Path would talk in this fashion to me. I'd killed a man, kidnapped a girl, stolen a horse, destroyed valuable machinery, and was engaged in espionage work. Suddenly I had what seemed like a fine inspiration. Could this be another Security Guard, living here in disguise, uncertain whether I was a Path or a normal person?

"You've spotted me," I told him, trying to draw him out. "I came through the Ring to look for one of our men who disappeared a few weeks back. I stumbled across some ma-

chinery, had to fight my way out, and my airjet crashed. That's when you found me. That's the whole story."

"That isn't the whole story they told me," Martin said. "Gerry complained about you stealing a horse. That's a terrible thing to do around here. Rixey didn't mind getting shot as much as he minded losing a horse."

"Rixey? The big man? You mean he's still alive?" I tried to account for the emotion of relief and happiness that swept over me when I learned that my shot hadn't been fatal.

Then I picture myself as a bedraggled and lost mouse, encircled by hungry but playful cats. The cat-and-mouse tactics were the only conceivable reason why I hadn't been killed off instantly.

"Don't worry," Martin said, lighting his pipe, and apparently reading my thoughts to perfection. "I got strict orders from Rixey not to hurt you. The folks are willing to consider everything as a sort of mutual disagreement. They'll forgive and forget, since you were just trying to carry out orders when you landed inside the Ring. They came visiting last night, told me that you would probably collapse in the forest pretty soon, and asked me to haul you in. I think you ought to visit with us quietly for a while. Most of your buddies who came inside the Ring in the past liked it so much that they're still here, won't go back."

"You're lying like fury," I said bitterly. "If I could read your thoughts like you can—"

"It's a good thing you can't; thoughts are sacred." He said it as if he were serious. "Now, let's go out and shoot us some dinner."

I SPENT three days at the Martian cabin, recuperating. The kids acted as if I were an old friend of the family who had returned for a visit. The oldest boy didn't have a hat yet, and wanted mine so badly that I ended up

by tying it to my ears with thin twine. That made me safe when the kid hung from the rafters and tried to grab it off.

Nobody else visited the house while I was inside it. Once I returned from a long, solitary hike in time to see a stout man and a well-shaped girl leaving the house. They hurried away before I came close. I fought a strange impulse to follow them and apologize, if it turned out to be Gerry and Rixey. Sanity stopped me; I shouldn't apologize for doing my duty, but it seemed hard by now to consider these people as loathsome enemies.

Occasionally I suspected something: Could this whole setup, even all the events that had happened to me, be an elaborate test of my loyalty to the Security Guards, my reactions under pressure? I think that I'd acted loyally enough, except for being softhearted a couple of times when I might have been more ruthless. So loyally, in fact, that I spent long hours wondering just how far loyal actions get a person along the path toward the things in life that really count.

This rural life wasn't too bad, for instance. There was lots of game; enough crops grew on a couple of acres behind the house to feed us; and Martin's job consisted simply of tramping around through the forest, occasionally removing a fallen tree from a path, and looking for new kinds of growing things. It was hard to believe that I'd ever felt so disgusted with wilderness and nature as I had on the day that I got inside the Ring.

You can see the things that I was thinking. Such thoughts caused me to take stock of myself, and pull out of there at the end of three days. I didn't want to be trapped into a primitive, useless life like other Security Guards, if Martin was telling the truth about those who had come before me.

I HAD THREE days remaining before the time came to dive into my

tunnel and get back to civilization. I didn't think that the things I had experienced so far would fill out a report very well. So I fought the impulse to head for that tunnel and count the hours until jumping-off time. Instead I hurried west, deeper into the heart of the Ring, wishing that I had dared to say goodbye and thanks to Martin's family. I'd crept out of the house before dawn, fearing that they would try to stop me. A desire to gather material for my report to Kantner was the best of reasons for heading west. But I suspect that there was a deeper reason, a desire to learn for myself something more about the Paths, so I could reconcile these harmless-seeming people with the race of thought-stealers we'd learned about in school.

I'd brought along some food from the Martin house. It wasn't stealing, because I'd shot game myself. It was hard to get used to stopping at any stream and drinking, but it could be done in Pathland. There wasn't an unpolluted stream of water outside the Ring in North America. My feet started to get sore again by afternoon, but that didn't bother me as much as the number of passersby.

Paths started to pass me by the dozen. They were heading in my direction, down the same dirt road, but they were moving faster. They were chattering so much that you'd never have guessed that they could have read each other's thoughts and saved their breath. I usually ducked out of sight into the thickets and let them pass me, during the first hour or so. But a few parties crept up on me without my hearing them, didn't recognize me as the guy who had done so much damage, and I started to ignore them.

It was nearly noon on the following day when I discovered why so much Path traffic had been heading westward. The road led to the first real Path town that I had found, and at the edge of this town, there were tents, booths, indescribable contraptions,

platforms, and all the other things that can be found at the old-fashioned sort of country affairs. It was hard to believe that the Paths had walked so far simply to go to a fair, but there was no other explanation. Thousands of Paths were milling around, dancing tirelessly to tiny orchestras, risking pennies on games of chance, and slipping off in pairs into the shrubbery for spooning purposes.

I didn't dare penetrate to the center of the fair, but remained on the edges, ready to break into the woods if recognized. I managed to worm out of an old man the fact that this fair celebrated some important Path anniversary, would last a week, and was attracting Paths from a hundred miles around.

"Purpose?" The old fellow spat tobacco juice and looked at me in disgusted fashion. "Why should there be a purpose for the fair? It lets us have a good time. Isn't that the best purpose of all?"

I didn't want to take the time to prove scientifically to him that individual happiness had no real meaning, that duty to the state was the important thing, so I walked away. Outside the Ring, amusements were scientifically designed to strengthen the body in specific ways or raise funds for governmental purposes. Somehow, just plain amusements without plan or goal seemed dangerously seductive. For instance, even I had trouble resisting, when some Paths asked me to help fill out a side in a ball game.

I felt like a bull in a china shop, but determinedly sampled most of the attractions of the fair, feeling that this fair might form the basis for my report upon leaving the Ring. I was doubtful whether many agents were lucky enough to stumble into such a celebration, and it might provide the psychologists with good clues about Path ways of thinking. That determination is the reason that I was wandering through a long tent containing a maze,

when a couple of timbers snapped and the way out of the maze was blocked.

4



A LOUD VOICE from behind the barrier reassured everyone that they'd be free as soon as a saw could be located. The Paths around me seemed to consider it as a good opportunity to rest for a while, and sprawled unceremoniously on the ground. I found an empty place to sprawl. I ignored the couple who were beside me, until my eyes adjusted to the gloom inside the maze. Then I saw that they were Gerry and Rixey, who were staring at me in speculative fashion.

I grabbed in an automatic reflex for my pelletgun. Rixey caught my hand and began pumping it up and down in greeting before I could tear it loose. I didn't fight him, because I realized now that the pelletgun had disappeared, that night I was lost in the forest.

"No hard feelings?" Rixey boomed in a tremendous voice. "Let's forget our little misunderstanding, and be friends."

He was the one who was wearing a big bandage on his head, not me. If he was willing to overlook the fact that I had tried to kill him, I wasn't going to be technical about it. In fact, I found myself saying:

"I guess I acted hastily. You see, I'd just come inside the Ring, and I lost my head. If—"

"Let's not just sit around talking," Gerry interrupted. "We might as well spend the time usefully with these, while they're sawing us out." She distributed sandwiches.

"Useful? I don't understand."

"She's kidding a little, my boy,"

Rixey said. "Useful to your appetite, she means. Not useful to some silly abstraction, so maybe she isn't kidding as much as you people outside the Ring kid yourselves." Rixey grabbed two of the sandwiches and started to chew.

"What are you going to do now?" Gerry asked, looking steadily at me.

Was it any use to lie to a person who can read your inmost thoughts? "I'm just going to look around Pathland a while," I said cautiously.

"We'd be glad if you decided to settle down inside the Ring," she said.

"Settle down!" I stared at her in horror. "But I've got work to do, reports to make, a deadline to meet." I stopped, hoping that I hadn't let the time and place of my appointment with that tunnel flash into my mind. "I don't know whether I'll have time to learn all that I want to know. I'm ignorant about the most fundamental things—why you're having this fair, for instance. What kind of an anniversary is it?"

"The day the Ring was set up."

"You mean that you celebrate your captivity?"

Rixey gave me a slap on the back that made me gasp. "You learn fast, my boy. A few days ago, you'd have said something about celebrating the liberation of humanity from Paths."

"Well, I suppose that some of my old ideas were partly wrong. If I can do anything to help—"

A jolt like an earthquake stopped me, threw the three of us sprawling on our backs. A hundred thunders beat at my ears and the maze split wide open.

I rolled and staggered to my feet. A huge Security Guards jet had landed beside the crater that had been the center of the fair moments before. Here and there a Path wounded by the blast was screaming in agony. Other Paths ran or limped toward the shelter of the trees.

"Run, boy!" Rixey's voice soared over the tumult. He yanked at me. I

followed him for a moment, then stopped. Where was Gerry?

I FOUND her lying with a huge timber across one foot. I ignored the screams and the scattered shooting, rolling it away with every bit of strength at my command. Her face was chalk, and when I pulled her to her feet, the leg wouldn't bear her weight.

"Get away, quick," she breathed in pain-hurried tones. "They'll kill you with the rest of us if you hang around."

I didn't stop to think, I just acted—by dashing toward the huge jet. A Security Guard spotted me coming, dropped to one knee, and leveled his rifle at me. I poked two fingers between my lips, and somewhere found enough breath to shrill out the identification whistle. He recognized it, held his fire, but grabbed me as I spurted by him.

"You're Darrell? The chief's hunting you." The Security Guard pushed a pelletgun into my hands and dashed toward the edge of the forest, hunting fugitives.

When I reached the plane, the scene had cleared magically. I climbed into the craft, my stomach threatening to heave from shock and the uselessness of the slaughter.

Nobody was in the plane. I rushed through its corridors, calling, wondering what good had been done by breaking up an innocent celebration of harmless people. Then I dropped to the ground again. One uniformed Security Guard was in sight, forty paces away, and there was something familiar about that figure. Kantner rarely went into the field personally—but it was the chief.

"High time!" Kantner shouted at me. "Wait there. I'm coming."

In the shadow of the plane, I stood and watched him pick up the axe that Paths had been using to cut free the damaged section of the maze, just before the Security Guard attack. Kant-

ner walked three steps to where Gerry lay. She tried to crawl away. He kicked her flat, and put one foot down hard on the small of her back. The sun flashed on the axe blade as he raised it high over her head.

Act, Kantner had always taught me. So the pelletgun in my hand hissed gently. I followed his advice. I shot the chief, without wasting thoughts.

The axe buried itself in the turf, inches from Gerry's head. Kantner twisted, stared unbelievably at me, then fell in a shapeless huddle. Gerry began to crawl again, toward me.

I pulled myself inside the plane again. I'd saved a Path's life at the cost of the life of the man who had once been my hero. Now there wasn't anything left to my future, inside or outside the Ring.

But I could make sure that this plane wouldn't slaughter any more Paths and settle my own fate in the bargain. Kantner had warned me that my helmet would explode if tampered with. I took it off, tossed it at my feet, and aimed carefully with the pelletgun. I pressed the stud.

The hat split into two pieces. Nothing else happened. Had I messed things up again?

I picked up the ruined hat. There was a space between the inner and outer linings, all right. But now I understood why the thing had been so light in weight. There wasn't any of the wiring or transistors or vibrators that I had assumed existed in there to block off thoughts. The space was empty. The hat had been a fake, a Psychological crutch for me, nothing more.

THERE WAS a noise at the ground under the plane. I inched to the port, gun ready, but didn't need it. It was Gerry, pulling herself somehow up the hatchway ladder, hand over hand. I yanked her the rest of the way and carried her to a chair. She smiled weakly through a dirty face.

"I think we'd better go someplace pretty fast," she said. "You've probably made your old buddies pretty angry. And thanks."

I wasn't a pilot of a full-fledged jet, according to my abilities dossier back at headquarters. But this was no time for bureaucracy. I studied the control panel, which was basically similar to that of the little one-man airjets. "Buckle yourself tight," I instructed Gerry, showed her how to fasten the straps around her body, then belted myself to the pilot's chair and played a tattoo on the control panel.

The jet roared into sudden life, bucked like a terrified bronco, and leaped from the ground. It careened at an impossible angle, lost headway, and began to fall into the trees. I threw in full power and blacked out for a moment as the jet regained headway.

Gerry's voice, pleading with me to straighten out the course, snapped me back to awareness. The plane was in a tight circle that would make it a sitting duck for any other Security Guards planes that happened to be around. I sent it higher, pointed its nose due west, then unbuckled myself slowly. We were *safe*—until someone started to shoot at us.

I was helping Gerry with her straps when I noticed something in her eyes that I'd never seen in a human's face before. It was gratitude. It was new, and it seemed much better than those little slips of paper that a clerk in the Security Guards had directed to my office whenever I'd earned an official commendation on the job.

I bandaged her injured ankle as best I could with a strip of cloth torn from her skirt, and said: "My world's turned upside down."

Gerry stretched hugely and grinned despite the danger. "Maybe I could explain a few things."

"What's come over me?" I asked. "I've betrayed my own people, for the sake of another race."

"Don't be silly," she said, and didn't

make it sound insulting. "We aren't another race. We're not to blame for being kept inside the Ring. It's not our choosing."

"But you can read thoughts. How could I ever be comfortable around mind-readers?"

"I *can't* read thoughts." Gerry stamped to emphasize her words, with the wrong foot, and grimaced.

"You're lying!" All the old suspicions were flooding back.

"You got any more of that stuff?" she asked meekly. "You can't keep kidding yourself if you use that on me and listen to the truth. Because this is the truth. *Nobody* can read another person's thoughts. Won't you believe me?"

"But you're Paths." I stared at her as if she had begun to speak a foreign language. "You've proved that you can read thoughts. You knew I was behind you, when I first stumbled across you at that machine. You knew when Rixey was shooting at our air-jet, though you couldn't possibly see the ground from that angle. Martin found me in the woods that night."

"**L**ISTEN, Bert," she interrupted my tirade, "it's going to be hard for you to understand in a few minutes the exact opposite of all the things you've been told all your life. But Paths aren't telepaths. When the first Paths were born, and turned out to have new mental powers, people got panicky. They didn't study the infants and small children carefully. They made a terrible mistake. They thought it was telepathy. It wasn't. The new mental powers consisted of clairvoyancy."

"Clairvoyancy?" I fought to remember the meaning of the word.

"It means the gift of seeing without eyes. It's not the power to read minds; people always have mixed up the two. Even before the Paths started to come into the world, the two were mixed up. The very first experiments with extra-sensory perception started the trouble.

They made tests with packs of cards. One person would go through the deck, stare at each card, and another person would try to identify the card without seeing it. The proportion of correct identifications was higher than the law of chance permitted, so it was called telepathy. It didn't occur to the investigators that exactly the same results could have been obtained if a mechanical shuffler and dealer had been used instead of a person staring at the cards. The person doing the identifying was using clairvoyance, not telepathy."

I walked to the window of the plane, trying to think. The plane was flying over hills, and I gave it more altitude. Then I turned back to Gerry, and said slowly: "Clairvoyancy doesn't sound so bad. It wouldn't intrude on privacy, as far as thoughts and emotions were concerned. As long as you didn't do anything wrong, you wouldn't care whether clairvoyant people were watching you mentally. But I can't believe it's that simple. Sooner or later the scientists would have realized that they'd made that mistake. They'd have told the people about the mistake and Paths wouldn't be kept inside the Ring."

"It didn't work out that way. People had gotten so roused up over the danger of Paths that nobody could have convinced them that a mistake had been made. The world's governments had set up this enormous plan to keep the Paths under control, and they simply silenced the few men who realized what a terrible mistake had been made. Besides, most of the governmental leaders had reached power by their anti-Path campaigns. They couldn't have held office without that reputation for protecting humanity.

"By now, probably even the scientists and government leaders don't realize the truth about the Paths. The books have been written over again, the old records have been destroyed. Don't blame humanity too much."



"If all that's true, I can't blame you for trying to break out of the Ring."

"We don't try to break out of the Ring. We Paths inside the Ring like it here and wouldn't enjoy life anywhere else. It's too mechanized, too cold, too far from nature outside the Ring."

"But I saw you talking about Paths in the big cities."

"Don't just jump to conclusions. The Paths in the cities outside the Ring aren't from inside the Ring. They grew up out there. We grew up inside the Ring, because we're descended from the first Paths, those who were put inside the Ring before a little system was worked out for Path babies."

"Go ahead, keep talking," I urged. My head was spinning so badly that more facts wouldn't do any fresh harm.

"WELL, BACK in the days when the real abilities of Paths be-

came known to a few scientists, those sensible men were horrified by the idea of tearing babies away from parents and exiling them in the wilderness. Some physicians, hospital heads, and such people conferred quietly and realized they didn't stand a chance of changing public opinion about Path babies. So they ordered a bunch of little robot infants, able to cry and wriggle, and with little interior furnaces that keep them at body warmth. Now, every time a Path baby is spotted, it's taken from its parents, but before it's shipped inside the Ring, it gets switched with one of these little robots. The robots are sent the rest of the way inside the Ring, the baby is quietly placed in an adoption home, and lots of the time the real parents are able to adopt it back. Every year that passes, Path babies make up a greater proportion of all the births, but the little robots can be used over and over again, and nobody is the wiser. There's enough Path school teachers and pediatricians to keep the Path babies from giving themselves away as they grow up into adult Paths."

"What happens when you start to outnumber real humanity?" I asked. Visions of the greatest war in history flashed before me, one obsolescent type of mankind battling to exterminate his improved descendants.

"There won't be any trouble about that," Gerry said happily. "The day will come when there won't be anything except Paths, because all people will sooner or later be born with clairvoyance, just as all babies in the last few centuries have been born with certain powers that cave men didn't possess, like good memories and the ability to learn to reason. We'll just take over without fighting, because there won't be any opponents left."

"I don't think it'll work out that way. I think some of you Paths will get tired of oppression and try to break out. I wouldn't blame you."

"No. It isn't really oppression, except for things like that bombing. Most of us inside the Ring realize that we're serving a useful purpose, anyway. Ordinary mankind has always been happy when hating something. Sometimes it was other nations, sometimes it was other religions, that gave an excuse for oppression and wars. Right now, ordinary men are so busy hating and fearing us Paths that they don't bother to fight among themselves. We can stand it for a century or so, and keep the world at peace in the process."

I COULD find only one feeble objection: "If you're all clairvoyant, why didn't some of you sense that jet was approaching to bomb the fair?"

"Well, you know how it is with your sight. When you're thinking about something else in which you're intensely interested, you don't notice that a thunderstorm is gathering overhead or you may walk past your best friend without recognizing him. That's the way it is with clairvoyance. The power is there to use when we need it, but we don't spend all our time with it. We just weren't paying attention, because we were having a good time."

"I guess such a gift would be wonderful for me. I'm always losing my keys."

"You wouldn't need it inside the Ring for that purpose. We don't use locks and keys here. In the first place, it wouldn't do any good to lock your house, because a Path could probe inside the lock and whittle out a skeleton key that would unlock it, or locate your own keys. And then it wouldn't do a Path any good to steal, because you could use your own ability to determine where he'd hidden your stuff. Paths are honest. We just don't have any criminals or liars. Nobody can get away with dishonesty."

I looked speculatively and long at Gerry. "Suppose I turn around and

fly outside the Ring and tell everything I've learned to the authorities."

"It wouldn't do any good, because nobody would believe you. Besides, you don't want to do that. I don't have to be a mind-reader to know that you're starting to like us Paths."

It was almost dark outside by now. Something else occurred to me.

"If you don't have any crime, you wouldn't have any lawyers. Without law, how do you get married?"

I could feel Gerry's eyes fixed upon me in the dark. "We don't need lawyers. We have ministers. They —"

She broke off, frightened, as the sound of the jet motors coughed and stopped. I starred at the fuel gauge. Empty. I never learned whether a leak had sprung or someone had erred in the fueling. The plane tilted sickeningly downward.

I grabbed the girl. "I'm sorry," I said. "For a minute, I thought we could both be happy."

She snuggled close, and said very rapidly: "Rixey used to be a Security Guard; now he's a minister. We can see him tomorrow. Now, grab those controls and we'll glide to a landing. No sense in crashing."

I obeyed automatically, and straightened out the ship, but said: "It's no use. It's dark as pitch down there. We'll smash up."

"Veer to the left a little, and try to lose altitude a little faster," Gerry instructed, snuggling up closer, and not even looking through the useless window. "Now count about five, and then land with your brakes set. There's a nice pasture just ahead. Good thing that I'm clairvoyant."

We landed with only a couple of bad bounces. There was a moment's silence. To break it, I said: "I still owe Rixey a horse. Do you think he'll do us a favor under those circumstances?"

"We'll raise horses," Gerry said dreamily.

WONDERFULNESS

IT'S ENTIRELY possible that even as I type this, Randall Garrett is giving an address in Newark, to the local fan club, on the same subject. A few weeks back, Randy told me he'd been invited to be a guest speaker at the October meeting; he was casting about for a subject. Later, finding that he still hadn't caught anything, I suggested that while there had been a great deal of talk and prose about the "sense of wonder" that has apparently departed from science fiction, I had yet to see or hear any explanation of just what constituted this element. Oldtimers who now lament its passing can recognize it when they encounter it upon re-readings of stories which appeared twenty years or more back; but how can it be described to the readers and fans of the fifties?

First of all, while the expression "sense of wonder" is good English, I don't feel that it is adequate as a description of just what we are discussing. I think the job of explanation will be helped by a phrase which may be rather poor English, to wit, "feeling of wonderfulness". Because, you see, there is ample incitement to wonder in present-day science fiction—to wonder if atomic doomsday will come soon; to wonder if the ideals of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are merely passing show; to wonder if today's technological progress has made universal tyranny and slavery for humanity inevitable; to wonder if neuroses and unsanity are the irreversible trend of civilization; to wonder if there's a sort of Gresham's Law working inexorably in all the fields of what we call "culture"—that is, if bad art, bad writing, bad music, etc., must necessarily drive out good—and if illiteracy and conformity induced by the mass-media of newspapers, comic books, expose magazines, radio, movies, and television will make a total mockery out of the early democratic hopes of adequate education for everyone. Yes, there is a wide element of wonder in what is called modern science fiction—but little wonderfulness.

What was wonderfulness?

When Ned Land and the Professor found themselves on Captain Nemo's *Nautilus* on a voyage of twenty thousand leagues under the sea, there was wonderfulness; when Michael Arden, President Barbicane, and Captain Nichol felt themselves hurled out of the *Columbiad* by a mighty blast that propelled them from the Earth to the Moon, there was wonderfulness; when H. G. Wells' Time Traveler found himself in the land of

the white sphinx, there was wonderfulness; when the Chemist shrank into the golden atom, there was wonderfulness; when John Carter found himself on Mars, there was wonderfulness.

And the quality remains, despite the fact that Jules Verne's *Nautilus* is rather quaint today; that we know the intrepid members of the Gun Club could not have survived being shot out of a *Columbiad*, let alone the question of whether such a projectile would have achieved escape velocity and/or would have encircled the moon and then returned as the author relates; that Time Travel is fantasy, not science fiction; that Cummings' golden atom is an absurdity, let alone his reducing pills; that neither John Carter or the other characters in Burroughs' series could have existed on Mars.

AND WONDERFULNESS was what Hugo Gernsback sought for his magazine venture *Amazing Stories*, issued in the belief and hope that there would be a large enough audience for science fiction to support a publication entirely devoted to it. Wonderfulness—but not the fairy tale or fantasy type; wonderfulness based on projections of science which did not ignore or contradict current scientific fact. It was not yet a fact in 1929 that the airship could not supersede the airplane; at that time the question of whether lighter-than-air craft had it over heavier-than-air craft was still open to debate. (Interestingly, Jules Verne made this controversy part of the plot of his novel "Robur the Conqueror", many years before, and had concluded that the heavier-than-air craft would prevail.) Thus the wonderfulness of the *Ark of the Covenant* was not obsolete when the novel was reprinted in *Air Wonder Stories*, even if the plot of stopping war by means of superpiracy on the part of rogue scientists which forces the capitulation of the Great Powers, can only be described as naive. Still naive, though still not proven impossible at the time, was the revolt of the scientists in the series by Nat Schachner (*Wonder Stories*, April, May, June 1933).

There was wonderfulness when Richard Seaton liberated the interatomic energy of copper and built the "Skylark of Space"; when Anthony Rogers awoke to find himself in the 25th Century ("Armageddon 2419 AD" by Philip Francis Knowlan, *Amazing Stories*, August 1928); when Cosmo Versal

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Some stories defy the blurb-writer, and here is an example — something unusual, even for science-fiction, where the unusual is to be expected!

WHY SHOULD I STOP?

Novel

by ALGIS BUDRYS

illustrated by Emsh

Red Bank, New Jersey

Dear Bob:

I've got one idea and two stories here. I thought you might like to see them both. Run them as variations on a theme, or something. The first is called "Thus, Conscience", and the second is "Moderator".

Basically, I think it's an interesting proposition: What's a vice? Where does something stop being a fondness and become a habit, and where does a habit become an obsession?

Let me know what you think, will you? So far, everyone seems to claim the point's too obscure.

Best,
Ayjay

THUS, CONSCIENCE

BILLY COWARD huddled desperately on a corner of his bed, holding his stomach tightly. Yellow-white under its light tan, his face was wet with small, clammy beads of cold perspiration. Breathing was very difficult, and his eyes were alternately screwed tightly shut or staring wide in terror.

He whimpered softly with each new cramp, and his feet, kicking spasmodically every time he doubled over, had

rucked the bedspread into a creased tangle.

Dimly, he heard his mother's footsteps coming upstairs, and he tried frantically to straighten out and pretend he was taking a nap. He assumed a rigid sort of exaggerated relaxation, his eyelids clamped tightly down, his lips set in the smile worn by all sleeping children in the magazine advertising pictures.

It didn't work. It never did, for some reason, but he could never understand why. His mother, stopping to look in, laughed gently in the doorway. "I *knew* it wasn't my good little boy who ate all the apples for our pie," she said. "My good little boy's fast asleep."

After that, he *couldn't* keep pretending any longer. He burst into mortified tears while his mother lifted him on her lap and softly smoothed the rumpled hair away from his cold forehead. "Sorry, son, but I'm afraid we're now going to have to do something about that green-apple bear in your stomach," she told him.

The concept of a green-apple bear, growling and running around in his stomach, was enough to take away most of the yughiness of having to down a spoonful of castor oil; but green-apple bears are most interesting

when considered as objective phenomena, and he never ate too many apples again.

BILL COWARD thought the top of his head just might come off. He gulped air in big mouthfuls, trying to clear his lungs. In a minute or two, he felt a little better, and took another cautious puff. It wasn't so bad, if you were careful not to inhale too much.

But for a long time after that first experiment, the least whiff of tobacco smell from even an unlighted cigaret was enough to turn his stomach over. Social pressure eventually taught him to inhale, and he became a pack-a-day man for a while; but a series of violent sore throats finally made him quit smoking after it was no longer so important to be one of the gang.

COWARD perched uneasily on the arm of a leather sofa in the frat house. "Sure, I'll grant you that, Spreckles," he said. "But you can't *prove* you exist after I've left the room." He punctuated the irrefutable statement with a brisk swallow from his beer can.

"Now, look—" Spreckles began.

Coward waved a hand. "Whoa! Look yourself. I've already admitted that's sheer sophistry. Or anyway, something like it. What I'm driving at is the fact that nobody can *prove* to himself that other people are as important as he is. It's something you have to take on faith." He glowered at the wall. "And I guess we both know what blind faith does to people." He finished the beer and punched two holes in the top of the next can.

"So what happens?" he demanded, taking a swallow during the rhetorical pause which followed. "Here's what happens: Your average man never *really* convinces himself he isn't somebody special—that he can't beat the odds that apply to everybody else. Accidents, sicknesses, statistical probab-

ilities just can't really happen to him. So he drives too fast; smokes too much; doesn't sleep enough; works too hard; plays too hard; gains too much weight, or—" He set the can down, burped quietly, and stood up. "—drinks too much. Excuse me a minute."

DR. WILLIAM COWARD bent a little closer to the graphs spread out on his desk, his pencil point suddenly stopped at the peak of a minor curve. His mouth went dry, and a jolt exploded out of his solar plexus and shot through his body with a force that tingled at his fingertips.

Forcing himself to work with slow care, he began checking back on the curve. Finally, he turned half-around in his chair. "Hank?"

Henry Steiner looked up from his own graphs. "Uh?"

"I think Ortega's screwy machine has finally come up with something. You been getting a correlation between the Chi curve and the manic period?"

Steiner's eyebrows went up. "Hadn't noticed. Who've you got?"

"Castillo. Three-day period. Three days he's on top of the world, and three days his Chi readings go up. Three days he's suicidal, and the Chi takes a nosedive."

"Huh!" Steiner looked down at his own experimental encephalograph readings. "I'm stuck with that screwball, Linez. He's got a period, but it's fouled up with so many sub-cycles that I haven't figured out what it really is, yet."

"Ought to be a good check, in that case. Take a look."

"Right."

Steiner went leafing back through the graphs on his desk, a quizzical frown gathering above the bridge of his nose while Coward waited. Finally, he picked up his telephone and called the record room.

"I'm getting the back files on Linez,"

he explained to Coward, whose knowledge of Spanish was shaky.

Finally, a messenger brought the files in, and Steiner signed for them and took the folders back to his desk. He sat down and began unfolding the graphs stapled into their jackets.

"Think you're getting somewhere?" Coward asked.

Steiner shook his head without looking up. "Don't want to say, yet."

After a half hour, during which Coward had considerable difficulty in concentrating on his own graphs, he looked up. "Got it, all right. Take a look." He spread the graphs out in consecutive order.

"These, over here, are the old readings taken with the usual kind of encephalograph. There's his manic curve, superimposed.

"Now; here: This is the first reading taken with Ortega's dingus. There's the Chi curve, showing up for the first time, but right where it should be. I'd say it'd always been there, but, of course, there's no proof with your old, low-detection readings. Still and all, it doesn't hurt our case any.

"Anyway, there's your Chi curve, following right along under the superimposed manic curve on the Ex. E. G. readings. One-to-one correlation. Up when the manic curve's up, down when it's down. No delay, no anticipation. Direct relationship, right up to date." He slapped the graph he'd originally been working on.

"Think we've got something, Bill?"

Coward nodded slowly. "Hard to say, working with a new gimmick and wading around in a snarl of brand-new curves nobody's ever picked up before. But this—" He stopped and grinned sheepishly at his friend. "You know, Hank," he said softly, "I wouldn't be a bit surprised if we didn't have the key to what makes guys behave exactly like the flabby gentleman who's currently kicking up the mess in the surrounding countryside."

THE PERSPIRING general said, "Gentlemen, we ask you, in the name of our people, for your help. You are here on an exchange basis with your government, we know. But your people also love freedom, and it is for freedom that my people fight. We, need doctors; we must have them, or our wounded will die for lack of attention."

Coward looked at Steiner. They exchanged a slow glance. Freedom was a good word—which was why everybody used it. But wounded men were also wounded men, everywhere.

"All right," Steiner said for both of them.

Captain Guillermo Coward huddled closer to the earth, his face in the rocky sand, while the mortar shells crumped down from overhead.

Behind him, he could hear his patients screaming in the tatters of the field hospital.

Another shell punched through the canvas and exploded inside. The roof bellied out in puckers as shrapnel came howling through. The holes it left began to ooze smoke as the roof sagged back, and Coward gritted his teeth at the sounds coming out. He tried once more to gather his legs and get back to the men inside, but the burst that had exploded behind his thighs had crippled him too well.

He turned his head to look at Steiner, and saw that his fellow ex-psychometrician was no longer crawling toward the hospital. He lay at the end of a swath of his own blood, his body oddly humped, as though he'd been making one last convulsive movement forward when his heart found nothing more to pump.

A casual dive-bomber rolled lazily in the sun, settled its nose on the perfect target of the cross on the hospital roof, and slid down an invisible track

in the sky. The bomb jumped away from its rack, and Coward shuddered as he clasped his hands over the back of his head and plastered himself against the bloody soil.

"Oh, Lord, *Lord!*" he screamed as the hospital exploded.

MOVING unrhythmically but competently on his artificial leg, William Coward surveyed the room. Finally, he nodded to the rental agent, pulled out his checkbook, and scribbled out three months' rent in advance.

He turned to Beck, the assistant he'd hired. "Well, we've got it, Howie. Let's get out of here and buy a drink to the Henry Steiner Memorial Research Center."

Beck grinned, fumbling with the top of a cigaret package "Good enough." He grimaced as the cellophane tore down the side and became a useless impediment that he had to throw away. "You know," he commented idly, "somebody ought to figure out a way to really open a pack of cigarets cleanly."

Coward grunted. "Somebody ought to figure out a way to make people stop smoking."

Beck raised an eyebrow, then shrugged.

ORTEGRA was dead in the bombed-out ruins of his clinic, and his encephalograph had gone with him, together with the filing cabinets that held the vital clues Coward needed.

They had to start from scratch. Coward searched through medical journals for Ortegra's old papers, and Beck's workbench became a welter of parts.

Finally, when it had become obvious that the obscure theories of a foreign experimenter had never penetrated the hash of conflicting schools and theories rampant in the rest of the world,

they gave up and did their work from the bottom up.

It was a year and a half before their first cranky slap-up job traced a genuine Chi curve on a graphing drum.

Coward looked down at the graph, his heart pounding. Finally he turned to Beck, his lips in a crooked smile.

"Well, Howie, now we've actually worked our way up to where we started from. Let's go out and buy a drink to Hank."

"Hell, let's go out and buy a raft of drinks," Beck answered.

"A drink," Coward repeated.

Beck shrugged.

"LOOK, HOWIE," Coward explained in the bar, "I don't think there's anything wrong with a drink; but there's plenty wrong with drinking. I don't think there's anything wrong with smoking; but three packs a day is something else again. I don't think there's anything wrong with standing up for what you believe is right. But there's something horribly wrong with war."

"Well, sure," Beck admitted, "but that's your human element, there. People don't seem to have a check-rein mechanism that lets them go just this far and no further."

"Not as a general rule, anyway," he added quickly, heading off Coward's obvious rejoinder that some people did. "Sure, I know. Some people can learn from experience. But very few people really get scared when their ticker bumps too hard a few times, or their wind cuts down to nothing. Sure, there's a momentary flash of panic, but as soon as they've had time to simmer down a little, they explain it away, and nothing gets done about it until next time."

"Exactly," Coward agreed. "People are inherently incapable of believing the rules really apply to them; unless, of course, they're inherently depressive—then, all the rules apply to them,

simultaneously, and they'd sooner slash their wrists than live in the horrible place the world's become. But, as a general rule, people never get the long, thorough, frightening experience, harmless in itself, that would lead them to realize that *some* of the statistics apply *all* the time, and that all the statistics apply *some* of the time."

Beck finished his drink, and started to order another one. Then he caught Coward's glance and let his hand fall back. He grinned philosophically and exhaled a plume of smoke with a low chuckle. "Guess you're right, Mr. Coward."

COWARD finished tightening the last bolt on the housing and stepped back from the generator. "Doesn't look like much, does it?" he remarked.

Beck shrugged. "Most shortwave sets don't, really, and that's all this thing is, except that it's built to fling out what you might call an unusual frequency."

He looked at Coward with a puzzled expression on his face. "Okay, so it's built, and it'll duplicate the Chi curve's signal. Now—who do you plan to try it on, and how long have I got to rig this thing so it's directional?"

Coward shook his head. "It doesn't have to be directional. It's fine the way it is."

Beck raised his eyebrows. "That's kind of experimenting on a wide scale, isn't it? And what's your control?"

Coward smiled. "The signal's going to be bouncing off the Heaviside Layer, isn't it? What's your estimate of where it'll hit the surface of the Earth?"

Beck, still puzzled, scratched his head. "Search me. Shortwave's tricky stuff. Ever heard of DX?"

Coward shook his head.

"Well," Beck said, "That's the trade name for getting a signal that's got no business being there. Say, like having a

receiver in Madagascar and pulling in some police transmitter in Hackensack. It happens all the time." He gave Coward a sudden look. "Say, you're not serious about really turning this rig on the way it is, are you?"

"Certainly."

"Now, look— Check me if I'm wrong, but we built Bessie, here, to put out a signal exactly like the kind of signal the human brain puts out to trace a Chi curve, right?"

"Exactly."

"And the Chi curve is exactly correlated to the manic curve, right?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, this thing's going to beef up the Chi radiations in the brain of every human being it hits. According to your theories, it'll beef up the manic curve, too."

"Precisely. And then," Coward amplified, "the affected people will become mildly manic—not too much, but enough to really convince them that they're a special kind of individual. Suddenly, there will be *no* check-reins at all. Those individuals will begin indulging their favorite vices to complete excess. Then, after two days, I'll turn the machine off.

"The results are easily imaginable. All over the world, people will become frightened and ashamed of the things they've done to themselves. There's your prolonged warning. I venture to say that the affected people will never again indulge in excess of any kind. And, if we're at all near being correct as to the number of affected individuals, they should be enough to form a large nucleus of sanity in this hysterical world."

"But you can't *do* that! Good God, man, this'll kill some people, and it'll cripple others for life!"

COWARD smiled bitterly. "There's nothing new about that, in human history. And as for not doing it, I re-

fer you to any newspaper to see whether or not I *must*."

Beck moved forward. "Look, Mac, I helped you build this thing, but I'm not going to let you get away with this shenanigan. There's other ways of stopping people from being damned fools."

"Name one that seems to be working," Coward shot back. "And I might as well tell you now that you'd have to kill me to stop me."

Beck stopped. "Yeah. I can see that. And you know damned well I couldn't do that, even if I am convinced you're wrong."

He turned away and began walking toward the door. "Two days, huh? And I suppose you're going to start right away?" He shrugged and smiled bitterly. "Well, as long as I'm able to be pursuing my favorite vices for that long, I guess I'd better hole up somewhere with a case of rye and a couple of cartons of cigarettes."

Coward nodded. "You'd better."

He turned the signal generator on. Something touched his brain. He went to the telephone and ordered new parts.

Working rapidly, stopping only long enough to eat, sleep, and pay the rent and power bills out of his various royalties, he had five others built before the year was over.

By 1942, gaining speed with practice, he had seventeen, and the lab was filled with the constant hum of their operation. Now, in 1956, the count is two-hundred-and-twelve, and still going strong.

New York City

Dear Ayjay:

I've only had time to read "Thus, Conscience" so far. I thought I'd give you my reaction before we go on.

As I gather it, the point of this story

is that the suppression of vice can itself become a vice. Well, that's all true, of course, but I don't know...

You know how editors are. I'd discount that "obscure" excuse you've been given for the story's not being bought, if I were you.

Tell you what, though—suppose I read the other story before I give you a definite No or Yes? I want to be fair.

How's your writing coming along?

Good luck,

Bob

MODERATOR

EMMETT DARBY sat tensely in his chair, listening to the babble of sound coming from the other men in the lounge. They were all querulous, all strained. Hoffman and Cleveland, in particular, were almost at each other's throats: "Is there *any* possibility we've been detected?"

"There's always a possibility, Hoffman. The chances are low. The station's radar-transparent and light-absorbent."

"That's all well and good, but we're not, and some of the equipment certainly isn't."

"That's doesn't show up much more than normal static; there's a good chance it'll be discounted."

"How do you know? Have you ever watched a terrestrial radar screen sweep for this station?"

"Oh, for Pete's sake, Hoffman, *quit bending my ear!* I refuse to get into this discussion again. Either I'm the electronic physicist here or I'm not. Either you accept my authority for my statements or you don't; but once and for all, *shut up!*"

"How dare you speak to me like that, Cleveland! How dare you!"

Emmett Darby felt his mouth dehydrating with tension.

Another man broke in: "Why don't

both of you go somewhere else? Some of us are trying to think, you know."

That was Borger, the assistant ballistics man. His thin finger marked the place in the pamphlet he had been reading.

"May I suggest," Lawson cut in coldly from behind him, "that it is not the place of department heads to defer to the petty annoyances of ordinary technicians? If you wish to read your tracts, I suggest you go elsewhere."

Darby's eyes twitched toward Lawson. He saw that the man was continuing his recent habit of shaving every twenty-four hours. Under circumstances in which water was strictly conserved, it was a sign of panic. Lawson did not wish to die ungroomed.

We're all a little mad, Darby thought. More than a little.

Borger pressed the pamphlet against his leg as though afraid Lawson would snatch it away. His jaws strained as he displayed the icy, obvious control that was more of an outburst than rage would have been. "Sir, I am not required to accept the insult of your materialistic philosophies. The ancient thinkers of the East were in possession of secrets lost to modern man—rejected, I might add, by crude Western Man in his egocentric belief that there is no answer but the machine-god he worships. The ancient philosophies of wise spiritual leaders have been scorned by us and our kind but it is obvious now that only among the doctrines of the ancients, uncontaminated by worldly crassness, can the answer to the world's agony be found—"

"Oh, dry up!" Cleveland snapped. "It wasn't pamphlets that blew up the other two stations, and it won't be pamphlets that save this one."

No, Darby thought. No, probably not. But something must be done, or this station is as good as inoperative now.

He stood up and walked across the lounge, not sure of what could be done.

but wanting a quiet place to sit and consider possibilities. He'd heard enough here.

"Well," Hoffmann said sarcastically. "The flea hops. And how are our little psychometrician's ears this morning? Full, I hope? Going to run and tattle to the Commander?"

DARBY TOOK a patient breath. He reminded himself again that the good psychologist does not become embroiled in personalities. He reminded himself that Hoffman was an obvious hostility-type, compensating for his own doubts by personally attacking anyone who might be in a position to confirm them. He reminded himself of these things, but, nevertheless...

"Doctor Hoffman," he said coldly, "My 'tattling,' as you describe it, is no more than the duty to which I was assigned here, and consists only of an advisory function to the Commander, and only when it is my opinion that the condition of station personnel morale has become serious."

That was not strictly true, of course, but it was the interpretation he placed on his position now that Doctor Costello was gone, along with Station Two. It seemed to him that it was the reasonable evaluation.

Cleveland interposed before Hoffman could reply. "Well then, *Doctor Darby*, what is your opinion on the state of our morale?"

Darby flushed. He didn't like Cleveland. The brawny, handsome physicist knew it, and now he was expressing his reciprocal contempt. The fact that Darby was not a doctor of psychology was actually irrelevant, of course. An M.S. in Psychometrics was perfectly adequate to assume the requisite duties in a case such as this. Nevertheless, Cleveland's attitude was irritating.

There was only one way to answer the man, and that was to pretend the question had been put seriously.

"It is my opinion," Darby said in

his most cutting voice, "that you are all undergoing an elementary psychological phenomenon. You knew when you volunteered for station duty that the stations would become prime targets in the event of hostilities. You knew intellectually that, in the event of a direct hit on the station, there was no hope of survival for any length of time, even in airsuits, and that the possibilities of rescue were negligible. But you knew it *only* intellectually. All human beings are egotists. Emotionally, you never for a moment doubted that you could escape the laws of probability. Data, gentlemen, is always something that applies to someone else.

"But now you have seen men die in situations identical with yours. You saw Station One exploded, and you saw Station Two riddled. You all heard the broadcasts from the men trapped there, while they slowly asphyxiated in their suits."

He turned to the door, opened the hatch, and turned back for a parting shot. "Now, gentlemen, you are no longer so sure you will not die; you are experiencing critical anxiety. I would say your morale was bad. Quite bad."

Having had his revenge on Cleveland, he stepped through the hatch.

"You're up here too, you know, Darb," Cleveland said. "How calm are you?"

Darby slammed the hatch, with a convulsed jerked of his arm.

IT WAS QUITE true that his hands were trembling. But his hands had always had a tendency to tremble. Hyperthyroidism.

Darby sat on the edge of his bunk in the dormitory, considering possibilities.

The station personnel had to be steadied down. Only if the station continued to function as a unit, sending its observations out to the repeater stations that relayed it down to the

ground, could the war be brought to a conclusion. Only if the war could be brought to a conclusion would the possibility be removed of the station's being located.

Psychology was the answer, of course, but the problem rested in applying it.

He reviewed what he knew of mass hysteria, but he had to admit to himself that his experience was small. As a thoughtful man, naturally, he could only be proud of knowing his exact limitations, and of searching for a solution within them.

Doctor Costello had been working on something...

Of course! The Chi curve. Operating Doctor Costello's special electroencephalograph, he had observed the phenomenon a number of times.

But he would be the first to admit that observing a line being traced on an E. E. G.'s graphing drum, even knowing what caused it, was not the same as being able to apply that knowledge. Still, it was something to think about.

Darby lay back on his bunk and smiled at the slight relief from his tension. It was at least a little progress. With thought, it might be more than that.

He continued to consider the possibility for several hours, making some very gratifying headway, and he grimaced with annoyance when the station intercom crackled and called him to the Commander's office. It was too soon. But the Commander was understandably busy, and Darby could not expect to name his own time when he requested an appointment. In any case, he had almost completely formulated his thinking, and he would doubtless have it shaped up by the time the conference was well under way.

THE COMMANDER said shortly, "Sit down, Darby," when he looked up from his desk. "I'll be with you in a minute."

"Yes, sir. Thank you." Darby drew

up a chair and sat down carefully. He noted that the Commander was suffering from a severe facial tic, that his eyes were engorged, and that the skin of his forehead was clouded by a film of nervous perspiration. Areas of wet darkness were visible wherever the sides of his blouse touched the walls of his chest. The papers in the Commander's hands were fluttering unsteadily.

"What is it, Darby?" the Commander asked after he'd sighed and dropped the papers with a hopeless gesture.

"It's about the personnel, Commander," Darby began. "I've observed definite traces of severe hysteria."

The Commander snorted shrilly. "You have, eh?"

Darby compressed his lips and wet them with the tip of his tongue. "Yes, sir. In my opinion, this station cannot continue to operate efficiently. The men are panicking rapidly. There was a series of arguments in the lounge earlier today. The very fact that so many men were in the lounge indicates an attempt to reject their duties and surrender their initiative."

The Commander opened a desk drawer, pulled out a pillbox, took two Thiamin capsules and a Dexedrine, and swallowed them with a short gulp from his waterbottle.

"If I may say so, sir, a little sleep and some hot food might—"

The Commander made the scornful, snorting noise again and slammed the drawer back into place.

Darby coughed uncomfortably. "I realize that the military situation is severely taxing," he said. "After all, the essence of psychoneurosis lies in the inability to take action when threatened with obvious danger. I have never heard of a more nearly classical example than a space station with its missiles expended and the enemy obviously tracking for it."

The Commander sucked in a breath

ground, could the war be brought to a conclusion. Only if the war could be brought to a conclusion would the past possibility be removed of the station's being located.

Darby kept his facial expression neutral. He realized the abnormal amount of caution and diplomacy which would be needed. "Well, sir, in the first place, I have a plan of therapy."

"That's nice."

"Yes, sir. Its essence lies in the fact that no anxiety, however well-founded, is ever quite justified by the cause. Once the human mind has surrendered to panic, it exaggerates the danger in an attempt to justify itself to what remains of the sense of responsibility. Just as the personnel here, while admittedly in a difficult position, have convinced themselves that the station will inevitably be discovered and destroyed. Actually, with our camouflage—which the other two stations, not being military in nature, did not possess—our chances might be described as fair. There is also the possibility that hostilities will cease shortly."

The Commander snorted again, his voice close to breaking. "Quit kidding yourself, Darby. We're occluding stars. And there is a considerable amount of radar-reflective material here, even if it isn't much in relation to our gross bulk. They'll find us."

Darby licked his lips again. "Yes, sir. But not before the war ends."

The Commander grimaced again, threw his chair back, and strode to the bulkhead. He snapped on the terrestrial screens.

"We're passing over the Western Hemisphere, Darby—take a look."

There were a considerable number of blinking lights and a large amount of ground smoke. Nevertheless...

"Yes, of course, Commander," Darby said. "Nevertheless, I'm sure that much effort cannot go on much longer."

"No, you're absolutely right," the Commander said in a level voice. "It can't. Then the infantry war starts."

DARBY hid his expression. Infantry combat was completely outmoded, as any well-read man knew. The Commander, of course, would tend to cling to his military axioms.

"Well, sir, in any case," he went on, "the efficiency of this station would be much improved in the hysteria were removed, would it not?"

The Commander snapped off the screens and sat down behind his desk again, supporting his head on his palms and looking down woodenly at the papers, which Darby had ascertained were figures on the available station food supply and oxygen reserve. "Yes," he said, "it certainly would."

Darby leaned forward. "Well, then Commander—permit me to sketch my idea. It is a method of eliminating the exaggeration which is panic."

The Commander raised his head. "Go on."

"Doctor Costello, in the research station, was engaged in electroencephalographic experiments, as you may know. He borrowed me to assist him on several occasions, inasmuch as I was the most qualified psychometrician available. Were you familiar with his work?"

The Commander shook his head.

"Doctor Costello," Darby went on carefully, "had discovered a new electrical radiation of the human brain, which we plotted as the Chi curve. He had first discovered it on Earth, while working with manic-depressive patients, and later requested, and was granted, the privilege of continuing his work at the research station where the background emissions of the Earth's population would not divert his extremely sensitive apparatus. He had, to put it as simply as possible, discovered a correlation between the Chi curve and the period of mania. He discovered

that the curve was high during periods of depression, and low during periods of mania."

Darby cautiously licked his lips. "The human brain, Commander, is a highly reflexive and instinctive organ. I am convinced that if it were to be stimulated with large amounts of electromagnetic energy at the Chi frequency, it would react by depressing the impulses which create mania. That is to say, if a panicked man were exposed to the Chi frequency, he would stop being panicked. Once that were accomplished, of course, it would be simple to set back the amount of radiation to a nominal level sufficient to maintain calm, but not enough to create depression." He smiled carefully. "The proverbial ounce of prevention."

THE COMMANDER'S tic was increasing. He looked at Darby through his bloodshot eyes. "How would you go about it?"

"I propose that Doctor Cleveland's staff construct a low-power signal generator set to the proper frequency, and that this generator be installed in the center of the station. I'm sure that would handle the problem."

The Commander managed to steady himself by putting his palms on the desk and taking a deep, trembling breath. He looked Darby squarely in the eye. "Will it work?"

"Yes, sir."

"How do you know?"

"Sir, I am a trained psychotherapist."

"I thought all you psychometrician fellows did was measure things and work with statistics."

"That is my specialty—yes, sir. But I took all the standard preliminary courses during my undergraduate period, and I have, of course, kept up with my reading."

The Commander sighed. "What happens if it doesn't work?"

"Then we've lost nothing, sir, and

the work involved will at least occupy Doctor Cleveland's section for some time, as well as contributing a little hope to the other departments."

That was, Darby thought, a nicely-put psychological point.

"You're sure that even if it does go wrong, it'll be harmless?"

"Yes, sir," Darby answered firmly.

The Commander sighed and looked at his shaking hands. He put his hand up to his twitching face. "All right," he said. "We'll try it." He pulled the desk drawer open again. "We probably have to."

Darby smiled with relief. The Commander had believed him.

DARBY WATCHED quietly while Cleveland supervised the last bit of work on the generator. He could not restrain a certain pulse of satisfaction in the hollows of his elbows, but, on the whole, he was quite calm.

The only remaining problem was to get Cleveland out of the compartment before the generator was turned on. Judging by his past actions, the man might very well become unbearably quarrelsome under the influence of the radiation.

Darby felt a surge of pride. He was proceeding in the highest ideals of the medical profession. He had a cure; he knew he had a cure, and he would demonstrate it, despite his knowledge that society—in this case, represented by the Commander—would violently object to its details if they were made known. Accordingly, he had *not* made its details known.

Convincing the Commander would have been a hopeless task if Darby had told the truth, and he'd known that all along. A man like the Commander lacked the necessary intellectual detachment to assimilate the facts. The Chi curve *aid* correspond to the manic period, yes; but he had inverted its nature when describing it to the Commander. The curve actually

rose with the manic period, and fell with the depressed.

What he was about to do was right; it could not fail to work. The instinctive psychologist in him was quite certain of that.

Cleveland turned away from the generator and disconnected his soldering iron. "Well, Darb? Let's get her fired up." A scowl crossed his face. "I'm warning you, though, if I feel anything going wrong, I'll break your neck."

Darby grimaced scornfully. He was about to order the man out of the compartment when the possibility of malfunction occurred to him. "Are you sure it'll do what it's supposed to?" he asked. "That is, will it broadcast the proper frequency?"

Cleveland's lips stretched in a furious snarl. "I designed it, didn't I?" he growled. Then his features relaxed and he mopped his face. "Sorry, Darb. You're no prize, but you don't deserve yelling at. Nerves."

Darby dismissed it with a wave of his hand. "Well, thank you very much, then. I'll wait until you're gone before I switch it on."

Cleveland's eyebrows went up, and he smiled. "You will, will you? If you don't mind, I'll stick around and see it operate. It's my baby."

Darby took a deep breath, but Cleveland answered it with a stubborn tilt of his jaw.

Very well, he'd put up with the man, and trust to opportunity to get the man out of the compartment later.

HE LOOKED at the generator and licked his lips. An hour's radiation ought to do it. The men in the station would have their panic boosted to the breaking point. Their present reactions to anxiety would be intensified to the point of unreason. Hoffman would probably claim to see interceptor missiles coming up at them. Borger would preach salvation in the corridors. Lawson would attempt to assert his

importance over the Commander's, and the Commander would flood his system with drugs. Cleveland would, of course, become completely muleheaded, but a clever psychologist could handle that.

When he cut off the generator in an hour, the shock would be tremendous. They would all see their idiocies, magnified to the point where the illogic of their fears became apparent. They would stop spreading disquiet through the station. Contrite, they would no longer spread an atmosphere of fear so strong that even the most reasonable man aboard began to doubt himself. Each of them would have his particular panic-reaction elevated to the status of an obsession, and only Darby, who had been able to think and act intelligently, would remain able to think and act.

"Cleveland," he said cleverly after an hour or so had passed, "It's working quite well, isn't it?"

Cleveland nodded happily. "Sure is! Best damned electronic physicist in the world, that's me!"

Darby listened. The shouts and screams in the corridors had begun to die down a little.

He looked at the switch, and once more found his hand jerking toward it.

A most annoying reflex. It would, of course, be folly to turn off the generator. He wondered, briefly, if there was such a thing as willful foolishness. That would bear investigation.

A thought struck him, and he looked quickly at the barricade of equipment piled in front of the hatch. "Is that holding, Cleveland?"

"Sure it is! Tight as a drum! Y'know something, Darb old boy? I don't think we need it any more! Way I figure it, the air in here's holding it shut! Simple, huh? No more pressure in the rest of the station, air in here holds it tight. Physics, my boy! Pure physics!"



Darby looked at the generator again. "Cleveland," he said cleverly again, "It's working so well, and it's only a little one. Let's build it bigger."

Red Bank, New Jersey

Dear Bob:
Well?

Best regards,
Ayjay

New York City

Dear Ayjay:

Sorry about the delay. I've had to think over my reply. "Moderator" seems to make the same point as the other story, with a somewhat grimmer note. Too, it goes more deeply into the psychological aspects of the idea. I can see that. I gather that the point you're trying to make is that suppressors of vice act out of fear: that they're so worried and uncertain of themselves that they feel a need to regulate everyone else in order to always know what the competition in the Game of Life is doing. And that this panic intensifies as their efforts are frustrated, until they finally cast aside all reasonableness and hammer away at their pet idea in an obsessed attempt to get it accepted despite public apathy.

I think you're probably right. But, let's face it; this isn't your best work. And, besides, I'm not sure it's a very exciting point.

What are you working on these days?

Best of Luck,
Bob

Two MSS, "Thus, Conscience" and "Moderator", encl.

Red Bank, New Jersey

Dear Bob:

Here's a story I'm *sure* you'll like. It's called "What Makes It Go?" It's about a man who invents a wonderful machine, but nobody will listen to him.

Bests,
Ayjay

PS: No, of course I'm not mad about you bouncing those other two. I guess I must have been a little under the influence at that Writers' Club meeting. Sorry. Send me the bill for your glasses, please.

Dear Ayjay:

What good is a friendship if it won't cover a little argument now and then? I'm not mad, either. I want you to believe that, because, regretfully, I've got to return "What Makes It Go?" I feel that the story of the frustrated man who can't get anybody to listen to him has been somewhat overdone in science fiction. Sorry, but you know how it is.

How come I haven't seen much of your stuff in the magazines lately?

Keep trying,
Bob

P.S. I see you typed this Ms. yourself. I guess that means your arm has healed. I'm very glad.

Red Bank, New Jersey

Dear Bob:

Yes, my arm has healed. Thanks for sending my story back with only four coffee-container rings on it. Here's "Nobody Wants Me", 10,000 words. I'd sell it to somebody who pays top

rates, but they all want extensive re-writes. I think it's fine as it stands.

Best,

A. J. Budrys

PS: Sorry my check for your glasses bounced. I'll make it good as soon as I get some money in.

Dear Mr. Budrys:

Enclosed please find your story, "Nobody Wants Me". Our editorial staff deliberated over this manuscript for some time, but I'm afraid our final decision was unfavorable. It was generally felt that there have been a number of stories about starving writers whose mss. have been rejected due to the machinations of concealed pressure-groups.

Sorry.

Your Friend,

Robert W. Lowndes

P.S. I'm sure that must be some other theme in science fiction that you might develop an interest in if you only tried.

Encl. List of Addresses, editorial offices of other science fiction magazines.

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

Enclosed please find "I Hate You", 80,000 wds. I have been working on this novel for over a year, and feel it is not only good as a story but is also startlingly realistic in its revelation of the incredible favoritism-ridden and basically obtuse commercial writing field. Because I know this story strikes to the heart of this field's corruption and unwillingness to accept new ideas, and will arouse the retaliatory action of certain Persons, I have moved to a new address I would rather not divulge. When you purchase this gripping story, please insert the word "Moolah" in the 'Personals' column of *The New York Times*, and I shall arrange to have the check relayed to me.

As ever,

A. J. Budrys



SO HELP ME!

This may sound like the grossest of exaggeration, but persons with experience will assure you that it isn't. Alas — we fear too many stories labelled "science fiction" have been written in just such a manner; and perhaps you have read some of them. We can only hope that you didn't read them in our pages, and that you never will!

by QUIEN SABE?

THESE PEOPLE who think a science-fiction writer goes into a kind of extra-sensory trance at his typewriter, and plays it like a piano for a few hours, and Lo there is a nice story—they give me a pain in the neck.

It's the fault of the writers; they never tell what really goes on. Maybe one or two are geniuses but the rest are all liars, because I've seen many a one dry his tears on my rug, and I know how it is myself when I'm writing a story; and I say they'd be ashamed to tell a tenth part of their gruesome wrestlings and squirmings in the act of alleged creation. So right now—in the interests of truth, but especially because I'm black and blue and sore and punch-drunk—I'm going to give an actual blow-by-blow description of what goes on *really* in this peculiar and harrowing and I might say sordid profession of twisting sensible words to make them sing a song of silly science to the tune of a penny or so per.

Here's the kind of thing that happened in the last story I wrote. Just the front end, and just as my rheumatic typewriter turned it out. So help me, I'm gonna tell the truth! I don't give a cockeyed damn! Any strong language

you meet is only history; I am an imperfect man.

I decide to aim the next yarn at *Outlandish Stories*. It will have to be only medium wild—one of the three usual plots and a little twist at the end. I think I'll make it No. 1. Earth about to be blown up, and it lies in the hands of one Earthman to prevent it. Maybe the unspeakable Aliens have taken human form, and infiltrated our civilization, and are about to take over. Or maybe the Things, etc. I sure know that plot! The only trouble is the twist in the tail—that comes hard; you gotta kind of encourage your unconscious mind for it, hope and wait.

Well, off and on I hope and wait two weeks, but nothing happens except that my roll goes down to three thin bucks and I get the jitters. So to hell with it, I say; I'll do it the hard way—write one sentence, then another, then another, not knowing what's coming next. And if I don't know what's coming the reader won't, either, and I get suspense automatically. All right. It's 11:30 P.M. I blow some of the cigaret ash and hair out of the typewriter, loosen up its joints a little, and begin.

The Eyes of the Alien

The blustery wind whipped off the ice

cap of Mars, tore through the forest of dry oogloo trees and with fingees of ice tried to unzip Chet Hollard's bulky covee-suit and leave him a sprawling carcass, frozen and eteenally stiff and alone on a dark and alien world, lost to all memory of Earth, and free forevee from the disturbing eyes of the mysteeious girl who had sent him forth on his wild eeeand.

Something wrong with this. Kind of too much all at once. Is it blustry on Mars? Don't know the science of it—not that it matters any. Why the devil did I put in about unzipping? Silly. Wind might open buttons, but would take peculiar wind to pull a zipper. What in the devil's the errand? I'll start farther back; new sheet of paper; nothing like a satisfactory start, then one can go ahead confidently. I'll try to go evenly, too, so that when I write the letters *er*, the *r* type bar doesn't come up too quick and knock the falling *e* bar back up again, making the *er* turn out *ee*. This typewriter needs a shot of cortisone.

Chet opened the door of the Martian dive and ducked in, bringing a blast of icy air from the Martian ice cap with him.

That's it, make it a dive; anything can happen in a dive. Look at that—dive and duck—di-ving duck—hell with it—skip it. But the name Chet, I dunno; it's awfully short. Maybe I'd better use a longer one, like Johnny, then if I use it a hundred times that'll be an extra four bits coming in. No, forty cents. No, to hell with the forty cents. Or no—don't be a fool. I go on—

A dozen pairs of Martian eyes turned malevolently on him—all the eyes in the room but one pair, the green eyes of a beautiful girl, a girl of Earth. Hee eyes found and held on his eyes like a pair of mysteeious magnets.

Seems like a lot of pairs of eyes. What in the devil is a "mysterious"

magnet? I xxx out the "mysterious" and feel better. Now, what next? Who the hell is Johnny, anyway, and who's the beautiful girl? I can't imagine.

I GET OUT from under the rickety card table and walk up and down. These damn details! If it wasn't for them writing would be almost pleasant, almost. Logic, logic—let's do this neat and clean by logic. Put myself in the reader's place. Which has greater suspense—to see hero duped and led on by beautiful girl, enemy, or see hero suspect her even though he does fall for her—until the end, when she comes through all pure and right? Who's Johnny? What the hell is the girl doing there? This opening starts off too strong, anyway—and look at all those pairs of eyes. Have to start over. Shucks. All right, a mild opening with fewer eyes.

Johnny pushed through the door of the Martian dive and ran smack into Martia.

Now how did that word smack get in! Stumbled into? Bumped into? Lousy. Almost collided with it? I've got it—

Johnny pushed through the door of the Martian dive and who did he see but Martia?

I wonder if you use a question mark.

"Why Johnny," she smiled.

There I've done it. How the hell can anybody *smile* words! You can speak words, shout words, exclaim words, but you can't smile words. Let other writers do it; I won't. It's tough in some ways to be a stylist. I know I lose money by it, but good writing's good writing, and I have my conscience. I xxx out "smiled".

"Why Johnny!" she said smiling.

Now what? I rest awhile, then take

Sandra sat down on the edge of the Martian canal and pulled off hee stocking.

No. Much better when one's mind's clear—

Sandra sat down on the edge of the Martian canal and rolled the stocking down off from one shapely leg.

O.K., let's go.

She was tired from hee day's work, going about the Martian dives in hee blue Salvation Army uniform, dispensing smiles and cheee and little tracts from hee regulation leatheoid shouldee bag.

Now how the hell did I come to do this! Still, I'll bet it's never been done before. Different, that's me. Always original. I'll bet the Salvation Army *will* be on Mars some day. And I'll bet, too, that's the only true prediction any SF writer's ever gonna make! I suspect maybe this SA idea's no good, but can't exactly put finger on why. Think I'll go ahead, anyway; if necessary I can always make her a spy, to catch the guys about to invade and take over Earth.

But it was not fatigue that made hee tired, it was strain. She could not get out of hee mind the memory of that strange alien man. Why had he looked at hee like that? His eyes weee dark mysteeious magnets; they seemed to have caught hee in a spell, compelling...compelling...

Always liked those dots—you don't have to finish out the sentence so it makes sense. Now what? Can't think. Take off all clothes. Rest. Get up and walk. Walk long time. Rest. Think of Eve; walk; stub toe on shoe; see need new pair of shoes; see only two inches of gin left; wonder how good my eye is—if that really is two inches; measure; pretty good, two and an eighth inches—about, well, eight small snorts; take one; walk; look out window at fat man going to bed; get good idea

and dive at typewriter; idea evaporates, but it was something pretty good if I could only remember it.

THAT'S THE main trouble with me—I can't type fast enough, except the damned *er*'s. I'm just full of ideas, but after I fight out one sentence, the rest go glimmering. I'll have to practice typing, plain typing. There's a guy I used to know, writes five or ten thousand words at a sitting. Never gets up on a short. Makes a noise like a lawn mower. That's what I could do if I got real speed on the keys. Let's see: I'll practice typing two hours every day, one hour morning and one evening. Then I'll keep a strict routine, writing two thousand words a day for five days a week—not too much at the start—and I'll sell maybe half and that's fifty bucks a week. On that I can always have clothes, pay rent, see Eve, go where I please, even eat regular. And get a haircut. I'll start tomorrow morning.

Feel pretty good about this. Very sleepy, so take a little snort to make me sleep and go to bed.

Up 2 P. M. Very fuzzy. Find last stale doughnut and make coffee. Hell of a breakfast. Remember something made me feel good before going to sleep—oh yes, resolution. Seems far away. No momentum to the idea now, but of course I'll go through with it. Notice typewriter at same time see the sun's out. To hell with work—night's the time for a writer. Pity the poor office barstads. Bad luck—landlord catches me on the steps, and he's pretty mad. I ought to have a locker at the courts; it don't do my blood pressure good to get caught sneaking out with a tennis racket. Up to the courts, play, home, nap.

Up 9 P. M. Read to eleven, rest, then gradually sit down at typewriter. Practice a few minutes. Thing makes a hell of a noise; expect guy next door to get mad and knock on wall. He doesn't,

so have to start in. Read last start. Looks all right, but somehow I don't seem to feel it, and I haven't the faintest notion what comes next. Suddenly struck by a swell opening for a dianetics engram story.

Drop by drop the blood dripped into the beautiful girl's veins from the containee slung above. Drop by drop the peeveeted blood with its awful directive dripped into hee innocent veins, so innocent theeetofore of all evil, so unaware of the awful, vicious thing that was being peepetrated in that silent, secret laboratory. Blood, blood, drop by drop, carrying its irresistible impulse, the impulse that was to doom Earth and its three billion unsuspecting inhabitants...

"You're sure it will work?" asked the alien creature.

"It will work," said the evil-eyed scientist who looked like an elephant. "Each red corpuscle, each white corpuscle, each platelet, carries the message of doom. Six quarts, and myriads of corpuscles. You saw what I did with that Earthman before I took out his blood. My instructions went not only to each cell of his body, but to each corpuscle of his blood. 'I hate Carruthees, head of Earth's FBI. I hate him fieecely. I wish I could kill him. If I got into his presence with a raygun I would shoot him. I am going to shoot him, like the dog he is. I feel an irresistible compulsion to shoot him. I love the Martians. When he is dead thee will be a few hours of disorganization, then the beloved Martians will strike. Earth hasn't a chance.'—You heard it. I'm putting one pint into each of twelve beautiful girls."

"But won't that message, that compulsion, carried by the corpuscles, war with the compulsions carried by all the othee cells in each girl's body? She might just get confused, or go insane."

"No engrams have evee been engramed engraved so deeply on living cells as my engrams," said the evil-eyed elephant scientist. "They will be all-dominant. I have the secret. I alone have the secret. One single drop of that blood would compel hee to my will."

You could of cut the silence with a knife. In that silence the fateful blood kept dripping down into the vein. In that silence the future of all Earth was being deteemined.

Now this isn't too bad, in a way. Of course it's frightfully silly, all this stuff about each cell remembering everything ever said, done, heard, felt, smelt, etc., in its presence. How can a

cell smell? And what if the words were in Chinese! Phooey! Well, the dear Readers like it; who am I to be sensible! I get a little sad. I'm alone, among so many. Peculiar detached mood. Examine critically what I've written. See at once I've got two "innocents" together; change the first to "violated," making it "...into the violated veins, so innocent theretofore of all evil..." Nuts—what kind of a word is "theretofore" in a place like that! I change it to "up till then." Notice the phrase "You could of cut the silence..." Jumping Jupiter, how did I come to write "could of cut"—a stylist like me! It just goes to show what fighting the mechanics of typing will do; I certainly don't think that way. I need that practice in typing.

NO TIME like the present. I start practicing, touch, on the same sheet of paper. Go very slow at first, trying to keep the *er*'s from turning out *ee*'s. Continue faster and faster for ten minutes. Make a hell of a lot of errors. Knock at door. Bill enters with his gal Dotty, and another chick—young, good-looker. Talk. Told other chick, Peg, has just hit town from the sticks; going to find a job and stay.

Bill, to Peg: You're looking at the man who's writing the Great American Novel. (I quick stick the damned practice sheet under the box of paper.)

Peg: How exciting! It must be thrilling to be a writer and think of all those things! (She looks around at decrepit furniture and cracked walls.) What a romantic place you have! Just like what I've heard—genius in an attic! Or a basement. What does it matter!

Me, easily: It's not much of a place, but I'm sure my surroundings are quite immaterial to me.

Peg: Of course they are!

Bill: What's that you're reading—Joyce? I thought you couldn't stand him.

Me: I can't, really. Pathetic example of a good mind stultified by a misguided attempt to achieve an impossible realism. Third rate. But I look into him once in a while. The irritation stimulates.

—And so on, talk and talk, about Art, Letters, Life, etc. Looks like Peg'll be dropping in to see me again in a few days. It's hell to be broke and have to take a passive role. Eventually they leave, but before they do I take Bill aside and borrow five bucks.

Very quiet and lonely in my place now. I look at typewriter and feel strong emotion. Damn, damn this being broke! I've got to get this story out! Got to! Got to! Sit down at typewriter. Now where was I? See page covered with practice and mistakes. Oh nuts! Pull it out, crumple, throw across room. Start another.

The rocket ship loweed slowly with correcting blasts from the side vents. Artyx, looking upward, said, "That's an old job, I think. PV-39601A. Must be from a Class IV culture. Probably some kind of insect inside."

Count my money. The five bucks must go to hold off the landlord; that leaves two dollars twenty-one. Jeeze, I thought I had nearer to two fifty! I've gotta get this story out! The thing's going very slow; can't decide what Salvation Nell's got to do with the canal, with the dive, with Johnny, with the wild errand, or maybe the rocket ship, and with the dark magnetic eyes of the alien stranger—and how can anything like an evil-eyed scientist like an elephant operate in a secret laboratory, anyway? Silly. Stuck. I think of what one SF editor said—right out in print—ha! —that the great value of SF is or should be that it gives the scientists advanced ideas to work on! Jeepers! So I'm letting science down!

THAT THOUGHT really gets me, but after a while I calm down some.

I take a snort. Walk up and down. Lie down and rest. Get up and peel off clothes. No, that second opening started all right; I'd begun to get into it. All I've gotta do is fix it up and plug away. Maybe I'd better just go ahead full blast, not bothering with small lapses, then correct for style later when I have the comfortable feeling of a complete draft behind me. I do this for full page. It stinks. I feel kinda weak. Jeeze, jeeze, hell! I take a rest, then drag myself to typewriter again. If I can only get a start! Speed! I'll start again, and won't go back any more to fix the *er's* and xxx out—too distracting. I write better, anyway, when I don't think.

The blustery wind whipped off the ice-cap of Mars, tore through the forest of dry oogloo trees and with fingees of ice tried to unzip Chet Hollard's bulky covee-suit.

Doggedly he kept going forward, foot aftee foot step aftee step one leg aftee the othee against the bitter biting wind.

Damn those *er's*.

Crunch, crunch sounded his footprints in the frozen carbon dioxide frozen snow just snow carbon dioxide on the frozen ground, making a kind of rhythm,

I remember a job I had once. Fifty smackers a week. Fifty smackers every Friday—and I didn't kill myself working, either.

The rhythm seemed to be a kind of music, a lonely chant, and the words of the chant weee those of the girl, Sandra, whom he so surprisingly had met and talked to in the Martian dive only an hour before. Sandra of the Salvation Army.

There couldn't possibly be a Salvation Army lass named anything but Mary.

Mary of the Salvation Army—Mary from Earth—Mary, a ray of sunshine in that foul den, dispensing smiles and cheee and little tracts from hee regula-

tion leatheoid shouldee bag. What won-deeful violet eyes she had!

Needs a shot of cortisone. So do I.

But that was at first. They had sat down and talked. She had told him about hee work. It was while they weee talking that he first noticed that among all the forty pairs of hostile eyes in the room theee was another pair on an alien from an alien in an alien another pair, an alien strangee's, sitting a little apart. The eyes held on hee like glittee-ing magnets.

Oh damn those *er's*! —I go too fast after the *e's* and too slow after every-thing else!

Subtly Martia had seemed to become aware of the compelling eyes. She turned and met them for a long mo-ment. She shiveeed and turned back. "I saw that man yesteeday," Martia Sandra said. "He was the same one. It was late afternoon and I was tired from being on my feet all day and I sat down by the bank of the canal and was slip-ping down my stockings from my shape-ly was taking off my stockings because I just wanted to wiggle my toes in the watee a little—and theee he stood look-ing at me, from my toes up up up, and it was wrong of him to look at me like that. I was sorry for him. I slipped my stockings back on and got up, wanting to speak and give him a tract I fortun-ately had one with me, but then he was gone. I was sorry for him."

This is awful.

"You keep away from him, sistee," Johnny had said. "He doesn't mean you any good."

She was looking at the alien strangee again. She said, "Theee's something about his eyes that are compelling... I feel he needs me."

"No more than any othee woman," had been his reply, tough.

"I must go ovee to him," Sandra had said. "It's my duty. Deep undeeneath I know he's a good man. Deep unde-neath, eveey man is a good man."

OH, THIS is awful! Still I've read worse. There's no doubt she'll have to turn out to be a spy.

Then, ovee Chet's protests, she had gone ovee to the strangee. For some time he had watched them conveese, while he

felt greatly troubled. The alien stran-gee seemed to be hypnotizing hee. His eyes weee mysteeious magnets...

That was an hour ago. Chet had had to leave, for he was late. The pump-ing station had broken down, and they weee waiting for him to come repair the pump...

Chet Johnny crunched onward, face to that icy blast, worried. He felt that that alien strangee was not an ordin-ary man. Theee was something about his magnetic eyes.

Seems to me I always run heavy on eyes.

I should have stayed with hee, he kept telling himself.

The icy biast tore at his zippee and he felt an icy blast of air down his body. The zippee was open. He jeeked at it. It stuck! Panic surged through him. He saw himself a sprawling carcass, frozen and eteenally stiff and alone on that dark and alien world, lost to all memory of Earth and gone from sight forevee from the disturbing green blue violet eyes of that brave little girl in blue.

Got that in. Hate to waste copy.

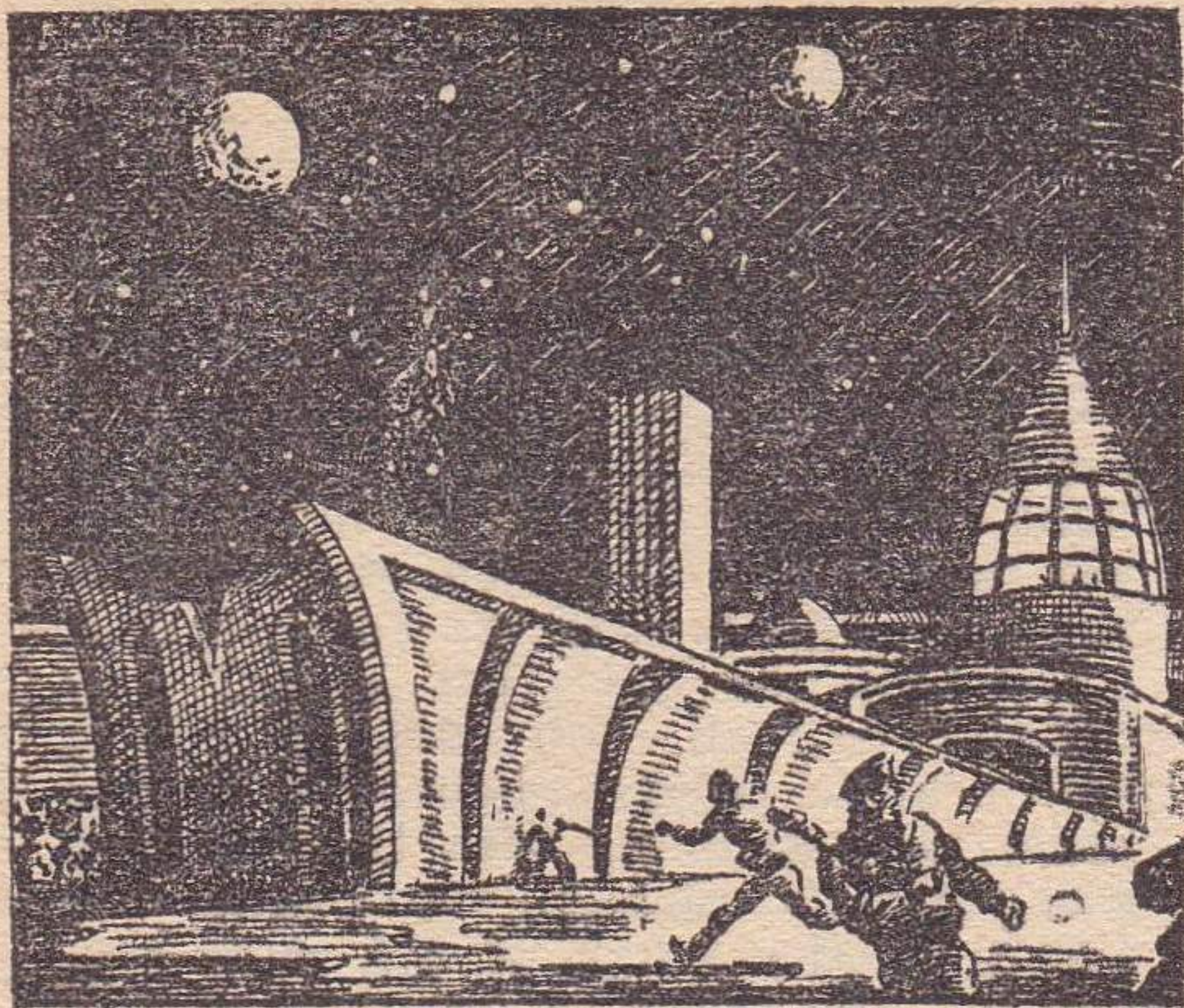
Chill took him. He staggeeed. Musn't go down, he kept thinking—fatal—mustn't go down—be the end—

I've got it—

But then he did go down. His hands numbed rapidly in the blanket of carbon dioxide frozen carbon dioxide snow colorless green algae of the northeen icecap. For a little longee he crawled blindly forward, but his movements slowed...slowed...they had almost ceased when his outstretched hand arm fingees hand touched some-thing. He cracked open his eyes. It was a door! It looked familiar. He strained to see. It was the Martian dive! He had made a full circle and re-turned! He was safe! With the last dregs of his strength he pushed open the door and crawled through.

Johnny He lay panting thawing motion-less on the floor, panting a little, while slowly, evee so slowly, the warmth crept back into his congealed limbs. Directed toward him from all sides he saw the hostile eyes of the Martians. Not one of them made a move to help him.

Slowly Chet lay theee, warming. When he was able to he crawled his way to a chair and pulled himself up to a seat on it. Slowly he looked around. Sandra no Mary was gone, and



so as the alien strangee with the magnetic eyes. It seemed to him that his blind circle had been fated. Sandra had called him back. She must have needed him. Dumbly he wondeeed if he had returned too late. Too late for what? Surely the girl was still theee. In the back? He panted no just waited, welcoming the slowly returning warmth, slowly suddenly resolving in his mind that when he had recoveeed a little more he would take the place apart and find hee.

Seems to me things always happen suddenly or slowly.

Suddenly, as if they had read his mind, two grotesque Martians got up, crept up behind him, and conked him on the head with a bottle two bottles with a two-handed Martian urglin. Chet saw a milion stars, and that was all he did see for a long time...

Now I'm rolling!

Sandra Mary was theee, even as he had figured feared. Theee was a secret laboratory in back of the dive. In that laboratory a momentous thing was happening.

A beautiful girl in blue lay on an operating table—Martia no damn it Mary. She was unconscious. Drop by drop a lot a stream of blood dripped into hee veins from a great containee slung up on high above. Drop by drop peeveeted blood with an awful directive dripped into hee innocent veins, so innocent into

Where's that other page?

hee theetefore inviolate into hee innocent into hee up to then of all that was

evil, so unaware of the awful, vicious thing that was being peepetrated in that silent laboratory. Blood, blood, drop by drop, carrying its irresistible impulse, the impulse that was to doom Earth and its three billion unsuspecting inhabitants...

Fifty bucks every Friday.

"You're sure it will work?" asked the alien strangee.

"It will work," crowed the evil-eyed scientist who looked like an elephant. "Each red corpuscle, each white corpuscle, each platelet carries the message.

I've got it!!!

Hee own blood is running off through that tube. This new blood is the blood I took from the empty Earthmen in the slop pail in the box in the casket oveee theee. You saw what I did to the Earthman before I took out his blood. My instructions, amplified by that apparatus oveee theee, went not only into each cell of his body but into each living corpuscle of his blood. Six quarts, he had. Myriads of corpuscles. Each with its message.

Follow me, scientists!

The message is irresistibly compelling. 'I hate FBI men. I hate all FBI men fieecely. I wish they weee all dead. I wish I could kill them all myself. I am going to shoot down each one with a raygun, like the dogs they are. I feel an irresistible and proper impulse to kill all FBI men. I love the Martians. When many FBI dogs are shot down theee will be a peeiod of confusion, then the beloved Martians will strike. Earth hasn't a chance.'

Fifty smackers.

"But won't our message, our compulsion, carried by the corpuscles, war with the engrams carried by all the othee cells of the girl's body? She might just get confused, or go insane,"

"No engrams have evee been engramed engraved so deeply on living cells as my engraves engrams," said the evil-eyed elephant scientist. They will be all-dominant. You saw my apparatus oveee theee. I have the secret. I alone have the secret. One single drop of that blood would compel hee to my will. Earth will become a Class IV culture. The insects will take ovee."

BUT WHY did the elephant bother with the empty Earthman in the

off my shoes and hat to be comfortable, then read what I've done. Look at that, I've got Martian and Martia. How do I always get to trip myself in such things! Dive and duck, Martia and Martians! I change Martia to Sandra, then put in new page. Wonder—should I keep Martia, and lay story on planet of distant universe wanting to take over our universe? Bigger the units, bigger the thrill—think they. Phooey! Wonder if anybody's ever used the cosmos. I could do it. It would be a natural. Phooey some more! Keep Mars. Good old Mars. Anything can happen on Mars. Most everything's already happened on Mars.

Johnny pushed through the door of the Martian dive and who did he see but his old girl friend Sandra?

That question mark looks kind of funny.

"Why Johnny," she began with a smile—and then hee face paled.

Hit it, boy—

In the mirror by his side, reflected from the back room, she saw an alien stranger, and his eyes weee holding on hee eyes like dark, mysterious magnets.

There, got *both* openings in. Now what next? Belt pinches, so take off pants and shirt. Funny, it's all right to work with your shirt off, and all right to work with your shirt and pants off, but to work with your pants off and your shirt on—that seems ridiculous. Pity the poor barstads who have to work in an office. No pants off when it's hot—just sit there in a puddle and smile when the boss smiles. Nothing like being a writer: office in your hat. Work wherever you are. All in your head. Florida in winter, Maine in summer. No ties. Absolutely independent.

NOW, WHERE was I? Read carefully what I've written. Seems to

me the thing keeps getting worse. For one thing, combined openings spoil the mood. "Johnny pushed through the door of the Martian dive and who did he see"—that's fresh and cheerful—and then I ring in the alien magnet. And what the hell did a stylist go and write "who" for? —it should be "whom." I change it. I still don't like it—where's this thing going, the *Atlantic Monthly*? I change it back. I sit and look dyspeptic at whole thing. The trouble is, I've got ideals. Or, you might say, a good sense of smell. Suddenly get sore and also feel sleepy. They get good idea. Something a little sexy—that'll hold 'em better.

Sandra sat down on the edge of the Martian canal and pulled off hee stocking.

Not sexy enough. How does a girl pull off her stocking, anyway? It's been so long since I've seen it, I've forgotten. I've gotta notice these details more; they're stock in trade. I wonder how Eve is. It's hell not to have a phone; but no money, no phone, and no phone, no Eve on the other end. Solution: I've got to get this story out. I've got to! I've *got* to! Very sleepy now, but tomorrow I'll take a good whack at it. Take a snort of gin to make me sleep and go to bed.

Get up in fog at 1 P.M. Three cups of coffee and one stale doughnut. Hell of a breakfast. Rest a while. Notice typewriter. Not awake yet, so reach for Joyce's "Ulysses." Two hours later gradually sit down at typewriter, read what I've done so far, notice it's beautiful day and remember the lovely effect of afternoon sunlight across a cement tennis court. To hell with work. Tonight. Night's the time a guy can think. Pity the poor office barstads. Out, play, home, eat, and nap, very tired. Eight P. M. up, groggy; have coffee, read "Ulysses." Ten to eleven—gradually sit down at typewriter. Read what I've written.

first place? He could just have worked right on the girl, without giving her the other's blood... But it's not important. Nobody every notices these things.

"Seems to me she don't need "Seems to me she doesn't need "It seems to me, sir, my esteemed Doctor, that this great dose is going wasted. If, as you say, only one drop would do the job."
"Ah, that's the beautiful thing!" exclaimed the elephant the evil-eyed elephant the monstee summoned from who knows wheee in the univeese to do that awful deed. "That is what you call I think the gimmick.

Onward, scientists!!

Why do you think I am being paid so much money! This girl will become

sick. The Martian Government will see to it she's shipped back to the Salvation Army Hospital on Earth. When she recovees she will give blood to the Hospital blood bank. That blood will go into othee membees of the Salvation Army. They too will give blood. Their blood will reach the U.S. Armed Forces and many civilians. Chain effect! Large sections of the population will quickly begin to hate the FBI men and will kill them on sight! Earth is doomed! Destroyed by the Salvation Army!"
Silence returned. You could of cut it with a knife. In that silence the fateful blood kept dripping into the innocent into Martia's veins. In that silence the future of the Earth of the solar system of the univeese was being de-teemined...

So help me!



Wonderfulness

(Continued From
Page 25)

built his Ark ("The Second Deluge", most recently published in *Fantastic Novels*, July 1948); when August Korf set out to rescue Nataalka ("The Shot Into Infinity" by Otto Willi Gail, *Science Wonder Quarterly*, Fall, 1929); when Number 774 came to Earth ("Old Faithful", by Raymond Z. Galun, *Astounding Stories*, December 1934).

And we can include Noel Loomis' "City of Glass", wherein Groff Conklin could see nothing new, despite ingenuity here and there, could see the absence of characterization and smoothness of writing—but could not see the wonderfulness that inspired various readers of the pocket size edition we issued last year to write us, and tell us that it was "wonderful to read a science fiction story where people are helping people, instead of finding usual morbid and sordid concentration on sadism, defeat, destruction, and hopelessness." (Our printers have no semi-quote marks; the quotation marks above enclose a paraphrase and summary of several letters and comments.)

The feeling of wonderfulness did not necessarily require happy endings or complete triumph over all obstacles; but it *did* present protagonists as heroes in that they grappled with the fantastic catastrophes that arose from dangerous inventions, or the invaders of Earth, or the perils of space, time, and dimension, etc. They were essentially ordinary men, sometimes idealized, to the point of ridiculousness; outside of his mighty brain—reinforced by the super-science of Norlamin, etc.—Richard Seaton was so common as to be prosaic. As dull a superman as you'd want to meet, if you wanted to meet supermen. But for all that,

the "Skylark" stories had the feeling of wonderfulness about them. Whatever else the admittedly cardboard characters of this era in science fiction were, they were not victims of a world and universe that was just too much with them and for them.

At one time, it was fashionable to sneer at science fiction as being "escape" literature, and it is true that the perhaps simple-minded optimism of science fictionists persisted far into the period when cause for such optimism in the world around us was diminishing day by day. However, there's little grounds for such a complaint now. I leave it to psychologists to determine if literature which projects all the ills of reality into the future, magnifying them onto the cosmic canvas—as modern science fiction has done—can rightly be called "escape" literature.

It's fairly easy, of course, to recognize what is wrong and to say that what science fiction needs most of all now—since writing technique has improved considerably, etc.—is the nearly-absent feeling of wonderfulness. The question is, are there writers today who have that personal feeling of wonderfulness without which the needed element cannot be present in their writing? Are there editors today who can read or re-read the oldtime stories and *feel* a valuable quality therein, (for all the crudeness of style, plot, characterization etc.) which is not to be found in the mechanically superior stories they have been publishing?

It's something like the problem the mice faced when they realized that the solution was to put a bell on the cat.



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1. You must correctly identify "Quien Sabe", author of the article, "So Help Me", in this issue, and answer the other questions listed above.
2. Give as many additional facts about "Quien Sabe's" science fiction career as you can.
3. Only one guess as to "Quien Sabe's" identity is permitted to each entrant.
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5. Where other merits are judged equal, the entry with the earliest postmark will be preferred.
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7. Any individual may compete except employees of COLUMBIA PUBLICATIONS, Inc., and their immediate families, and past and present representatives of, or members of the immediate family of, the person designated above as "Quien Sabe".
8. Address entries to PRIZE CONTEST, SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY, Columbia Publications, Inc., 241 Church Street, New York 13, New York.
9. All entries become the property of COLUMBIA PUBLICATIONS, Inc., and none will be returned.
10. CONTEST CLOSING JANUARY 10, 1956. All entries must be postmarked no later than midnight, January 10, 1956.

READIN' AND WRITHIN'

Book Reviews

by DAMON KNIGHT



A WAY HOME, by Theodore Sturgeon; edited and introduced by Groff Conklin. Funk and Wagnalls, \$3.50.

This handsome book, expensively printed and bound (but set in a pale & squashed-looking type-face), offers a mixed bag of Sturgeon's stories—the best and worst, from 1946 to the present.

Sturgeon hasn't always had his big voice under the control he showed in "More Than Human" and "Saucer of Loneliness." He's been practicing, trying this and that; and along with the pure tones a lot of sad squawks have come out. (When a really good voice goes just a little off key, it's a hard thing to take.)

Three of these 11 stories were written at the top of Sturgeon's form. "Hurricane Trio," from *Galaxy*, is a heart-wrenching exposure of the pain three human beings can cause each other, merely by loving. It is padded and blunted by some nonsense about an alien spaceship, which you can forget—it's in no way essential to the story—but grade A, all the same.

"Thunder and Roses," from the 1947 *Astounding*, is Sturgeon's big, painful answer to the question, "Suppose our country were murdered by nuclear weapons—but to strike back would be to destroy all humanity?" In spite of frequent outbreaks of preciousness, and a conspicuously bad poem embedded in the story, this treatment is honest, anguished and unforgettable.

"A Way Home," from *Amazing*, is, I suppose, an allegory: the fearful joys of growing up, packed into the story of one day-dreaming kid running away from home.

The rest range from delightful things like "The Huckle Is a Happy Beast," "Tiny and the Monster," and "Mewhu's Jet"—only half a step down on the Sturgeon scale—through a series of increasingly distressing pot-boilers—"Unite and Conquer," "Special Aptitude," "Minority Report," and "Bulkhead"—to one total failure, a shapeless thing that reads like an unkind parody: "...And My Fear Is Great...."

Part of the trouble with these lies in the excesses of Sturgeon's self-conscious style; most of it is due to a serious, and widening, gap between the things Sturgeon is interested in, and the things he has to write about in order to sell.

This ambivalence was evident as far back as the early 40's, when Sturgeon's conventional, gadgetty plots began to be buried deeper and deeper under layers of human character. His people grew bigger and solidier, and took up more room; but the plots stayed small. Like clay sculptures built up on inadequate armatures, these stories fall apart of their own weight.

For those who think they see an easy answer to the problem, here's a thought: Sturgeon *has* tried writing straight people-stories, without any fantasy in them at all. Two of them wound up in this book: but both were first published in science-fantasy magazines. "Hurricane Trio" evidently failed to sell in its original, stronger form; Sturgeon had to dilute it with space-opera to save it. "A Way Home" is not even remotely science fiction or fantasy: it saw print, undiluted, in *Amazing Stories*, only God and Howard Browne know why.

This is laughable on the face of it, but it happens to be true: Cramped and constricted as it is, the science fiction field is one of the best of the very few paying markets for a serious short-story writer. The quality magazines publish a negligible quantity of fiction; the slick short story is as polished and as interchangeable as a lukewarm-water faucet; the pulps are nearly gone; the little magazines pay only in prestige. There are no easy answers.

NOT THIS August, by C.M. Kornbluth. Doubleday, \$2.95. If we make use of the word "unusual" for small prodigies—like unsuccessful Wyndham novels and poor Sturgeon collections—what can we say of a Kornbluth book which echoes, even by inadvertence, the plot of a Jerry Sohl epic?

The parallels are obvious, and we may as well admit them at once: in "Not This August," the U.S. has been conquered and occupied by Communist armies; the people are starved and oppressed; the active part of the plot concerns the hero's efforts to make contact with the underground opposition: and the solution, in this book as in Mr. Sohl's, involves a spaceship built in a secret cavern by the Good Guys.

Of these points, (1) is obvious fictional material and would have had to come from somewhere; remember the glee of "Yellow Peril" stories—about an America conquered by the Chinese or Japanese—that ended just before WW II? Item (2) is equally obvious; any other extrapolation would have been extremely odd as well as unsaleable; (3) is a stock novelistic device which I hope has not outlived its usefulness, and (4) is a Hollywood idiocy.

Kornbluth's treatment of all these things, even the ship-in-a-cavern, is roughly 1,000 times more intelligent, factual, detailed and convincing than Sohl's. The author's remarkable talent for producing the inside dope or a reasonable facsimile on anything at all, from dairy farming to Red Army methods, is here evidenced on nearly every page. Heaven forbid this story should ever become actuality; but if it did, the chances are, no fictional forecast would be more accurate (up to chapter 15) than this.

Further, the book is tightly constructed and continuously readable: it has several vivid characters, a lot of equally vivid dialogue and action, and the same taut, hard-boiled excitement that made Kornbluth's "Takeoff" so successful.

I hate to say "but," and if it were any lesser writer, I wouldn't. *But* this book is satisfactory, even in a limited way, only until you compare it with the same author's short stories.

This novel is written almost entirely in Kornbluth's extensive Working Stiff and Slob vocabularies, acquired (evidently) in an effort to reduce the gap between that odd fish, the writer, and the rest of humanity.

Like everything else Kornbluth does, the effort has been thorough: Kornbluth has the words; but he hasn't got the tune.

No working stiff, nor slob either, he has had deliberately to suppress the sensitive, cynical, philosophical, irreverent top slice of his mind in order to counterfeit the tribal conventions of the boobs around him. The result is craftsmanlike, well polished, and rings hollow as a tin dollar.

Happily, nothing I write is likely to inhibit the sale of "Not This August," which has already rolled up a tidy income as an abbreviated serial in the Canadian magazine *McLean's*. I hope Kornbluth will take the money and write a whole-headed book.

TWO RECENT anthologies on similar themes deserve your attention: "Terror In the Modern Vein," edited by Donald A. Wollheim (Hanover, \$3.95); and "Galaxy of Ghouls," edited by Judith Merrill (Lion, 35¢). Wollheim's, his best since the long-ago "Portable Novels of Science Fiction," offers a surprisingly literate introduction and three Grade-A stories: Robert Heinlein's often reprinted "They," A. E. Coppard's "Gone Away"—as mystically moving as his more familiar "Adam and Eve and Pinch Me"—and a little-known masterpiece by Venard McLaughlin, "The Silence." The rest of the volume is far too unselective; poor stories by Beaumont, Sheckley, Fisher and Bloch weigh it down—beyond the lifting power of interesting, flawed work by Wells, Leiber, Bradbury, Michel & Lowndes, and others. Miss Merrill's book, on the other hand, re-establishes her place as science fiction's most critical and penetrating anthologist: here are eight first-rate stories (headed up, to my taste, by Fredric Brown's "Blood," "The Wheel-barrow Boy" by Richard Parker, "Triflin' Man," by Walter M. Miller Jr., and Arthur Porges' "Mop-Up"); seven B's, and only one stinker.

Bargain hunters will be as interested as I was to learn (belatedly) of Britain's Science Fiction Book Club. Subscriptions to U.S. readers are \$4.50 a year: for this, you get six books (with the option of skipping one) in small, sturdy, uniform British bindings. Most of the club's books so far have already been published here; three that haven't, though, are John Carnell's all-British anthology, "No Place Like Earth," F. G. Rayer's preposterous time-opera, "Tomorrow Sometimes Comes," and Andrew Marvell's excellent—and startlingly different—1938 superman story, "Minimum Man." For more details, write to Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd., 1 Tavistock Chambers, Bloomsbury Way, London W.C.1, England.

Ray Bradbury's "Switch On the Night" (Pantheon, \$2.50) is for rich, slightly addled parents and fanatical Bradbury collectors only. Boldly and ingeniously illustrated by Madeleine Gekiere, this thin volume is intended to soothe your child's fear of the dark. A more likely result, it seems to me, is

that Bradbury's spectral images will scare the daylights out of the poor tyke.

Basil Davenport's "Inquiry Into Science Fiction" (Longmans Green, \$2.50)—another tiny and overpriced book—is an amiable, erudite, rather charming and necessarily superficial survey of the field, its origins, history and prospects. Probably no one who had any acquaintance with science fiction will find anything to surprise him here: the essay would have done very well in *Harper's* or the *Atlantic*, but why Longmans chose to publish it as a book, I can't imagine.

Among recent paperback reprints the most notable is William Sloane's "To Walk the Night" (Dell, 25¢). After 18 years it's still a fascinating piece of work; Sloane keeps jabbing you awake with little touches of absolutely right description; his management of character and mood are beyond reproach: and yet nobody, not even Basil Davenport in his excellent introduction, seems to have noticed that the novel is phony science fiction. The hints that Selena

is from the moon are pure window-dressing, as awkward and artificial as the chrome knobs pulp artist used to put on six-shooters. Selena is obviously a witch and a revenant; if you read the story that way, disregarding false clues, it becomes, for the first time, all of one piece. The book has been tinkered with, in a crude and unnecessary attempt to bring it up to date.

"The Exploration of the Moon" (Harper, \$2.50) tells the now-familiar story handsomely in Arthur C. Clarke's prose and R. A. Smith's startlingly effective paintings. The book would be worth having for these alone: like the best of Bonestell, they give you the momentary heart-stopping illusion that you're there—on the mountains of the Moon, or 200 miles up with an instrument-carrying rocket. It's a pity that only the jacket painting could have been reproduced in color, but even in black-and-gray, the rest are magnificent.



A. E. VAN VOGT'S

"SLAN"

A Book Review in Verse

by Randall Garrett



(Note: These parodies are perpetrated in the spirit of good fun, and no offense to either author or story is intended. In all cases, the author has seen the parody, and has approved, between gusts of laughter.)

Our tale begins with Jommy Cross,
A slan lad lad who's pursued
By Petty, Secret Service boss,
A fellow mean and shrewd.
It seems, you see, that any slan
Is somewhat of a superman,
So humans have pronounced a ban,
Which starts an awful feud.

Young Jommy, who's a telepath,
Escapes and meets old Gran,
Who feeds him, makes him take a bath,
And then begins to plan.
She hates to live in filth & grime,
She don't like starving all the time,
And so she plans a life of crime,
For which she needs a slan.

The scene now shifts some miles away,
Where, in a palace grand,
A plot is laid to murder Gray,
The ruler of the land.
The plot is foiled by sweet Kathleen,
A female slan, the heroine,
Whose telepathic mind has seen
How Gray's demise was planned.

With Katie's aid, the entire gang
Is mopped up, neat and clean.
Says Gray: "You done that with a
bang,
So bend an ear, Kathleen.
The law says all slans must be shot,
And that puts you upon the spot.
But since you helped me foil that plot,

I could not be so mean."

Meanwhile, young Cross, against his will,
Has started stealing, which
Has helped Gran fill the coffers till
The two of them are rich.
Unknown to Granny, Jommy's found,
In some place hidden underground,
A gun his father left around,
Concealed there in a niche.

One day, while thinking of his woes,
He bumps into a pair
Of older slans, to whom he shows
The tendrils in his hair.
There are two types of slan, we find:
The tendriless and tendrilled kind.
(The former can not read your mind.)
Well, these two don't play fair.

They chase him! Jommy runs like hell!
He hears them call him "Snake"!
He says: "They don't like tendrils—
well,
That's more than I can take!
Although I'm in an awful mess,
Since them two slans is tendriless,
If I escape, they'll see, I guess,
They made a bad mistake!"

Without delay, he gets away,
And starts in making plans
To search until he finds, some day,
The true, or tendrilled slans.
For this he needs a spaceship, so,
Since he knows just the place to go,
He quickly packs up all his dough,
And also most of Gran's.

The slans (*sans* tendrils) have a lair,
And Jommy knows they've got
A hot-rod spaceship hidden there;
He sneaks off to the spot.
And, giving all the guards the slip,
He climbs into the rocket ship,
Sits down, and gives the switch a flip,
And takes off like a shot.

The slans' gigantic superships
Are cruising all around.
Says Cross: "I'll hide from all these
drips,
Where I can not be found.
They think they got me on the run?
Well, brother, watch me have some
fun!"
He turns on Pappy's atom gun,
And dives into the ground.

The spaceship's now well hidden, so
He says: "I'll never rest
Until I find true slans. I'll go
And do my very best."
He knows, no matter where they are,
They can't have gone so very far,
And so he builds a supercar
And starts out on his quest.

Now let's get back to sweet Kathleen.
She's doublecrossed by Gray.
She's told, in manner quite serene,
That on that very day
She must become the mistress of
A gentleman she doesn't love.
"Oh, hell," says Kate, "I guess I'll
shove!"
And quickly runs away.

She's chased by Petty. (You know
him—
The Secret Service boss.)
She flees into a cavern dim,
All full of dust and moss.
Now, to an author, nothing beats
All these coincidental feats.
So, whom do you suppose she meets?
You guessed it—Jommy Cross.

So, down the cavern halls they walk.
"Gee, this is great!" says he.
(Of course, instead of normal talk,
They use telepathy.)
She says: "I ran from Petty, but
He'll never find me here, the mutt!"
And Jommy Cross, the stupid nut,
Says, "Yes, dear; I agree."

He really pulls a boner then;
A stunt I can't condone.

He leaves her. Petty and his men
Find Katie all alone.
So Petty shoots her through the head;
He fills her noggin full of lead,
And sweet Kathleen falls over dead.
She doesn't even groan.

Poor Jommy slams his auto door
And drives away in tears.
Of course, he gets away once more.
We now skip seven years.
The slans are up to their old tricks;
They raid his hideout in the sticks.
Poor Jommy's in an awful fix;
In trouble to his ears.

With rays, they blast his hideout, and
He runs out into space.
Although they have the upper hand,
They're led a merry chase.
I hardly think I need to say
That, once again, he gets away.
He does it twenty times a day;
By now, it's commonplace.

He goes to Mars because he thinks
True slans are hidden there.
He soon finds *that* idea stinks;
They aren't there anywhere.
"A most disgusting state," says he.
"The only place that they can be

Is highly dangerous to me.
I wonder if I dare?"

So, back on Earth, he sneaks into
The offices of Gray.
He's caught, and Gray says: "This
won't do;
I fear you'll have to pay."
For Gray, it seems, is not a man;
Instead, we find that *he's* a slan!
Says Gray: "I do not think you can
Expect to get away."

Then Jommy shrugs and says: "Pooh
pooh!"
And gives his head a toss.
Gray grins and shouts: "Hooray for
you!
You must be Jommy Cross!
My daughter, Kathleen Layton Gray,
Is somehow still alive today!"
Poor Jommy nearly faints away,
He's thrown for such a loss.

The story's ended at this spot.
I trust you get the gist;
This is a Dickens of a plot—
The point can not be missed.
The story of a little boy
Pursued by all the *hoi polloi*.
And so, van Vogt, we note with joy,
Gives us a brand new Twist.

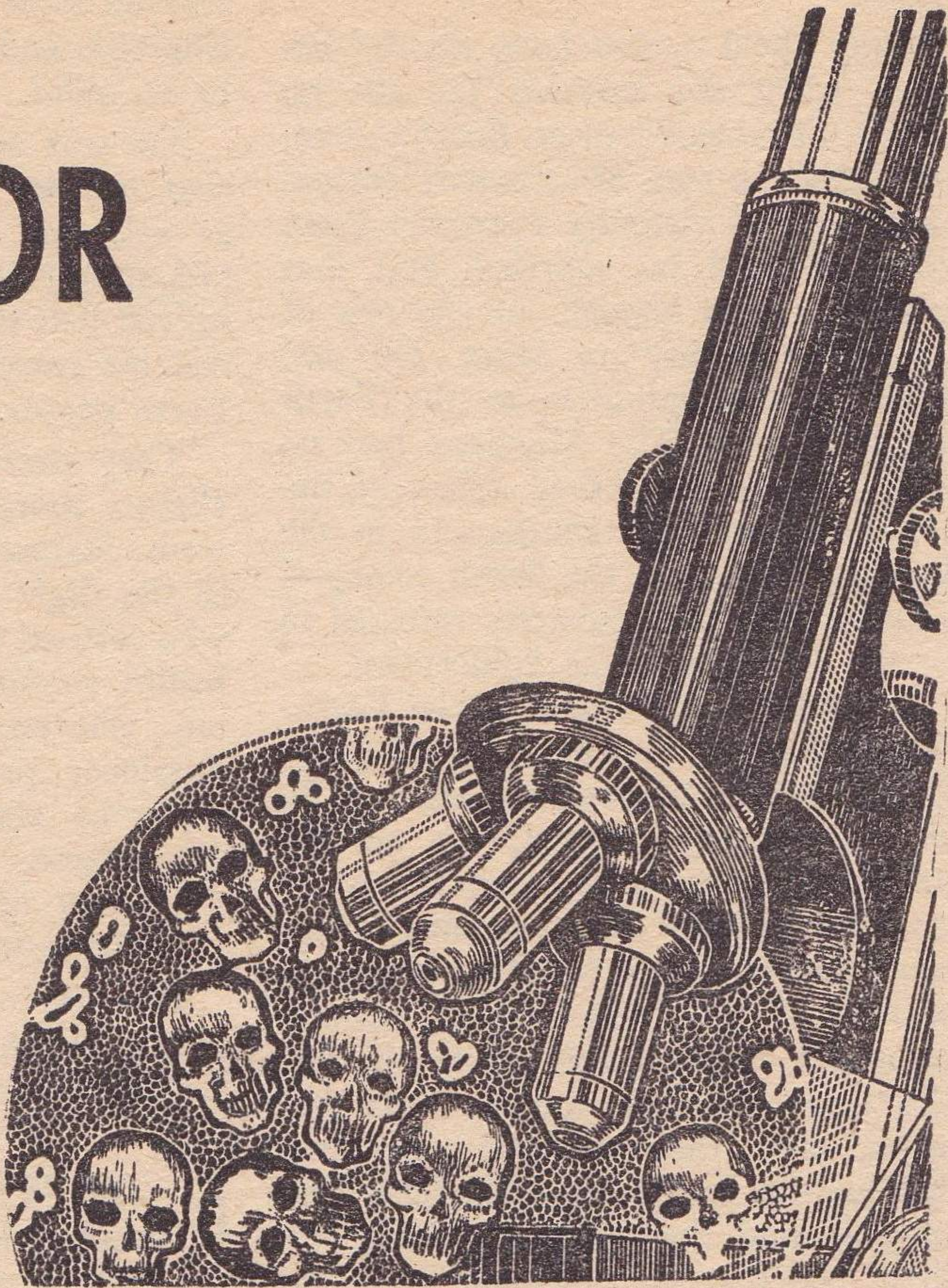
WRITERS CONFERENCE PLANNED

Note: Damon Knight, Judith Merrill and James Blish are making tentative plans for a science fiction writers' conference to be held next summer in Milford, Pa. Milford is a small resort town about 90 miles from New York. Dates, prices, etc., have not been settled, and reservations are not wanted now. What is wanted, if you are interested, is a letter telling something about yourself — experience, training, stories sold (if any), and so on. Later progress reports on the conference will go out directly to qualified people who write now. Address: Damon Knight, P. O. Box 164, Milford, Pike Co., Pa.

Reformers should bear in mind that
water wears down a great stone, not
by striking hard but often!

HONOR

by
**Richard
Wilson**



WE ALL KNOW the story of Serum M; once, the news was full of it almost exclusively. We know how Serum M rebuilds the tired cells—the ones that used to break down at the end of sixty or seventy years—and gives them the vitality to carry on for another score of years or more.

How many more we don't yet know. The life insurance companies probably will be the first to get the answer. Serum M has become a matter of hard dollars to them, and the lights are burning late in Hartford as their actuaries try to work the new longevity into proper relationship with their rate scales.

But very few people knew until Dr. Holsinger made his famous speech at the Nobel dinner what the "M" in Serum M stood for.

This is the way it was.

THE RESEARCH was done in a spare room of a weatherbeaten old house near the spaceport on Mars. The house belonged to a man named Jac. Jac Mrlo or Mlro—one of those Martian names that no one knows how to pronounce. He's since become known as Jac Marlowe, or as one conservative newspaper decided it had to be, Mr. John Marlowe. But on Mars he was known as Jac; he lived in the house

with his wife, Ellen, who'd come from Earth.

I say she'd "come from Earth" because when she married Jac she no longer was considered an Earthwoman. Her father, a man of otherwise normal qualities, had virtually disowned Ellen when she and Jac married, and that was more than enough for the rest of the Earth colony on Mars. Jac and Ellen became outcasts—to the Earth people that is. The Martians had no such prejudices and they welcomed the newlyweds to their community in the Martian section of the Earth colony—a community unfortunately referred to by the Earthpeople as Spidertown.

It made no difference to the Earthpeople that Jac was a respected member of his own community. He was, in fact, a research chemist, but no one outside Spidertown had ever taken the trouble to find out anything more about him than the fact that he was a Martian—one of those short, skinny, big-nosed, hairless and nearly chinless Martians. The Earthpeople were job snobs, too; they naturally assumed that Jac was one of those Martians who hung around the spaceport doing the dirty jobs that no Earthman could be hired to do. There are all kinds, in any land.

Like most of the early colonists anywhere, the Earthpeople on Mars presumed a superiority that did not entirely exist and dismissed the ancient culture of Mars as possibly interesting anthropologically—but undoubtedly of a low, almost savage, order.

That is why, when Jac Mrlo—not yet Mr. John Marlowe—ran his last test and was reasonably sure he'd got the serum to behave the way he wanted it to, he became discouraged. The excitement of the hunt had ended. While it lasted it had been exhilarating; but now that it was over and he had the prize it was no more than the tail of a dead fox.

He explained it that way to Ellen,

because, to please her, he had been reading some books of hers about old England, and the metaphor came first to his mind.

She was enthusiastic. But he knew that was her way, and her wifely duty as well, and he discounted it. But she talked and cajoled; and eventually he agreed that they should take his serum and his carefully-written paper to the Earth people.

They decided that there would be slightly more chance of success if she went, instead of he. So she went off to the flight surgeon at the spaceport, who refused to see her, and then to the health commissioner of the Earth colony, who was frostily polite. The commissioner pretended to listen to her while he signed letters and initialed memoranda, and pleaded that he had too many official reports to read to take the time to read her husband's.

She was ushered out into the cold bright sunshine within five minutes, fighting to keep back the tears.

ELLEN WENT next to her father. It was his day off from his job at the spaceport's weather station and he was glad to see her, in a regretful sort of way. But he let none of his happiness show and offered her tea, as he would any caller. He avoided all references to Jac and asked only after Pug, who was the dog she had taken with her when she left his home for Jac's. He didn't even mention the fact that she could see again after years of blindness because it had been Jac who restored her sight, in some queer Martian way that he didn't care to know about.

She returned to Jac, defeated.

"What else did you expect?" he asked, his deepset eyes bitter in his hairless head. "We're outcasts, Ellen. I've always been one and you became one when you married me; it's something you've got to face, that's all."

"It's not fair," she said. "It's not fair."

"Of course it isn't fair," he said. "But that's the way it is, and you've got to learn to live with it."

"I won't," she said defiantly. "I'll live with you, but not *it*. They're fools, all of them, and they've got to learn."

"They'll never learn; that's the way they are. They only care about themselves, and what they can do. I knew that before you went. There's no use crying about their stupidity. I'll pour the serum into the sand, and burn the paper, and that will be the end of it."

"No!" she said. "You can't do that; at least use it for your own people."

"That would be like bringing sand to Mars," he said with a little smile. "Or, as in your books, coals to Newcastle. Our people have no need of a longevity serum. It's built into us; we outlive your kind three times over."

"Then you must give it to me," Ellen said.

"I would love to," Jac said, "if I were sure of it. But I'm not. There is nothing so frightening to me as the thought that I might lose you. And the next most frightening thought is that you must die, by the nature of things, so many dozens of years before I do, even though I am already so much older than you."

"Then give it to me," she said again.

"No. I am as sure as I can be of my figures, my experiments with the Earth rodents—in my head. But I am not sure in my heart—and as long as you are in my heart I cannot do it."

"Then you must have it tested somehow," she said. "Otherwise I will think you don't care to have me with you for the rest of your life."

"You know that isn't true," he protested.

"Then you must prove it to me. I am a woman and I would die jealous of your next wife if I were old and senile while you were still in your prime. I am jealous now, in fact."

SHE ASSUMED a quite serious expression.

"You must not be," he said, alarmed. "You have no reason to be. It is not logical—"

"*Women* are not logical," she said. "Maybe Martian women are, but Earthwomen aren't. So you've got to have your serum tested so you can give it to me. I shall nag you until you do."

"But how?" he asked. "Who would test it? You've been to everyone."

"Only here on Mars. I've talked to a very small—and narrow-minded—segment of a very small colony. The big men are on Earth. You must send it to—who is the leading geriatrician on Earth?"

"Dr. Holsinger, of course. Of Pan-Europe."

"He's the one. Send your serum and your paper to him."

"He doesn't know me," Jac protested. "I'm nobody. What's worse, I'm a Martian nobody."

"You are *not*!" said Ellen; you're my husband. You pack the serum for space flight. I'll write the letter to Dr. Holsinger."

BUT DR. HOLSINGER didn't reply.

As the months went by, Ellen became more and more furious, but Jac made excuses for his fellow scientist across the spacelanes on Earth.

"He's a terribly busy man," said Jac, "and a very important man. He must get hundreds of crank letters; you can't expect him to investigate all of them."

"I didn't write him a crank letter," Ellen said. "And no crank could have developed that serum you sent him."

"These things take time, even so," he said. "We must be patient."

They tried to be, for many more months.

Then, in one of the scientific journals Jac subscribed to, he read a disturbing paragraph. It was about a

longevity injection the Klausens Institute was testing. That was Dr. Holsinger's institute. But nowhere was there any mention of Dr. Holsinger; certainly there was none of Jac.

"They've stolen it!" Ellen cried when she saw the paragraph.

"Nonsense," said Jac. "Many times different people have arrived at the same discovery by different methods."

"But not at the same institute!" she said. "That's stretching coincidence too far."

"We mustn't jump to conclusions," he cautioned, but his voice sounded hollow, and it was obvious that Ellen had already jumped.

The next news of the serum came not in a scientific journal but in the Earthcast.

They had tuned to the daily link with Earth and the staticky voice from the other world made a medical item the first on the news program.

"Dr. Ulrich Holsinger, the noted Pan-European scientist, today announced a new miracle drug which may banish the problem of old age," the voice said. "That is the gist of a report made public at the internationally known Klausens Institute. Dr. Holsinger's report was phrased in careful medical terms and he referred in it only to the patients who have been under treatment for the past sixteen months—but it seems clear that from the results in these cases the lifespan can be extended as much as a quarter century without loss of vigor of mental alertness. In other words, Dr. Holsinger seems to have licked the problem of senility in the same blow that has postponed death from old age..."

They listened, tense and bitter. Not once did the newscaster imply that the discovery was anyone's but Dr. Holsinger's.

When the far-off voice came to a transition that began "Meanwhile, on the political front," Ellen switched it off.

"Maybe," she said with a feeble laugh that trembled like the tears in her eyes, "when they've finished giving your serum to all the rich Earth people, they'll let us *buy* some of it."

LATER, JAC, behind his kindly-ugly face, tried to pretend that he didn't care. The main thing, he said in an over-casual voice, was that Earth had the serum; where it came from wasn't important.

Ellen told him quite frankly that he was a big liar; and she was equally frank in admitting that *she* cared a great deal, personally. She didn't want to become a senile old crone until one day people mistook her husband for her son or her grandson.

Jac tried to laugh her out of it, reminding her that she was barely more than a teenager, but she refused to be consoled. It was more than just that, of course. It was the knowledge that once again the Martian's supposed inferiority had been thrown in his face. Earth would not admit that Mars could produce anything the Master Planet could not develop infinitely better. And Earth apparently had no compunctions about stealing from a Martian to perpetuate that myth. Even so respected a figure as Dr. Holsinger was tainted with Earth's intolerance and ruthlessness.

"I'm glad I left them," she said. "I don't want to be identified with a people like that."

They tried not to listen to later reports of the success with which the drug—it had now become known as Serum M—was being applied. But they could no more not listen than if it had been a child of theirs who had run away to find his fortune at the other side of space.

Finally the drug was taken out of the laboratory and given the pharmaceutical houses to mass produce. In its refined state it was rare and expensive to extract, and there were international

debates about who should be the first to benefit from it—after the old people, who had been the human guinea pigs during its tests.

Some argued that the great statesmen of the world, many of whom already had outlived a normal lifespan, should be first; others thought the philosophers and scholars deserved it more. The philosophers themselves, replying to a survey by a news service, said the artistic geniuses of the world should benefit first—the painters, writers, poets and composers.

WHILE THE question was still being discussed, the Nobel prizes were announced the Dr. Holsinger was chosen to receive the award for medicine. He said he would give his views about who should benefit, at the time he made his acceptance speech later in the year at Oslo.

Ellen was furious. "The Nobel prize!" she cried. "They're going to give the Nobel prize to Holsinger for stealing your serum!"

But Jac by now was past anger. He merely smiled ruefully and wrinkled his big nose at her. "They are children," he said as if he had thought it all out. "Greedy children. Let them have their toys."

"You sound as if you'd given up," she said. "You mustn't do that. It just makes it easier for them. You've got to fight for your rights or they'll go on taking advantage of you—of us."

"I don't have time to fight just now," he said; "I'm too busy with something else."

It was true. He was off at the worktable in the corner, figuring something on a big sheet of paper, and it was likely that he'd soon be out in the lab, boiling things and pouring things into other things and watching things wiggle under a microscope. Anger is short; research is long, and infinitely more satisfying.

ELLEN WAS drawn uncontrollably to the receiver for the Earthcast of the Nobel acceptance speeches. It was a special cast, carrying the ceremony in full, and Ellen resolved to sit through the whole thing. It was as if she thought her indignation and scorn would be communicated back across space to shame the Earthmen as they spoke.

Jac pretended uninterest and there was the hissing of a gas burner and an occasional clatter of glass from the lab during the preliminaries to the ceremony. But as Dr. Holsinger was introduced, Jac drifted in; he sat his thin body down next to Ellen and his bony hand took hers.

Dr. Holsinger acknowledged the applause with a brief Thank you. Then he departed from the tradition of the acceptance speeches and told a little story.

To most of his listeners, the story must have sounded strangely out of place. Dr. Holsinger talked about an ancestor of his, about a witch doctor in Africa and about a colleague he had never seen.

"A little more than a hundred years ago," he said, "a member of my family practised medicine in a city called Berlin. He was a good doctor, and at one time he had the respect of his patients and his colleagues and his community. But little by little this respect fell away. It was not because he had become a bad doctor or a poor one. He had not changed—the others had. You see, my ancestor was a Jew. And a hundred years ago, there was a great prejudice in the land..."

As Dr. Holsinger went on, the two people sitting by the receiver hundreds of thousands of miles away on another planet began to suspect that he might be talking to them. Ellen felt a prickling at the back of her scalp but sat very still for fear that if she moved, or even took a deep breath, something might happen to divert the speaker's

train of thought and keep him from reaching the conclusion she was so desperately willing him to reach.

JAC GRIPPED Ellen's hand very hard. But she dared not turn her head to look at him.

"Ten years ago," Dr. Holsinger went on, "a brilliant man went to London and studied medicine. Then, from medicine, he went into psychiatry. But then, instead of returning home, he set up practise in England. He was, as I said, a brilliant man—but he also was black. He was a Bantu from Africa, and his father had the misfortune to be a medicine man in his tribe. And so the whispering began up and down Harley Street and eventually it ruined my psychiatrist friend. Who among the mentally disturbed would risk the gibes of his friends by going for treatment to a man the whispers said was a witch doctor? The Bantu went home in shame and I lost track of him. Perhaps he did become a witch doctor among those who respect the name. Whatever he did, psychiatry lost a great mind.

"Prejudice, my friends, is a fiendish, abominable thing..."

Ellen looked at Jac. "Oh, he is," she said. "He must be going to, now."

"...two years ago," Dr. Holsinger was saying. "The parcel came from a far-off place and it was preceded by a letter. I studied the contents of both of them most carefully and I tested what was in the parcel. The tests took time, because I wanted to be sure.

"Then, prematurely, an announcement was made in my name. I had not authorized it, but it was out and I could not recall it. Nor could I at the time give the proper credit; the prejudice that eats at our vitality was still—is still, I fear—among us. I could not risk having the serum discredited because of it. The examples of my ancestor in Berlin and the Bantu in London came into my mind afresh.

"And so I was silent, and if my col-

league in that far-off place is listening tonight I hope he will understand, finally, why I was silent, and forgive me. I accepted credit for what was not mine. But now the serum has been tested beyond all doubt; the world knows its worth and it can never be withdrawn. It is too late now for prejudice to go to work.

"Therefore tonight I most humbly accept your prize, but not for myself. I accept in the name of the discoverer of Serum M—Jac Mrlo, of Mars."

Dr. Holsinger pronounced the name exactly right, as if he had known it a long time.

THE DELEGATION of officials from the Earth colony had come to the little house in Spidertown, in an atmosphere that mixed gruffness, pride and embarrassment. One of them had made a speech, obviously prepared in advance. Then they had left, in a group, apparently glad to get away and have a bit more time to learn to live with this new situation.

Ellen closed the door behind them and then turned and looked proudly at her husband.

"They were kind of sweet, in their stupid way," she said.

"Huh," Jac said noncommittally.

"We will go to Earth, won't we?"

"No," he said; "I'm damned if I will."

It was the first time she'd heard him swear. "But why?" she asked. "It's all right now, isn't it? They've accepted us. That's what we wanted, wasn't it?"

"Maybe they have accepted us," he said; "but that doesn't mean we've accepted them."

"I don't understand. You're not going to be uppity now, are you, just when they've stopped?"

"That's not it at all," he said. "I'm just not going to be anybody's pet Martian."

"Pet Martian?"

"Don't you see, Ellen? It isn't good enough for them to accept me, just because I won a Nobel prize. I'm no better than any other Martian, and I won't let them make a big fuss over me to appease their consciences while they go on treating other Martians like dirt."

"Oh, Jac!" she said. "It's a beginning. There has to be a start someplace, and it just happens that you're it. You have to do your share. You owe them that much—and you owe Dr. Holsinger a great deal more."

IN THE END he went to Earth, of course. They gave him the VIP treatment all along the way and soon his skinny frame, his bald head, his shy-proud smile, his retreating chin and his big nose were known to everyone who looked at a newspaper or a video or a magazine. A few of the papers hastened to add a degree that was yet to be bestowed on him by referring in cutlines under his pictures to Dr. John Marlowe.

Looking back on the era now, from a historical vantage, we can see what a turning point it was in Earth-Mars relations. It was not only because of the way Jac Mrlo conducted himself—contemporary descriptions of this ranged from "impeccably" to the inevitable "credit to his race"—and the way the great of the Earth behaved,

setting an example which in due course trickled down to everyday dealings between the people of the two planets.

These were important, of course. But there was a subtle and totally unexpected sort of poetic justice which developed from the widespread use of Serum M.

You see, the serum had its ironic side-effects, which some historians are inclined to believe did more than anything else to end the lingering prejudices of the Earthman against the Martian.

The serum prolonged life, true, and it arrested senility but it did nothing to halt some of the natural processes of aging in Earthmen. Some even think it speeded them.

Thus the Earthmen grew older and retained their vigor—but their hair fell out faster, their teeth deteriorated more than had been usual, their bodies slimmed down to a healthier size and their noses, which always had been growing anyway, grew still more.

It was a gradual thing, of course, and people didn't notice at first. But as the first crop of oldsters on Earth came into the new maturity induced by Serum M it became apparent that they—just like the Martians—were skinny, bald, big-nosed and chinless.

It got so that after a while it was hard to tell them apart.



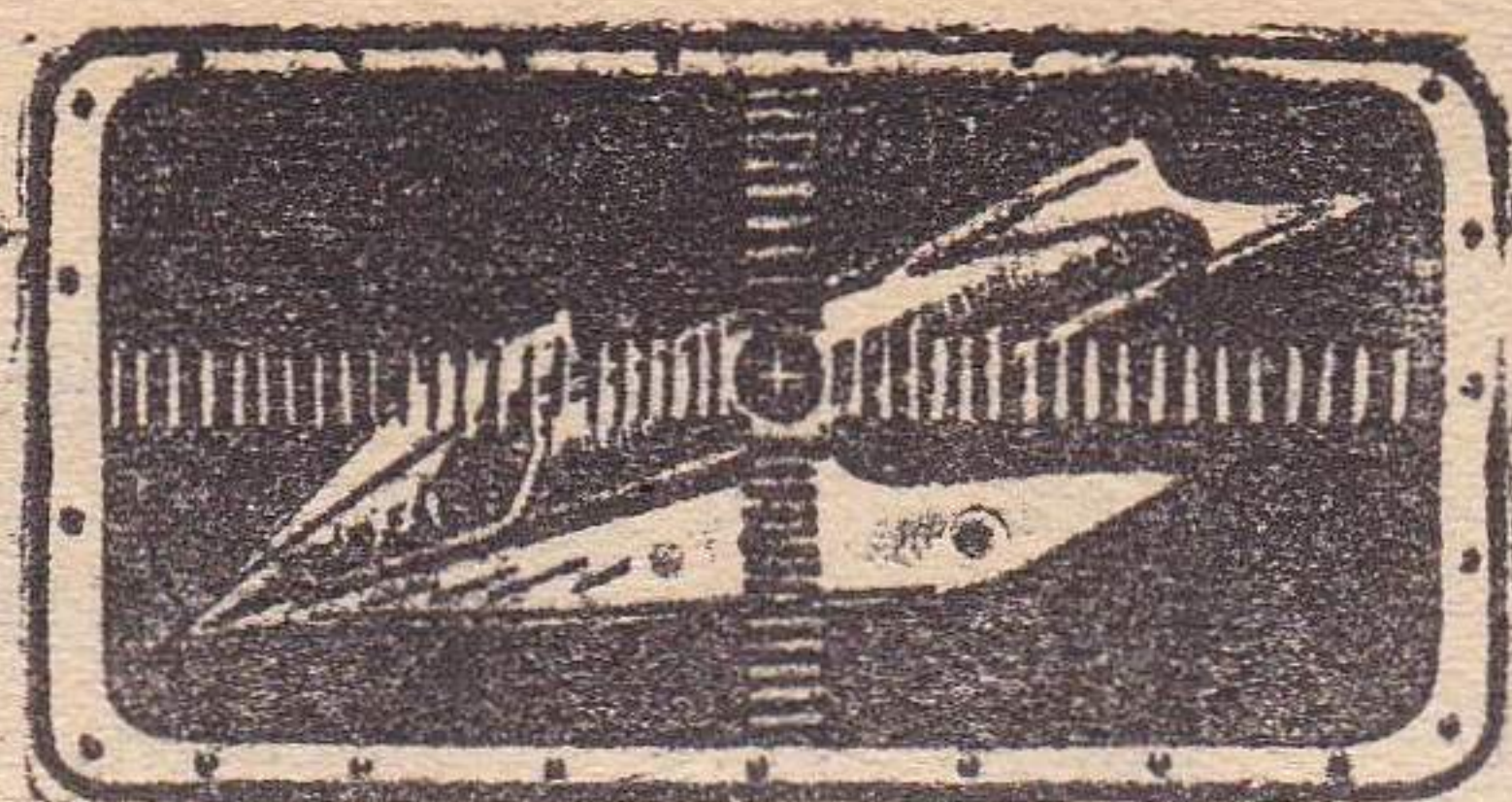
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THE ORIGINAL

Look for
the January
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SCIENCE FICTION STORIES



INSIDE SCIENCE FICTION

A Department For The Science Fictionist

by Robert A. Madle

FANS, AUTHORS, and editors attend 13th World Science Fiction Convention: Although there were not quite as many as expected, approximately 500 signed the registration book at the Hotel Manger, Cleveland, Ohio, this past Labor Day weekend, making the *Clevention* the fourth largest in World Convention history.

A page of this magazine could be consumed by merely listing the celebrities who traveled from far and wide to attend this science fiction festival. Space limitations compel it to be said that among the authors present were: Isaac Asimov, Damon Knight, Dr. E. E. Smith, E. E. Evans, Robert Abernathy, James E. Gunn, P. Schuyler Miller, Mark Clifton, Fritz Leiber, Jr., R. R. Winterbotham, Edmond Hamilton, Leigh Brackett, L. Sprague de Camp, Randall Garrett, Bob Silverberg, Robert Bloch, Jim Harmon, Frank M. Robinson, and many, many others.

There were editors present, also. Anthony Boucher (*Fantasy and Science Fiction*) worked very hard: was parliamentarian, master of ceremonies at the banquet, helped write and acted in a hilarious science fiction play; William L. Hamling (*Imagination*) said that modern science fiction is through, and displayed the latest issues of his duo to prove it; Howard V. Browne (*Amazing Stories*), said that modern science fiction was through several months ago and, according to his latest circulation releases, is proving it; Evelyn Gold (*Galaxy*) has yet to say that modern science fiction is diminishing in popularity. Bea Mahaffey represented *Other Worlds*, which is reverting from digest-size to regular pulp-size format; Larry Shaw (*Infinity*) brought along an unassembled copy of his initial issue.

Publishers? They were there in all their huckstering glory. Lloyd A. Eshbach (*Fantasy Press*) had all of his latest releases on

display: Marty Greenberg (*Gnome Press*) discussed with all and sundry the trends in bookpublishing and selling; and Erle Kershak (*Shasta Publishers*), scotch and soda in hand, surveyed the science fiction scene with a perceptive eye.

Big-name scientists, too, were there. Willy Ley was present and also was a featured speaker. The omnipresent Mr. Ley (we say this because not only does he attend all the conventions, but right now he is one of the most widely-known of all American men of science) spoke on the projected earth Satellite and the possibilities of further and more elaborate extensions along this line. And, for the first time to our knowledge, old-time s-f writer (now prominent in the field of Geophysics) Wallace West attended a convention—and gave an absorbing demonstration of “Industry’s Interest in Science Fiction.”

There were some reviewers and columnists there, too. Forrest J Ackerman (who never misses a convention if it is at all possible to be present) told of his new fan department in *If*; Rog Phillips was getting all the dirt for his “Club House” in *Other Worlds* (let’s hope he’s not as harsh with the Cleveland group as he has been with the Philadelphia and New York convention-sponsoring groups); P. Schuyler Miller (“The Reference Library,” *Astounding Science-Fiction*) who astounded everyone with his youthful appearance: he’s been writing s-f for a little more than 25 years; and one neo-fan paraded about wearing a nameplate which read “Roger De Soto,” but we don’t really think Mr. De Soto was in attendance.

THEY ALWAYS come back! Oldtime fans and writers were quite prominent among the attendees, some of these “ancients” not having been seen for many years at an s-f gathering. Julius Schwartz (who

edited the old *Science Fiction Digest* and *Fantasy Magazine*, among the earliest of all fanzines) was an early arrival. Julie is now editor of *Superman Comics*. Youthful pro-success Oliver E. Saari (he sold his first stories to *Astounding* almost twenty years ago, and is only in his mid-thirties today) consumed many a bottle of that delightful concoction which sponsors the Wednesday night fights, along with your columnist and another old fan friend, Art Saha. J. Chapman Miske (he was a big-name fan in the late thirties) turned out to be another elbow-bender. Jack is now an editor of *Foundry Magazine*. One of the earliest of fan publishers, Richard Frank, walked up and shook our hand. Richard may be remembered as the publisher of several printed pamphlets in the thirties, one of which was "Three Lines of Old French," by A. Merritt. A real ancient present was Landell, Bartlett, who wrote (away back in 1928) the Gernsback-published pamphlet, "The Vanguard of Venus." Mr. Bartlett is attempting to obtain a copy of this story.

E. E. (Skylark) Smith pulls no punches. One of the highlights of the convention was Doc's talk, which he entitled, "Reviewing the Reviewers." Doc Smith, in his usual precise manner, investigated the book reviews of such reviewers as Groff Conklin, P. Schuyler Miller, Anthony Boucher, Damon Knight, Robert W. Lowndes, and several others. He proved statistically, (based on a sampling of approximately 200 reviews) that P. Schuyler Miller is the most unbiased reviewer while Anthony Boucher turned out to be the most biased, closely followed by Groff Conklin. The subject was of intense interest to us inasmuch as we mentioned in the last issue of *Science Fiction Quarterly* something about contemporary reviewing tactics, and indicated P. Schuyler Miller to be the most impartial, Groff Conklin the most partial (or biased). In a conversation following the speech, Doc Smith agreed that Conklin's bias shows the most, but statistics (based on such a large sampling) cannot be refuted logically.

Morris S. Dollens, who, many years ago, published one of the earliest hektographed fanzines. *The Science Fiction Collector*, had on display a backdrop of approximately fifty magnificent interplanetary scenes, all of which were offered for sale to the highest bidders at the auction. Today's collectors took to the vast scope and delicate detail of Dollens' paintings and bid high to obtain them. Some went for as much as \$20.00, even out-drawing the old master himself, Frank R. Paul;.

Anthony Boucher, master of ceremonies at Clevention banquet, smilingly awarded "Hugo" after "Hugo" to *Astounding* as the science fiction world made its annual achievement awards. Mark Clifton and Frank Riley were awarded the prize for the best novel of the year, "They'd Rather Be Right." Walter M. Miller, Jr. wrote the best novelette, "The Darfsteller," and prize-

winning short-story was Eric Frank Russell's "Allamagoosa." And *Astounding* copped the prize for being the best magazine of the year. Frank Kelly Freas (featured primarily by *Astounding* and *Columbia Publications*) was voted the best s-f artist of 1955.

The award for best fanzine was accepted by Ray Van Houten for *Fantasy Times* (which proves that fanzine readers want fanzines to discuss science fiction). Sam Moskowitz was voted the "Mystery Guest" and received a "Hugo" for all he has done for past conventions. Sam, completely taken off guard by his selection, received a standing ovation as he rose to accept his award. A touch of humor was added to the proceedings when Lou Tabakow was awarded the prize for "The Best Unpublished Story." Lou's short-story, "Sven," was featured on the cover of the May, 1955 *Other Worlds*, but did not appear therein—nor has it appeared in any subsequent issue.

Also adding zest to the banquet was Guest of Honor Isaac Asimov who, despite the seriousness of most of his fiction, is a comedian equal to or better than most professionals. Robert Bloch (another super-funnyman) and Forrest J Ackerman (who amazed everyone with his ability to joust humorously with such as Asimov and Bloch) supplemented the well-planned banquet program.

THE ABOVE is just a sampling of what occurred at the 13th World Science Fiction Convention. There were innumerable other interesting and exciting panels, speeches, and discussions. Just to mention a few: a pro-zine editor's panel during which many of the problems which face s-f today were kicked about; a collector's panel during which pictures of rare and ancient magazines and books were projected on a screen while being discussed by such as Ackerman, Moskowitz, and Dr. Barrett; a side-splitting skit, "A Science Fiction Carol," which starred Sam Moskowitz as Scroogowitz, supported by Fritz Leiber, Jr., Mildred Clingerman, Judith Merrill, Robert Bloch, Randall Garrett, and Anthony Boucher. Bob Tucker offered the results of his fan survey; P. Schuyler Miller spoke; Mark Clifton spoke; and many others spoke. But all of this never would have materialized had it not been for the valiant efforts of the hard-working committee. The Terrans of Cleveland did not sponsor the largest convention, but it was one of the most enjoyable we have attended. For posterity, their names are herewith recorded: Noreen Kane Falasca, Nick Falasca, Ben Jason, Honey Wood, Stephen Schultheis, and Frank Andrasovsky. To all of you: congratulations for a job well done!

New York in 1956. The very first World Convention was held in New York City in 1939. For many years New York has wanted to sponsor another World Convention, but lack of cooperation among the various fan

factions has made such an affair inadvisable. In recent years, however, New York fandom has welded itself into one of the strongest fan groups of all time. And this year, New York, geared to convention-sponsoring as no other group has been, was awarded the World Convention for 1956. Only London, England, put in an opposing bid. And Ken Bulmer (the Trans-Atlantic Fund Guest), after receiving seconding speeches for London from Don Ford and Bob Tucker (both of whom mentioned enticing reasons why a convention should be held in London) bowed out in favor of New York—but not before stating that 1957 will be London's year.

The 1956 convention is being sponsored by the Science Fiction Council of New York Fandom (which comprises representatives of leading New York and New Jersey organizations). David A. Kyle (a member of first fandom, and more active now than he was then) will be Chairman. His assistant will include Art Saha, Sam Moskowitz, James V. Taurasi, Jean Carroll, and many others. No definite information can be mentioned as yet—but the committee is considering accepting the offer of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel to house the big affair. Early financing is required to get the drive under way. Why not get in on the ground floor? Join the convention committee right now and insure receiving all pre-convention publications and announcements. Send \$2.00 to Art Saha, Secretary, 167 East 2nd street, New York 9, New York. Watch this department for further convention announcements. *New York in 1956!*

THE FANZINES

COMPLETISTS usually have great difficulty in keeping abreast of the large number of fanzines being published. This statement is probably more applicable today than it was one or two decades ago. Therefore, it will interest many to learn that a comprehensive fanzine index is now in the research stage.

Back in the late '30's Dr. R. D. Swisher published his *Checklist*, which provided information on all amateur s-f publications of which he was aware. It was practically all-inclusive, and has come to be regarded by collectors as definite. Now, after a lapse of fifteen years, two energetic fans have announced *The Fanzine Index*. Soon to be published, it will list fanzines from the beginning to the end of 1952, and will be an extension of Dr. Swisher's efforts. Information concerning this invaluable project can be obtained from Bob Pavlat, 6001 43rd Avenue, Hyattsville, Maryland. With that taken care of, let's see what the fan publishers have been doing recently.

Inside combined with *Science Fiction Advertiser* (25¢ a copy from Ron Smith, 611 West 114th Street, Apt. 3d-310, New York 25, New York). This is the outstanding publication of the quarter. Each issue has

improved to such an extent that it can now be considered a member of the so-called "little magazine" category. Editor Smith must devote the majority of his free time to publishing this 48-page, photo-offset magazine, and his efforts should be rewarded by the enthusiastic support of all interested science fiction readers and collectors.

Lin Carter conducts "Inside Books," which is a book-review department of professional quality. Collectors will find not only the reviews useful, but also the lengthy listing of forthcoming books, which closes the department. In "So What's A Little Blood?", Howard V. Browne discusses why the editorial policy of *Fantastic* changed so radically in recent months. And Joe Gibson writes "Ray Palmer's Medicine Show," in which he indicates that Ray is about due for another boom period. (Latest circulation figures of *Other Worlds*, provided by Ray himself, display this boom to be long-overdue.) There is a thought-provoking short-story by George H. Smith, "The Paper Foxhole." (If you enjoyed this author's thor's February '55 *Spaceway* novelette, "The Towers of Silence," you'll like this one, too.) And the issue closes with fifteen pages of controversy on censorship and sex by such as Hannes Bok, Algis Budrys, and Editor Smith. Recommended, without qualifications.

Merlin (10¢ from Lee Anne Tremper, 1022 N. Tuxedo Street, Indianapolis 1, Indiana). Miss Tremper has improved her monthly mimood magazine consistently, and it is rapidly becoming one of the most interesting in the field. The issues for July and August arrived simultaneously, so both of them will be discussed together. The July issue is a rib-tickling burlesque on Ray Palmer and his magazine, *Other Worlds*. This is the first in a projected series of issues "dedicated" to various prozines. (*Weird Tales* is next in line.) Dave Jenrette, who will do all of the covers for this series, captures the *Other Worlds* atmosphere in an uproarious manner. Joe L Hensley's burlesque of a Palmer editorial is almost a classic, and Rusty Jenrette (Mrs. David Jenrette) will keep you laughing with the "Personals" department.

The August issue offers a humorous photo-offset cover by *Merlin's* number one artist, Dave Jenrette. Dave also contributes a humorous short-story, inspired by the now-famous "oompah" joke. (Incidentally, one of Dave's previous stories, "The Siren of Saturn," also inspired by a well-known joke, will be used by Larry Shaw to lead off the fan department in the initial *Infinity*.) Rusty Jenrette (this husband and wife team appear to provide most of *Merlin's* contents) offers "Rette's Galactic Sketchbook," a description of strange intergalactic creatures, replete with drawings of said creatures—not recommended for children. Others will enjoy it immensely, however.

The New Futurian (15¢ from J. Michael

Rosenblum, 7, Grosvenor Park, Chapel-Allerton, Leeds 7, England.) It was indeed a surprise to receive a copy of this revived English fanzine. J. Michael Rosenblum, as readers of "The Immortal Storm" may recall, was one of the most influential of British fans during the so-called first and second fandoms. He published an important journal, *The Futurian*, which at one time actually appeared in printed format. During the war Rosenblum was a motivating factor in keeping the scattered remnants of British fandom together and rates, in our book, along with Ted Carnell and Walter H. Gillings, among the most important of all British s-f proponents.

THE FOURTH issue, which is the first we have had the pleasure of reading, continues Walter H. Gillings' history of science fiction, as it applied to him and British fandom, "The Clamorous Dreamers." Gillings relates in this installment how several early English organizations were formed, and how he fought constantly to provide England with its own s-f magazine. (Many years were to pass before Gillings' dream materialized with *Tales of Wonder*.) Incidentally, memoirs of this type are of extreme interest and importance, and it is suggested that other members of early fandom emulate Gillings and seriously put down on paper their observations of the early eras of science fiction. It has been suggested by David A. Kyle that if this is done in sufficient volume, another history of fandom could be written, perhaps stressing activities other than the notorious feuds of the '30's. But, until this occurs, "The Immortal Storm" will continue to be the definitive history of s-f fandom.

Other real old-timers represented are Harry Warner, Jr., Eric C. Hopkins, and Douglas Webster. Rosenblum apparently delights in resurrecting "relics of ante-deluvian fandom," and it is delightful to read articles by these giants of yesteryear. If

you're an "ancient" in fandom we know you'll like *The New Futurian*; if you're comparatively new in the field, you'll enjoy the wealth of information it provides.

Capsule Reviewss

Slander (10¢ from Jan Sadler, 219 Broadmoor Drive, Jackson 6, Mississippi). This is an acceptable first issue, rather well-dittoed, and containing fairly good material. Future fan historians may find this of utmost value for, to our knowledge, it carries the only coverage of the First Southeastern Conference (Atlanta, Georgia). However, the coverage is comprehensive: Fred Chappell, Charles Wells, and Russ Watkins all appear with fine articles on this comparatively obscure gathering. *Slander* shows promise, and is worth sampling.

Canadian Fandom (no price listed, but 20¢ should get you a copy from William D. Grant, 11 Burton Road, Toronto 10, Ontario, Canada). *Canfan* is now in its 13th year of publication, this being issue #26. The magazine is very neatly mimeod and offers controversial articles along with science fiction fare. Fred Hurter discusses "The Origins of Religious Thoughts and Beliefs," and even arrives at a conclusion. And most readers will enjoy E. E. Evans' eulogy, "The One and Only Doc Smith."

Alice (20¢ from Kent Corey, Box 64, Enid, Oklahoma). Kent's *Cleveland* issue seems to be devoted primarily to nudes but in between he has managed to squeeze in a rambling editorial, a complete fanzine review, and letters. The best article in the issue is Don Ford's "Handy Form for Farewell to Fandom." Artwork is so scattered that it is difficult to follow the written material. We see that Kent promises artwork by David Jenrette in following issues, which should be a definite asset.

All fanzines for review should be sent to: Robert A. Madle, 1620 Anderson Street, Charlotte, North Carolina.



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GIANTS IN THE EARTH

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THE ORIGINAL

SCIENCE FICTION STORIES



At last Big Bill Brady was the right man, in the right place, at the right time — or was he?

ELECTED

by GEORGE HUDSON SMITH

WILLIAM (Big Bill) Brady surveyed the assembled and waiting people of the 22nd Century and smiled at them the same sincere, boyish, heart-warming smile that had won him so many votes in the 20th Century.

"Good people of the 22nd Century, it is with the greatest pleasure that I greet you. I cannot properly express the humbleness and the gratitude I feel that I should have been chosen by your scientists of all the people of my time to return to life in your time."

Having said that he couldn't express what he felt, Big Bill took an hour to do so, with countless references to Ireland, dogs, mother, and his dearly-beloved family. He ended in a flood of tears in his best 20th Century manner, for after all hadn't exhaustive research by the biggest advertising agencies proved this the most effective TV campaign technic?

But something was wrong; Big Bill knew that he had delivered one of the best performances of his life, but it hadn't taken hold. In fact, most of the smock clad people who had gathered to see him revived had drifted back into the woodlands; by the time the speech was over there were hardly a dozen people left in the clearing and these were busy working.

Big Bill turned to Dr. Davis, the scientist who had revived him. "Say, Doc, what's the matter with these people? Don't they care nothing about politics?"



"I suppose, Mr. Brady, that it's just that we don't understand politics. Since the atomic wars of the 20th Century, the few of us left have lived rather simple lives devoted to peaceful pursuits."

"You mean you ain't got no politicians or political jobs?"

"Well, I don't suppose we have anyone who could rightly be called a politician but we do have political jobs."

"No politicians but political jobs? That's interesting. I'm just what you need around here."

"Yes. The highest political position is open right now; our last President was killed a short time ago when a tree branch fell on him."

"Now that's too bad. Sorry to hear it," Big Bill rumbled. "This President's job... is it pretty plush?"

"Plush?"

"Yeah, you know. Is there a lot of loot goes with it?"

"Loot? Oh. Well, if I fathom your meaning correctly you want to know if the pay is good. Is that right?"

"That's right, Doc. You got me right."

"In our small community it is the plushiest job there is."

Big Bill rubbed his hands together gleefully. "That's what I like to hear. How long is the term?"

"Ah...you might say that the term is indefinite. As long as the incumbent can hold the office, that is."

"And how many joes are runnin' for this deal?"

"Runnin'? I don't believe anybody is really running, although it seems I did hear that Elmer Brown from Bottstown did express a desire to take up the duties of our late President."

"You mean to tell me a guy has just got to ask for a job like that to get it? What's the matter with you people? Ain't you got no democracy? Ain't you got no machines to take care of who gets elected?"

"No...no, we haven't," Dr. Davis said, looking puzzled.

A wide grin split Big Bill's face. *Well, Brady, you old son of a gun, you really ended up in the right place this time,* he thought.

Dr. Davis looked more confused than ever as he asked, "Do you mean that you would be interested in the job as President, Mr. Brady?"

"Interested? Why, Doc, I'm already runnin' and I ain't runnin' scared."

"I'm astonished, but you really would be filling a very important place in our community life. I've been wondering how you would fit in, especially since some of the other scientists were against my revivifier. They were afraid a person from the past might not fit in our primitive little society; but it seems that you will."

BIG BILL didn't even listen; his brain was seething with hundreds of plans. "Say, Doc, how about this Elmer Brown character? What do you know about him? Or better yet, tell me what kind of people most people don't like these days."

Bill assumed his sincere pose. "How's this for a starter, Doc?...and al-

though my opponent will deny it, I have learned that both his brother-in-law and his wife's cousin were at one time members of the Communist Party."

"Ah...um...is that what you call 'campaigning' Mr. Brady?" Davis asked.

"Yes, sir; that's the sure-fire technic. It always worked before, and it ought to work now."

"But, Mr. Brady, what is a communist party? We have bottle parties and petting parties, but I don't think we have ever had any communist parties."

"What? No Communist Party? You people a bunch of subversives or something? How can you have politics without no reds?"

"I'm sorry, Mr. Brady; so much was lost during the wars. So many records were destroyed, and so few books were left, that perhaps we don't really understand the way things were done in your time. It may be under the circumstances you would prefer not to...ah...run?...for the position of our President."

"What? Not run? What're you trying to do, ease me out? I demand my rights!" Big Bill was furious.

"Your rites? Mr. Brady, I don't believe I know what your rites are; as I have said we're a very primitive people with nothing but our agriculture and a little science and learning. We have fertility rites, and spring rites, but I..."

"Forget it, forget it. No Commies, huh? Well, I'll think of something else."

"I'm sure you will, Mr. Brady," the professor said taking a note tablet from his pocket. "I must remember to look up 'Commies' and 'My Rites'. They sound most interesting, especially the latter. Our society finds a special appeal in ritual."

"Tell me, Prof, when is this here election gonna be held?"

"Why, I don't think any of us have given it much thought. Today would be as good a time as any, I guess; I'll

ask the runners to summon the people."

"Today? Hey, wait a minute! What about my campaign? What about my speeches?"

"Speeches? Well, I'm sure our people would be glad to listen to another of your speeches if you really feel that it's necessary."

"I ain't had any time at all to campaign and you say if I feel it's necessary!" Big Bill was all at sea, but suddenly his eyes grew shrewd and he said, "Hey, this Elmer guy don't even know I'm in the race. Yeah, maybe we better hold that election tonight. Won't he be surprised when he learns there's someone else's hat in the ring, someone with a little get-up-and-go."

Dr. Davis carefully wrote down "hat in the ring" and "get-up-and-go" for his researches before he went to summon the community runners, whose job it was to carry news to the people of the outlying farms.

A SHORT time later, the last of the voters was straggling into the clearing, and Big Bill Brady was again standing on the platform with Dr. Davis beside him.

"I know. I've got it, I've got it!" Big Bill said suddenly. "How does this sound? This one always worked back in my time. 'My dear friends and fellow citizens of the 22nd Century, I would be the last person in the world to cast aspersions on the character of a fellow candidate, but I have been wondering how many of you know that my worthy opponent is married to a woman of doubtful ancestry. Of course, I myself am not prejudiced but is a well known that Mrs. Brown's father was of Jewish des...'"

He was interrupted by a big raw-boned farmer who climbed up onto the platform. "Say there, Dr. Davis, I understand that this here fellow wants the President's job. That true?"

"That's right, Elmer; he does," Davis answered.

"Well, go on and let him have it. Only reason I wanted it was 'cause I'd had a fight with the old woman; we've made it up now, and I really don't want it."

"Glad to hear it, Elmer. Glad to hear it," Dr. Davis said patting the man on the back. "Then if there's no objection I guess that Mr. Brady is our new President."

No one in the crowd said anything. Most of them looked relieved, and some began to edge away back into the woods.

"No objection being raised, I declare William Brady our President." Davis intoned. "Elmer, please bring the sword. It's over under the tree where the old president was killed."

"What sword? What's going on here?" Brady demanded.

"Your sword, Mr. President; the sword that all our Presidents carry as they circle the sacred tree," Davis explained.

"Huh? I don't get it."

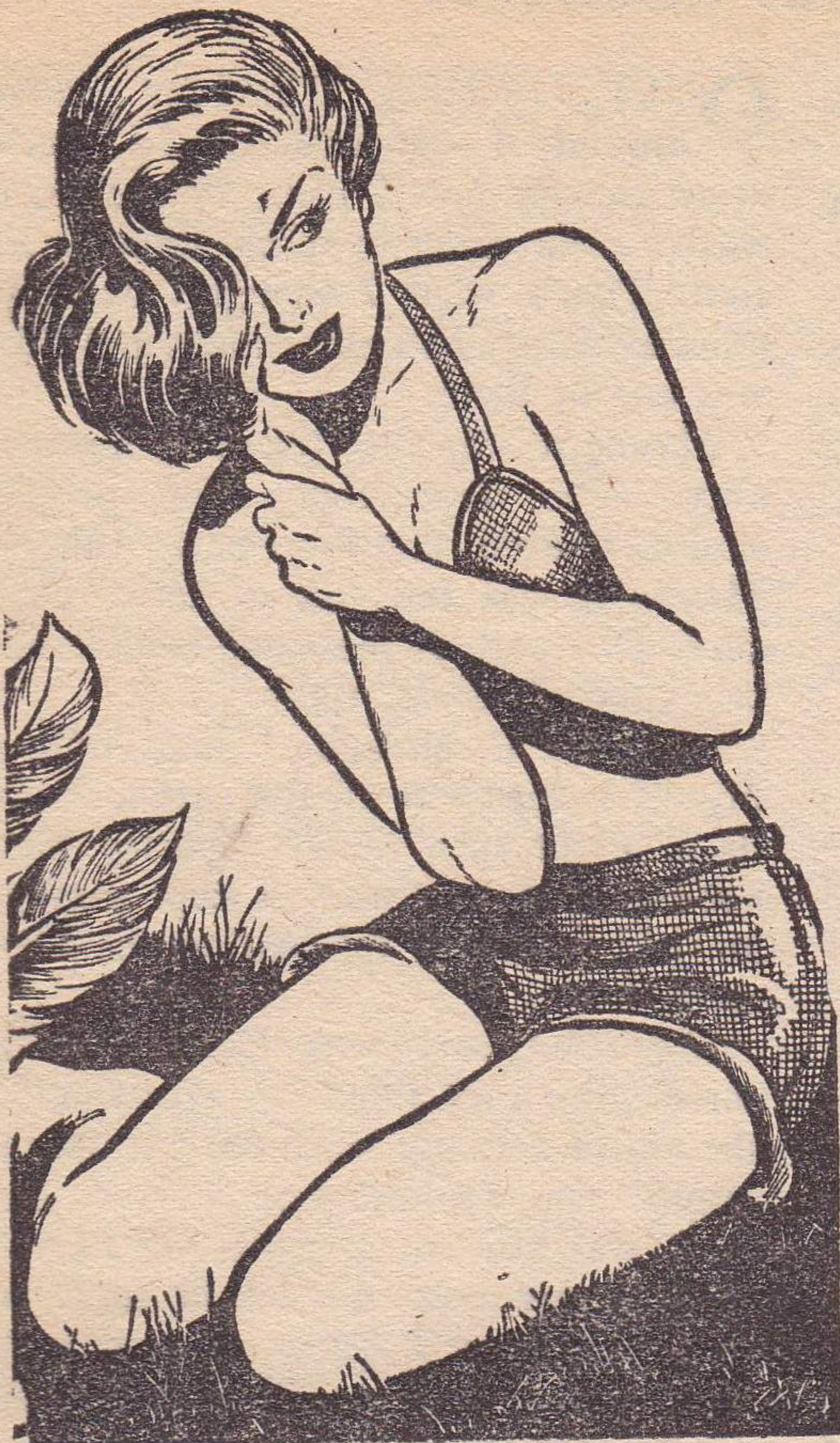
"Let me explain. You are now officially the President-Priest of our community. You will be given the best of everything in food, wine and women, but you can't give up the job until you die—or until someone kills you and takes your place. We learned the ritual from existing fragments of a book written in your time, 'The Golden Bough'."

"But I...you can't do this to me!"

"Oh but we can, Mr. Brady. If you refuse to carry out the ritual, we will be forced to sacrifice you to the Gods of Fertility; it would be bad if all our crops should fail, you know. Don't worry. It won't be long before someone comes along to relieve you of your burden of office. The job looks good to some people, you see."

As the moon rose that night, Big Bill Brady, with sword in hand, could be seen slowly circling the sacred tree, nervously carrying out the duties of his new office.





LOVE ME AGAIN

A FABLE
of FUTURITY

by CAROL EMSHWILLER

CHARLEY said, "What you need is a new wife."

"Look," I started, but he waved his hand and went on.

"I know you've only been married three months," he said, "but, believe me, I know the signs. Look at the way you mope around. You're restless; you can't keep your mind on your hobbies any more. Take some advice from someone who knows. You need a new wife."

"I don't know," I said. "It doesn't exactly feel like it to me. But just supposing, for argument's sake, that I do. What would I do about it? Wives aren't made with a hobby kit; they cost money, plenty, and I'm fresh out after buying Claire. You know that. On my salary I have to make do with the same wife for, at the least, about a year, even with Claire as a trade-in. Besides,

she's a good girl. I like her; I really do. We're getting along fine."

"'Like' and 'love' aren't the same thing at all, Dan boy, and I know what you need. I can read the signs all over you."

"I don't know; I'd really hate to get rid of Claire already."

"Why don't you keep her around and get a new wife, too?"

"Are you crazy! You know I'm broke. I'd need her for the trade-in even if I did have the money for the payments on a new one."

"Listen, Dan. I've got a wonderful idea; I've even been thinking of doing it myself, and you know what shape my finances are in. Listen now, and try not to be shocked. At least not till I finish."

"I don't know if I'm particularly in-

terested in any more of your schemes, Charley."

"Now don't interrupt me. This is a real good idea. Look. There are a lot of girls, *real* girls I mean, in the same boat as we are. They make the same salaries, and husbands are just as expensive as wives. What I'm thinking is, why can't we get together some way?"

"Charley, you mean..."

"I mean just that. Why don't we team up with *real* women for a change."

"But..."

"No, don't say it. I know it sounds preposterous, population laws and all that, but just think about it calmly for a minute. There are plenty of real women as broke as we are who are dying for new husbands. Some of them are bound to be pretty decent-looking, too. I think it would be a pretty exciting thing to do. New experience and all that. A real adventure."

He put his arms behind his head and closed his eyes. "Primitive love," he said, "wild, passionate, wicked. The way love ought to be."

"O. K.," I said. "*You* do it. Have yourself a real adventure, but you can leave me out. The idea is revolting. That sort of thing is up to the Government Population Service. If I'm called by them, I'm called. I'm ready to do my bit for my country and all that, but that's *all*."

"All right, if that's the way you feel about it. Just don't be mad. Think about it some, though. You'll see what I mean. You need a new wife, and some gal somewhere needs a new husband. What's holding you back but a silly social taboo? Call me if you decide anything. I can help you out. My job at the Personal Fire Service comes in handy sometimes. My work day is Thursdays. Think it over and let me know before that if you decide."

"You don't need to worry," I said. "I won't be calling you."

ONLY...WHEN Thursday came around, I *did* call him. I don't know exactly how I came to decide. I wasn't even going to think about it at first. That's what *I* thought, but my mind evidently had other ideas and this was one of them.

Maybe it was that touch of immorality. The fact that *nice* people wouldn't even consider such things. Maybe it was the risk of social censure. *This* sort of marriage would certainly be different, risky.

I fought it, though. I kept telling myself I wasn't at all the sort to even think about such things. Charley was, not me. Only the more I kept saying, no, no, the more fascinating the idea seemed.

My one worry was Claire. I still cared quite a bit about her even though she didn't actually thrill me any more. Maybe you couldn't call it love, but there was still an awfully big like. I didn't know how she would react to this thing, but I knew she wouldn't like it. I knew she could be hurt even if she *was* only a synthetic. Robots wouldn't be very decent wives or husbands if they didn't have feelings, and I always kind of hate to upset them even if they aren't real people.

It probably would be kinder to just send Claire back to the factory, though the re-adjustments they go through there are said to be painful to them. But then I couldn't ask a *real* woman to take time off from her hobbies just to look after the house, so I had to keep Claire. I really wanted to, too; I'd miss her if she wasn't around.

Anyway, by Thursday this idea of Charley's had really gotten hold of me till I *liked* the immorality and I *liked* the risk of social censure. I liked everything about it in fact. So I picked up the TV-phone and called Charley at his work.

"Hey, boy, I knew you'd come around," he said when I told him. "In fact I've already looked up some girls

for you. There's a real cute number I found that hasn't had a husband for two months now. She must be really broke. I'll contact her for you. She'll probably be right over as soon as she hears about you, so you'd better get the divorce papers set for Claire. I'll get some marriage forms from here. You just give them back to me after you fill them out and I'll file them myself. That way everything will be legal, all right, but nobody will know anything about you both being real people except me."

"O. K., Charley, go ahead, but what do you think I ought to do about Claire?"

"Do about her? Hand her those divorce papers, old boy. As soon as possible."

"No, Charley, I mean she's been so happy these three months. She's not like the others. I guess she's overly sentimental; I know she'll be hurt."

"**L**OOK, DANNY, *you're* the sentimental one. Those feelings you're so afraid to hurt are synthetic, you know; they're manufactured, built in. There's nothing real about them. Sure, she feels things; that's the way she's made. You got yourself a darn good model that's what. But what she feels isn't really real; it just seems that way."

"I don't know, Charley. That's what everyone says, but sometimes I wonder if it's true."

"Anyway, she's got no rights in this matter at all. You bought her didn't you? She's supposed to feel and do whatever it is you want her to, and nothing else."

"Yes, but..."

"Don't you worry, now. I'll call this babe, and you hurry up and get your divorce. And forget about Claire. This is going to be a great experience for you, boy. Don't let any petty little things spoil it."

"Say, Charley, I thought you were

going to try this thing too."

"I am; just give me time. As a matter of fact I was thinking of taking this girl for myself, but since you called me, and you're in such a desperate situation, not being in love and everything, I thought I'd just let you have her. Anyway, I have a couple of others listed. Not as good as this one, but possibilities. Now don't you worry, kid; you'll have a new wife in no time."

WELL, IT didn't happen that fast. Charley called me three days later. This first choice wasn't so nice after all, he said; she even threatened to report him to the Government Population Service. Of course that wouldn't have hurt too much. At least there was nothing actually *illegal* about what we were doing, not as if we were having babies, or anything. It would have made a stink for a while, though, Charley said, but that was all. Anyway, he called the others on his list, but no luck there either. They were nice, and didn't threaten to run and tell, but they weren't going to be a party to any such thing.

"But don't you worry," Charley said. "I'm still sure there are plenty of girls who are willing. Just let me handle everything and don't give up hope yet."

I would have to wait a few days more anyway, till Charley went to work again on Thursday.

I wouldn't have had to rush to get my divorce, and then I wouldn't have had to sit around, with no wife at all, trying not to see the look in Claire's eyes. She hadn't been sleeping much, I was sure. There were dark circles under her eyes and she was pale. She still smiled as she served me, but it was such a little, lopsided smile, worse than none at all.

She has to take it, and take it, and take it, I thought. If she could only get mad. But I knew she wouldn't get mad at me even if she could.

EVEN THE next Thursday didn't bring any luck. This waiting wasn't doing me any more good than it was Claire. Maybe I'd been restless before, but it was nothing like what I was now. It wasn't till the next Thursday after that, that we got Lois. Charley sent her over, and she came right away.

I answered the door myself when she rang. She stood outside a moment and looked up and down the street and then ducked into the vestibule fast. She was out of breath and her cheeks were pink from the run from the auto-cab. A curl was out of place and hung down by her ear.

I knew she wasn't perfect; I could see right away her figure was old fashioned. Hips like that went out of date on all robot wives almost two years ago; and blue eyes were the latest thing now.

But she doesn't have to be perfect, I thought. That's the beauty of it. This is real, real and primitive. Suddenly without even thinking about it, I took her in my arms right then. "I love you," I said, "and it's real, real love."

She smiled and pressed against me. "Isn't this exciting," she said. "I've never been in love like this before. I think it's going to be fun."

We kissed then. It was a wonderful, human kiss. As Charley said, this was going to be a pretty exciting adventure. You could tell that in a second.

Then Louis pulled back. "Did Charley say your name was Bob?" she asked. "I wasn't quite sure."

"It's Dan," I said, "and you're Lois. Come on in the house and meet Claire."

IT WAS RIGHT after that we had our first argument.

I had argued with Charley, and other fellows often enough, but seldom with a woman before, and especially not with one about to be my wife. It was very unpleasant, though, of course,

our love was so strong it couldn't really be hurt by it.

It was over Claire.

As soon as we were alone again after Lois met her, she said, "I won't sign the marriage papers until that woman gets out of here."

This made me angry, for after all, it was my house, and I was very fond of Claire. But I didn't show how I felt. "I suppose," I said, "you're willing to do the housework yourself, then."

"I have John for that," she said, "and I much prefer to have a man working about the house than a woman. You'll have to get rid of her or deactivate her, and soon."

I didn't much care to have some former, robot husband working about the house either, but I could see this called for diplomacy; so I kept my temper as well as I could. "Where is John now?" I asked.

"I packed him. He's de-activated and packed, and he'll be over with my baggage."

Well, I thought, at least he's out of the way for the time being. As far as I was concerned, John could stay packed, but good.

"Claire has supper almost ready, and John won't be here till tomorrow," I said. "I can't de-activate her now. Besides, she can show John around the place for a few days till he catches on to where everything is. Then we can do something about Claire, I promise you. Just try to get along for two or three days."

Lois thought this over for a minute or two; then she finally smiled and said that she didn't want to do anything to spoil our beautiful love affair—and, though she didn't care for the idea, she would give in gracefully to show her good will.

Lois was a real prize; I could see that. But still, I made a promise to myself right then, that no matter what happened, I wasn't going to deactivate Claire. Lois could say or do any-

thing she wanted to; that I would not do. I know I was judging the robots by myself—but I certainly wouldn't want to be deactivated or go to the factory to be reconditioned, and I couldn't do it to Claire. I simply couldn't and I wouldn't.

Real love was wonderful then, exciting, a little wicked. Just the way it should be, as Charley said. And the next day Lois' baggage came. Lots of it, but then Lois was a *real* girl. There too, was the long box with John. Just seeing it gave me a funny feeling, jealous and scared—scared not for me, but for Claire.

Lois insisted that John be activated right then and there, to get the baggage inside and put away. "After all," she said, "I gave in to you on your plans for Claire yesterday. For the sake of our love, you know. Now I think it's your turn to do the same and let me have my John."

I really couldn't say no when she put it that way. She had been nice about Claire. So I said, "For the sake of our love, then." And Lois opened the box and activated John.

JOHN WAS just what I was afraid he would be, big, handsome, broad-shouldered. Of course robots were never violent to humans, but he gave me a funny feeling even so. I just hoped he would be slow in learning about my kitchen; that would give me a little more time to plan what to do about Claire.

Things went along smoothly for the next few days. The honeymoon time is always wonderful. We didn't even spend much time on our hobbies. And compromising. That was a new experience. I looked at the TV ice show with Lois, though I don't care for it, and Lois looked at boxing with me. I ate liver with Lois on Monday, and Lois ate lamb with me on Wednesday. It was actually fun.

One funny thing, though, I was still as restless as ever.

Then Lois said Claire would have to go soon, whichever way I wanted. She wasn't particular how. Two robots, she said, would never work out, anyway. But I guess she was judging by human beings. John and Claire had no arguments or disagreements over their work, that we could tell, anyway. The service was better, the food more elaborate. The two robots got along as if they'd originally been built to work together. John did most of the serving and I was glad about that. It was too painful seeing Claire trying to keep smiling; I guess she didn't want to see me, either.

It was hard not to like John. He did make me feel a bit inferior, but he was a nice, pleasant fellow, and seemed as attentive to me as he was to Lois. I always found it hard not to like most all of the robots. They were so good-natured, and John seemed especially nice. I liked him better each time I saw him.

But I liked him best of all when Lois asked him if he felt it was time to get rid of Claire, and didn't he know all the house yet? John was on my side; he said he knew the house pretty well, but it was a big one and the work was a lot easier with two of them.

"Why should you care," Lois asked him. "After all, you haven't any hobbies to keep you busy; you don't need Claire."

"Even we mechanical men enjoy a bit of leisure now and then, and, well," John smiled, "you must admit she's a much better cook than I am. I think it would be to your advantage in many ways to keep us both working here. After all, we're a big investment. You might as well get your money's worth in service."

Lois frowned. "Well, I don't know. Too much leisure..."

"At any rate I need a few more days

with her—especially if you want me to learn to make her special quince tart. The one you enjoyed so much yesterday.”

“All right,” Lois said, “for that, certainly.”

But she changed her mind the very next day. We had a terrible fight, and suddenly compromises didn't seem so much fun any more to either of us.

LOIS CAME storming into the hobby room where I was working with a kit for assembling a pocket, color, TV projector. It was for Claire. I had started it before our divorce and I was still going to finish it for her.

“That woman has got to go,” Lois shouted, “or *I* go.”

I felt a sudden chill, but I asked her what was wrong as calmly as I could.

“What's wrong! Since when does there have to be something wrong in order to de-activate a robot? I *want* her de-activated, that's all. I don't like the look in her great, big, gorgeous, blue eyes, the hussy. She's still in love with you and I think you're in love with her; and I won't believe anything else until you turn her off.”

“Lois, you know I'm in love with you. When have two people made as many sacrifices as we have, just for our love? I admit I'm a bit fond of Claire, but not in that way at all. It's you I love.”

“I don't care what you say. Claire has got to go or you can just go down and get a new set of divorce papers. You decide. I'll be waiting in my room.”

I was pretty upset. I didn't want to turn Claire off or send her away, but I didn't want to have this wonderful, real, marriage spoiled so soon either.

I decided to call Charley and see what he had to say.

“Hey boy, how's it going,” Charley asked as soon as he saw it was me on the TV-phone.

“Great,” I groaned, “just great.”

“Don't let her get the best of you,” Charley said after I told him the situation. “Of course I don't see why you care so much about what happens to Claire. I turn my Margot off just to shut her up a couple of hours every day. It doesn't hurt them any; in fact it does Margot a lot of good. She behaves herself, I can tell you, boy. You're too sentimental, Danny; it's a bad habit and you ought to try and get over it.”

“Well, I can't change just like that now. What do you think I ought to do.”

“My advice to you is, whatever you do, don't give in to Lois. After all, you're not a robot husband; you've got pride. You've got ideas of your own she ought to respect. Stand up for them. Show her who's boss, and that'll straighten everything out. Try it. And call me if you need me again. I'm always ready to help a buddy.”

I clicked off the phone and thought about Charley's advice. But I knew it wouldn't work.

I pressed a button on the drink mixer and sat down and thought some more. And then it seemed to me that it was John I should be asking for advice. He should have just the sort I needed already built in.

I switched the TV-phone for local and called the kitchen.

JOHN WAS up in a minute, smiling and ready for service even though it was only me and not Lois.

“Sit down,” I told him, “and have a drink.”

“I'm sorry, but mechanical men are not allowed to drink.”

“Look, John, how can I talk to you man to man if you don't join me? I'd feel uncomfortable. Let's just forget the social taboos for once. I'd like to. Please sit down. I need your advice. You know so much more about this

love business than I do; at least this end of it.

John stood, not smiling for a moment, thinking hard, and then he smiled again, but just a little one. "I guess it'll be all right," he said, and sat down and took the glass I offered him. "I'd like to help you if I can."

"Good boy. Let me ask you one thing first, John. You don't have to answer if you don't want to. You don't seem so concerned about Lois and me, but you're supposed to be in love with her."

"Well," John said slowly, looking into his drink, "I guess I was made to love all creatures about equally. At least I never loved Lois particularly more than anyone else. I like people, and I did my best to please Lois when I was married to her; but I wasn't upset at all when she tired of me. I knew a breakup would come sometime, anyway, and when it did, it didn't bother me."

"Yes, but what about Claire? She's not the same as you are, even though you're both from the same factory. Why is she so upset?"

"We mechanical men aren't all alike, you know, any more than you humans are. Emotions are funny things. They can't seem to be cut on an assembly-line pattern; even when they use the same chemicals and glandular tissue, they never get exactly the same results. If the right person comes along, we mechanical men are capable of falling actually in love, too. I think Claire is...or was...really in love with you, but I think she'll be all right now. Give her a little time."

"That's just it. She's not going to have time for anything. Lois insists I turn her off or send her back to the factory, right now. Tonight."

John frowned and then took a long drink.

"That's what I wanted to talk to you about," I went on. "If you were

still married to Lois, what would you do? How would you calm her down and make her see reason?"

John didn't answer for a long time. He sat and finished his drink and I dialed another for him, and then he said, "I'm afraid we mechanical men don't think as you people do. We would probably give in; let her have her way. The love relationship, to us, is the most important of all. We sacrifice, even large things, to the ends of a happy marriage. We wouldn't want to hurt another creature though, so that makes this problem particularly hard."

"What should I do? I've got to decide something in a hurry."

"If I were you," John said, "I think I would go to Lois and try to show her in every way I could that I loved her and perhaps she will feel more generous when she realizes how it is you feel towards her. I'd try it, anyway." John drained his glass and set it on the table with a thump. "If that didn't work, I guess, if I was in love with Lois, I'd give in to her."

"John, I like you, and I like your ideas, too; I'll try it. Pride doesn't matter in a thing like this. It's love that counts. You stay here and have another drink. Have all you want. I'll go see what I can do."

THINGS didn't happen as I'd hoped they would. Perhaps as a human being, I just didn't have enough loving to give. I certainly hadn't had much practice in that end of it. Anyway, it didn't work at all, and in my desire to make everything right between us, I promised Lois I'd turn off Claire. I didn't mean to promise it, but somehow I did, and, as I walked out of Lois' room, I was on my way to do it. She'd said, "Do it right now so I can be sure it's me you love." And I said, "All right I will; I'll prove I love you best of all."

Only here I was on my way to do it

and I didn't want to at all. In fact, once I thought about it, it was Lois I would rather be on the way to turning off. It was Claire, gentle Claire, who loved me. John said so. And she really loved me. Robots could have different feelings just like people, and Claire loved me in a special way of her own. Manufactured or not, it was real. How could I turn her off? How could I hurt her?

I stopped before her door and raised a hand to knock, but I didn't knock then, because it came to me suddenly that it was Claire that I loved too. What I had thought was real love wasn't real at all. It was this feeling for Claire that was real. No, not just real. Unique. The only love. The first love. Adam and Eve... Dan and Claire. The only man and the only woman in the world.

"Claire," I called, knocking. "Claire, Claire, darling."

But she didn't come to the door; she didn't answer. The door was unlocked. I pushed it open, but there was no one there. I ran to the TV-phone and called local all over the house, but there was no answer. And then I called for John, but he didn't answer either. I ran to the kitchen, but it was empty, too; and, then I sat down to catch my breath.

They were gone. I knew that.

Claire had found a new love. A better, kinder love than I knew how to give.

I called Lois and told her.

"My down payment," she shouted. "They can't run off like that. I need John for a turn-in. I'm certainly not going to spend the rest of my life with you. How will I ever get a new husband without John. Call the police. Have them traced. We *must* find them."

"Don't be ridiculous, Lois," I told her. "We can't call the police. Remember *we're* married and living together here. You wouldn't want that to get out would you? You can't call them. Besides, I won't let you. Claire deserves some happiness and she's going to get it from the one person who can give it to her best. John deserves a break, too. Neither of us are going to say a word about them the rest of our lives. Remember, our marriage is on file at the filing center. One word from you and the whole world knows what we've done. I'll see to that if I have to call every newscaster in the business."

Lois had backed out of view, but I heard a sob at the other end of the phone.

"Look, I'm sorry," I said. "I don't mean to be so harsh. I know you want a new husband and I'll help you get one. With both of us working on it, it won't take so long. It won't be any hardship for me. I won't need a new wife. Not for a long, long time."



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As I Was Saying...

THE INCREASE in letters from you-all has been most gratifying, and I'm definitely pleased at the number and extent of the discussions that are springing up. However, for my own edification, I'd appreciate listings of story preferences, too, which seem to have slacked off. The more of these I get, the more representative my report on your findings will be. A postcard merely giving me this information will bring editorial blessings upon you, regardless of whether you liked the stories I thought were best.

William F. Temple's "Better Than We Know" was a clear choice for first place in the August issue. "Beyond the Door," by Sam Merwin, Jr., and "Reunion," by Carter Sprague III tied for second place. Russ Winterbotham's "Perfect Discipline" came out third; and "The Taint", by John Jakes and "It's In the Air", by Winston Marks tied for 4th place. No story received more blame than praise, which is always cause for moderate rejoicing.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

Dear Bob:

I don't expect this to get into print—after all, I'm no genius, and after, *after all*, I have no typewriter. My husband has prom-

ised me one for years, but somehow new tools, new tires, and car repairs get all the extra cash in our family.

Anyhow, I'm writing to tell you I enjoyed the November issue of Science Fiction Quarterly very much, even though the stories were a little short, and too few. I do like those lovely, long letters in the letter column, and your editorial about entertainment was just as true as the old saw that "one man's meat is another man's poison". I have frequently noted that stories I considered too infantile were praised lavishly by other readers, down the long years of my fan-ship!

One story, "Salvage", by Lee Priestly, I liked above all the others. In fact, it was a disappointment when it ended so early. In fact, it seemed to me the story had all the necessary elements for making a long novel-let. There was a lot there to develop and to work with. Maybe you could ask Lee if he had anything like that in mind for later publication.

I would like to say that S. S. Boren's story about "noogles" was utterly ridiculous and too childish for worthwhile reading, but to tell the truth, I'm still too busy laughing. What tragedy! What drama! What ho! I *do* hope he learns enough now and then to furnish plenty of padding for his cell.

I would like to tell you how I feel about Jim Harmon's very natural sputter in the letter column. After all, youth is nothing if not deadly serious about itself. Later in life, we can laugh at our earlier intensities, all out of proportion, and frequently way off track. But without the driving urge and blind faith of our youth, this old world wouldn't spin so merrily on its axis! And perhaps less would be attempted, after all. So the boy has a point there.

But the other side of the coin is just as valid. No matter how well or intelligently a young author in his twenties may write, he will have surpassed himself by every year he gains the experience of *living* another year. There is simply no substitute for having lived, and observed, and personally evaluated. There is no remedy for the brilliant youngster who has only read of life, and has not yet achieved it.

True, a young man may gain a measure of success if he is more brilliant than the average would-be writer. But this is a false dawn, and he will have to grow, and his writings must grow with him; for in only ten years, he will have learned enough to be forced to recapitulate, re-form, and newly assess his views of life. It happens to all of us. Whom, among us, would be fool enough to say and write the things he did at twenty one? Not I, I assure you. And it will be so with Jim Harmon, though today, of course, he will not agree with me.

I must ask him to think about one thing he said, however, regarding the "hottest" writers of the times. He states they are so-and-so. I do not agree. You see? Another man's poison, again. And it should be remembered that while some youngsters are starting out on fine careers, the ones having "mute" periods may be held back by circumstances beyond their control—family responsibilities, perhaps. They must wait until they are free, to start their writing, because until they *are* free, they cannot neglect to earn a living in more regular ways. A few write, anyhow, being very clever—but many more need to be free of tethers before they can write. It is because of this that the bulk of our commercial authors develop, published-wise, when they are older. Some wait too long, and never make it. Some aren't as good as they hoped. But the race is not always to the swift—sometimes the stronger ones overtake them.

Well, another *Quarterly* gone, and I wish it were still ahead of me; they are so far apart, darn it! Anyhow, I'll be watching for the next one, as usual.

GWEN CUNNINGHAM, 13801 East 14th St., San Leandro, Calif.

As I've said before, I don't object to typing up an interesting letter (so long as I can read it) when the writer just doesn't have access to a typewriter; it's the ones who type on both sides of the sheet that really gripe me.

The "noogle" story struck me the same

way it did you. On first reading, I grinned, shook my head, and reached for a rejection slip. However, since it did amuse me, I wanted to say a few words of consolation to the author; I read it again in order to fix specific points in my mind. Then I thought and thought, and put it aside to take care of later. ... Later, I picked it up—well, a day or so after that, it suddenly came to me that I'd read the blessed thing five times and still found it amusing. Obviously, I said to myself, this is not rejection-fodder; a fair percentage of the readers are going to get a laugh out of it too, even if they think it ridiculous, etc.

As much as I'm yearning to pour my own words of doubtful wisdom onto the youth-age argument, I won't do so now. Let's wait and see what the readers say; if no one says what I have in mind, I can always spout later. It occurs to me that it was in order to avoid temptations like this that F. Orlin Tremaine consistently refused to add his comments to the letters in "Brass Tacks", twenty years ago; as he said to me, and probably to many others, he didn't want to take the last word unto himself, didn't want to squelch anyone who might possibly be able to say it better. I'm afraid that, in the past, I've jumped the gun and spoiled some readers' fun—which tends to discourage letterwriters and defeats the very purpose of the department.

So, at times, you'll see a letter without any comment after it at all.

HE DIDN'T FORGET

Dear Sir:

Just finished the November issue, and since you seem to be interested in your readers' opinions, thought I would deliver a few.

To start with the cover; just how important is it in selling the magazine? I buy the mag for the stories and don't care if it has a cover or not. Another opinion, strictly my own: I am not interested in fan activities. I feel that the number of active and articulate fans is really too few to have a great effect on circulation; but I'm sure your opinion is worth much more than mine here. One more: I like your editorials very much, particularly the one entitled "Entertainment". Don't you really feel though, that Science Fiction is always going to have a restricted appeal as in the case of the detective story? Wouldn't it be wonderful if it would appeal to as many? Then we really would have some magazines. I'm sure many writers of top-notch ability in other fields could write Science Fiction if it could pay the rates. I suspect that many more writers write for plain old cash than for Art or Literature.

As to the stories; "Meddler's World" was good. Not excellent, but good. "The Regenerators" would have been straight fantasy if Stearns had used a pentagram and colored smoke instead of the gadget. "Fort Iron"

was not developed as well as it could have been, but I think it was the best in the issue. "Noogles, etc." was a queer one. Boren used a lot of strange words, but I can't see that he said anything in particular. "Salvage" was good. I think Priestly handled that literary device very well. Can he do some more along that line? Looking back over those comments, I find that they amount to glowing praise, for me. I have been reading this stuff too long to wax wildly enthusiastic more than once or twice a year.

I like your letter column and hope you never discontinue them. I wonder, as put forward by a couple of contributors, if the reading of Science Fiction really does promote some clarity of thinking. I'm sure it does a great deal in the way of spreading information, but what I particularly mean is the (I believe) scientific attitude that "If you can't prove it, you don't know it." If that were general what would happen to the churches, for instance? (Not to be construed as a poke at religion, but of course religion is based on faith which, by definition, is belief without proof.) If we would examine all our beliefs in this light we might be less comfortable; but things would be a lot more interesting, and we might even start hunting around for some real information.

Have you noticed that only in the letter columns of Science Fiction magazines do you find any evidence of thinking on the part of the writers. Of course I mean *story* magazines. Look even at the letters to *Life*. They say "That baby in the last issue looks just like mine and here is a picture to prove it." Or "That article was wonderful; the same thing happened to me." Drivel.

Since a little mild controversy livens up the columns, I hope the preceding couple of paragraphs will spur someone to take up a little cudgel or two.

One question: why don't you use the digest format? Does it cost more? I don't care; just wondered. If you answer that, how about telling us what things in order, are most important in selling a magazine. To me it's the stories, but I only buy one copy.

You say that Emsh illustrated "Fort Iron", but I can't find his name anywhere. He usually works it into the design. Did he forget?

One thing I feel sure of: you are getting better and better. Hope it shows in the circulation figures.

F.W. ZWICKY, 2244 S. 6th St., Rockford, Illinois.

Lord knows that almost everyone in the publishing and production end of Science Fiction Quarterly wishes he KNEW EXACTLY HOW IMPORTANT the cover was in selling the magazine. We can only make what we hope are intelligent estimates on the basis of past experience, and this seems to add up to the following: the cover

sells and the contents re-sell. The person who has never bought before, or who doesn't buy regularly, can be attracted into buying by a cover that really strikes him or her; the person who was pleased with the last issue will go looking for the next issue and will buy it regardless of the cover—very possibly writing in to tell us if he didn't care for the latest frontespiece.

Okay, that's the principle: we still have the question of what kind of cover attracts the larger number of persons who are not already steady readers? On this, we can only go by statistics—look at the covers which sold well not only on SFQ but on other science fiction magazines, too) and try to find out what it is they all had in common. And do the same with issues which did not sell well and try to find what was lacking. Sounds easy, doesn't it? Well—IT ISN'T!

If you'll look down at the lower right of the illustration for "Fort Iron", just above the words "cracks at" in the caption, you'll see Emsh's signature; it came out very faintly but the "M" and the "H" are almost readable.

NOPE—NOT FOR MALES ONLY

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

Just a few lines to ask, "Aren't there any females not ashamed in this day and age to write a letter to your column? Or is it for males only?" I used to head for the letter section first of all; but now it seems that only the men write—or only their letters are printed.

It's true there used to be a day that, when us females bought one of the science fiction magazines we would pretend interest in other magazines, keeping one eye on the other customers. Then, when no one was looking, we would pick up the magazine (upside down), rush to the clerk, show him just the price, pay him, then roll the book up so it wouldn't be seen and rush home to our room. We'd hide it, then read it only with the door locked and shades drawn, lest folk think we were daffy.

Not now, though. I, for one, walk right up and look the science fiction magazines over, buy the one I like, and to hades with those who don't like it.

Only trouble is, since we've lived here in Prospect, a suburb of Waterbury, Conn., it's almost impossible to find science fiction magazines—any kind—though they do have the pocket-type books, with stiff backs, which I buy occasionally when there's a real good one for my library. But I prefer the regular magazines, as you get a variety of stories, which is what I like.

The other night, I went to the drugstore here in Prospect and found, behind the other books, *Science Fiction Quarterly*, a May issue. Then, on another rack, behind other magazines, I found the August issue—just one of each. I asked the druggist, "What's the matter? You hide the best magazines

behind the silly ones." He just looked at me kind of funny. It's hard to believe that anyone these days could think that science fiction doesn't hold a place of its own, (It's very popular now, with all the movies and publicity, and so on.) or that it should be hidden, as in the old days.

I live here in the suburbs, and my one pleasure is reading, and my one great joy is science fiction. I'm really surprised, though, that I only recognized one author—that is Sam Merwin Jr., a truly great author in science fiction.

Now don't get me wrong; I believe in new authors, and look forward to some, now that the country is more science-fiction minded. But I'd like to see some with really good stories. You don't find them these days, as before—for instance, "The Moon Pool" by A. Merritt, and so on; those were tales to hold you spellbound until the end.

I enjoyed Sam Merwin's "Eye in the Window" and "Beyond the Door"; both were really wonderful stories. But "The Sedulous Apes" was not very well written; nor were "You Risk Your Life" and "Gladstone Planet". (The latter would have been good with a better plot.) "The Guzzler" was fair, and "The Red and the Green" was only fair, too.

What has happened to A. Merritt, L. Sprague de Camp, and so many of the older writers?

Well, I must sound like a first class crank; but really, when one's only real pleasure is reading science fiction you naturally want good reading. As for your covers I think they are lovely. I don't object to the scanty-dressed girls, as they turn me green with envy (I'm one of the dumpy types, 5' 5" and 150 lbs.). But, of course, with this damned crusade on magazines, I suppose that the nekkid girls would be really considered indecent. Oh, well, we can't have everything.

If my letter sees print, even though it's poorly written, I'd like to add that if any fan clubs care to send me a sample copy of really good fanzines, I'll subscribe to join the best ones. Well, I've gone on and on, and probably haven't even gotten my point over; so I'd better shut up before another loyal fan thinks I'm not so loyal and shuts me up.

Come on, female species, what's wrong? Write in and give your viewpoints, too; don't leave it all up to the men.

A very loyal fan for 24 years,
MRS. MARIE WOHL, Talmadge Hill Road,
Prospect, Conn.

I hope that this, plus Gwen Cunningham's letter, will convince you that there's no ban on letters from the females.

A. Merritt, alas, passed away many years ago. L. Sprague de Camp is still writing—You'll find articles by him in Science Fiction Stories, and fiction in this magazine and in Future Science Fiction. He's a very busy gentleman, in other fields, and

doesn't have much time for fiction, these days.

WE'RE EVEN HAPPIER

Dear Bob,

Before me sets the November issue of *Science Fiction Quarterly*, and I am pleased with it. If you'll remember, my last letter started off the same way, except that the all-important "not" was inserted. But this was a good issue—not one really bad thing in the issue. "Meddler's World", first; this was the least good one, I thought. It was almost null in the way of a plot, but still, it was well enough written, and it held my attention, so I have no serious gripe. Stearns' story was good, too. I'd place it first, *but*—it wasn't science fiction, at least by my definition. The weird element was too strong to be ignored. It would have been more in place in *Weird Tales* than in SFQ.

The shorts were almost uniformly good, with perhaps "Salvage" placing second in the issue, and the other two following in order. The "Noogle" story was amusing, although I've read substantially the same thing a dozen different times. "Fort Iron" wasn't up to St. Clair's usual standard, but was still good enough to place fourth in the issue.

Cover...well, it wasn't really bad, but it was distinctly one of Freas' minor efforts; he can do better than that. Interiors were all okay.

The features were the same as usual—good. I especially enjoyed your editorial. I had intended to add some remarks of my own, but looking back over it, I can't think of anything original. But what *should* science fiction be? Tastes differ, certainly. I think that a stf story, like any other, should be well enough written to hold the interest of the reader, but I think it should go a little further. I like to read a story that gives me food for thought, whether it be scientific (in which case the thought would probably be extremely muddled), philosophical, or what-not. Evidently, I'm in the minority, as witness the trend back to space-opera. A word about the 'sense of wonder' James Lewis mentions....I think that mostly, the loss of it lies with the person, rather than the stories. I know that few stories seem to equal the first few I read...but that is more nostalgia than literary judgement on my part. Incidentally, I'd like for James to cite me some of the stories whose concepts left him dazed. And I'm not being sarcastic—I would like to know if they affected me the same way.

I seem to have run on too much, and not said much, at that. So I guess I'll vanish away, until the next SFQ. Oh yes, give the illos to Lewis, Harmon, and Gies, in that order. All were interesting, especially the first two. Wish I could do as well. Say, I said I was going, didn't I...

[Turn To Page 82]



FUN FOR MEN

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I agree that Freas can do better for us than the November cover, and hope you'll agree that the cover on this issue is proof of it.

INTERGALACTIC FLIGHT

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

I want to disagree with a certain reader in the latest issue of *Science Fiction Quarterly*. I don't remember his name; I remember only his arguments. He seemed particularly anxious to tear apart the author of the spaceflight article by constructing a *reductio ad absurdum*. He did some neat semantic juggling and—if I may be permitted to say so—he unintentionally gave some opinions or beliefs as fact.

One of his contentions was that there is at present no conceivable method for intergalactic flight. Not feasible, maybe, but certainly conceivable. The general qualifications as "given" by most writers are approximately these: it must be capable of producing high acceleration, up to light speed; and it must produce no strain on the passengers. This would seem impossible, but has already been achieved in nature: the gravitational field.

If the occupant in a space ship is falling in the gravitational field say of Jupiter, his ship is accelerating at 2 1/2 gravities, but he experiences no strain; to the contrary, he is weightless. Why? The gravitational pull is exerting its force upon every atom of his body, whereas with a rocket only the ship is pushed. In the field of the star Sirius B, he would fall about 20,000 g's, with no strain. Therefore, if a "drive" could be constructed which would give a push or pull on every atom in its field of influence, giving no-strain acceleration.

Agreed, there are, if you'll pardon the pun, *astronomical* engineering problems. If you had a drive acting on this simulated gravity system, there would be the problem of how to keep the drive from affecting the orbit of a nearby planet; Pluto was discovered because of its affect on Uranus' orbit, and it has only about 1 earth gravity. Presumably, a technology capable of developing a device capable of simulating gravity would also be capable of devising a limiting device. The actual construction is, at present, impossible; but at least in principle it is possible. Instantaneous or near-instantaneous acceleration and deceleration aren't feasible; they are definitely conceivable.

In re Bobby Katz of Alpine: where do you get the idea that the human body can't stand the acceleration needed to attain escape velocity? One *g* is 32 feet per second increase each second. Five gravities is equal to an increase of 160 feet per second/per second. The velocity of escape for our ball of mud is seven miles per second, which

works out to 36,960 feet per second, or about 37,000 feet. At an increase of 160 feet per second/per second, slightly over 2300 seconds of 5g acceleration would be required. I am puzzled as to why Bobby considers the human body to be incapable of standing just under four minutes of five times the pull of gravity. They might black out, but that's all. Men in test centrifuges have withstood more than this with no bodily harm than an occasional capillary hemorrhage.

One last bone to pick. The first reader I mentioned made a remark about the same attitude being had toward the light barrier as to the sound barrier. The sound barrier problem was an engineering one; planets had been observed to travel faster than sound. The light barrier problem, however, is a problem of basic physics. The inertia of matter increases as the speed approaches that of light, so that no amount of energy could make a mass exceed the speed of light. This has been borne out in experiment. It may be said that I have toyed with natural laws in suggesting gravity control. Not at all; gravity varies greatly, since it is a matter of fields of forces, and is a phenomenon. The light barrier is a basic principle. An analogy? A certain size auto wheel at a certain speed gives a precise number of r. p. m.'s. The gas mileage can be changed, with a water injection system. We can't vary light speed or even achieve it. It is possible, if a method is found, to devise a "water injection system" for gravity.

The issue was about par for the magazine, maybe a little over. The lead story was best, but then longer stories usually provide more plot development. Bob Madle's section was good. It's a rare fan column that includes fan news lately. The letter column was good. There were a few open minds that didn't close on anything, but the letters were generally good, with a choice selection of "personalities." I think that SFQ will survive the "slump."

MIKE CHANDLER, 514 N. St. Mary St., Carthage, Texas

The increase in letters seems to indicate that SFQ has shown a bit of improvement; readers' praise, suggestions, and gripes certainly help. So, to all of you who've shown that you care enough to write—keep up the good work!

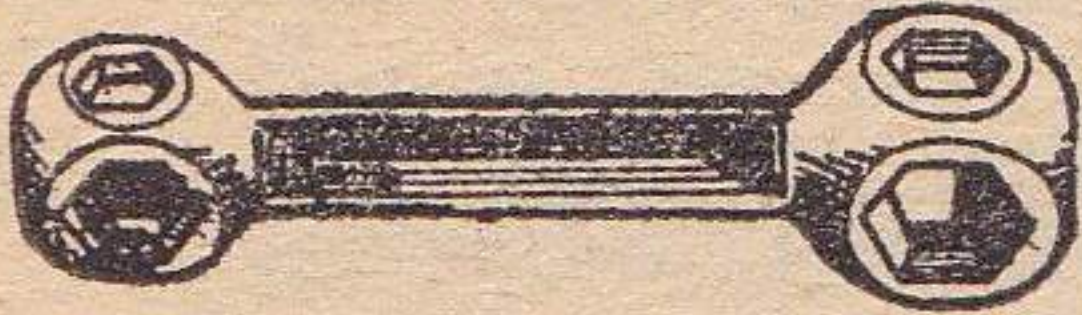
Some have asked me why I don't go in for "pep talks", and urge readers to go out and introduce SFQ to others. My feeling has always been that if the book is good enough to warrant such activity, the satisfied customer doesn't have to be urged!

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

My quarterly comments, now that I've finished the November issue. The featured novel, "Meddler's World", was excellent; I enjoyed every word. In some ways, it re-

[Turn To Page 84]

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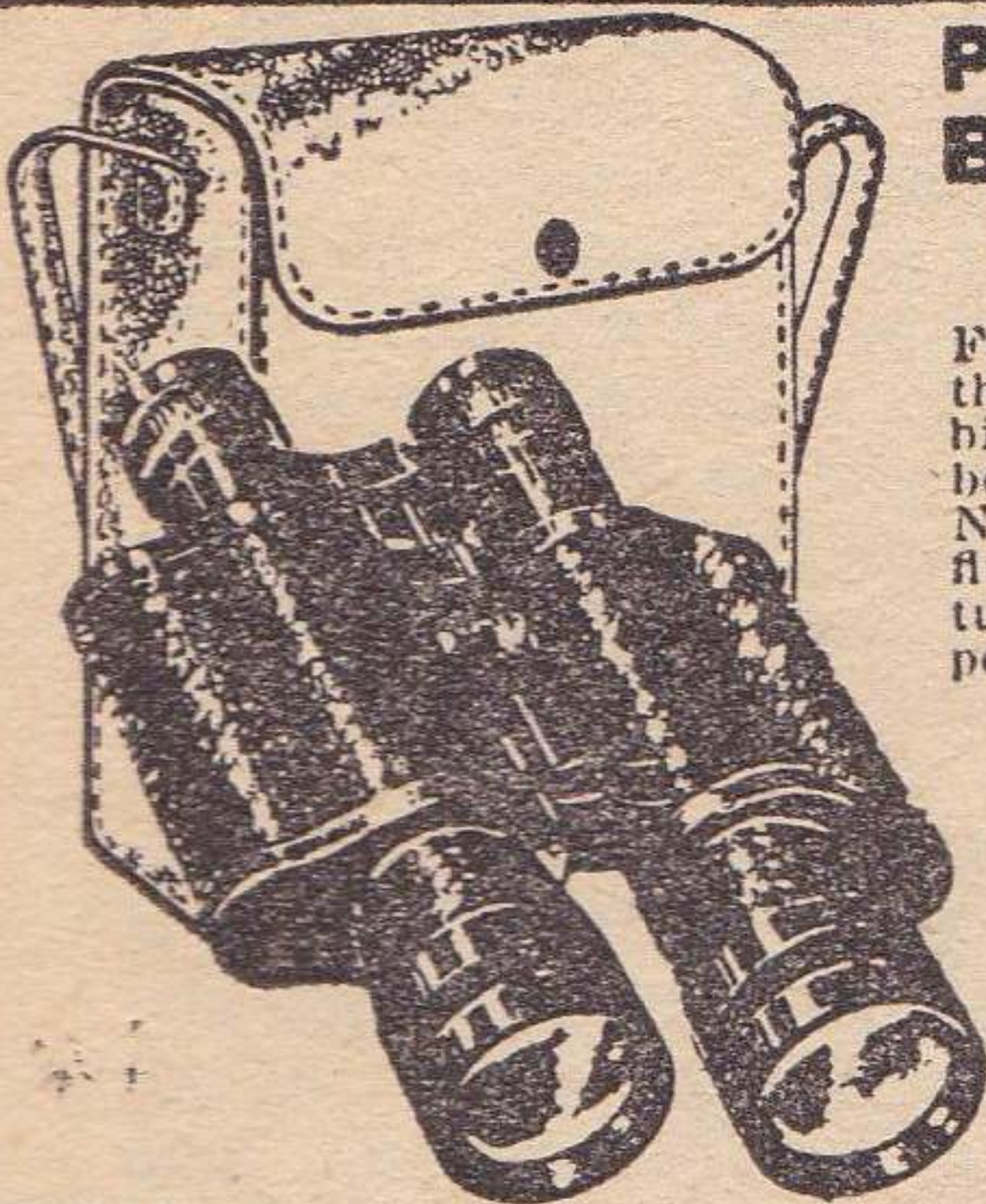
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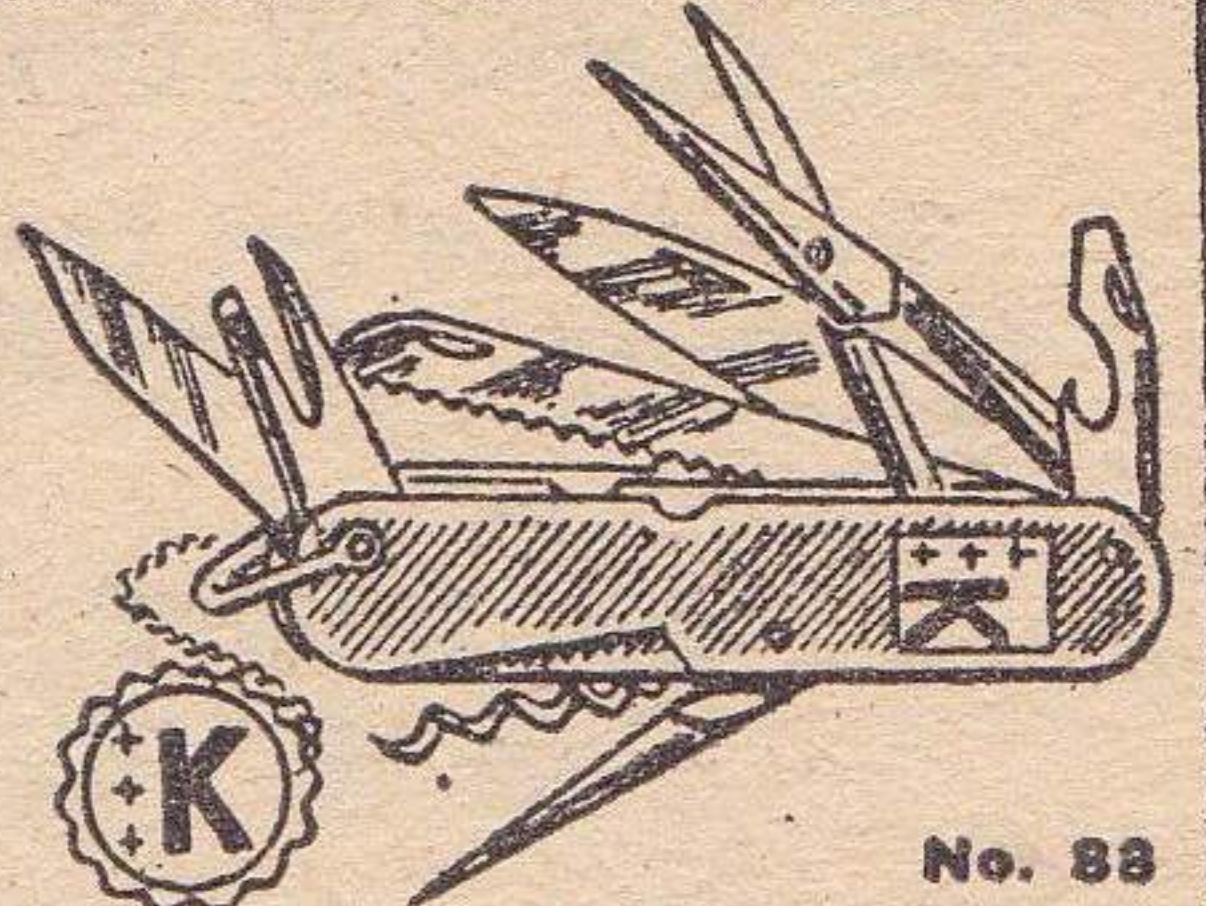
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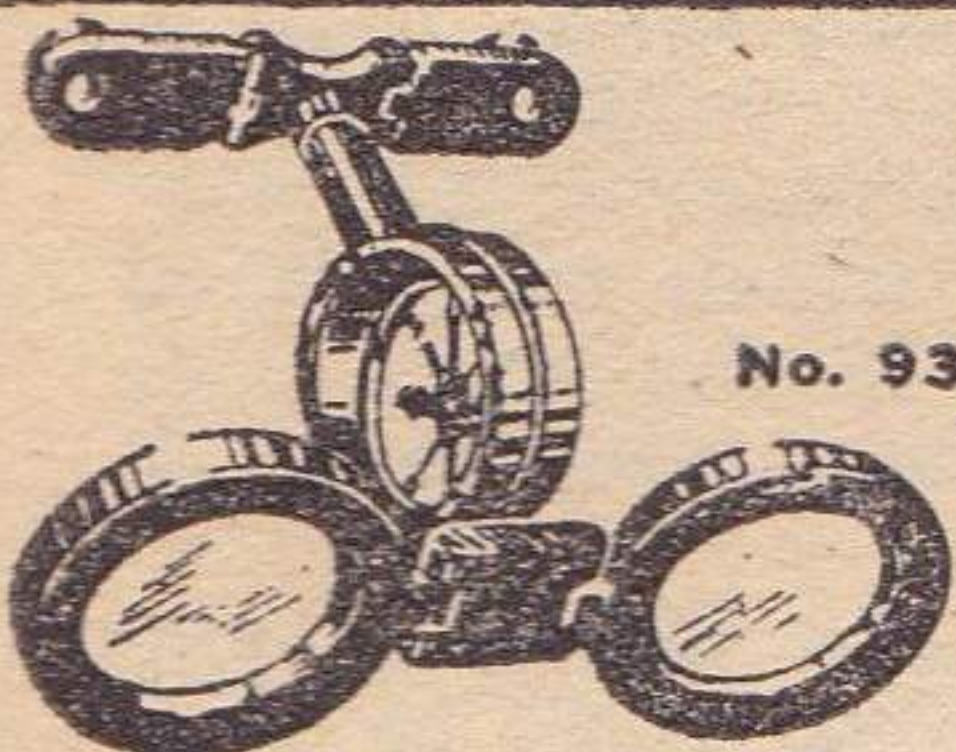
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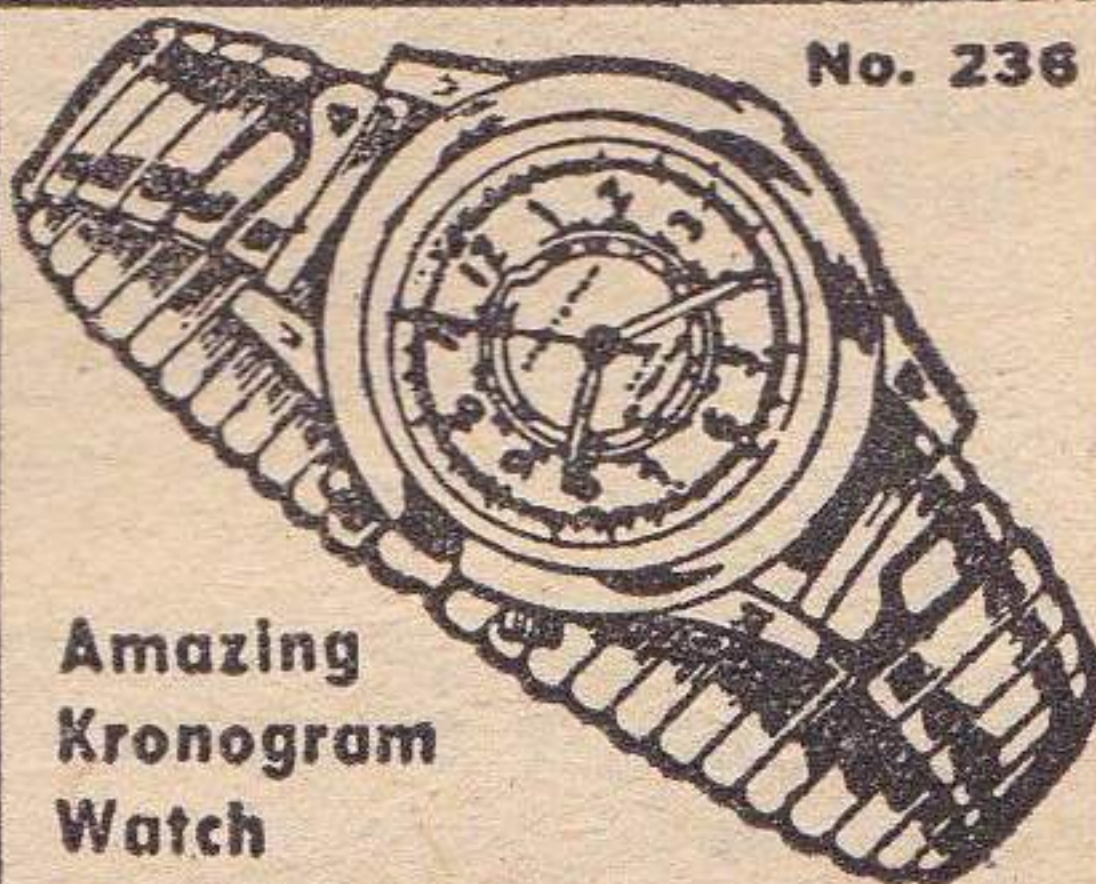
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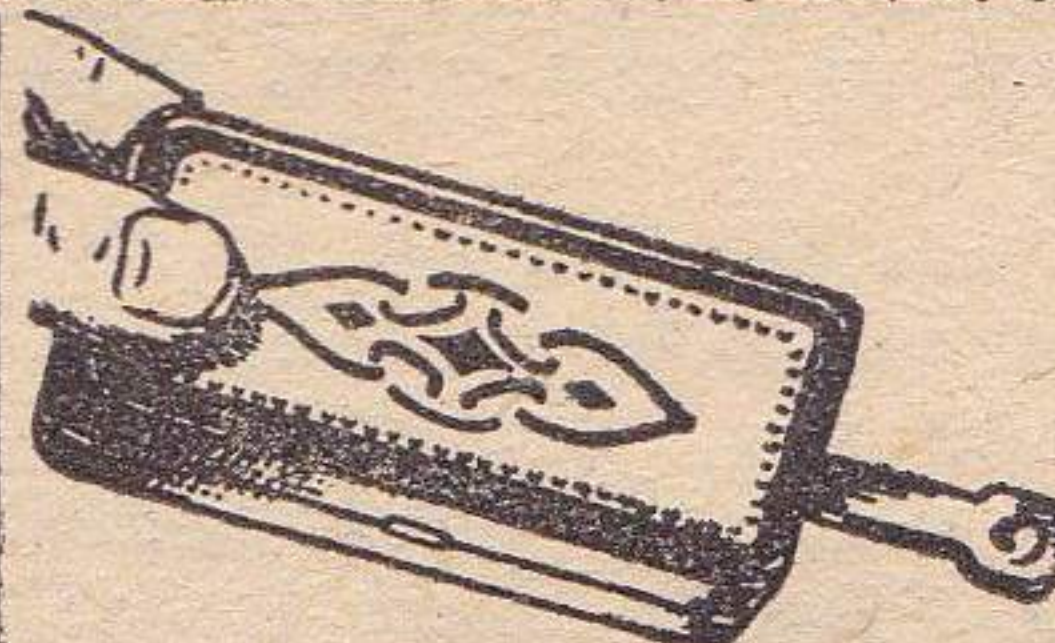
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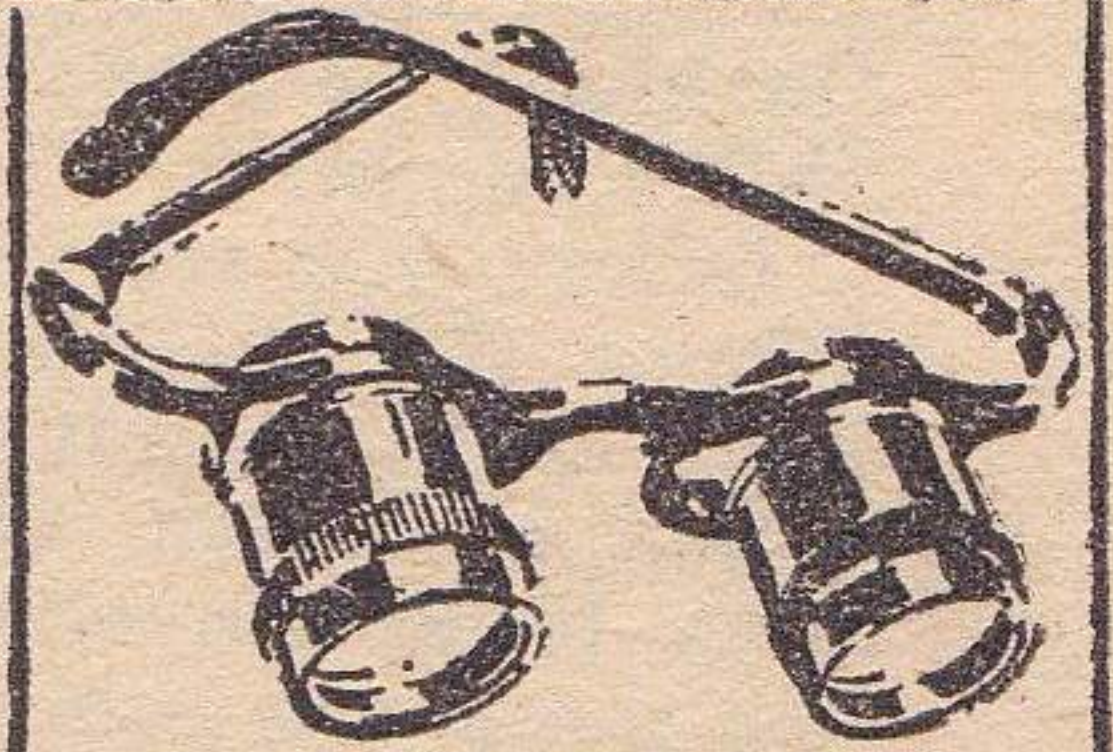
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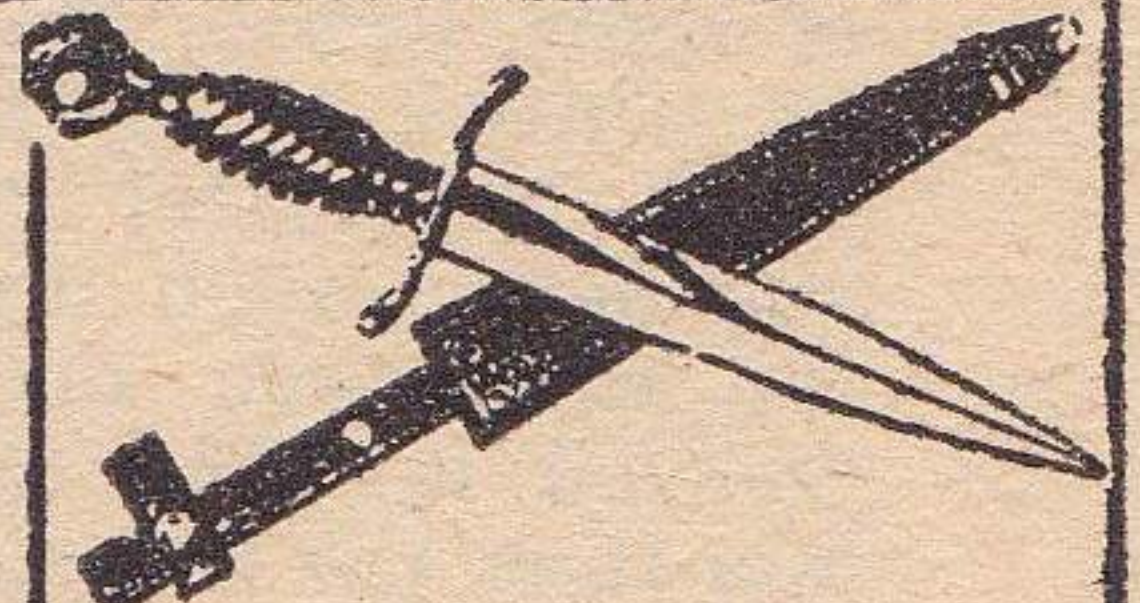
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minded me of the old air novels, back in the 20s and 30s (*Aces, G-8 and His Battle Aces*, etc).

The novelet, "The Regenerators", was cleverly written; short stories were good, as far as they are intended.

Now regarding our letter section argument on short or long letters. For myself, I enjoy any letter, if it has a few points of interest and a bit of intelligence; but the usual ribbing and severe criticism found in a majority of letters—that's out. Maybe the writer of such letters knows what he is dishing out, but it gets a little monotonous, as Mrs. Kenneth Miller's letter stated. Keep them short and interesting.

The cover was well done; that jet job gives me some ideas in my plane modeling. W.C. BRANDT, Apt. N, 1725 Seminary Ave., Oakland, 21, California.

The verdict has been, "Keep the letters interesting, and let the lengths come as they will!"

ON LIGHT, EINSTEIN, AND DR. RHINE

Dear Editor:

I'd like to make comment about light and Einstein. One thing I've wondered about: If you were in a rocket, and were traveling, say, 25,000 m.p.h., and you had a flashlight turned on and pointed toward the nose of the ship, would the beam of light from that flashlight be traveling at light speed plus 25,000 m.p.h.?

Before you try to answer, let me do the honors. No. The light would be traveling at light speed relative to you. Relative to a planet or a sun, the beam of light might seem to be traveling "faster than light", but there are complications which I don't think are particularly relevant right now. As such, you could never exceed the speed of light except as relative to the motion of some material object. Being that speeds are completely relative anyway, you could theoretically pass the speed of light. The thing about this all is that some people think it may be possible to surpass the speed of light in a rocket. This is not so, since the speed of light (which must always be measured as relative to the observer) is always constant. No matter how fast you travel, you will never reach that speed; but relative to the earth you may have passed it and doubled it. Who says we have to stay at less than the 670 million m.p.s. mark?

This is something I've wondered about much before, and have gone so far as to question some people on it. The answer is simply that it does seem to be that way. I don't know. Maybe we'll find out later, hmmm?

I was very pleased to find the letter column extended in area. It seems that such columns are coming back into general acceptance by editors. Why?

I refer you to page 36 and 37 of August

SFQ and the statements anent J.W. Campbell, Jr. and Dr. J.B. Rhine. First, I do not know J.W.C., but I have an immense respect for his mind. I do know Dr. Rhine, as we have been corresponding about some experimenting I've been doing in ESP. Last week I met the gentleman and was able to talk with him and, as a matter of course, the people he works with at the Parapsychology Lab at Duke University in Durham, N.C.

I'm an extremely cautious person when it comes to accepting things pertaining to the "mystical" or even related to it in the slightest way. Regardless of what work Rhine has done, ESP still is considered of that genre. I thought to do some experiments in ESP, first to prove or disprove its existence to my satisfaction, and second to enter into competition for a scholarship. I ran tests, read books, and gathered data. I have not yet finished work, even though I started last year about November or so (earlier, since I read on it during the summer). I am having to correct my work now, since some mistakes in scoring were shown me by one of the people at the Lab. However, I have seen enough to know that there is something to be found in ESP. I think I've come on something myself, but I'm not sure.

To continue about Rhine: after meeting him, and talking to him and Dr. Pratt, and also exchanging a couple of letters with Dr. Mangan, I have found that these people definitely have something to work on. The thing which struck me most about them is that they are exploring something unknown, and are doing it in such a manner that precautions are being taken which would have been considered foolish if the work was being done on, for instance, electronic calculators.

Fantastic precautions are taken. If you think not, I think Dr. Rhine would be most pleased to have you drop by and investigate for yourself. I know what precautions I had to take with my testing for ESP, and still if I turn up something, people will demand that I repeat the tests under even more difficult conditions. Science does not play with things of this nature, and it is very reluctant to see the work showing results no matter how ridiculous the conditions are. People are thinking in material terms, so it is nearly impossible to prove something to them which seems non-material. Psychologists (who are most vehement in denial) even admit that if the same amount of proof were presented to them in proving something else, they would have accepted the other thing twenty years ago.

The subject is too incredible for belief.

I wish to assure you that these people have found something. And, further, instead of spending time trying to prove this for people who will not believe, regardless of proof, they are going ahead in the investigation of psi talents. I hope to be at Duke this fall and will probably do more

[Turn To Page 86]

MYSTERY! MAGIC! SCIENCE! FUN!

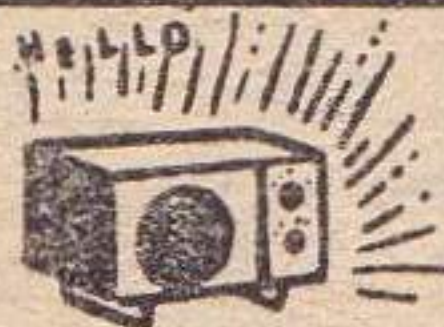
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A necessary tool for the amateur magician and a good joke too. Plastic, 14 inches long with white tips and a black center. 5 exciting tricks—Rises, jumps, produces silk, etc.
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Sing, laugh, talk, crack jokes from an other room and your voice will be reproduced thru the radio! Fool everybody into thinking it's coming right out of the radio. Easily attached to most standard radios. Made of handsome enameled metal 4 inches high.
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They move! They talk! They're weird! Guaranteed to shut the blabbermouths up for good. It'll really embarrass them. It's a set of big false teeth that when wound up, start to chatter away, like crazy. A great comic effect for false teeth on cold nights.
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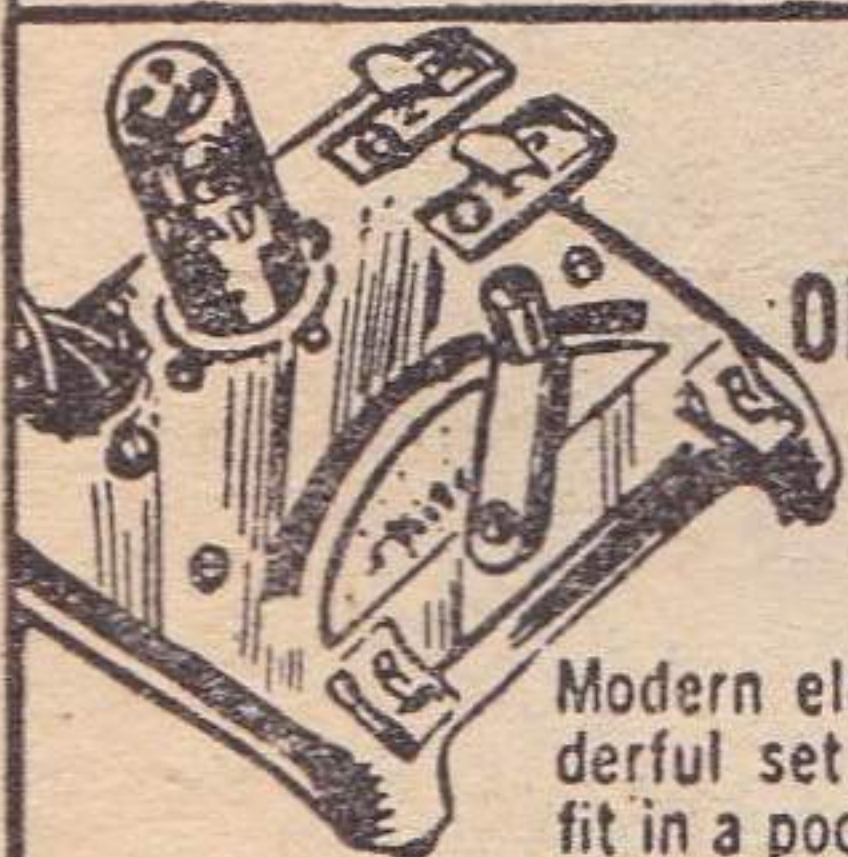
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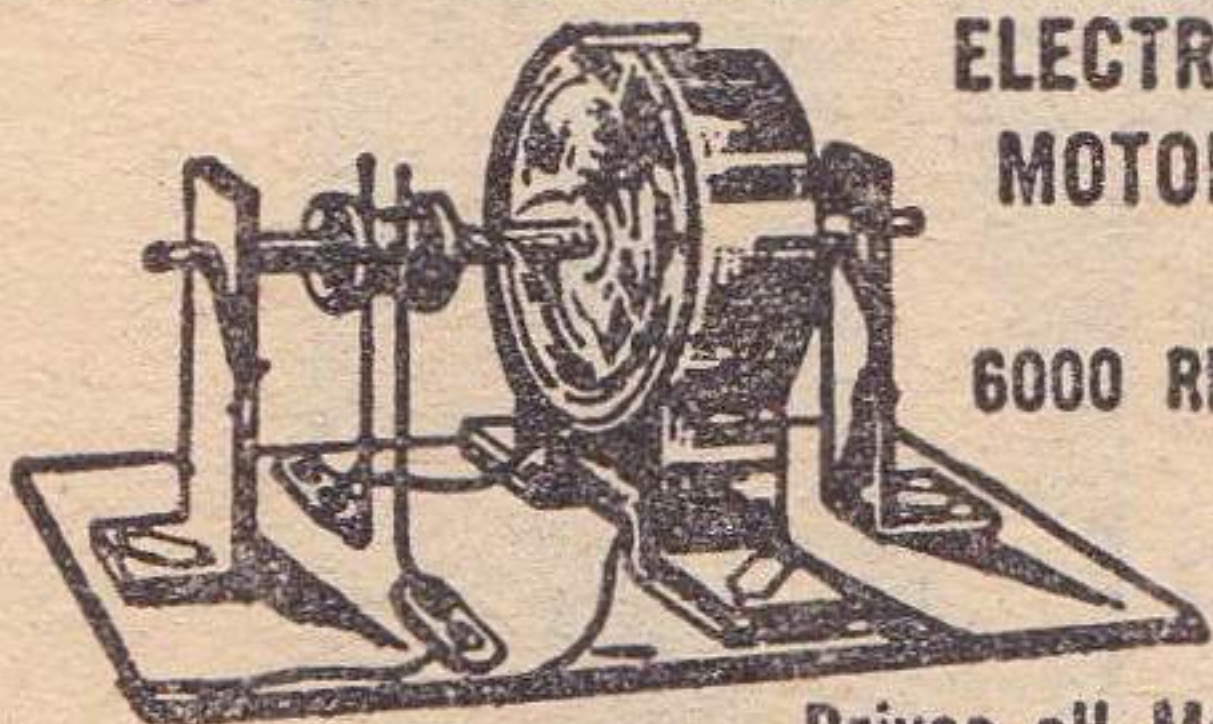
Show them the "naughty" pictures inside. They'll twist it and turn it to see, but all they do is blacken their eyes.
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Style 160 — For you he-men, we've got the newest, most exciting and tremendous play suit of its time. A complete Superman outfit in fine durable washable rayon gabardine. Outfit includes red cape with screened Superman figure, navy and red suit with gilt figure "S", and belt. Be first to get this wonderful outfit. Sizes 4-14.

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6000 RPM

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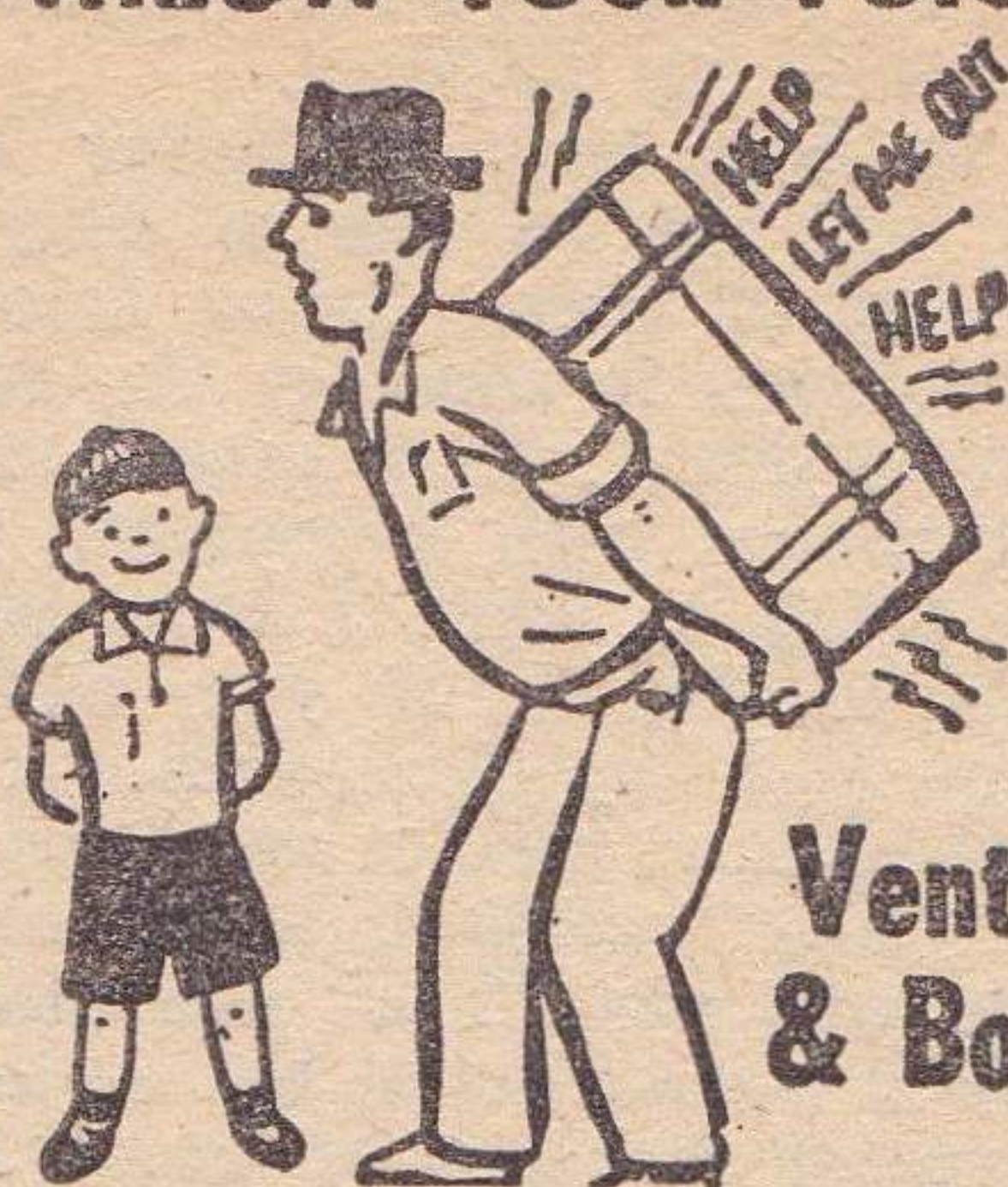


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reading research when I can have the Lab's library at my disposal.

I do hope that whomever wrote the section will not be one to deny ESP on the grounds of mere say-so from others who refuse even to consider the subject. If you wish to doubt, first give it a fair chance. Experiment with it yourself. After you see this thing at work I hope you will either write to me, or if you will, contact Dr. Rhine (c/o the Parapsychology Lab). Until proof *against* ESP is established, no one can say "Nay" without being called a fool—those who say "Yea" are also being called fools in some circles, but at least they have a greater measure of proof for what they say.

One thing I might add about Rhine. You mention that he is the "kind of person easily imposed on". If you ever get to talk with him about his work, you will discover that that idea is not true. He does not dismiss people who come to him with a wave of his learned hand...but neither does he accept their stories without either questioning the person's reliability, sanity, or veracity. He is simply a scientist who has departed from the "white tower" to study one of man's (if, indeed, the talent belongs to man exclusively) more curious sides. He understands why people have ignored his work for the most part, and for that reason does not bother proving, but rather is exploring and going ahead.

If you are interested, I am not completely

sold on the idea, but I am certainly open-minded enough to accept proof without becoming ridiculous in my demands.

Oho! So it was de Camp who doesn't care for Rhine's work and Campbell, Jr's liking for the man. Tsk.

This letter has dragged enough, so I will spare you further suffering. *However* (ah yes, I can be disgustingly lengthy in my farewells), let Wherry, Terwilleger, and Williamson have the originals in that order. SAMUEL J. JOHNSON, 1517 Penny Dr., Edgewood, Elizabeth City, N.C.

I think we can agree on one point, any-ways that the last word on ESP hasn't been said yet. And if and when the evidence (not "testimony", which isn't scientific evidence, as James Blish pointed out in an article some years ago—"What Is Evidence?" in the March 1951 issue of Future) is sufficient, then science in general will accept ESP.

Human weakness being what it is, there is always a chance that scientists are over-conservative, or even near-sighted, in some instances. However, there's a wide difference between this and a campaign to suppress valid evidence, which the proponents of not-yet-accepted "discoveries" often accuse scientists of undertaking. I've seen no grounds for believing that the latter is the case with ESP.

[Turn To Page 88]

ORIENTAL "SAMURAI WARRIOR" HUNTING KNIFE



TRY THIS!

\$4.44

Open an old phone book to page 1. Plunge the point down into the book. This amazing tempered blade will pierce over 400 pages cleanly! (An ordinary knife can't cut this thickness.)

The "SAMURAI WARRIOR" Knife—an exotic and mysteriously beautiful knife—from the strange oriental city of Seki in ancient Gifu. It is designed and executed by the rare craftsmen who created the world-famous "Samurai" Swords. This knife is precision made, 9 in. long, skillfully balanced and with tough, solid weight. The blade itself is double-edged, razor sharp, and of heavy Stainless Steel. To the hunter or fisherman who takes pride in his gear, it's a dream come true—for this is really a magnificent knife.

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This "Samurai Warrior" Knife is a hunter's delight and an ideal collector's item—handsome enough for any room. You'll want a matched pair for your den or recreation room.

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OF THE
DRAGON**
IN
RED and GOLD



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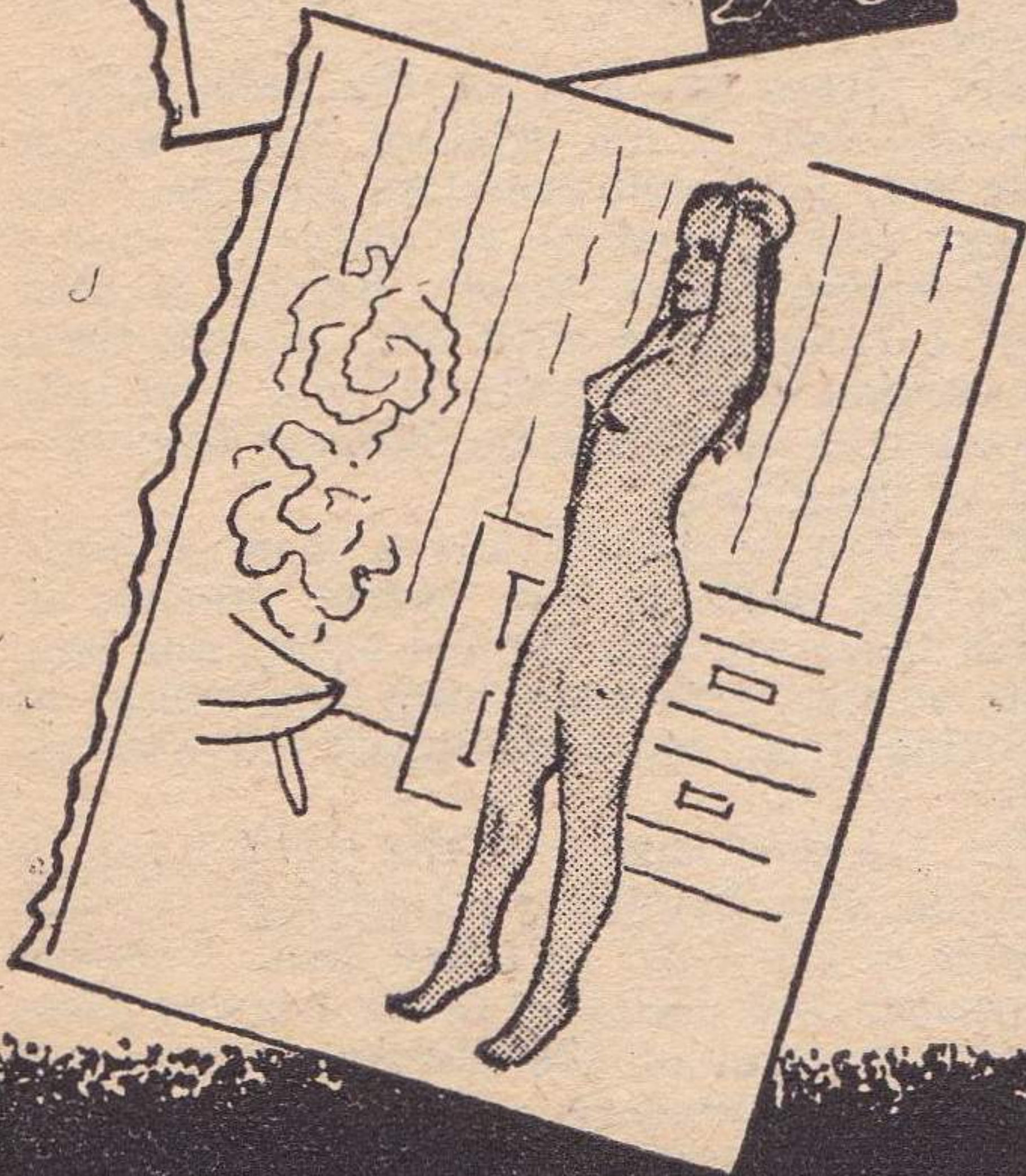
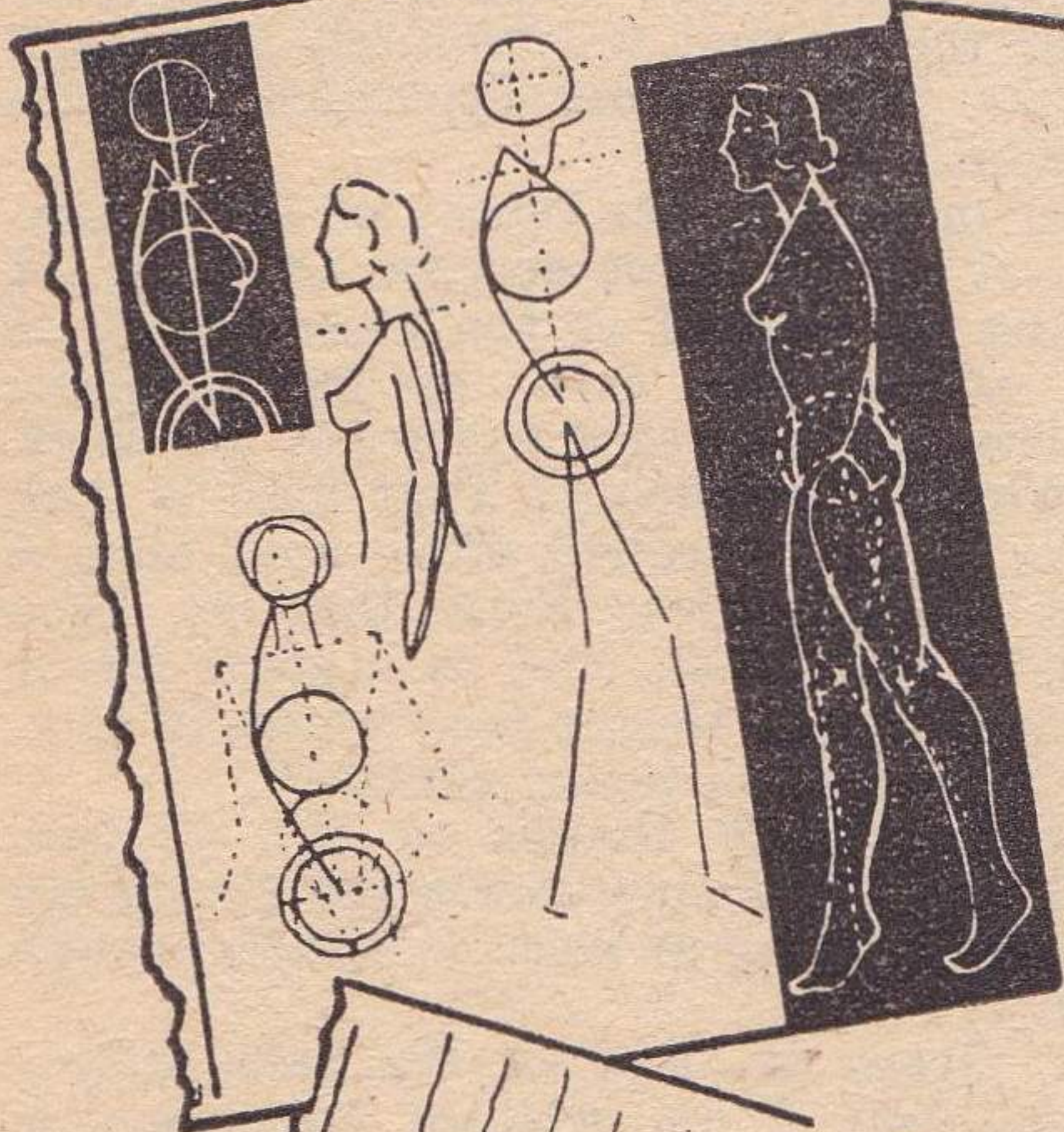
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Science Finds Healing Substance That Relieves Pain—Shrinks Hemorrhoids

For the first time science has found a new healing substance with the astonishing ability to shrink hemorrhoids and to relieve pain—without surgery.

In case after case, while gently relieving pain, actual reduction (shrinkage) took place.

Most amazing of all—results were so thorough that sufferers made astonishing statements like "Piles have ceased to be a problem!"

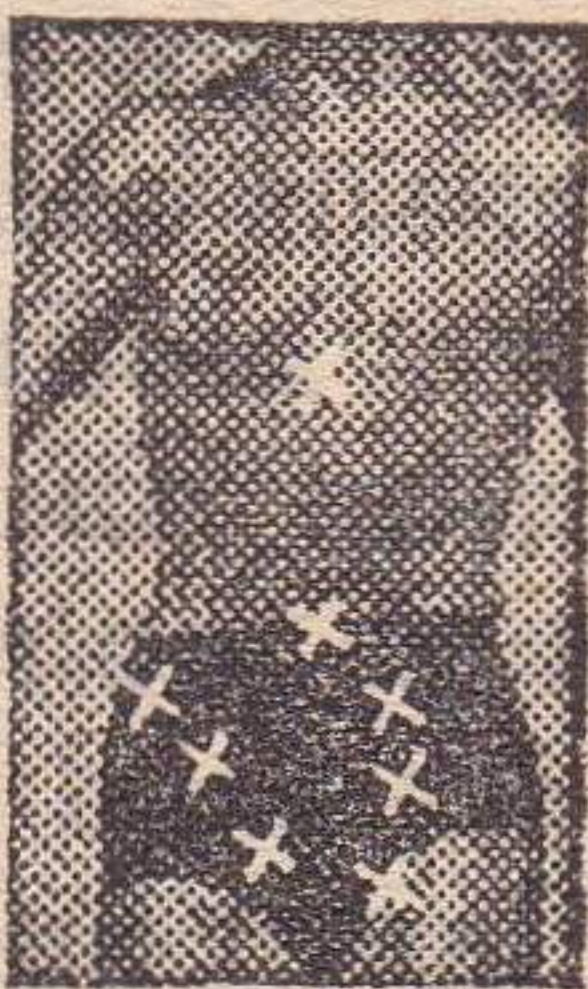
The secret is a new healing substance (Bio-Dyne*)—discovery of a world-famous research institute.

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY IDIOTIC?

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

This will be another "idiotic missive". Robert Coulson says it is that kind that makes a letter column worthwhile. I guess he is right. An "idiotic missive", according to Mr. Coulson, is, no doubt, one in which opinions are expressed that he does not agree with.

Mr. Coulson says that only *one* theory will work on any subject out of the thousands put forward. I disagree with Mr. Coulson only about 100% and would say that practically *every* reasonable theory works on any given subject—instead of only one. Under different conditions and different times there is hardly any theory but what will work. For example, in Salesmanship, which has been my line of work, the books on the subject of selling all lay down certain rules that they claim must be followed to achieve success. I have worked at selling from Seattle to San Diego and from New York City to Miami and I have seen all the rules of whatever kind broken by successful salesmen. So that, from experience, I know there is *no one* method, or rule, or theory that is absolutely necessary to follow. They all work (provided that the individual *works*).

Even in science, the theory of the propagation of light is another good example. At one time we learned of the wave theory of light; at another time, or by different scientists, that it was a stream of particles. Now what is the theory? That light is both a wave in the so-called ether and, also, a stream of particles. Both theories have proved to be correct. And so it goes! Never is there only one theory that works in anything, Mr. Coulson to the contrary.

However, many thanks to Mr. Coulson and also to Mr. James Lewis for giving my letter some rating at least—idiotic though it was.

Mrs. Grace M. Kay of the same city—Atlanta—that I am writing from, makes some very pertinent remarks, such as, "*The gadget stories become so gadgetty that I could hardly follow them*". Bravo! to Mrs. Kay! I fully agree with her, though there are certain few individuals who love long descriptions of all the mechanical devices—real or imaginary.

Mrs. Kay certainly has a good thought when she deplores the horror stories, of which there are far, far too many, and suggests stories with something that might be inspiring from more advanced extraterrestrials.

Jim Harmon sure tells the truth when he says that Ray Bradbury's anthology "Golden Apples of the Sun" is a bad book. I bought it recently and declare I threw it away after reading several of the stories; it was not worth further reading—just another example of Bradbury's efforts—wholly unin-

[Turn To Page 90]

This 49½¢ STORM WINDOW protects your family all winter!

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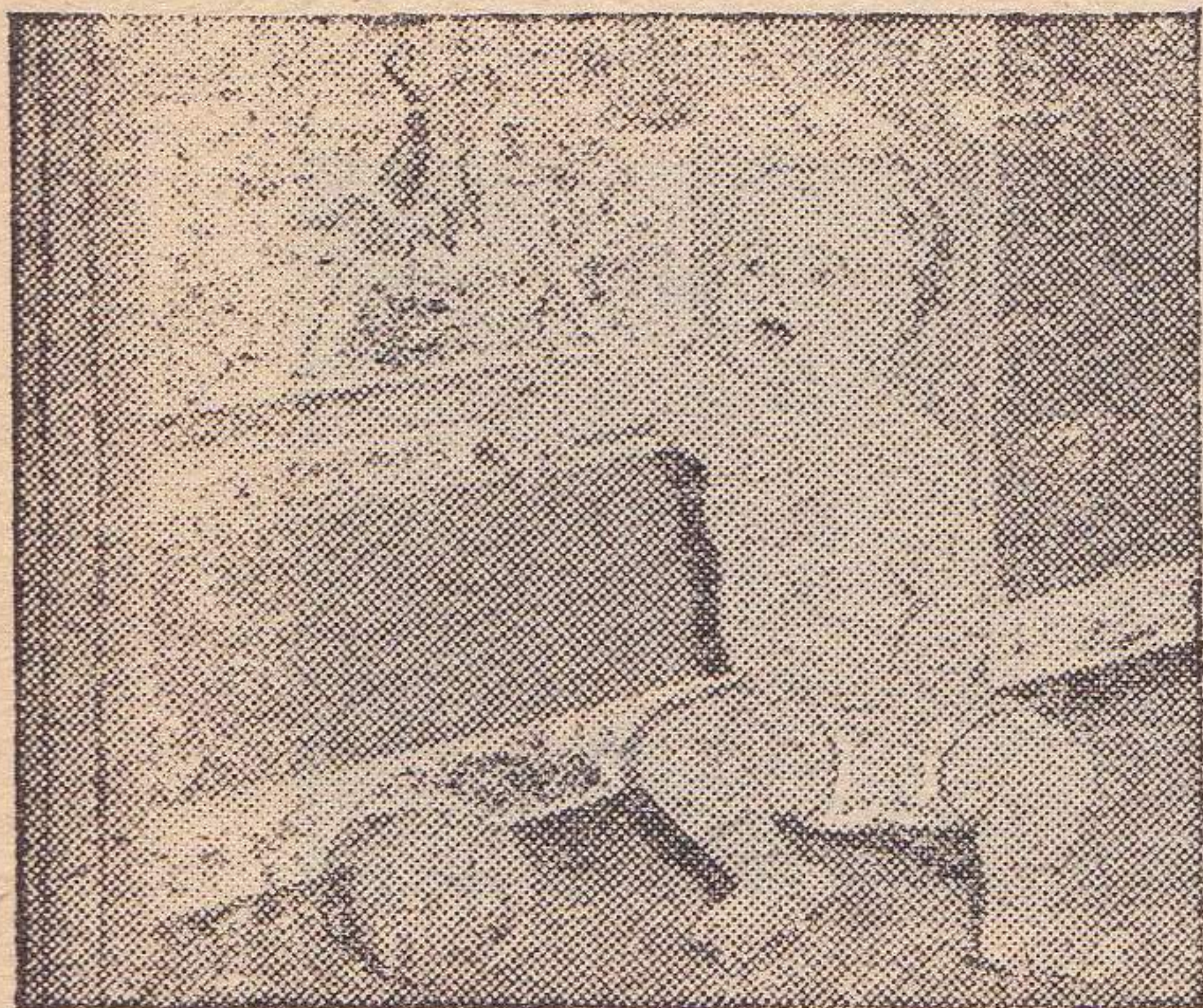
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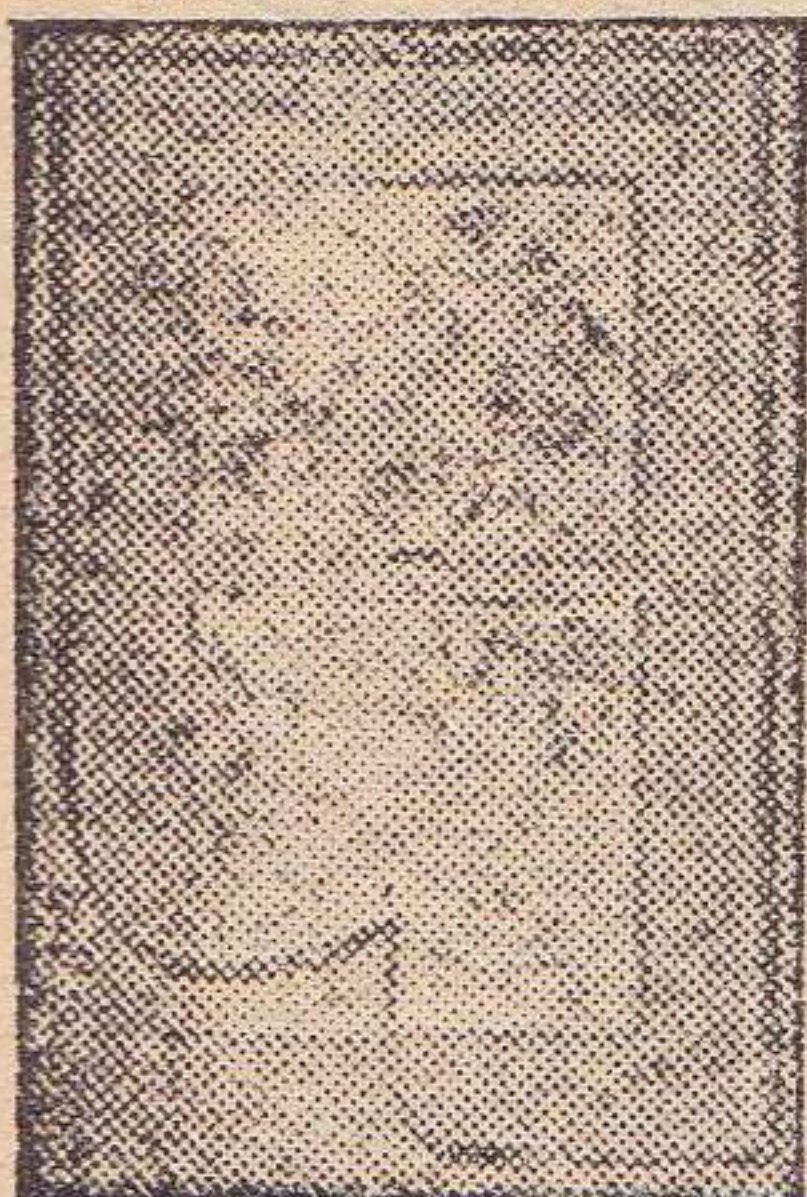
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LOW-COST HEALTH PROTECTION!



You can hardly see this **TRANS-KLEER** storm window—it's wonderfully transparent, yet it protects your loved ones from winter's frigid blasts. And each window costs only 49½¢ cents each!

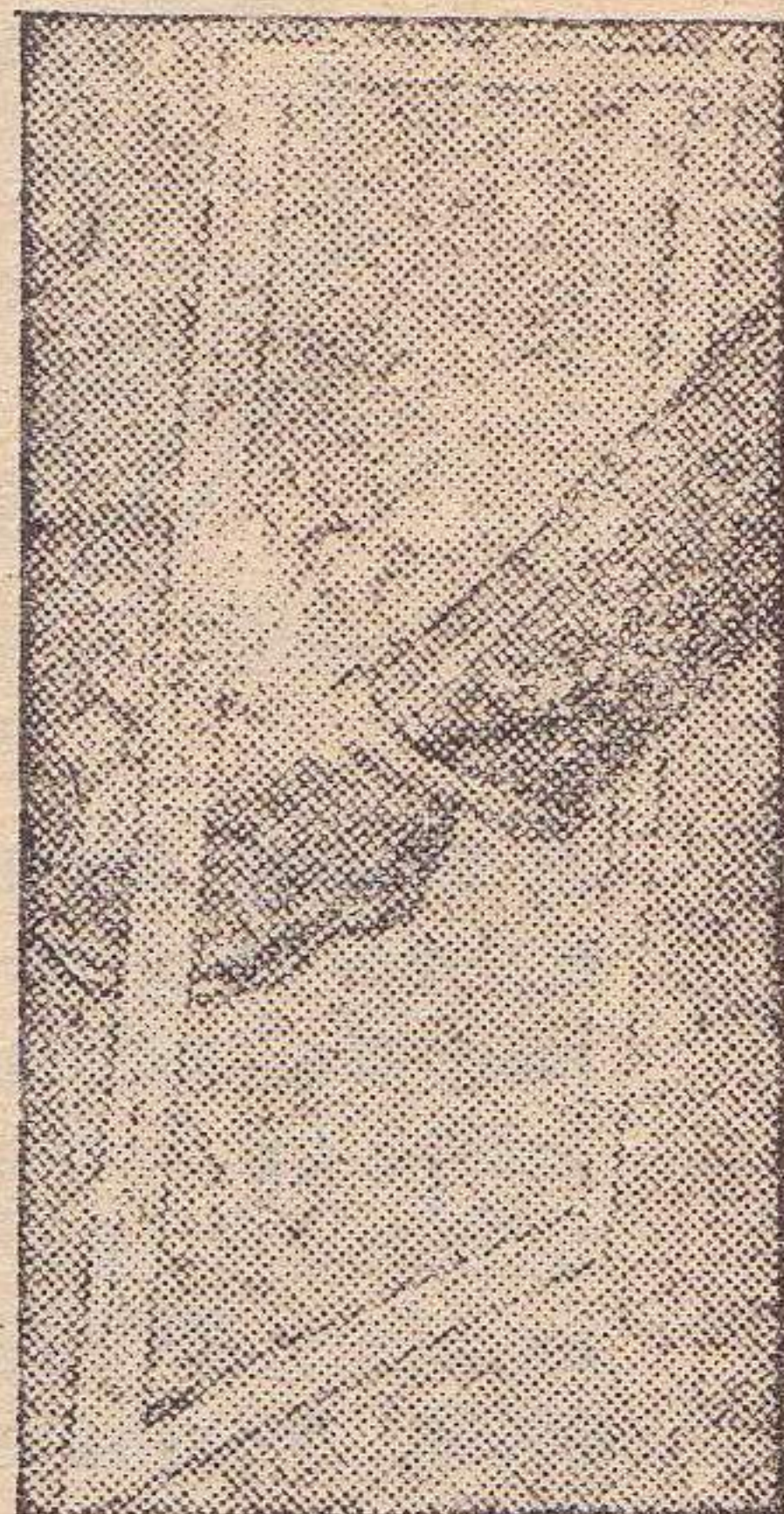


Lift Adheso
Border
For Airing!

So simple! So quick! Just lift border for airing of rooms. Just **ANOTHER** feature of **TRANS-KLEER** windows—usually **NOT** found in others!

5 WAYS BETTER!

1. Glasslike transparency. Not milky or cloudy.
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3. Waterproof and Fire Retardant.
4. Climate resistant—even at 25 below freezing.
5. Re-usable year after year.



TRY ONE AT OUR RISK!

Over 2,000,000 of these new type storm windows were sold last winter alone. We invite you to try one, too, entirely at **OUR RISK**—no obligation whatsoever for you! When you've **TESTED** it—when you see how easily and quickly it goes on, you'll never again use the heavy, bulky, old fashioned kind! No more back-breaking installation! No more broken glass! It's a new, safe, sure way to winter comfort—for only pennies per window. **TRANS-KLEER** comes in kits 36 inches by 432 inches—**ENOUGH FOR 10 AVERAGE SIZE WINDOWS, AT ONLY \$4.95—HARDLY 49½¢ EACH!** In all, you receive 108 **SQUARE FEET!**

PROVE IT YOURSELF WITH THIS SIMPLE MATCH TEST!

Try this: on a windy day, hold a lit match just inside a **CLOSED** window. The first strong gust of wind will blow it out. **NOW** put up a **TRANS-KLEER** window...you'll find that a lit match will **NOT** blow out **EVEN IF YOU KEEP YOUR REGULAR WINDOW OPEN!** No wonder so many have been sold! No wonder so many home owners, hospitals, farmers, buildings and churches are switching to **TRANS-KLEER**! To avoid disappointment, rush your order **NOW**—while our supply lasts! **SEND NO MONEY**. Simply fill in coupon and mail at once. Pay postman only 4.95 plus a few cents postage. Try a window for 5 days—test it. If not delighted, return the other 9 for **FULL REFUND**. **SPECIAL OFFER FOR BULK BUYERS:** 8.95 for 2 full kits (216 sq. ft.); 20.95 for 6 kits; 36.95 for 12 kits. **ACT NOW!** Mail the coupon **TODAY**. (CANADIANS: avoid tariff. Send direct to Thoresen Ltd., Dept. US-47, 45 St. James St. W, Montreal 1, P.Q.)

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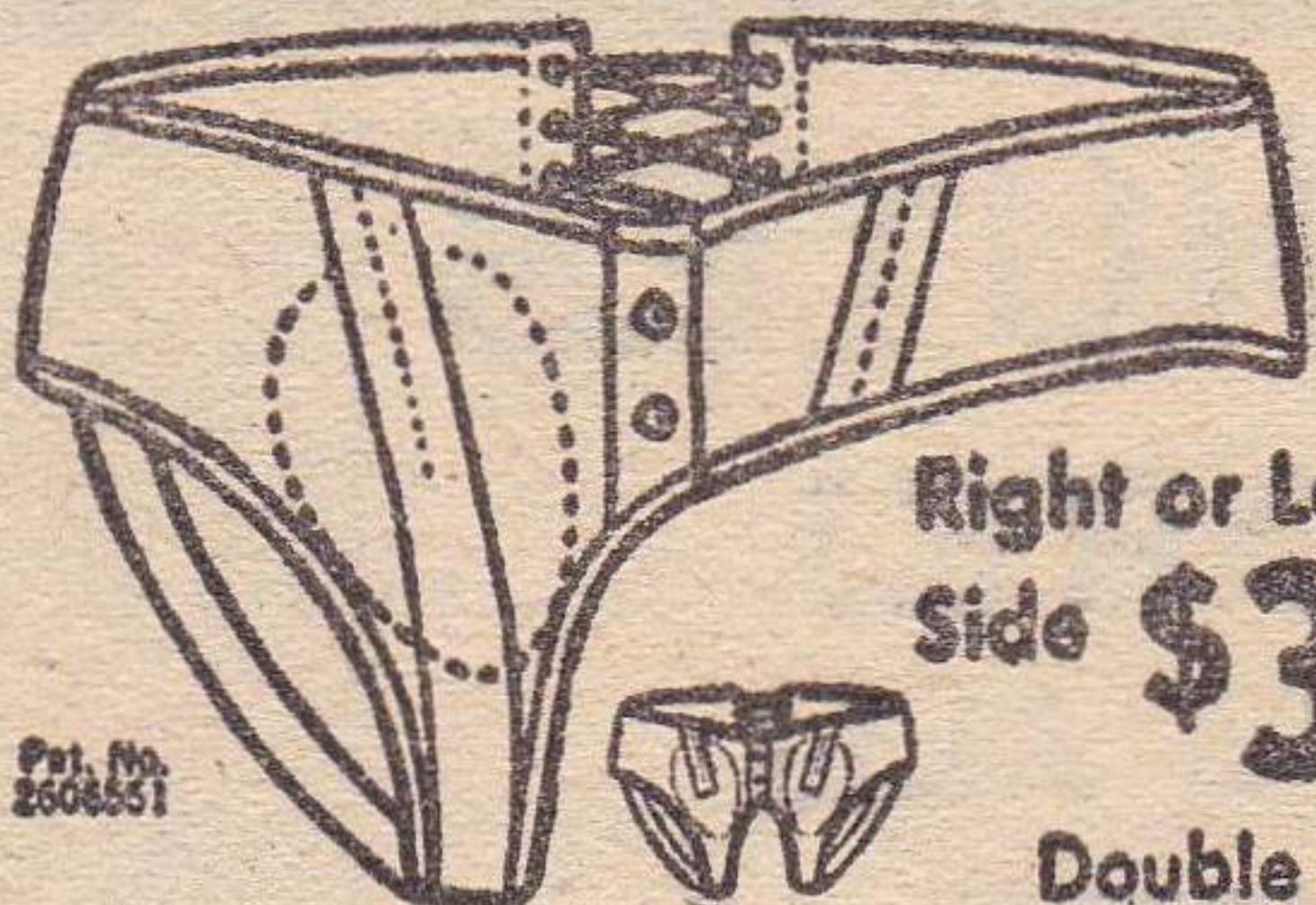
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A strong, form fitting washable support designed to give you relief and comfort. Adjustable back-lacing and adjustable leg straps. Snaps up in front. Soft flat groin pad—**NO STEEL OR LEATHER BANDS**. Unexcelled for comfort, **INVISIBLE UNDER LIGHT CLOTHING**. Washable. Also used as after operation support.

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Can be washed without harm to fabric—you never offend when you wear Rupture-Easer.

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R. C. of Corvallis, Oregon, Air Mails: "Send me another Rupture-Easer so I will have one to change off with. It is enabling me to work at top speed at my press machine 8 hours a day."

M. S. of Anderson, Ind., thanks us and says: "It is one of the finest things I have ever worn and has made my life worth living. It has given me untold ease and comfort."

O. B. R. of Boston: "Send me another... I wish to say to everyone who suffers as I did, 'Oh what relief I have found from its help!'"

Blessed Relief Day and Night — You can sleep in it—you can work in it—you can bathe in it.



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Please send my RUPTURE-EASER by return mail.

Right Side ☐ \$3.95 Measure around lowest part of
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(Note: Be sure to give Size and Side when ordering.)

We Prepay Postage except on C.O.D.'s.

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

teresting and of no use at all. Jim, however, says he is emotionally fond of Bradbury—whatever it might mean to be "emotionally fond" of an author.

Perhaps the best letter of all was that of Richard Geis of Portland, Ore. It was good.

So much for the letters!

As for the stories in this Nov. issue I didn't especially care for any of them. The best thing of all in this quarterly the editorial, and it alone was well worth the price of the magazine. The editorials always seem to be most worthwhile. In this one, the editor's remarks seem, as it were, to hit me squarely between the eyes or ears or something. It says, "The thread of a story must not be broken; if it is broken by lectures or exhortations—propaganda, if you please—you do not have a story." Some of us—myself in particular—cannot write a story for this very reason. My own ideas and opinions—propaganda—continually enter in and break the thread and no story results. So I want to thank the editor for bringing into focus and explaining what exactly is the reason that I, for one, have never yet produced a readable story.



I shall continue to buy every *Science Fiction Quarterly* that comes out in order to get the editorials, no matter how good or poor the stories may be, and it may be that another "idiotic missive" will appear in the letter column. Who knows? The more idiotic, the better, says I.

S.F. CARY, Gen'l Del., Atlanta, Ga.

P.S. Would you say, Mr. Coulson, that there is one, and only one, theory, or belief that will work in religion? If so, please tell us which one it is. It would be a wonderful blessing to all of us poor deluded souls that believe there is much good in every theory, belief and denomination if someone would let us know just what theory, or belief would get us through the pearly gates safe and secure for the rest of eternity. It surely would.

[Turn To Page 92]



RACING CAR DRIVER FRANK KOHN SAYS: "THIS REVOLUTIONARY PRODUCT HAS INCREASED MY CAR SPEED & POWER UP TO 50%—STOPPED OIL BURNING"

SAYS RACING DRIVER FRANK KOHN OF PHILADELPHIA:

"I have been driving racing cars for 18 years and now I never start a race without a tube of Peggio in my car for emergency use. You know how grueling a stock car race can be and what wear and tear it produces on the engine. I have already used this miracle piston-ring sealer in some of my most heated races and restored my engine performance.

At the race in The Philadelphia Municipal Stadium I was driving car #79 with a sportsman type Ford V8 engine. Right in the middle of the race I began to lose power and speed and was burning up all my lubricating oil and fouling my plugs. I pulled into the pit area during the second heat and in a couple of minutes took out my spark plugs and quickly injected a tube of piston-ring sealer to compete in the third heat. Back in the race my car quickly picked up speed and power, and I was able to go on again even faster than when the car started the race, finished second in the race, and won a Liberty Stock Car Racing Association trophy cup for the season.

The results lasted for over 5,000 grueling miles and when I pulled the engine down later I could still see the sealer.

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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.
After	100 lbs.	110 lbs.	115 lbs.	95 lbs.	105 lbs.	118 lbs.

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Compression Readings — 1948 Pontiac

	Cylinder 1	Cylinder 2	Cylinder 3	Cylinder 4	Cylinder 5	Cylinder 6	Cylinder 7	Cylinder 8
Before	105 lbs.	95 lbs.	107 lbs.	120 lbs.	110 lbs.	115 lbs.	95 lbs.	123 lbs.
After	125 lbs.	120 lbs.	120 lbs.	125 lbs.	122 lbs.	120 lbs.	115 lbs.	116 lbs.

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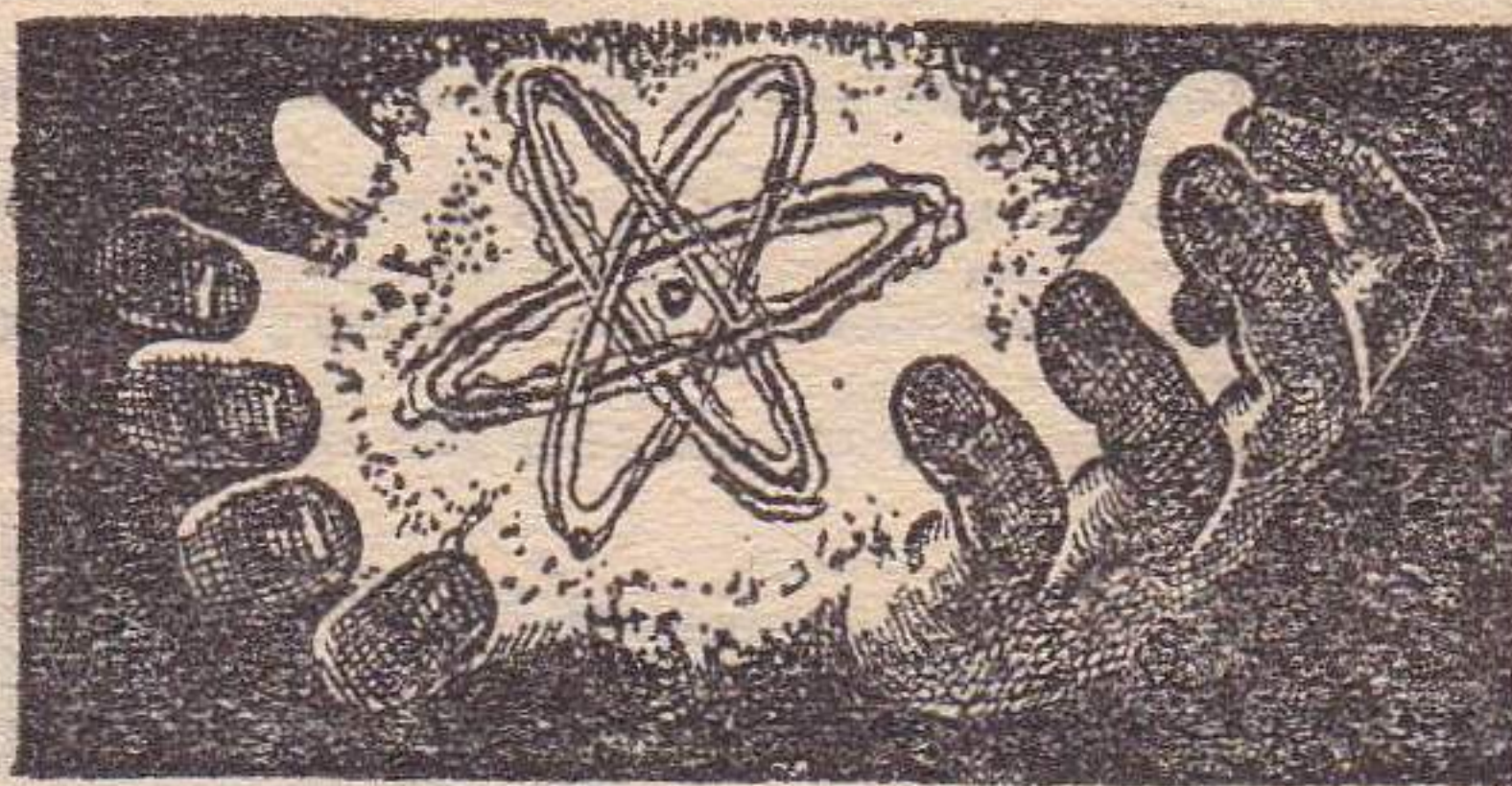
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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

Congress and the President surely would be glad to know just what is the one and only theory that would solve all the multifarious problems connected with the various phases of government, international relations, taxation, etc. etc. And what a boon to parents of teen-age children if they could find out the one and only theory that would work entirely to their satisfaction in raising their youngsters. In the little matter of diet, also—but why go on? If Mr. Coulson will give us the one and only theory that will work on any given subject or problem, whatsoever, then we can all go and get married and live happily ever after.

The floor is now open.



A HIT!

Dear Sir:

I picked up my first copy of *Science Fiction Quarterly* while traveling. You have a good magazine; keep up the good work.

I would rate the stories in the August issue in this order: 1: "Reunion", by Carter Sprague III; 2: "Better Than We Know", by William F. Temple; 3: "Perfect Discipline", by Russ Winterbotham; 4: "It's In the Air", by Winston Marks; 5: "Beyond the Door", by Sam Merwin, Jr; 6: "The Taint", by John Jakes.

I would like to point out, however, a large incongruity in the magazine. In your editorial, "Super Science vs. Pseudo-Science", you blast the case for pseudo-science in science fiction to atoms. Unless I am mistaken, the story "The Taint", by John Jakes, is based on pseudo-science. Unless I have been misinformed, it is impossible for the same object to occupy two places at one time. The "stranger" did not exist as a physical entity in the past, where he came to kill young Dickie Carter, *but the atoms which made up his physical body did.* Draw your own conclusion as to what would have happened when the "stranger tried to materialize out of time.

I also noticed a possible incongruity in "Perfect Discipline". Unless there is something wrong with my basic assumptions, or with my logic, the word "discipline" means the ability to control your own emotions. "Voluntary slavery" is the only way I know of to describe perfect obedience, with no questions asked.

[Turn To Page 94]

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

While I liked "Reunion", I did notice one inaccuracy. He mentions one species of organic life. There are purple trees and pink mosses mentioned along with the intelligent life form. Unless the biology which I have learned so far is all wet, all life forms, intelligent or otherwise, are organix in nature. I make no claims to being perfect, and am ready to be convinced that I am wrong on any or all of these counts, but it will take some discussion.

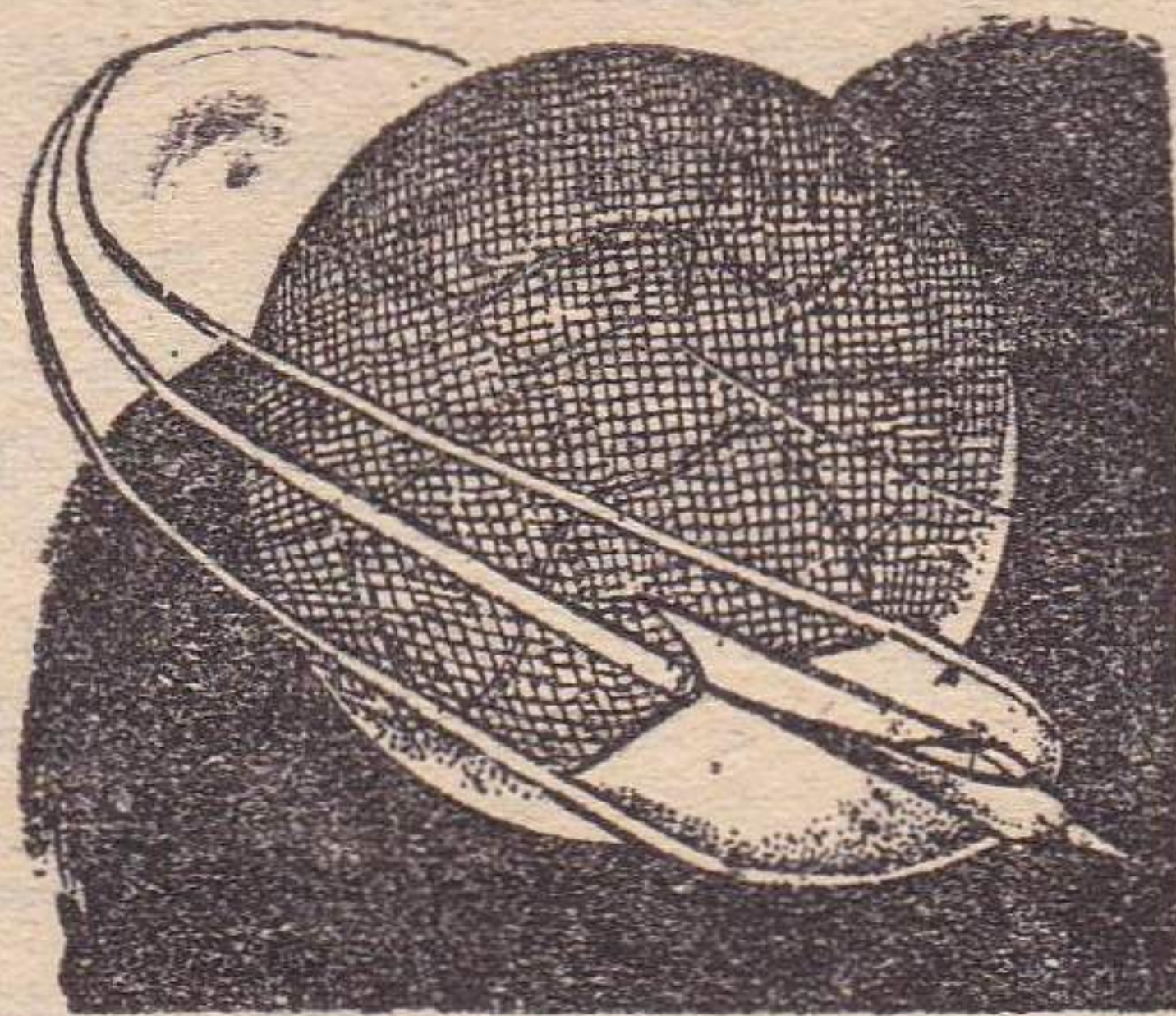
As I am in possession of insufficient funds for a subscription, and do not know of a place in my home town where I can buy copies as they come out, I would appreciate it very much if, when a disagreeing letter is sent to SFQ, a duplicate be sent to me at my home address.

MARVIN TANNER, RED #2, Kankakee, Illinois.

Any time travel story that appears in a science fiction magazine has to appear under a sort of special dispensation, if the editor is trying to avoid pseudo-science, for time-travel is sheer fantasy. There's no evidence at all that "time" exists in such a manner as to permit travel in it; the editor's opinion is that "time" has no physical existence whatsoever but is just a verbal invention of humanity which permits us to set up some arrangement and order between events.

"Discipline" can also refer to systematic and to teaching; in the case of the Winterbotham story that was the type of discipline the captain wanted—a systematic type of response. On the part of Donald, you could, indeed, call it "voluntary slavery"

In reference to "Reunion" the point was that the apparent multiplicity of organic life was illusion—it was all but one species, capable of taking unlimited semblances, including that or purple trees and pink mosses. All clear now?



ON ASTRONAUTICS

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

Science Fiction Quarterly is one of the very few different science fiction magazines, which features interesting letters from well-informed readers, an editorial, and articles. Whatever love I might have had for literature *per se* had been trained out of me by chippy teachers at two high

schools, and this quasi-fact seems to explain in part why I do not read many novels, etc., now. I would much rather *spend* that time on notebooks filled with amateur efforts at pure theoretical physics research. My interest in physics also influenced me to buy your August issue, which contained what can be described in stretched analogy as a dog-pile upon the astronomical claims of HWM of Newark, Ohio. (Get up off his lawn kids. Hmm—I take that back.)

May I add my bellows-nozzle to the by-this-time dying coals? I should like to comment on astronomical dynamics (or mechanics, if you prefer).

Many of you have noticed in the movies how long it takes for a space rocket to start leaving the ground after the firing button (or switch) has been pressed, and the gravel is being scorched for awhile. You probably know that the ship is becoming progressively lighter during that time, until a point is reached (and passed) where the product of the ship's decreasing inertial mass by the gravitational force per unit inertial mass, is just equal and opposite to the force exerted by the pressure of combustion of the top-most walls of the firing chambers. While the thrust force inside the firing chambers is somewhat constant during the blastoff time, the force which we call the "weight" of the ship is gradually decreasing. The thrust force due to expansion of of burning gases is thus becoming more and more effective in lifting the ship. Moreover, the force of gravity per unit inertial mass is

itself decreasing, because of the increase in the ship's distance from the Earth's center. Even if the effective lifting force were constant, the speed of ascent would increase, which is what we mean by the ship's "acceleration". However, the steady decrease in the ship's weight is responsible for an increase in that acceleration. To express this last thought in the language of elementary calculus, I suppose that the *third* derivative of the distance with respect to time is slightly greater than zero.

Now, suppose that the field-energy of gravitation were in the nature of a downwardly flowing drift of ether, as though every proton in the Earth were sucking into itself fluid ether from all sides and at the same time expelling an equal amount of ether as a pair of fine squirts at the speed of light—so rapidly that even the exchange-fields inside atoms would fail to offer impedance to such squirts, so that such squirts could remain beyond experimental detection. All right, the downward sink-field has been postulated, it being the sum of all the sink-fields contributed by every proton in the Earth. If this be so, then the ether-sink fields of all the protons in the space ship should be attracted by the downward ether-drift of the Earth's gravitational field.

Suppose, further, that all the other subatomic particles of an atom *except* the negatively charged electrons, contain each at least one proton-structure. Would not the

[Turn Page]

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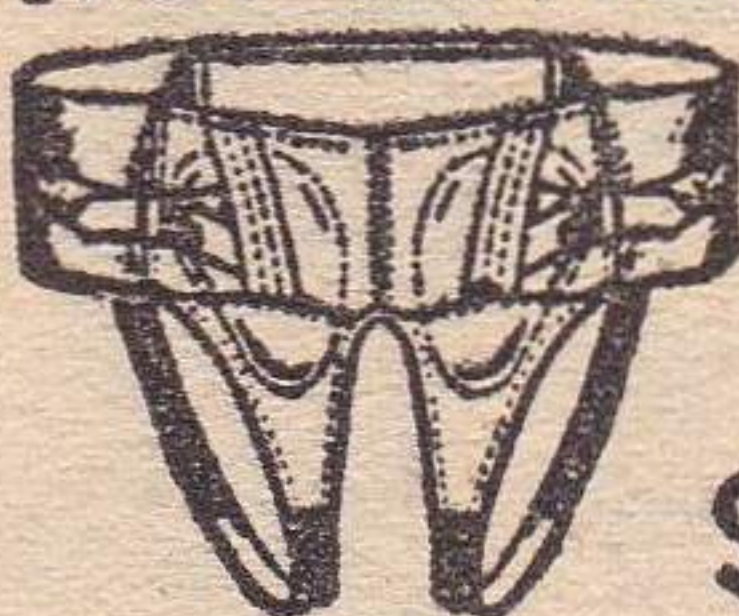
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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

weight of the ship depend also on these hidden protons?

Just one more postulate. Suppose that a negative electron has a structure which is the antithesis or complement of the structure of a proton, so that the electron is repelled by the gravitational field (although not repelled forcibly enough to overcome electrostatic attractions). If myriads of electrons could coat the surface of a ship at superlatively great concentration so as to almost touch one another, should it not be possible for those congregated electrons to shield off the Earth's gravitational field so that it could not reach the protons inside the ship? By analogy, a duck's back prevents rain or fountain spray from reaching the skin underneath the feathers. So a coating of close-packed electrons should be able to shield protons from the gravitational field. However, I'll admit that it would be extremely difficult to get the electrons to pack together so closely, if there are forces of electrostatic repulsion between the electrons in the same sense that like magnetic poles strongly repel each other.

If our astronautical scientists should succeed in developing a gravity shield for their space ships some day, would not this permit a great saving of rocket fuel? Remember what Anthony Rogers' rocket ships were like? They were supposed to have "inertron" (metallic phlogiston??) in their hulls, you recall. Wonderful stuff, "inertron". I wish our industrial centers had plenty of it to use. Well, plutonium would have seemed an impossible metal to scientists contemporary with James C. Maxwell and Michael Faraday. Therefore, let no one scoff at the idea of a gravity shield.

I imagine that this letter is long enough to fail to show up in print. Keep up the present trend of your magazine. It would be nice to match the quality of *Wonder Stories* of 1932 in most ways. I miss that newsprint "aroma" that that early magazine used to pour forth every time it was opened. Also that inspiring maze of realistically depicted apparatus, such as had accompanied Arthur G. Stangland's "The 35th Millennium". Let's have some of that in 1956.
VICTOR M. WAAGE, 329 East 6th Street, Duluth 5, Minn.

YOU DON'T SAY!

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

It's pathetic.

Remember how we used to read our favorite authors' fancies and other letter writers' musing in SFQ? And all the time clutching either a pen or pencil in our fingers, hoping to spot at the very least three errors, so as to write you dear editor and ex-

[Turn To Page 98]

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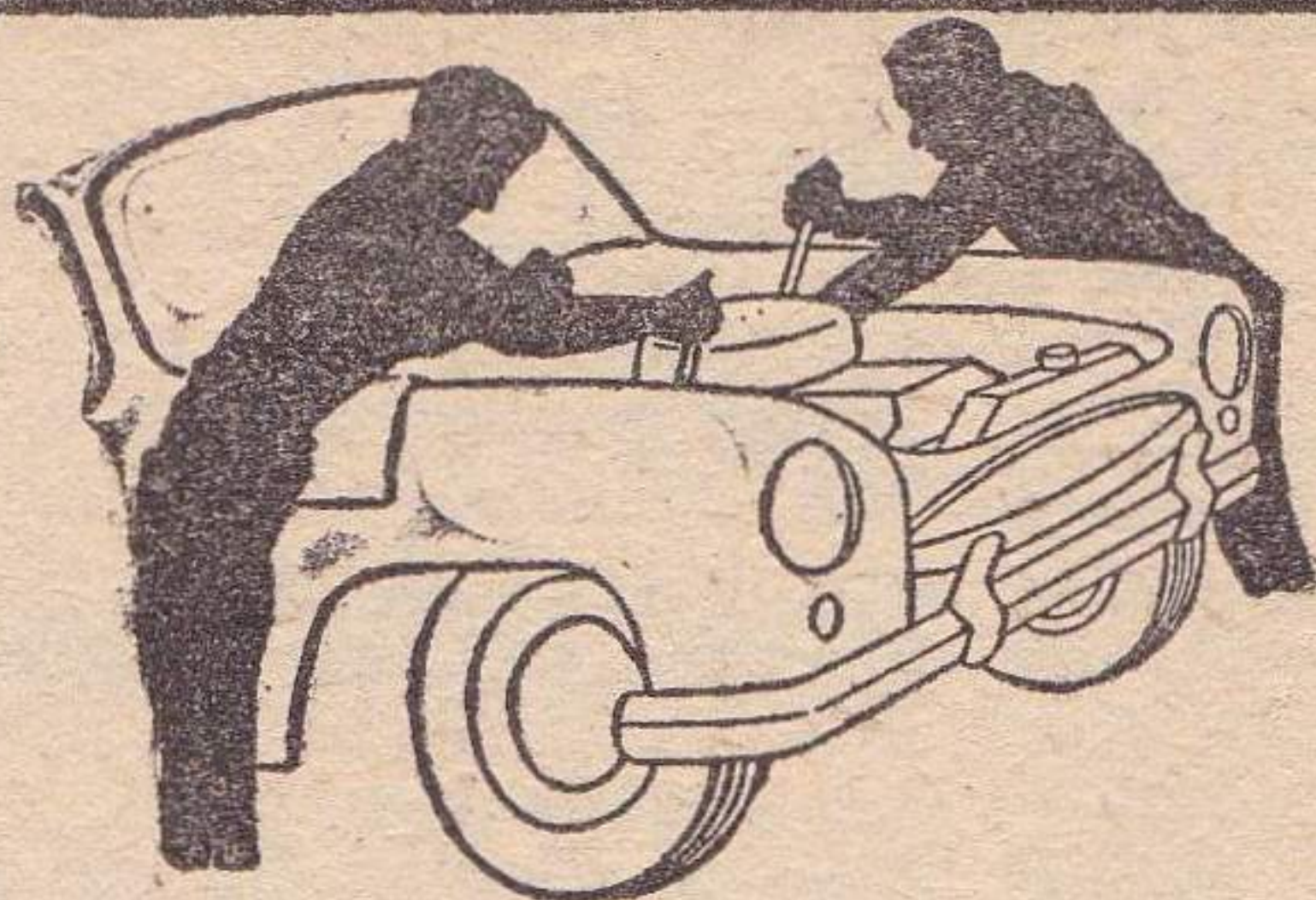
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plain what a moron and jackass such and such a fellow happened to be.

Ah, and then the glory of penning our own asinine reasons to show the whys and where-forths and make so and so look more of an imbecile than ever. *Yes, that was true bliss.*

And now all that gone.

Why, I can remember when I was a young (and if I do say so myself) an enthusiastic science-fiction connoisseur. Of course that was way back in the mid-fifties. Some of us even dreamed of man someday traveling to the stars. Naturally that was just a pipe-dream as you can see now.

What? You ask why?

Didn't you receive this morning's telepathic bulletin or are you one of the hold-outs against T&T communications (Telergy and Telepathic.) Well, no matter; I'll give you the dope in writing.

The worm has turned. Not figuratively but literally. They (the worms I mean) ask for complete surrender in two hours or man will be annihilated. Don't ask me how but the world's greatest brains, after studying some P.O.W.'s dug up by a fishing party, say that they can do what they promise.

Naturally the United Nations and the United Sons Of Brussia can't get together, so it looks like we've done had it.

I'm hoping you can get this into print before the end comes, as this is the first letter I've dared write. I have always been afraid of either shocking, disgusting or showing my ignorance to other readers (I will not mention names, and there is no telling what might happen then. Probably one or two of the more brilliant have their own stock-piles and I didn't want to risk the lives of a lot of non-science-fiction fans here in Balto.

In conclusion, (now where have I heard that before?) I just want you to know why the worm has declared war. According to them they want to get off the hook.

I expect both Murry King and Mr. Miller feel the same way.

ROBERT D. GRIFFIN, 828 S. Rappolla St., Baltimore 24, Md.

Well, Mr. King seems to have wriggled pretty well off, don't you think?

TOO REPITITIOUS

Dear Sir:

I am writing this in the heat of my reaction to Messers Williamson and King. The two letters are rather similar. Mr. King, satirizing Mr. Williamson's attempt to enlighten the reader, and pointing out his references to "authority", himself makes references to an even more vague authority ("we") in what may be a halfhearted attempt to make Mr. Williamson appear a leftwinger.

These letters are typical of most letters in readers' columns (say I, who merely scan idly such stuff when the stories are read). They all seem to have a weak point. They

fairly force the reader to compose a confutation. There must be those who write missives that are unassailable, or nearly so. One, this one, anyway, hardly ever sees them in print, though.

It seems that the editor selects only the controversial letters to print.

As a result, many readers go through unbelievable contortions to see their names in type. They not only violate the scientific method, but they make all sorts of biased and vague statements, and then refuse to give an inch in later epistles, devoting reams of paper to the effect that what they really meant was...and so forth.

I submit that readers' columns are too repetitious. I tire of seeing endless requests, statements, and explanations of how a rocket flies. After all I *know* about the little man inside.

JACK HIGH, 1146 Franklin Street, Reading, Penna.

PS—Am interested in meeting other science fiction fans in Reading—especially female fans, of whom I know so few.

APOLOGY

Dear RWL:

If I've given the impression that I think Mr. Williamson is, or was, or might possibly be a leftwinger, as Mr. High suggests, than permit me to apologize to all. I had no such intention. My phrases reflected my irritation at with the tone of his letter, and very possibly I brushed aside a perfectly valid reproof.

Actually, on thinking it over, I may have been guilty of sloppy phrasing; what I was trying to ask was, aren't exact measurements an essential part of the scientific manner of obtaining evidence? Can we have acceptable "facts" where the measurements are vague? The term "measurements" was intended both literally and figuratively—a hazardous way to put it, perhaps—and the argument might have been avoided if I'd said "measurements and standards".

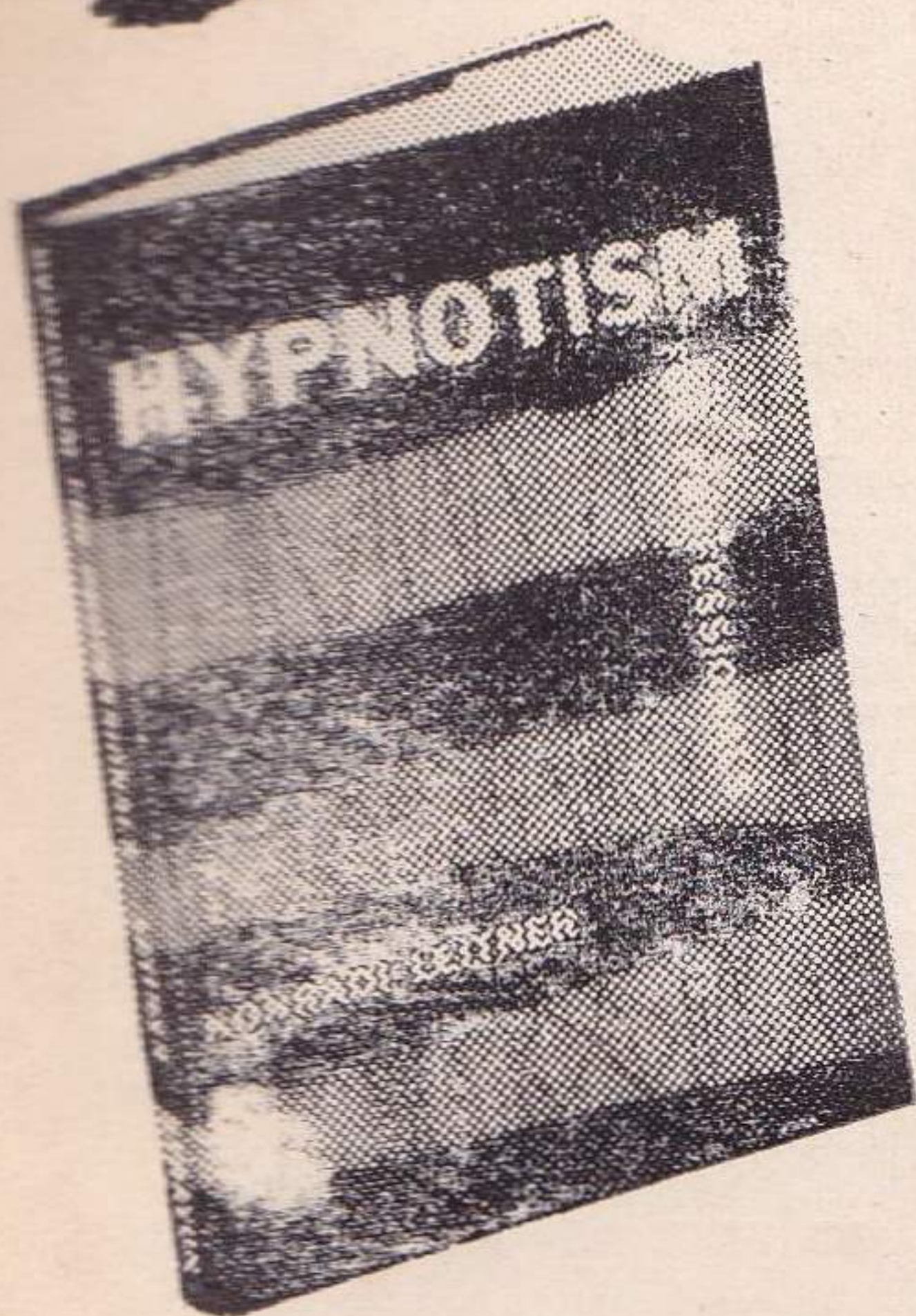
Particularly in psychopathology, psychology, psychotherapy, etc., I wanted to question whether truly "scientific" conclusions can be reached when we do not have any universal standards of just what constitutes psychic health and what constitutes sickness. So far as I've been able to discover, there isn't any universal agreement on this point; what one school considers "healthy" another considers symptomatic of disturbance.

In still other words, Mr. Williamson, how can we have "facts" when there's no agreement as to what can be accepted as fact? Or am I mistaken, and does such agreement, and do such standards, exist in the fields mentioned above?

MURRAY KING

A letter doesn't HAVE to be controversial in order to appear in these columns, but I do welcome letters which spur on discussion. Are we overdoing it?

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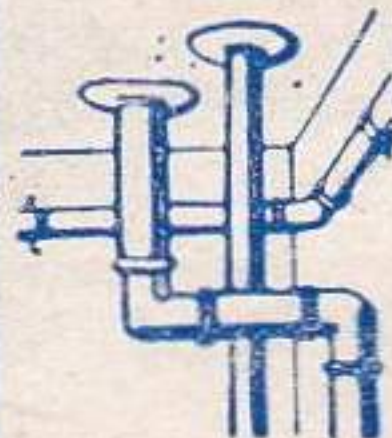
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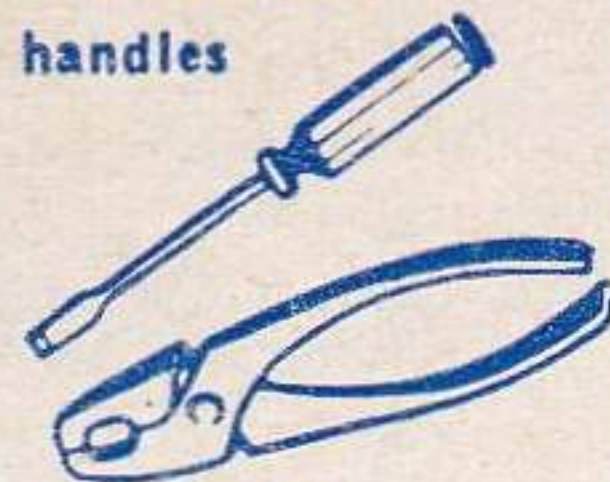
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