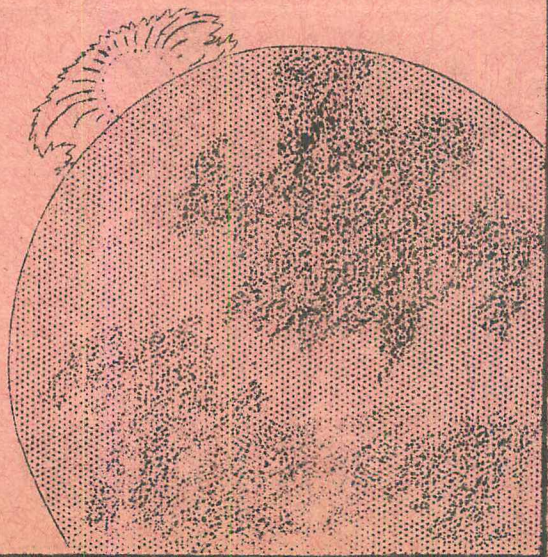
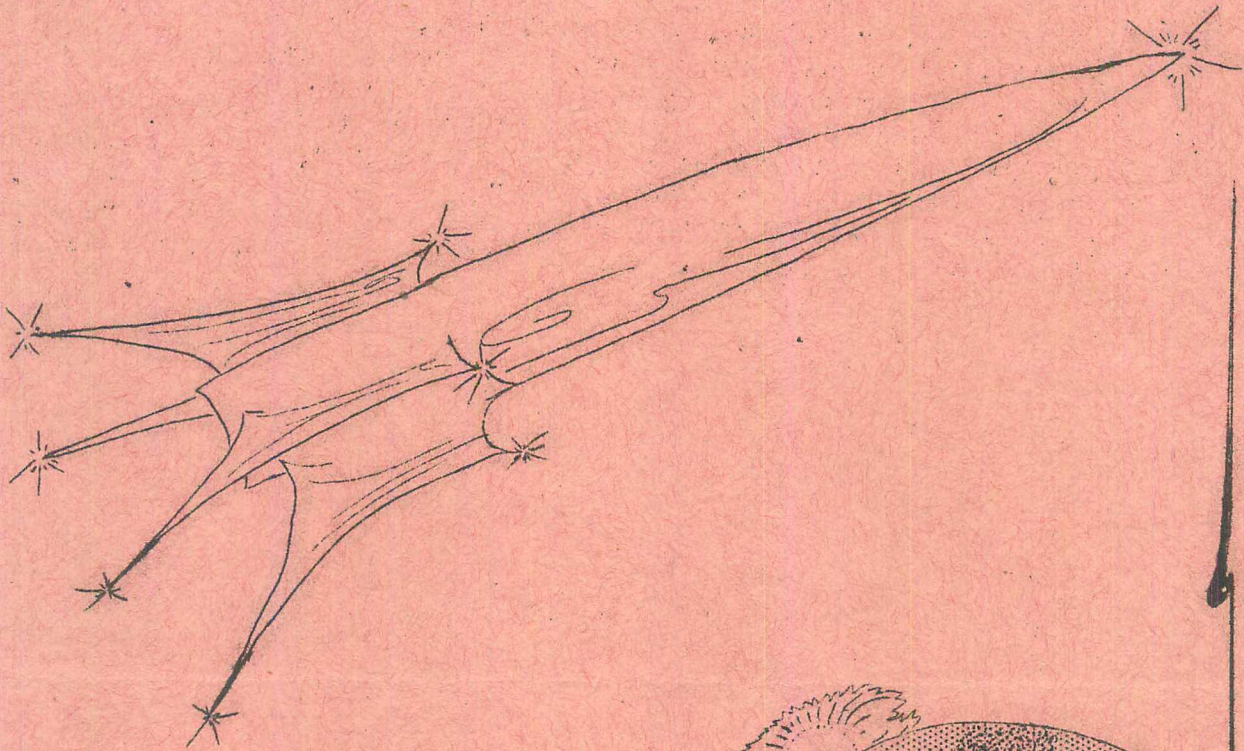


THE ZED NO. 795



KA '61

HAPPY WINTER SOLSTICE FESTIVALS

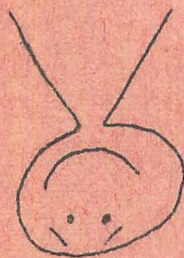
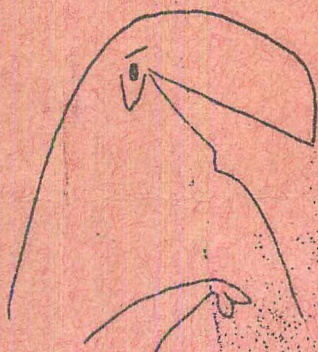
If memory could be relied on, this issue of the Zed would complete my seventh year in SAPS. I think the first ZED appeared in the Spring 1953 mailing, but my memory is as inconsistent as my typographic style. If this is really (as some data tend to suggest) No. 795, it appears that I have only missed three mailings. This is obviously untrue, since last mailing's Zed is in this mailing.

If I could be relied on, this Zed would contain mailing comments and pages of personal chitchat. I seem to be about as reliable as a sundial on a fine moonlit night.

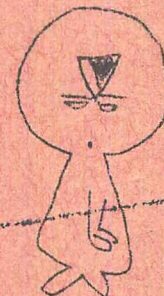
The tower in the picture a page or so on is the Tower of Mlia Meroun, beyond Pegana by way of Merimna and the sources of the Yan. It is said that the burglar Slith once attempted to steal the gold tiles of its rooflets, but he failed, being unable to climb its smoothly-fitted diamond walls. The report has never been authenticated, and it is now impossible to discover the truth since Slith has attempted to practise his art upon the gnoles. The tower was built by a student of Drax the oneiromancer. Morlenneth the Guardian now dwells there, waiting for his story to be written. He will watch over the Great Land in the interregnum before the coming of the Dragon Incarnate. When Morlenneth has departed into his story, a guest as yet undreamed will live in Mlia Meroun.

Now you tell one.

BUT YOU PROMISED
NOT TO DRINK
TONIGHT!

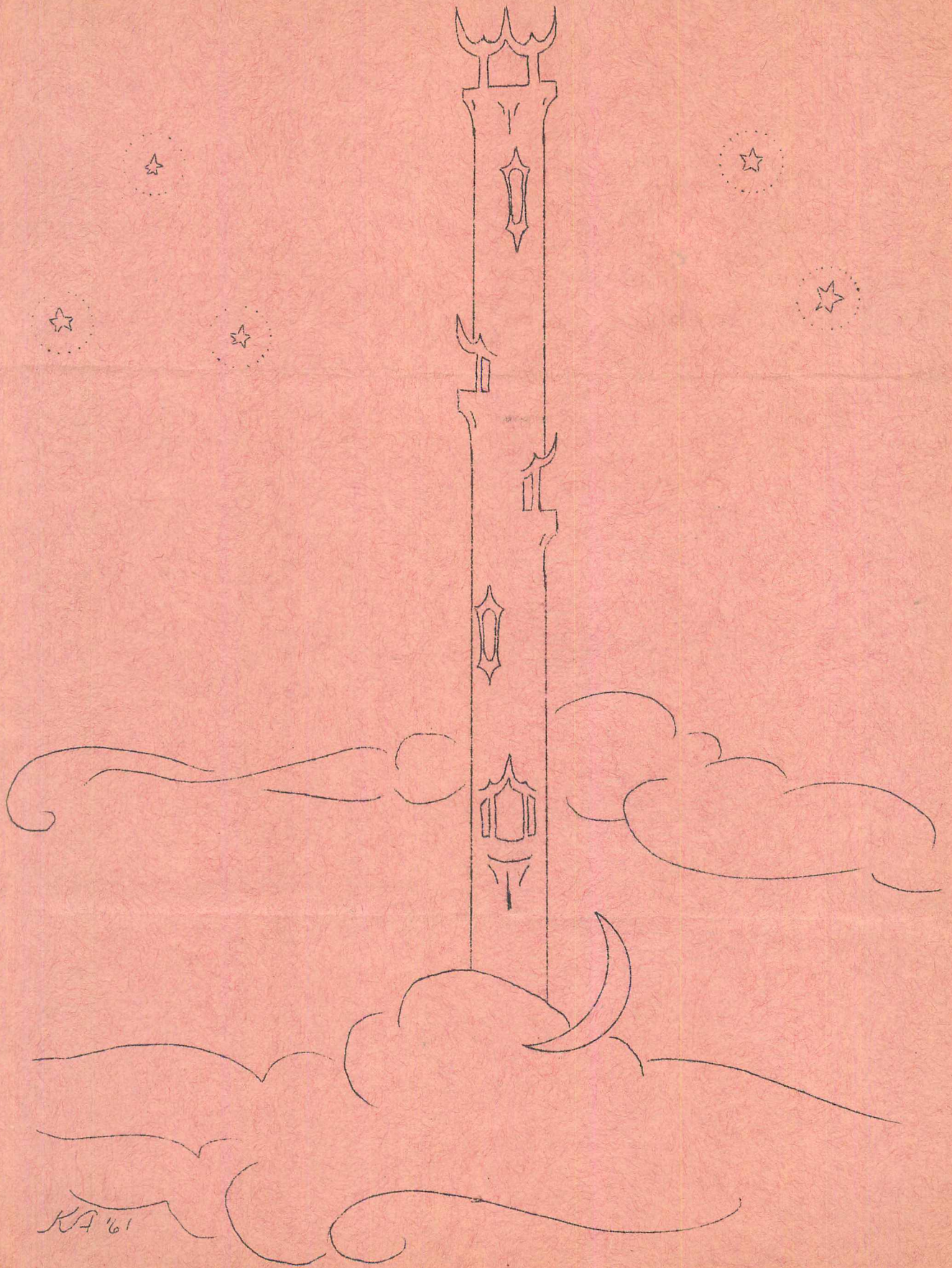


THAT WAS SOME
PARTY LAST
NIGHT... I THINK

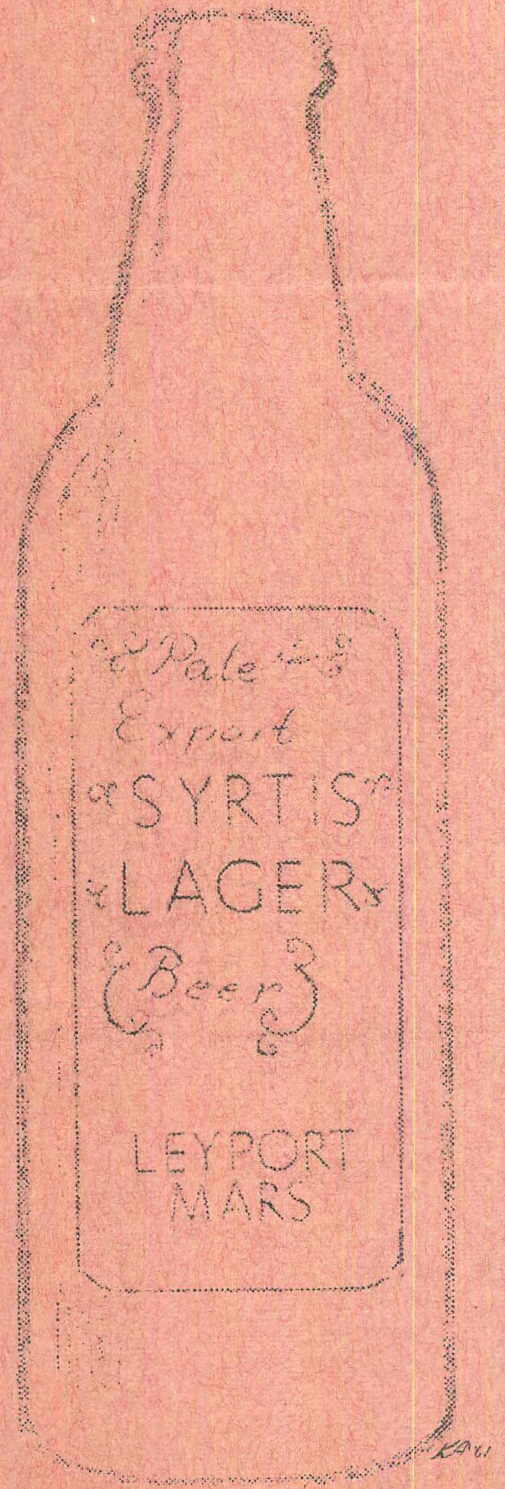
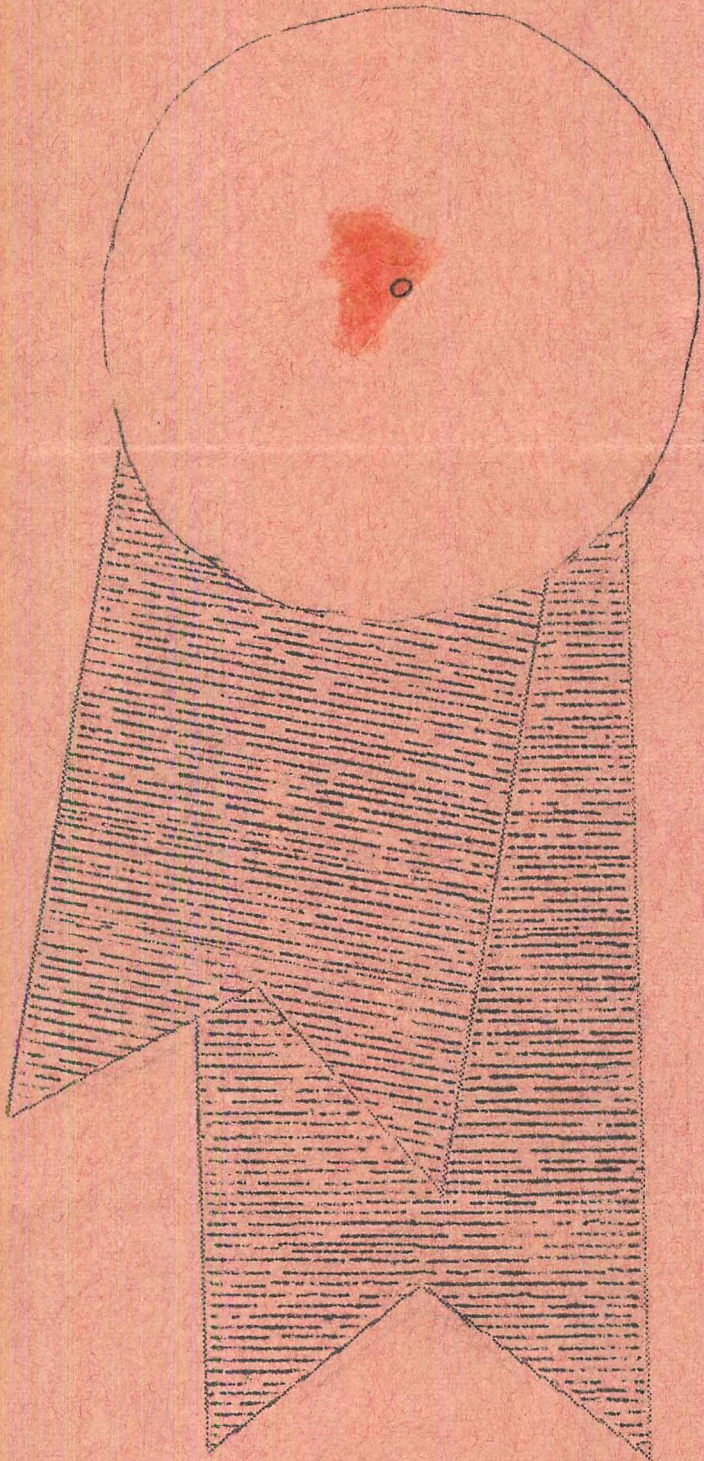


HOLIDAY CHEER

WR



KA '61



THE CHILDISH EDDA

By Poul Anderson and Ron Ellik

(We and Ron went south for Thanksgiving in the Morris, a large load as far as I'm concerned. Astrid lacks fannish instincts and doesn't like being crowded. That matter, I'd rather drive the whole way than spend the night back seat, even if I had it all to myself.)

(Halfway or more to Los Angeles, it was not possible to get there in one heat. I had to stop to find out about accommodations. I was surprised I could count on rooms being available. I was a block from the Fan Hillton.)

(But it was late, and the highway generally affords no time for study. I, who'd been studying this subject for some time, began working on the tune of the Orcs' Marching Song. I gave it the mundane title.)

(The full story of that march is too long to think I have the energy.)

Yggdrasil, where nine worlds
Is a noble piece of ash
That shelters Norns and Gods
There's a dragon gnaws the base
Of an eagle's resting-place
And a squirrel and seven harts complete the zoo.

(Ratatosk was the Ron Ellik of the Eddas. This verse may be sung as a chorus.)

Asa-Thor became a hermit
For to re-possess Mjollnir
And unto a frosty brute his troth did plight;
But the vittles that he ate
Would an army more than sate
And the chefs at Utgard always rued that night.

Frigga took a year or so
And, except for mistletoe,
Got from everything an oath for Baldr's good;
Evil Loki wished him harm
So he hired Hodr's arm
And the staff the blind god threw was kissing-wood.

Odin said to Mim, "I think
I would sort of like a drink,"
Mim said "That will cost you your left eye;
For you've come so very late
To the well at Wisdom's Gate
And the setup prices after hours are high."

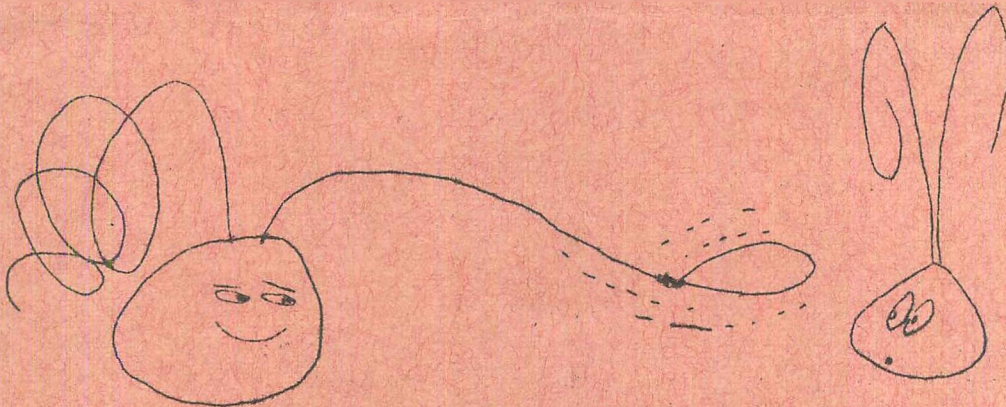
Tyr vowed Fenris-wolf his hand
If he couldn't break the band
That All-Father's wisdom made both light and hefty;
Lupine muscles heaved away
But the magic held its sway
And from then until The Time they called Tyr "Lefty."

When Thor went out to fish
He quickly got his wish
And he hauled Jormungandr from the bay;
But Hymr cut the cable
And Thor was only able
To brag about the one that got away.

When Thor called on the giants
They didn't show defiance
But they soon got rid of him and of his hammer;
For the sea he could not swallow
And old granddew beat him hollow
And the house-pet caused an awful katzenjammer.

Each god's apple every day
Kept the doctor far away
Till a giant kidnapped Ydun from their halls;
Loki fetched home Bragi's bride
With her health-food store beside
Plus a char-broiled eagle underneath the walls.

Oh, the giants brought their war
Up to Bifrost's very door
And the battling wrecked Asgard's perfect clime;
Jormungandr, Hel, and Fenris
Dealt out death in doses gen'rous
And in fighting did the Aesir pass The Time.



WR

ALICE IN
THRILLINGWONDERLAND

BY
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

ADDITIONAL DIALOGUE
BY

KAREN ANDERSON

POUL ANDERSON

LIZ WILSON

P. A. KINGSLEY

GEORGE SCITHERS

EVAN APPLEMAN

GRENDEL BRIARTON

and

HERMAN W. MUDGETT

BASED ON AN IDEA
BY
LEWIS CARROLL

This is the play produced at the Solacon by the Elves', Gnomes', and Little Men's Science-Fiction, Chowder, and Marching Society. I have added notes on the production, costumes, etc. to the best of my recollection.

CHARACTERS AND ORIGINAL CAST

Alice	Karen Anderson
The White A. P.	Anthony Boucher
Dr. Derringer	Anthony Boucher
Lensman	E. E. Smith, Ph. D.
Captain Nemo	Neal Wilson
Captain Tvidict	George Scithers
Captain Saturday	F. M. Busby
The Poka of Joka	Voice by Liz Wilson
The Red Knightbell	Neal Wilson
Attic-Agberg	Ron Ellick and Bob Silverberg
Fred Furdwiller	Ben Stark
The White Knightbell	George Scithers
The March Clifton	Elinor Busby
The Mad Hatter	F. M. Busby

SCENE I

(Dana Street. Enter Alice, wearing full-skirted dress and little-girl shoes and socks. She is reading a Classic Comics edition of 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, which she throws down in disgust.)

ALICE What is the use of a book with nothing but pictures and conversations? I'd better not go out for another one, though. The White A. P. is sure to pass by if I wait long enough, but if I go away even for a moment I might miss him. I've got to find him! So I'll just have to do without reading. I wonder what pseudonym he'll be wearing? Will he be H. H. Holmes, the murder-mystery writer? I don't think he uses that one any more, though, except as a reviewer. He'll probably be Anthony Boucher. Even so, I'm not sure I can recognize him. It's true Boucher the editor is on vacation, but there's still Boucher the reviewer, Boucher the writer, Boucher the opera disc jockey, Boucher the Democratic Party worker, Boucher the MWA official ---

(White A. P. enters left, hurrying)

WHITE A. P. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I shall be late!

(White A. P. exits right)

ALICE Why, that's him! How unusual to see him without a pseudonym! Wait, please wait! I want to see you! Oh, he's gone down a hyperspatial tube. I'll have to follow him.

(Alice exits right.)

SCENE 2

(A desk and chair are placed on the stage and signs reading SCIENCE FICTION HEROES' UNION (AFL-CIO-TEAMSTERS) and WRITERS! COME TO THE SPACE BAR, Dr. Derringer enters right, carrying papers. He sits down and studies them. Enter Alice.)

ALICE Did the White A. P. come this way?

DERRINGER I haven't seen him in fifteen years.

ALICE Oh, dear! The hyperspatial tube must have collapsed. Now I'll never find him. Where am I?

DERRINGER This is the hiring hall of the Science Fiction Heroes' Union. Fill out this application, please.

(Enter a Lensman carrying a sign, HAVE LENS WILL TRAVEL. When he is onstage, all action stops. He crosses upstage and exits.)

ALICE I don't want a job. I just want to find the White A. P.

DERRINGER There's no way out unless you have a job. We are in a dimension of our own, and the only way into other dimensions is by hyperspatial tube. When some dimension has a job for you, a tube is extended.

ALICE Then I'd better get a job quick! Once I'm out, I may find another way back to my own dimension. And I've got to find the White William A. P.!

DERRINGER I would like to find him myself. He created me.

ALICE Created you? I thought I knew all his characters.

DERRINGER I am not one of his characters. I am a character written by a character in one of his detective novels. He mentioned my name in one of his science-fiction stories, as the inventor of the time machine --- but I myself never appeared.

ALICE Why, you must be Dr. Garth Derringer --- the Sherlock Holmes of Science Fiction!

DERRINGER That is what I was called.

ALICE I've always wanted to read a story about you.

DERRINGER It is highly unlikely that you ever shall. Meanwhile, since I have nothing else to do, I run the union hiring hall. Send the White A. P. here if you ever find him. Have you finished the form?

ALICE Not yet. I can't seem to remember any of my prenatal traumas.

DERRINGER That section is essential. You'll have to remember.

(Captain Nemo enters left)

NEMO Captain Nemo reporting for duty.

DERRINGER Walt Disney wants you again. He's doing a movie of The Mysterious Island.

NEMO How can he do that? When he made 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea he killed me and scuttled the Nautilus.

DERRINGER He doesn't expect to have any trouble in bringing you back to life; he's hired the writer who used to revive the Frankenstein Monster.

NEMO Good God! I hope I don't have to go through as many revivals as the Monster. Well, I'll take the job.

(Derringer hands him a bottle labeled DRINK ME; he drinks and exits left)

ALICE What's that?

DERRINGER It's necessary in order to get through the hyperspatial tube.

ALICE I didn't see any hyperspatial tube.

DERRINGER You can't see them unless you take a drink.

(Enter Captain Tvidiot, left.)

TVIDIOT Dr. Derringer, can you get me a summer replacement?

DERRINGER Why, Captain Tvidiot! You look quite ill.

TVIDIOT I feel awful. I can't stand this job much longer.

DERRINGER You must have to spend all your time studying to answer the science quiz.

TVIDIOT Oh, that's no problem. I wear my space helmet when I answer the questions, and the earphones are real. Willy Ley tells me the answers by telephone.

DERRINGER That's an ingenious trick.

TVIDIOT Oh, please! You mustn't call it a trick! What would the children say? They look up to me as their ideal! In fact, that's my whole trouble. I have to show an impeccable moral character all the time. I can't smoke, drink, swear, or even look as though I wanted to. I have to treat women like a brother.

(Lensman crosses as before with sign reading LENS SANA IN COR-
PORE SANO)

TVIDIOT No matter how loathesome and fiendish my enemies are,
I can't trick them in any way. I have to be upright
and honorable and courteous and brave and --- well,
you can imagine. Why, I can't even use bad grammar! If I
ever used a preposition to end a sentence with, I'd probably
lose my job.

DERRINGER Believe me, Captain Tvidiot, I sympathise. But I
don't know anybody who could handle the job. All
our men are in the habit of dealing with villains
on their own terms. I can't think of anybody who'd last
through a single episode.

TVIDIOT I see. I'll carry on, then.

(He squares his shoulders, takes a drink from Derringer's
bottle, and exits left.)

ALICE He took it bravely.

DERRINGER He couldn't do it any other way. His characteri-
zation is so ingrained now, poor fellow, that he
can't possibly do anything out of character.
You've finished the form?

(He takes the form and looks it over briefly.)

Ah, we have just the job for you. Drink this.

(Alice accepts the bottle doubtfully, tastes it, then takes a
hefty swig.)

ALICE Hey, that's good!

(Derringer takes the bottle away before she can drink any more.)

ALICE Now I see the Tube. I'm not going to take the job,
though --- I'll just keep on going. I've got to find
the White A. P.

(Alice exits L., Derringer R.)

SCENE 3

(Desk and chair are turned to face an imaginary wall. Sign
is changed to read TSV VEGA. Captain Saturday enters right
and sits at "control board.")

CAPTAIN All hands to battle stations! All hands to battle
stations! First Mate report to control room!

(Enter Alice, left)

ALICE Excuse me, but have you seen the White A. P.?

CAPTAIN Never heard of him.

ALICE Sorry if I've bothered you.

(Alice starts to exit left.)

CAPTAIN What's got into you, First Mate? We've sighted an alien spaceship! Warm up the computer!

ALICE You must be mistaken. I'm not your first mate. My name is Alice, and I just happened to pass this way. I'm hunting for the ---

CAPTAIN I ought to know my own crew. You're my first mate. Get busy with that computer, we should make contact with the enemy any minute.

ALICE I can't be a member of your crew. Ships' crews are men.

CAPTAIN Not any more they aren't!

ALICE You'll have to show it to me in the Articles of War to make me believe it.

CAPTAIN We don't use the Articles of War any more; it's not sociologically valid. We've replaced it with Coming of Age in Samoa.

ALICE But sex and science-fiction don't mix.

CAPTAIN They do now. Science fiction has come of age. Will you get with that computer?

ALICE This is all a mistake! I'm just trying to find the White A. P.! I don't belong in this story! Let me out!

(Lensman crosses with sign: UP URANUS)

CAPTAIN You can't get out until it's over. We've got a battle on our hands, and we've got to win it, if we want to get out of this story with a whole skin.

(He consults something on the "control board")

They're about to board us! According to this, the Vapians are crossing the equinoctial of Queubus!

ALICE (horrified) Great grinning Noshabkeming! Where are the blasters?

CAPTAIN We don't use blasters.

ALICE What do you use? Proton-pistols? Disintegrators?
Paralyzers?

CAPTAIN How foodthirsty! Those went out with space-axes.
They aren't scientific enough. We use psychological
ju-jitsu now. ---They're in the airlock; cycle it.

(She pantomimes this.)

ALICE What's psychological ju-jitsu?

CAPTAIN We'll involve them in a logical dilemma, or else put
them in a spot where they can't use logic at all.

ALICE You mean you're going to defend the Terrestrial Empire
by asking riddles?

CAPTAIN It's all the rage.

ALICE What kind of riddles will you ask?

CAPTAIN Great supernovae! Haven't you warmed up that compu-
ter? Well, it's too late now. I'll just have to
rely on my memory of what's going to happen.

ALICE How can you remember things that haven't happened yet?

CAPTAIN It's a poor sort of memory that only works backwards.
Of course I remember. I'll --- Primordial Ylen!
You've got me so rattled I've forgotten how the story
comes out! Well, I'll do what I can. The air lock has cycled.
I'll bring them in.

(Exit, right)

ALICE I wonder what the aliens will look like? Will they be
giant ants? Bug-eyed monsters? But this is modern
science-fiction, after all. Maybe they'll be monster-
eyed bugs. --- Holy Klono's tungsten teeth and curving car-
balloy claws! Have I gone mad? They're ---

(Captain enters with the Poka of Joka. The alien is a large
teddy-bear. We had him dressed in Astrid's red pajamas and
my black rain-boots, with a long dress-sword in a gold scab-
bard. The Captain helps the Poka onto a chair, and a back-
stage voice reads his lines.)

ALICE They're TEDDYBEARS!

POKA I speak for the Jokan Empire. The Pokas of Joka intend
to conquer your empire, unless you prove by outwitting
me that this is not possible.

ALICE Do you mean that the fate of two interstellar empires is to be decided by single combat --- in a battle of wits?

CAPTAIN Oh, interstellar wars are passe now. They're too complicated. This way, it's much easier on the author.

ALICE Oh.

CAPTAIN My first riddle ---

ALICE For the glory of Terra!

CAPTAIN --- is, What goes on four legs in the morning, two legs in the middle of the day, and three legs in the twilight?

POKA The monstrous inhabitants of that viciously hostile world, the unspeakable planet Floor!

CAPTAIN Wrong!

POKA Was you dere, Sharlie?

(Lensman crosses with sigh, WATCH THIS SPACE)

CAPTAIN That isn't the answer. It's a human being. They crawl when they're babies, walk upright when they're full grown, and use a cane when they grow old.

POKA That's only a metaphor. The Floorans are shape changers and actually do have a different number of legs at different hours of the day. Since I've answered your question better than you could yourself, I win the first round.

CAPTAIN I guess you're right. I never thought of it that way. Okay, your turn.

POKA Is it not true that no human being has nine left feet?

CAPTAIN That's self-evident.

POKA Is it not also true that no human has eight left feet?

CAPTAIN Yes, but I don't see ---

POKA One human being --- you, for instance --- has one more left foot than no human being. Correct?

CAPTAIN Yes, but ---

POKA If you have one more left foot than no human being, and

no human being has eight left feet, then you, captain, must have nine left feet! Explain that, if you can.

CAPTAIN By the beard of Gernsback, I can't understand it! I feel like I have nine left feet.

(The Captain goes off in a corner and studies his left foot)

POKA The score is now two to nothing! Why not just give up?

ALICE I'll try. How about this? In a certain town in Spain, which no one ever enters or leaves, there is one barber. This barber is a clean-shaven adult male. He shaves every man in the town who does not shave himself, and shaves no man who does shave himself. Who shaves the barber?

POKA The problem is meaningless, because the terms of it are inconsistent. You might as well ask me to tell you the number of stripes on a pure-white fontema.

ALICE If you could figure that one out, you must know that your reasoning about left feet is fallacious.

POKA Naturally. But I'm not going to tell you what the fallacy is. And I've won! My empire will conquer yours! The Pokas of Joka are the race that will rule the seva-gran!

(Enter the Red Knightbell, who puts up a sign reading FINITE SCIENCE FICTION)

RED K. Stop it! Stop it! What's going on here? This isn't the way it's supposed to be. Where's the author?

(Enter Attic-Agberg, the Siamese twin author.)

A-A I don't know what's happened, Red Knightbell. The characters have gotten completely out of hand. I don't even remember putting that girl in at all --- oh, she must be the character the union sent. A fine mess you've made of things!

ALICE I never asked to be in this story, anyway. All I want to do is find the White A. P.!

RED K. Well, you won't find him here. What's wrong with you, Attic-Agberg? How did you let this happen?

A-A You know I can't do a story without a cover illustration to work from.

RED K. Furdwiller!

(Enter Furdwiller, dressed as a house painter)

FURD Yes, Red Knightbell.

RED K. Why haven't you given Attic-Agberg a cover illustration?

FURD You rejected them all.

RED K. Oh. Oh; yes.

FURD I've been trying very hard, but I need a model. I used to do all right copying covers by Bergey and Finlay, but now you reject them.

RED K. The public is tired of girls in brass bras who have nothing to do with the story.

FURD I realize that, sir. The Bergey Girl --- the Finlay Girl --- they've gone out of style. We've got to have a girl who's in the story --- a serious, constructive-looking girl, sweet, unspoiled, fresh from a calculus course. In short, the Furdwiller Girl!

RED K. Exactly. When are you going to do one?

(Lensman crosses with sign POTRZEBIE BOUNCES)

FURD I've tried, Red Knightbell. But I can't find a model.

RED K. How about that girl over there? She seems to be in the story; why not use her?

FURD You mean, base the illustration on the story?

RED K. It's been done.

FURD Well, if you say so, Red Knightbell. But I won't feel right about it.

RED K. Do it anyway. You, girl --- whatever your name is --- come here. The rest of you characters wait outside.

(Captain and Poka exit right)

ALICE My name is Alice.

RED K. Well, we'll fix that up. Meanwhile, you're going to pose for Furdwiller's next cover.

ALICE Is that the one who signs his work "Furd"? I always thought he needed a model.

FURD Do you mean to say ---

RED K. Shut up, Furd. You admitted it yourself.

FURD Yes, Red Knightbell.

ALICE I can't stay to pose, though. I have to find the White
A. P.

RED K. You won't find him here. This is my dimension.

ALICE I know he isn't here. I'm just passing through. How
do I get out?

RED K. You don't. You're under contract to me.

ALICE I didn't sign any contract.

RED K. If you came from the Heroes' Union, you must have
filled out the form there.

ALICE Yes, but ---

RED K. That constituted a contract, and you can't break it.

ALICE I've got to find him! Maybe if I found another bottle
labeled "Drink Me" . . .

(She spies a bottle in Attic-Agberg's pocket, snatches it,
and takes a drink.) Attic-Agberg snatches it ~~back~~.)

A-A Hey, don't do that! You don't want that bottle! It takes
you to another magazine-dimension!

(Alice exits left)

RED K. Another magazine! Traitor! Ingrate! Contract-break-
er!

(He chases Attic-Agberg off right. Furdwiller follows.)

SCENE 4

(Signs are replaced by FISTPOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION. There is
a Masonic symbol in the corner of the sign. Enter the White
Knightbell right, with rolled-up papers. The March Clifton
enters left, wearing short pants and sucking a lollipop.)

MARCH Hello, White Knightbell. Did you get my last story?

WHITE K. Oh, it's you, March Clifton. I got it --- it stinks.

MARCH (hurt) I put in as many of your Own Inventions as I
could.

WHITE K. Oh, that part was beautifully written. I admire the
way you write my inventions into your stories ---

you make them sound even better than I think they are. But you've got to have a new hero. The readers are getting tired of the old one.

MARCH But I can't write any other hero. You'll just have to get new readers.

WHITE K. That's impossible. Everybody who's willing to put up with --- I mean, who's intelligent enough to read Fistpounding already does. You've got to have a new hero.

(Enter Alice, left. During the preceding scene she wore zori, green shorts, and a short-sleeved white shirt, as did the captain of the TSV Vega. Her shirt was filled to maximum capacity by a pair of balloons. She is now wearing shoes, green slacks, and a baggy, long-sleeved white shirt buttoned to the throat. Her hair is now in a bun.)

ALICE Excuse me, but have you seen the White William A. P.?

WHITE K. You won't find him here. How did you get in here, anyway?

ALICE It all started at the Heroes' Union ---

WHITE K. You're listed there?

ALICE Yes, but that was all a mistake. I'm just trying to find the White A. P. Can you tell me where to find him?

(Lensman crosses, with sign YNGVI IS A FLEA)

WHITE K. You don't need to look for him any longer. I'm the White Knightbell. You can work for me.

ALICE Thanks, but I'm not after a job. I have to find the --

WHITE K. That can wait. Right now you've got a job. Rewrite that story, March Clifton, and use her for a hero.

MARCH I can't do that story with a woman hero.

WHITE K. Don't just stand there, write a new one. And mind you put in all my own inventions.

MARCH Yes, White Knightbell.

ALICE Did he call you March Clifton? I've enjoyed your father's stories.

MARCH (huffily) MY stories, you mean. I am the one and only March Clifton.

ALICE Excuse me. You seemed so young.

WHITE K. I train my writers from an early age, so that they form their style of writing to suit my magazine.

ALICE Oh, I see.

WHITE K. I'll be back in an hour or so. Have the story ready then.

MARCH I will, White Knightbell.

(White Knightbell exits left, leaving rolled papers on desk)

ALICE I'm sorry, but I can't stay to be in your story. I have to find the White A. P.

MARCH Do you have a "Drink Me" bottle?

ALICE No.

MARCH Then you can't get out of this dimension. Let's get busy.

(March Clifton sits down at desk)

MARCH We'll begin with the Terran Space Navy about to join battle with the Imperial Fleet of Aldebaran. You, the Co-Ordinator, will direct the battle from Supreme Headquarters. Here's the detector you'll use to study the battle formation.

(He gives her one of the papers, which she unrolls)

ALICE Is this the wiring diagram? It looks like a horoscope.

MARCH Watch your language! No, that is the detector. It directs your extrasensory perception. With that you can detect anything, at any range. It's the White Knightbell's own invention.

ALICE I'm sorry, but I'm not a medium. I don't have any extrasensory powers.

MARCH According to the White Knightbell's theories, everybody does, but they can't use them because they don't believe in it. You just have to believe.

ALICE Okay, I'll try. Just so I can get out of here and find the White A. P.

MARCH Start now. The story's begun.

(Alice stares at the paper)

ALICE All right --- I see the Terran Space Navy. Now what?

MARCH Can't you see the enemy? They're right there.

ALICE I can see everything in that volume of space, and fifty parsecs around. There isn't any enemy fleet.

MARCH Oh, those scoundrels! Those dirty sneaks! They don't believe in extra-sensory perception! Quick, take the faster-than-light communicator.

(He gives her another rolled-up paper)

ALICE Does this work on the same principle?

MARCH Yes, it's another of the White Knightbell's own inventions.

ALICE Calling all ships --- calling all ships --- this is the co-ordinator. The enemy fleet is inherently undetectable. Rely on visual observation, repeat, rely on visual observation. Detectors are useless --- I've lost contact! What's happened?

(She takes the detector again)

The fleet's gone! I can't find them any more! How could the fleet be gone that way, without a trace?

MARCH Those filthy, slime-begotten beasts! Those rotten skeptics!

ALICE What do you mean? What's happened?

(Lensman crosses with sign I GO POGO)

MARCH That fleet was the finest work of imagination ever created. The ships were not constructed in factories, but simply consisted of blueprints, brought to full function by the psionic powers of the crew. The space-drives were based on the poltergeist principle: the crew themselves furnished the motive power. It was all the White Knightbell's own invention!

ALICE But what happened?

MARCH The aliens outnumbered the humans --- and doubted the ships out of existence! What a sneaking, underhanded thing to do.

ALICE They won, after all. You'd better go back to the old style of inventing, where things work no matter what you believe about them. You can't think cold iron out of existence.

MARCH I don't know how to invent that way. I'm going to have to leave science-fiction altogether, and move to the Magazine of Fantasy-Science! Over there, they let you repeal the laws of the universe any time you want to.

(He takes out a bottle.)

ALICE I won't be going with you, since I've got to find the White A. P. I know he isn't there. How do I get to some other dimension?

MARCH You can't leave me. I need you for my hero. You have to come along with me.

(March Clifton drinks and exits left. Alice follows as if dragged by an invisible rope.)

SCENE 5

(Four signs are hung: MAGAZINE OF FANTASY SCIENCE, JACK OAKLAND ADVENTURE MAGAZINE, HILARY KING'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE, and DENTURE SCIENCE FICTION. On the desk are a wizard's hat, a solar topee, a deerstalker, and a space helmet. The White A. P. enters left)

WHITE A. P. Oh, my contracts and deadlines! How late it's getting!

(The White A. P. exits right. A moment later the Mad Hatter enters right and sits at desk; then Captain Nemo enters left.)

NEMO Are you the Mad Hatter? I understand you have some jobs available for science-fiction heroes.

(Hatter puts on space helmet)

HATTER Yes, we have some. What kind of work have you done before, Mr. ---?

NEMO Captain Nemo. The union sent me here.

HATTER Goodness, are you still in the science-fiction union? Why, you aren't science-fiction any more. Times have changed.

(Hatter changes to solar topee)

You're an adventure-story hero now. As it happens, we've got a new adventure magazine, and we have quite a few job openings just now. Let's see. Suppose we make you the captain of the USS Nautilus?

NEMO That's the name of my submarine! How can it be a United

States Navy vessel?

HATTER As a matter of fact, the United States Navy had a ship named NAUTILUS before you did. But it's nice that the name of your submarine is the one used for the world's first atomic-powered submarine.

NEMO Atomic power? Then it is science-fiction, after all.

HATTER No, Captain Nemo; the times have caught up with you and passed beyond. You have to keep running to stay in present time. If you want to move on ahead into science-fiction and the future, you'll have to run much faster.

NEMO It will take me a long time to understand the atomic submarine alone. I won't need to get into the future again. After all, to me this is the future!

HATTER Good luck, Captain Nemo!

NEMO Thank you, Mad Hatter.

(Nemo exits right as Alice and the March Clifton enter left, She is now dressed as in the first scene)

ALICE Let me go! I don't want to be a character! I've got to find the White A. P.!

MARCH I'd like to write for the Magazine of Fantasy-Science.

HATTER What experience do you have? (Changes to wizard's hat)

MARCH I'm the March Clifton. I used to write for Fistpounding Science Fiction, but I quit when my spacefleet was doubted out of existence.

HATTER I'm delighted to have you. I always thought you should be writing for us. You won't have any trouble here. Poltergeist spacedrives --- just the thing for us. You can start work immediately. And the young lady?

MARCH One of my characters.

ALICE I don't want to be his character! It's all a terrible mistake! I'm only trying to find the White A. P.! Please let me go. I've got to find him.

HATTER He should be back from his leave of absence soon. What did you want to see him about? You're a fantasy fan, I suppose?

ALICE Not really. I enjoy it, just as I enjoy science fiction,

but at heart I'm a mystery fan.

(Hatter changes to deerstalker)

HATTER I'm managing editor of a mystery magazine, too.

ALICE Then you know about the Baker Street Irregulars.

HATTER Of course. The Sherlock Holmes fan organization. The White A. P. is a member.

ALICE That's why I've got to find him. I want to join.

HATTER What was the curious incident of the dog in the night-time?

ALICE "The dog did nothing in the night-time."
"That was the curious incident," said Sherlock Holmes.

HATTER Correct.

(Enter the White A. P.)

A. P. Dark nights are unpleasant.

ALICE Yes, for strangers to travel.

A. P. Source?

ALICE The Valley of Fear.

A. P. Characters?

ALICE The challenge is by Mike Scanlan, and the response by Birdy Edwards, alias John McMurdo.

A. P. Correct.

(Lensman crosses with sign GRAY FLANNEL LENSMAN)

ALICE Say, who is that fellow, anyway? He keeps upstaging everybody.

A. P. Never mind him. He's just the Upstage Lensman. By the way, since you answered my question correctly, our Buy Laws provide that I owe you a drink. I believe we keep a bottle somewhere ---

MARCH You can't go! You're my character!

(Enter Furdwiller)

FURD There you are! Come on --- you've got to pose for the

Furdwiller Girl.

(Enter Attic-Agberg)

A. A. You've got to come back! We can't write anything unless you pose for Furdwiller!

(Enter White Knightbell)

WHITE K. Come back to Fistpounding! I need you to distract the readers from my inventions!

(In the ensuing tussle they try to drag Alice off in different directions.)

ALICE Who cares for you? You're nothing but a pack of pro's!

(Furdwiller, Attic-Agberg, White Knightbell, and March Clifton slink out)

A. P. Now, about that drink ---

ALICE Is it a bottle labeled "Drink Me"? I've had enough of those.

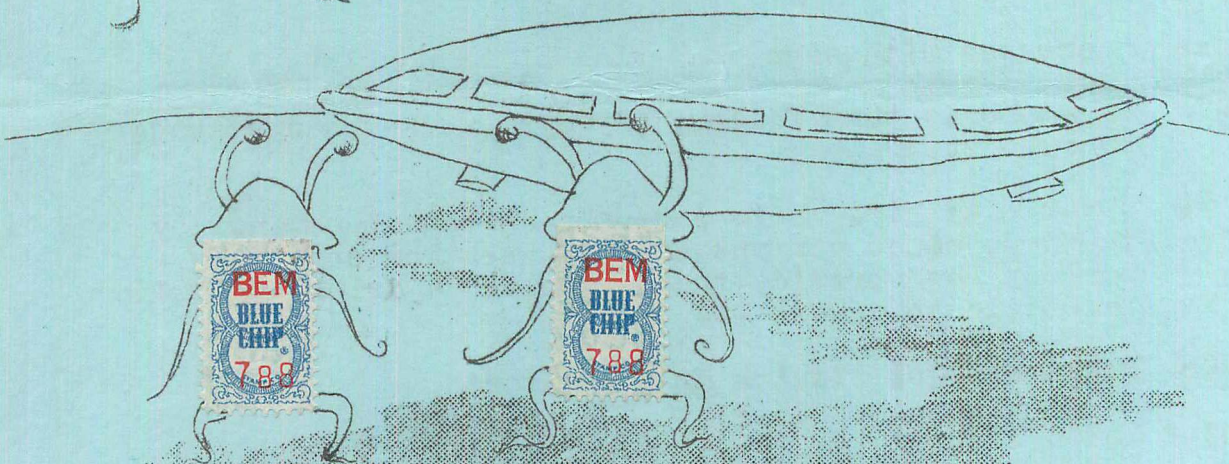
A. P. Not at all. It's Scotch.

(They start out)

A. P. Have you ever noticed the abrupt change in Sherlock Holmes' character after his return from Reichenbach Falls? Up to then, as you may remember . . .

(They go out)

THE END



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