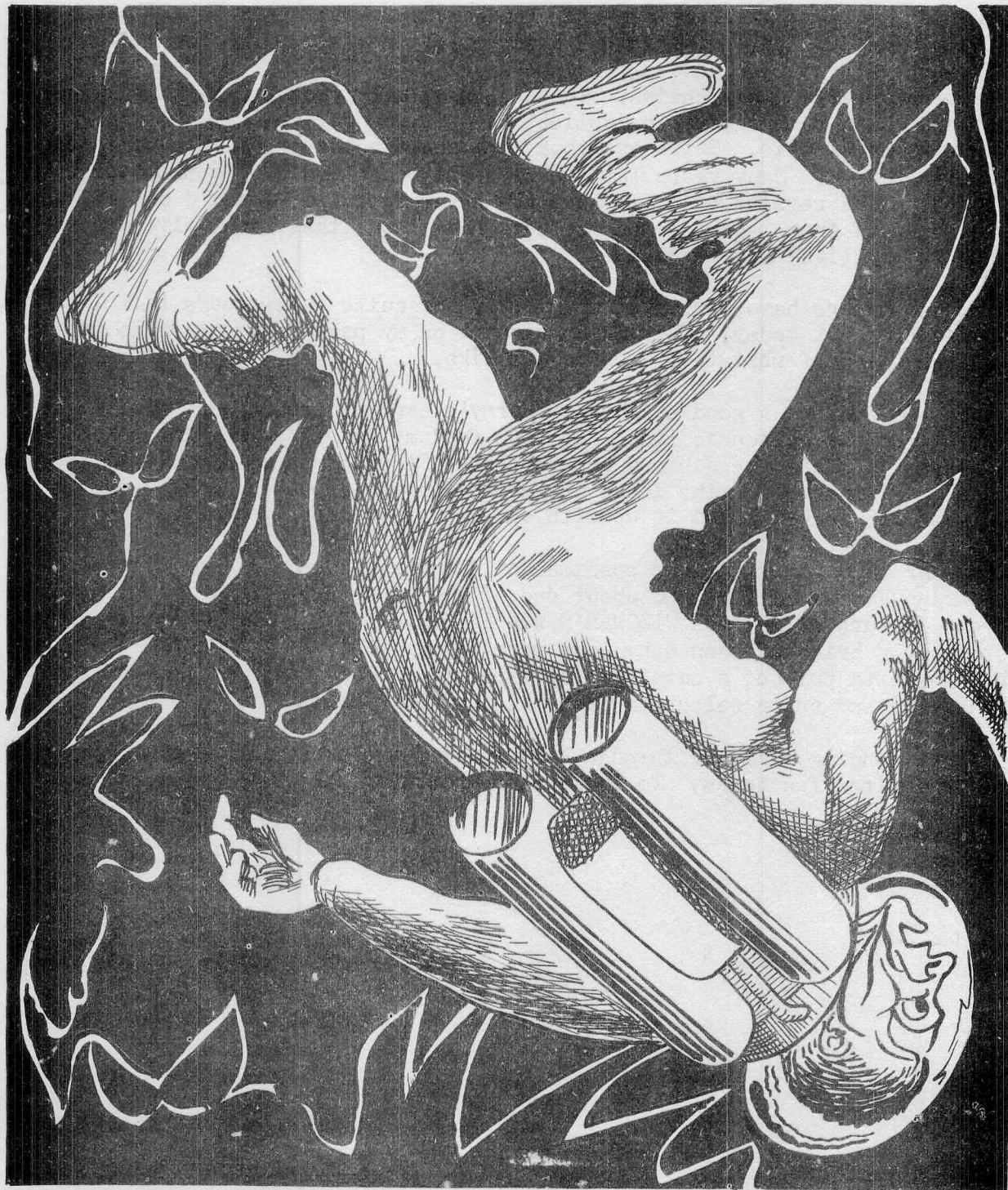


ASTRONEER



SPACE FEAR BY DENNESS MORTON

This is (contrary to outward appearance) BLEATHERINGS No 4, which is produced for the Fantasy Amateur Press Association by Ethel Lindsay, Courage House, 6 Langley Avenue, Surbiton, Surrey, UK

When I entered fandom in 1951 all my first contacts were by mail; and the first fans I met were the members of the then Manchester Group. Among them were two men - Harry Turner and Eric Needham. Harry was on the staff of the MANCHESTER GUARDIAN, and Eric was a window-cleaner who worked on his own. Between them they produced a fanzine called NOW&THEN which contained all the virtues of a good fanzine. It was beautifully produced by Harry whose artwork added to his care in duplication. It was gay and unusual due to the writing of Eric. Gafia overtook them one fine day; and that was a big loss to fandom. Many years later Harry sent me a bundle of duplicated sheets - the remains of a N&T that was never finished. I could do as I pleased with them -- but he suggested a hoax issue that might give a few old-timers slight heart-failure.

These papers have mouldered in my care for quite a few years till I hauled them out today. This is an attempt on my part to use them to show you something of what this fanzine was like.

The covers are a good example of Harry's careful production. The artist, Deness Morton is long gone from fandom; but if anyone knows his address I'd gladly send him a copy of this. First comes an article by Eric which was written for the issue of N&T that never appeared; I have put it on stencil; and followed it up with one of Eric's unpublished poems.

After this comes another specimen of Harry's production - an article by Brian Varley; it must be about one of the first written by Brian. A great feature of N&T was WIDOWER'S WONDERFUL PRODUCTS. These verses were started by Eric and soon many fans were trying their hand at them. Harry had meant to put out a catalogue of them and in fact had made up a dummy. I have picked out a selection from this and this is the last feature.

I am sending this out through FAPA; but some copies will also go to some old and tired fan faces. To the latter--remember when you thought this was fun?

Ethel.

THE AWFUL TRUTH

by
Eric
Needham

There was a convention of science-fiction fans held in Manchester in 1954. This was at the instigation of one vociferous fan, who later dropped out of the committee. Harry Turner was roped in to deal with the Combozine. The latest light of love went out of my life..... and I wandered into the Waterloo Hotel, where nefarious schemes were being hatched to amaze and delight the London Fans. Pause for sad reflection. Nursing burnt fingers, Harry and I subsequently met at his new home in Romiley, and joined company for the first time since the Manchester Interplanetary Society achieved fame by firing the only rockets to be launched from English soil by an amateur society. Pause for reflection on that, too. Even the B.I.S. can't make that claim.

Pensively we pawed through piles of ancient fanmags, dredging up the past, and sadly contemplating some newer fanzines. Then Harry mentioned a word...a single word...and I found myself writing for ZENITH 2. When ZENITH 2 will appear, we don't know. What I do know is that a yearning appeared in Harry's face to publish a fanmag again, and deep in the heart of London plans were being pushed forward for a thing called OMFA, which prospect appealed to me not in the least. Yet I wrote an article about Jonah, gave him a poem, a few cockeyed notes, and left him to his dreams. One Saturday night he wandered round with a pink sheet of NOW AND THEN. I was horrified. He had published my name as well.

From that day N&T never looked forward. The entire equipment at Harry's disposal swung into action. Out came his home made stylo. Out came his weary old wheel-pens. Out came his slightly irresponsible typer...and lastly, the Original Zenith Duplicator. Now this needs a paragraph to itself.

Fans old enough to remember when ZENITH first appeared will recall that a war had broken out a few months before. Patriotic appeals were launched for scrap metal, and great dumps of rusty machinery appeared everywhere. I do not claim there is any connection..but this is the time that Harry acquired his 1913 Model 2aRoneo duplicator. This is a purely paleotechnic device, lavish in its use of ornamental cast-iron, and qualifies for the title of being an upright grand. One night we wearied of sticking Gestetner stencils on to

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Roneo headings, so the appliance was examined carefully. Bits were removed and changed over. A hammer was skillfully used, and the contraption henceforth could be used with any make of stencil known. Was Harry satisfied? Not he. He now uses Ellam stencils, stuck to Roneo backings, very successfully. And his latest feat is to use half a quarto-size stencil stuck with Cellotape to very weary-looking interleaving sheets cut into masks. I suspect that the ink and paper is gained illegally, since Harry keeps neither books nor records.

And that covers the production side, but ohhh, the speed of the production. Each sheet is individually fed in, individually removed and slip-sheeted. Every twenty pages or so Harry reverently removes the stencil and annoints the drum with ink. Each page is manually produced, not the mass-produced of most fanzines. There was one occasion when Harry successfully produced two colour pages from the same stencil with one crank of the handle. Brother, that night was terrible. There was time to lose all interest in the proceedings between one sheet coming out and the next. Occasionally the Turner children assist Dad to produce his comics. Sometimes Harry, with determination I can only admire and deplore sets to with clenched teeth and does the whole sickening process himself.

Oh, I forgot...Harry also does the illustrations. He can draw pictures.

What of the Contents? Dear me...I take no responsibility for this. There are now 30 members of the RFV&SDS. To date we have had only Sid Birchby contributing...though we have published letters from the Bulmer love-birds, the Lyons, and an old croaker called Robert Bloch, who has been around for some time now. You never know...the old croaker might write again(GENTLE HINT). He is Our Most Revered ember.

Sometimes people look at me thoughtfully, as Walt Willis did, and speculate how the stories and articles get written, and ponder, as Walt did, on how my mental processes work. I'm flattered beyond belief that Walt credits me with mental processes. The whole truth is that NOW & THEN is purely autobiographical and completely factual in every respect.(Well, I knew you wouldn't believe it.)

The whole truth is that being a window-cleaner I find that the improbable is to be expected in life. I have long ceased to find anything unusual in seeing a half-ton chunk of Giant's Causeway in a hair-dresser's saloon, but what if I should write a story on such lines? I could write yarns about literally true incidents I meet which are completely improbable, and often funny. How would a visitor from outer space account for the fact that certain windows in office buildings often have on them old corset ribs and suspenders? The curious problem of neat packets of used razor-blades to be found in gutters and rooftops? The inexplicable quantities of women's undergarments found around chimney stacks, or the mystery of a roof-top covered with rusty hair-pins? People do not know of the oddities above them. At the other extreme is the miscellaneous assortment of oddments to be found below cellar gratings. Opening cellar windows may on occasion release a few pounds of rusty nails, boxes of marbles, Masonic regalia, and stuff dumped by shoplifters, such as coat and dress hangers. They steal the coat complete with hanger, and throw the hanger away. I've got lots of them. It

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was more interesting once, though, after the war, with clips of cartridges, rifle bolts, and my prize memory, a box of twelve land-mine detonators. Almost equal to this was a parcel containing a number of hand-grenade pins and retainer levers. What happened to the grenades themselves makes fascinating speculation. By far the most unusual was a neatly wrapped parcel of freshly-sliced bacon beneath a cellar grating, about four pounds of it. I re-wrapped it, replaced it, and looked for it at the end of the day. I lived on bacon for a week, because the ration in those early post-war days was four ounces a week.

Plots come ready made to me. It is a literal fact that after heavy showers of rain I've looked for frogs on rooftops and fire-escapes. No luck. Then I find reference to fads of frogs and all sorts of Fortean phenomena in The Anatomy of Melancholy. And in Titus Livius, plus Machiavelli, too. They are there, if you look for them. Biggest snag is trying to persuade fans that literature can be fun.

And so it came about that legends have been explored, after a fashion, and will continue to be. History and myths will be shown in a new light as the world-wide effects of Widower's Products becomes known. Remarkable new verses may see the light of day, and many anomalous situations may be examined..we don't know. Mayhap we'll have a laugh at some of the pretensions of SF and weird-fantasy yarns. Harry can illustrate anything, including the stuff you, dear Member, can write.

NOW&THEN makes no reference to fandom, being off-trail. Zap-guns and beanies are taboo. Fan feuds have no part in its makeup. All we hope is that people get a laugh out of it.

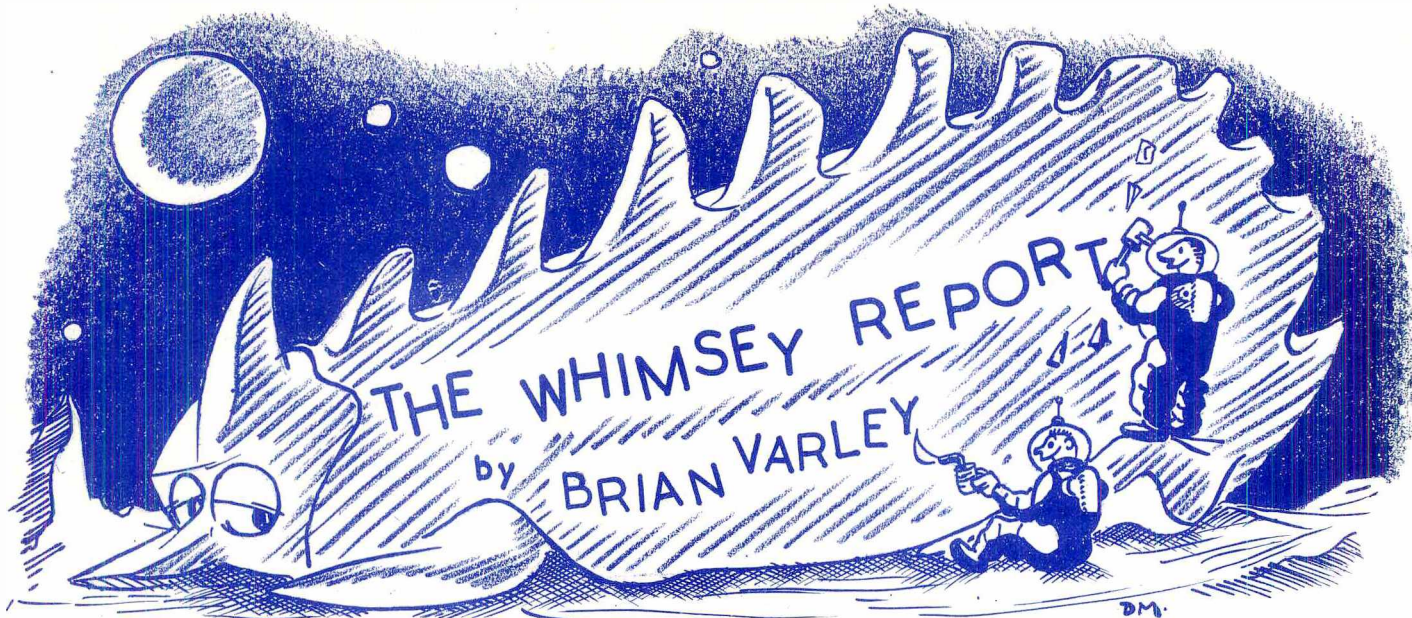
Eric Needham.

Love Still Finds A Way.....

A barren Moon and frigid space	
No atmosphere to scatter light	
Hell only knows this is no place	
For Love, this barren satellite.	To send my love by micro-beam
	What romance can that hold?
	Modern modes of love would seem
Hams of ancient days of course	To have nothing on the old.
Showed no sign of reluctance	
To send an interrupted wave of Morse	
By capacitance and inductance	

Across the gap which separates
Love's spark from you down there
My spark-gap love will penetrate
The Kennelly-Heaviside Layer!

Eric Needham.



MUCH TROUBLE HAS BEEN TAKEN BY Professor Whimsey and his colleagues, amongst whom I am proud to be numbered, in the compilation of the following report. So much trouble in fact that it is largely devoted to the difficulties we encountered during our survey.

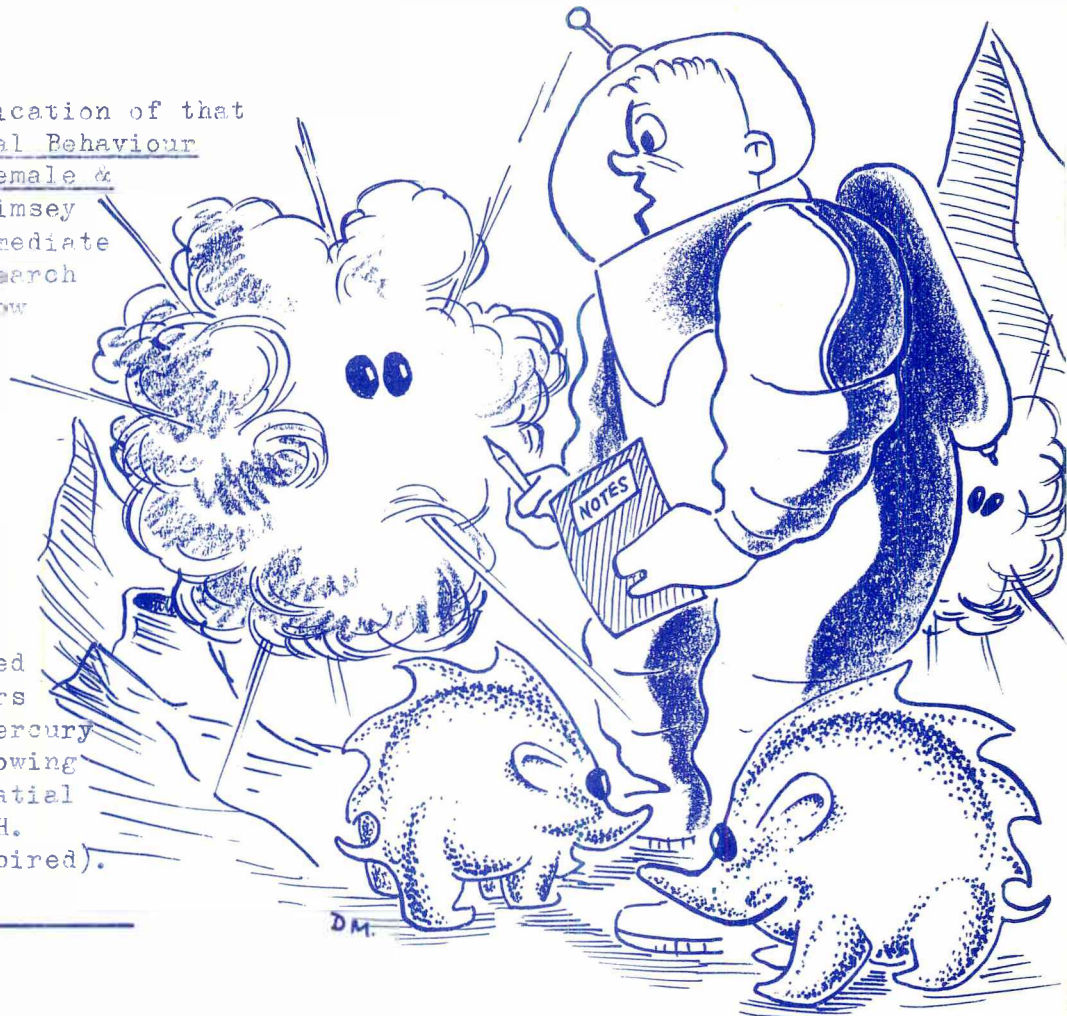
The first life forms on our survey schedule were the inhabitants of the night side of this desolate planet - the seemingly immortal ice-slugs (*Limax Frigidigit*). These 200-foot long monsters are unbelievably slow-thinking and acutely myopic. The first six months of our stay were devoted to making the ice-slugs aware of our presence: some 322 tons of high explosives and a battery of 140 searchlights were used to this end. Eventually our persistence was rewarded and our presence was acknowledged.

Communication was established through an old system known as the Mars Code. The slugs made noises of varied length by vibrat-

ing their antennae, while we flashed a searchlight beam. Perhaps "flashed" is an inaccurate term: we soon discovered that the slugs regarded a five-hour beam as a dot and a twelve-hour beam as a dash. There seemed no way out of this difficulty. After a mere fifteen years of this, we ascertained that the slugs would be delighted to complete our forms - provided that we printed them on sheets at least 30 feet square so that they might see them.

There was some consternation among our field workers at this request. Undaunted, Professor Whimsey conceived the idea of sewing several blankets together to form one large sheet. After many weeks of ceaseless sewing, the new "forms" were ready for use. A brief conference lasting eighteen months took place between the slugs when the questionnaires were presented. During the year following a message was received to the effect that a nation-wide canvas would be made.

With the recent publication of that monumental work Sexual Behaviour of the Human Male, Female & Others, Professor Whimsey has exhausted the immediate possibilities of research on this planet. He now seeks to conquer New Worlds and has embarked on a new survey designed to provide material for a complete report on the sexual behaviour of extra-terrestrial life forms. A hint of the shortly to be revealed results of seven years work on the planet Mercury is given in the following dispatch from our spatial co-respondent BRIAN H. VARLEY, N.S.F.C. (Inspired).



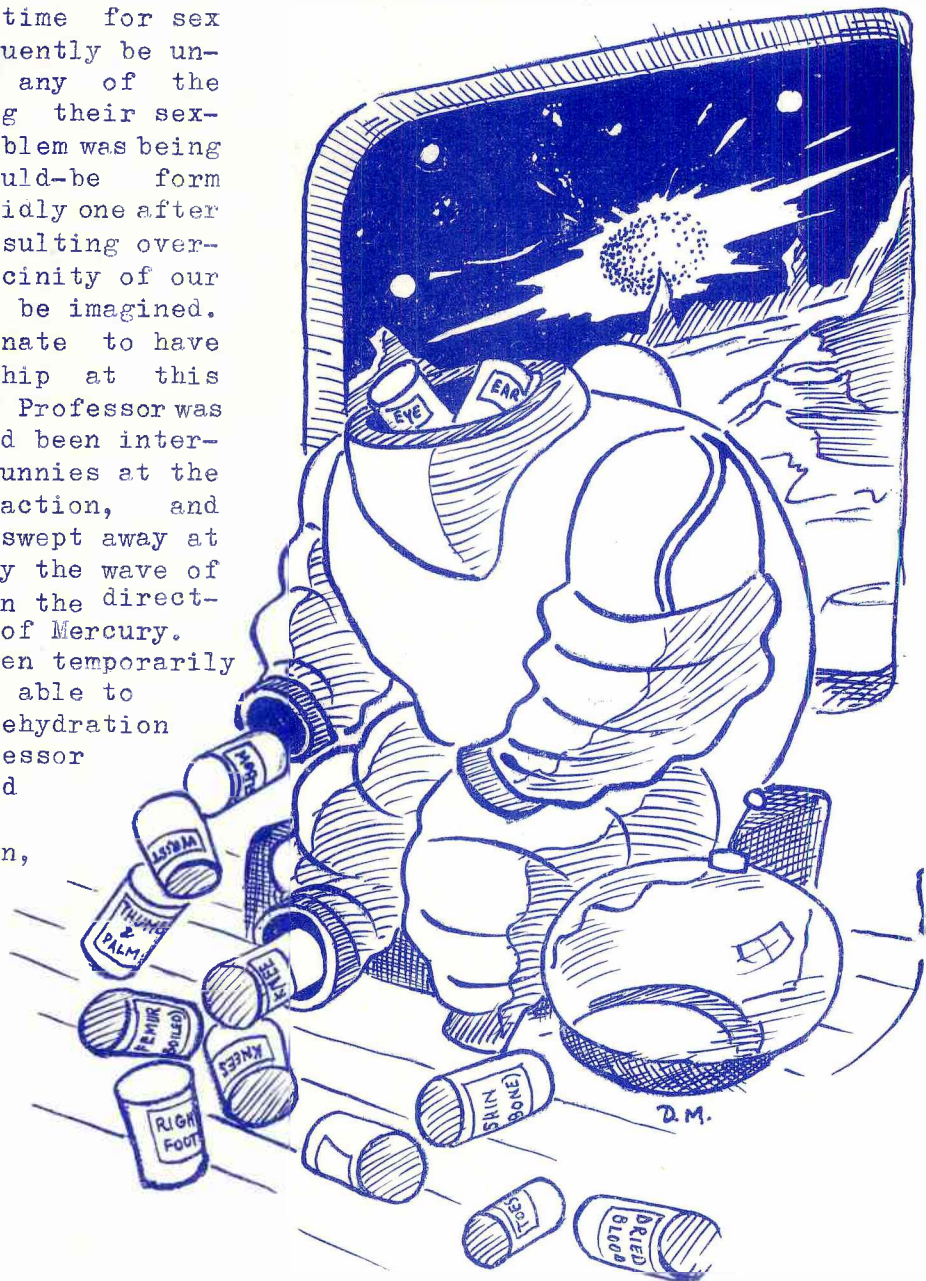
As this would take some little time, it was suggested that the expedition return a few centuries hence to collect the completed forms...

Faced by this unexpected setback we left Limax Frigidigit and departed to the "twilight" zone of the planet. Our intention was to extend our survey to include the other inhabitants of Mercury, the Lapindus Detonis, commonly known as the "bang bunny". This name is derived from their method of reproduction in that when two of these creatures die in close proximity the resulting double explosion creates three new fully-developed citizens. For each addi-

tional explodee present the number produced is squared. These creatures are highly intelligent but communication is somewhat limited by the fact that their life span is equivalent to a mere twenty Terran minutes. This obstacle was overcome by three hundred of them gallantly volunteering to devote their lives to filling in the questionnaire. Our excitement at having so simply solved this apparently insuperable problem was sharply curtailed at the third question - "What is your profession?". The answer in every case, not unnaturally, proved to be "Questionnaire Completer". This created an obvious hiatus.

An interviewing sample made up entirely of a single profession could not, by any stretch of the imagination, be construed as representative of the entire race. It was decided that as it was impossible to select a representative sample, we should have to fall back on random sampling techniques. A second difficulty was immediately encountered. If the bunnies were to devote their lives to filling in forms, then they would have no time for sex relations and consequently be unable to deal with any of the questions concerning their sex-life. While this problem was being considered, the would-be form fillers exploded rapidly one after the other. The resulting overpopulation in the vicinity of our spaceship may well be imagined. I count myself fortunate to have been inside the ship at this critical moment. The Professor was not so lucky. He had been interviewing one of the bunnies at the time of the chain reaction, and was last seen being swept away at a prodigious rate, by the wave of exploding bunnies, in the direction of the day-side of Mercury.

The survey has been temporarily suspended; if we are able to undo the extensive dehydration suffered by the Professor during his protracted exposure to the intense solar radiation, our tour of the solar system will be resumed.



Zeus sat on Olymus high
With gods as sole spectators
Who feared no jolts from lightning bolts
With WIDOWER'S INSULATORS.

Chuck Harris

In Xanadu built Kubla Kahn
A pleasure dome for his workers
An illuminated, prefabricated
WIDOWER'S TRAVELLING CIRCUS.

Where Florence Nightingale kept her lamp
Is a source of many rumours,
She had it concealed, it's now revealed
In her WIDOWER'S WONDERFUL BLOOMERS

Workers of the World, Unite!
More leisure for the toilers
Watch sheets and whites come startling bright
bright

In WIDOWER'S LAUNDRY BOILERS.
Fat Darrell.

When Mason and Dixon drafted out
Their famous boundary line
They had a frolic with neo-alcoholic
WIDOWER'S RHUBARB WINE.

dag.

The brides of Bluebeard, one by one,
Were murdered in a closet
End the lives of unwanted wives
In a WIDOWER'S SAFE DEPOSIT

The Peak of Everest was reached
By Hillary and Tensing
Who staked a claim and surrounded same
With WIDOWER'S PORTABLE FENCING
A. Mercer

When the Serpent caused Adam and Eve to fall
(was it python, asp, or viper?)
They had to leave Eden and shortly were
needing
WIDOWER'S WONDERFUL DIAPERS.
R. Bloch

The red men of the western plains
Once hunted scalps but later
Heard the news and now just use
WIDOWER'S DEPILATOR

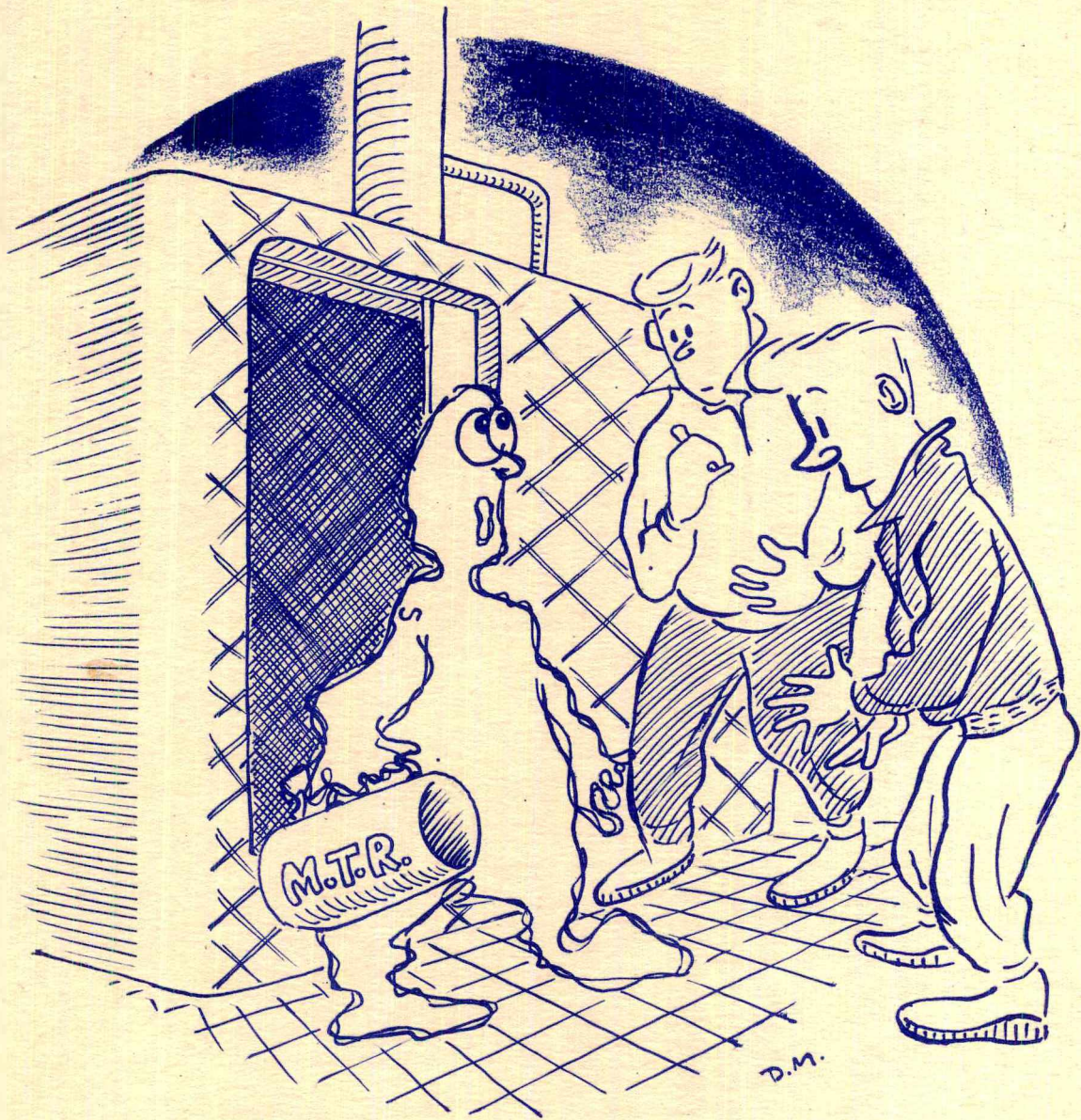
The haunting song the sirens sang
Left Ulysses aghast as
He calmed his fears and plugged his ears
With WIDOWER'S MUSTARD PLASTERS

Simon Legree, that terrible man
Who attempted to hurt Eliza
Ended his days because of his ways
As WIDOWER'S FERTILIZER

Barnum & Bailey said with pride
From the height of Jumbo's shoulders
To keep him penned, we recommend
WIDOWER'S ELEPHANT HOLDERS.
A. Mercer

The Boy stood on the burning deck
That fire was a wow, sirs!
Yet he could, without doubt, have sat it out
With WIDOWER'S ASBESTOS TROUSERS!
R. Bloch

My bet is that all unsigned verses were by Eric.....Ethel.



...Uh - I'm the Matter-Transmitter repair man you asked for...