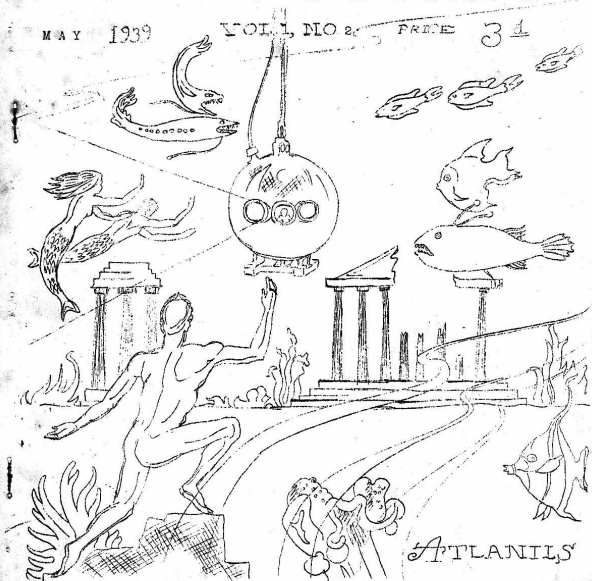


The FANTAST

MAY 1939

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PRICE 3d



ATLANIS

A FANTASY REFORM PUBLICATION.

Read also "The SATELLITE" published by John F. Burke, 57 Beauchair Drive, Liverpool 15 at the same price. 'Sally' is a miniature bomb-shell - and then some - as you will soon find out.

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Cover by ROBB symbolising "Atlantis"

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MACK

NO THANKS! ... ONE'S AN F.R.P.
FANTASY REFORM PUBLICATIONS --
the magazines that --

EARS RATE PERFECT!

MARS AND VENUS

Association of ideas leads us along strange paths of the mind. Even before modern psychologists discovered its sinister aspects, this habit was a source of wonder and delight alike to ordinary men and to such litterateurs as Edgar Allan Poe - surely the pioneers of psycho-analysis. Let us consider the words "Mars" and "Venus" - both rich in potent suggestion, both well-suited for our purposes.

What images do they call forth in the brain of the average man? Mars is for him the god of war, resplendent in evil panoply. He pictures a bearded ogre astride the world - a laughing giant whose joy is to spread destruction.

Turning from this fearsome sight to such an incongruous contrast as the popular brand of chocolate known as "Mars" he may pause to reflect on the red planet, of which his knowledge is limited, but with whose hypothetical inhabitants he is acquainted through the medium of the popular Press. H. G. Wells' goggle-eyed horrors may well cause him to shudder but he feels himself superior to the panic-stricken Americans who fled before their fancied invasion. Meditation on this Martian scare may move him to regret the folly of mankind in the mess; and this again will remind him of modern War, impossible without the sheeplike acquiescence of the multitude. So, having turned a full circle, he is back to his starting-point.

Venus will almost inevitably be linked in his brain with the amiable Venus de Milo; he may speculate on the circumstances of her amputation, mentally reconstructing the position of the missing arms. The smug expression on the face of the statue - her generous proportions - these aspects of the subject may flit across his mind, perhaps diverting his attention to the case of the modern woman, so different in face, figure, and attitude from her predecessor of ancient times.

If he thinks of the planet Venus at all, it is as the Evening Star, celebrated in prose and poetry. He is more familiar with the properties of the "Venus" pencil, than with those of that distant world.

The reflections of the classical student will differ slightly. With no more knowledge of the solar system than our friend the Man in the Street, he is better acquainted with the doings of gods and goddesses. He can regale himself with saucy anecdotes from the mythology of Greece and Rome, preening himself on the superiority of his culture.

To the astronomer, Mars and Venus will suggest spectroscopic findings, infra-red photographs, mean distances and so on. It is possible that the dazzling splendour of the cloudy planet has power to move him; but his business is to analyse Beauty, not to admire it. A lovely colour will make him think of the element its presence on the spectrograph indicates; the creamy flocculence of clouds will make him curious about

their composition. If his orderly mind ventures to speculate on the possibility of extra-terrestrial life, its speculations will be rigidly conditioned by the irrepealable laws of science. Not for him the untrammelled imagination of the fantast whom we deal with last of all.

A seeker after the enchantment of the utterly bizarre, well versed in all branches of fantastic literature, will find romance in these pregnant words - "Mars" and "Venus". His knowledge, perhaps almost as circumscribed as that of the average man, will not hinder the free roaming of his sportive fancy.

Sluggish plants unfurling thick leaves on the rusty surface of a dehydrated desert, dotted with bulging domes whose airtight walls enclose the cities of beings so alien to us that we can scarcely conceive of them..... Dried-up canals overgrown with crimson vegetation that stirs faintly in an icy wind, below the pin-pricks of two tiny moons or under the shrunken orb of a far-off sun..... Colossal ruins of a metropolis ancient when Man fought with the sabretooth..... And some day, across that distant horizon, the gleaming shapes of torpedoes that spit blue fire, spiralling down to land on the first conquest in Man's interplanetary career.....

That - and so much more - is what Mars means to the fantast.

And Venus? Steaming jungles that stretch to the shores of boiling seas in whose viscid waters stir vast reptilian nightmares..... Gaily-coloured flying things that dip and swoop above the massive fronds between which poke the gargoyle-faces of predatory carnivores..... Hissing, lashing rain that descends in solid sheets of chemical-tainted water from those perpetual clouds that veil Beauty and Horror alike from the prying eyes of terrestrial scientists..... And the moist heat of a Turkish Bath - relaxing, enervating..... Then, even on the face of this savage young world, the tiny figures of men in their protective suits, venturing from the chrome-steel bellies of the lightning-swift vessels that have brought them to Heaven and to the Hell that lurks in its lovely heart - Venus!

BY

OSMOND P H ROBB.

WE REGRET THAT owing to our decision to make the second "Fantast" a completely non-fiction number, we were compelled to leave over until the next issue the promised story by Eric Charles Maine. Like most good things, it will improve with keeping.....

May we mention that we are still very much in the market for material, not being so fortunate in this respect as the late and greatly-lamented IMAGINATION!

HOW TO WRITE WEIRD POETRY.

(Dedicated to C.S.Young)

In the first place, it must be remembered that poets are born, and not made. So if you intend to be a poet, 'twere better if you had made the necessary arrangements with your progenitors previous to your birth. However, if you were unfortunately born without the necessary versification kink, (kinks to you my good McIlwain! -- ED) then you can console yourself by remembering that "ye must be born again", but don't forget to remedy the omission next time.

It is to the unfortunate ones that I address these few hints, those to whom poetry is an anathema, a devilish contraption turned out only with the greatest of effort and much sweating of blood. You poor fishes need never be dim bulbs at a party; they won't laugh when you stand up to recite. Instead you will hold them spellbound with beautiful fantastic verse; verse calculated to turn OASmith green with envy, verse destined to enthral the spirit of Lovecraft with its perfect technique....

(All right - cut the preamble and get down to first principles -- ED)

Now the easiest kind of poetry to write is the modern style - "vers libre". It may best be described as prose-poetry, since there is no intricate metre to be adhered to, and no rhymes to be painfully sought or concocted. Instead one just writes down whatever comes into one's head, always remembering to vary the length of the lines a little in order to make it seem as though there is some subtle purpose in them. Be as vague as possible - circumlocution is highly to be commended - as this will gain you fame as a philosopher and thinker. Thus, instead of saying "The sun set", you would say:-

"Far in the west,
Embedded in a sky of deepening purple
And fanned by fleecy clouds,
Sank the sun in crimson glory
Towards the beckoning ebony
Of Timbuctoo"... or words to that effect.

Notice "sank the sun" is used instead of "the sun sank" because such inversions often make critics raise their hats and henceforth link your name with Shakespeare.

So much for vers libre - you should have no difficulty with that. But the snag comes when you try to compose the more orthodox, rhymed poetry.

But you need have no qualms, for "poetic license" comes to your rescue very nicely. If anybody should be

tactless enough to point out an error in your poems, just elevate your nose and say "poetic license" (whereupon the rude fellow says "Yeah - minus the 'license' -- I know! - ED) and your would-be critic won't be.

The most difficult part of writing verse is finding the rhymes, and if you haven't got a rhyming dictionary, then you'd better get one quickly or you'll be in a hot spot. Thinking out rhymes is made all the more difficult by the fact that the words chosen must be relevant. For instance, if your first line is -

"Oh, lovely creature born of Psyche",

then it wouldn't be much use your ending the next line with "crikey!" And if you can't find another rhyme for Psyche besides "crikey" or "likee" (Chinese for like), then you'd better destroy that particular poem. /How about this?

"Oh, lovely creature born of Psyche,

Dost thou recall the shores of Waiki-
Ki..." etc.

-- ED/

Always pick a simple one-syllable word with which to end a line, as this greatly facilitates rhyming. For instance it would be sheer suicide to commence a limerick like this --

"There was an old man of Brazil,

Who swallowed some trichlorophenolmethylenedosalicyl".

But substitute for the trichlor business a one-syllable word, and you're on the right road to Laureate-ship.

e.g. "There was an old man of Brazil,

Who swallowed a Beecham's pill...."

It would be more prudent if we left that particular limerick unfinished, but you understand my point, I hope?

As for metre - well, nobody ever pays much attention to that. Just remember to vary it every now and then to avoid monotony, and Keats will fade into comparative insignificance beside you. Thus, instead of ---

"Twinkle, twinkle, little star,

How I wonder what you are..."

you should write ---

"Little star, twinkle twinkle,

Like a blasted peri-winkle...."

It is certainly more forceful in its effect, as you will readily admit.

And now, having mastered the technique of poetry, you will be all agog to know how to combine the weird with your verses. You needn't worry as - using the above method - your poems are bound to be weird in any case. But for the enlightenment of budding RWT's, I append a few hints.

You must be familiar with mythology (including astronomy - c.f. Mr. Gabrielson's thesis in SALLY), and be able to spout strange and unusual names like an over-energetic drain-pipe.

e.g. "Down in the forest something stirred. He
Listened in pain to the hurdy-gurdy....."

poem... but you get what I mean, don't you? Names such as "Shoggoth", "Naiad", "Baalam", "Wollheim" ----- horrible though they may appear at first sight, have been the forerunners of their respective sponsors. If you can write a line of poetry like this ---

"The evil Palooka, son of Kaeva-kaeva, the rat,
Came up from Spraggon's fiery pit, the brat!"

then your fortune is practically made. Always use a "double A" in weird names, as this is a custom which is fatal - sorry - fatal - to ignore.

Now go ahead, and turn out weird poetry by the bucketful - you're bound to be a success. But remember, when you receive that big, fat cheque from WEIRD TALES that yours truly, the chap who trained you, would appreciate a cut - to keep him out of the workhouse.

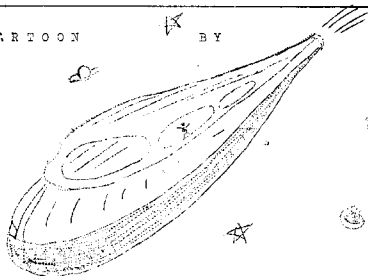
BY

DAVID McILWAIN

CARTOON

BY

BLACK



"Hoots mon! Stop the ship! I've
dropped a saxeence!"

" CONVERSATION PIECE "

It was the first night in new digs and the conversation with a fellow exile had got around to the subject of literature. After finding that my companion's tastes were not too high-brow, I remarked, somewhat hesitantly, "You know, I read a lot of tripe just from sheer force of habit - began before I had any sense of literary values and haven't been able to break off."

"Westerns?" he enquired.

"No, never read 'em. I was referring to science-fiction."

"You mean those American magazines. I've read a few. Most of the stories seemed rather crude, but that kind of stuff doesn't appeal to me much and I may be biased."

"No," I had to admit, "you're right. Most of the stories are crude, despite the marvellous possibilities of the subject."

"And where do you think the trouble lies?"

"Oh, the faults of science-fiction are legion. Probably there's no literary sin that is not committed by science-fiction authors. Quite apart from that, there's a decided deficiency of imagination and plain common sense."

"Deficiency of imagination? I should have thought that the trouble was too much imagination, that the fantastic side of the stories would overshadow the human interest."

"Certainly that was the case a few years ago when a type of story known as the "thought-variant" was in vogue. The typical "thought-variant" was simply a means of putting over some flabbergasting idea, and, of course, the characters, too, were designed to that end."

However, in the last year or two there has been more emphasis on human interest. But I wasn't referring to the scientific or fantastic side of the stories. That can still be imaginative enough - in fact sometimes a dashed sight too imaginative for my liking. It's just on this question of human interest that the authors show their deplorable lack of imagination. To many of them human interest simply means pitch-forking some unfortunate female into a story that would be better without her. That might be tolerable if they could make their characters, male and female, act and speak in a reasonably human manner. Unfortunately, an abysmal ignorance of human nature seems to be one of the chief qualifications of the science-fiction writer today."

"The characterisation is poor, then?"

"Exactly."

"You mentioned something, too, about lack of common sense."

"That is closely related to lack of imagination. It shows partly in the poor characterisation - also in illogicality."

"Scientific errors in the stories, eh?"

"It isn't that so much. As a matter of fact, some of

the best science-fiction contains no science at all, and in any case a competent writer can be forgiven much. No, I meant nothing more than faulty reasoning. Characters do things that no reasonable human being would do in the circumstances. Situations occur which are either utterly impossible or at least extremely improbable. The great thing about this kind of story is to give the reader an illusion of reality and with these recurring faults that is impossible."

"And despite all these faults, you go on reading the stuff?"

"Yes. As I said before, it's largely a matter of habit. Also, I make a hobby of collecting fantastic literature of all kinds, and don't want to miss any of the magazines. And, though I've painted a pretty black picture, there has been excellent science-fiction in the past and doubtless there will be in the future."

"You think there's a chance of improvement, then?"

"Yes, I think so. Most of the magazines can be written off as a dead loss, of course, but there are two whose demand is for stories that are primarily pure entertainment. That's the right idea and - well, only the future can show....."

BY

GARNET SOFFER

+++++

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

(In this department we will attempt to answer all queries submitted, provided a stamped, addressed, envelope and a postal order for 2/6 are enclosed.)

PROFITEER (L'pool). Yes. It will be quite safe for you to continue with your racket. Fans are too dumb to know when they are being swindled; and even if they were to find out, they'd be too lazy to object.

RATIONALIST (L'pool). If your girl-friend objects to your sublimating your sex-instinct on moonlit nights then I'm afraid you'll have to give up either your thesis or your g.f. - or marry her! See below.

ANXIOUS BABY (L'pool). A cure for Rationalism is an involved and lengthy process, and we cannot undertake anything of this sort ourselves. For home cures, our prescription, well tested, is - 10% Quina to 20% Kuttner to 70% cocaine.

THE BIG EUG (Leeds). Yes, it is definitely established that other Fans have personality also and possess equal, if not superior brainpower. That's good enough today, may be non-existent Tomorrow!

GUARDIAN OF THE BOOKS (London). I don't know why Editors won't accept your stories - perhaps you forgot to send them in (during one of your fits of amnesia)? You ask how to keep library shelves clean? Well, first of all, throw out all mags containing Quinn stories, then dust with Keating's powder.

SCHIZOPHRENIC SPHINX (London). Your pain in the stomach is nothing -- NEW WORLDS gives me a pain in the neck. Yes, your story was quite convincing, cos when it rains "cats and dogs", where else do the animals in question come from but the moon?

SWING FAN (L'pool). No, I don't know what causes your clarinet to make water - sounds rude to me. It will probably grow out of it eventually.

AMBITIOUS POET (Simpshire). Can I advise whether the infatistic tendencies of Twerpism should be classed with the vorticistic movement in prosody, or if they are both correlative to Einstein's 77th extension, and can I tell you why nobody wants your poems? Not in print, Shakespeare!

BOB SUCKER (Padded Cell 074, Bloomingwell - Nuts). Yes, you're very funny indeed. Every time I look at D'Journal, I burst into tears.

DAW (New York). Yes, I realise that you're only wanting to please Fandom. Why not try suicide - that would be sure to raise a laugh?

BY DON J CAMERON.

" DREAMER 4 "

And I shall watch them pass
Shining and dwarf-like to my shadowed eyes,
Until they leave the dreamer's sad surmise
And the brave glinting of the wizard-glass;
To face a world grown real and so demanding
That every shade that ever poet sought
Seem now but memories of a childish thought,
Lightly cast off for truth and understanding.

I shall remain; and when the new ones come
And stay a while within the tender dream,
Greetings I'll give them, and a steady hand,
And close my eye-lids to the dawning gleam
Of light. - when to their ears a throbbing drum
Thunders the call to march from Faeryland.

CSY

FANOPOLIS

PART ONE

(EDITORIAL NOTE:- You will have noticed on page 2 a statement to the effect that this is a non-fiction number. Such was intended but owing to the exigencies of contributions, we found that we had more space than material. Consequently we decided to print this serial in this issue, instead of holding it over till next month.... Fantacynic, it would seem, writes his serials a part at a time, for we are just as ignorant as you of what will happen next month!

In passant, we might mention that fiction re fandom seems to be gaining in popularity. First there was Cameron's "The Call to Arms" and then the suspiciously similar effort in the American Cosmic Tales, and we must not forget Speer's serial "Six Against the Past". And one fan has revealed that he is writing a novel about fan life! Fantacynic informs, however that he thought of this plot long ago, so would-be finders of plagiarism may consider themselves foiled. But enough. We hope you like it - and we hope Fantacynic is able to finish it!)

The day was hot and cloudless and, gracelessly reclining on a scorched bank of grass, the Neophyte felt less and less like reading and more and more like sleeping. As the remorseless sun frizzled him, the printed page wavered and danced erratically and the energy required for concentrated reading waned swiftly. Finally he dropped the magazine and, lying back, left the hero in the middle of a battle to the death with a dinosaur. One last sleepy glance revealed the name of the magazine - Marvel Science Stories - before he fell asleep.

Almost at once, it seemed, someone was tugging at his shoulder and, grumbling, he opened his eyes and stood up. He blinked rapidly at the sight before him. Rising like giants into the cloudless sky towered the minarets and towers of a city! And what a city! His brief experience with science-fiction convinced him that here was the real McCoy, the daddy of everything Stuart ever imagined.

In the true tradition it was built of a gleaming

white material, and the inescapable trellissed bridges and flying buttresses, sweeping up and down, in and out, in dizzy perspective, made it a huge maze of intricate light and patterned shadow. An occasional cigar-shaped airship lounged across the sky and amongst the "levels" of the city there was bustle of tube cars and scurrying of ant-like figures. Wondering who could live in so strange a place he turned to look at the interrupter of his rest.

He was a small peaceful-looking man, though rather ludicrous with a bulging cranium and over-sized ears. A broad smile spread over his face as the Neophyte turned to him, and he wagged his ears sympathetically, with an ingenious rotary movement. Wonderingly, the Neophyte asked him where he might be.

"You might", pronounced the little man, "be in Babylon or Chicago. Actually you are in Fanopolis - the city of the Fans" he rendered kindly.

"Fans?" murmured the Neophyte, "what are Fans?"

The little man considered this gravely for some moments. "There again there is room for doubt" he remarked at last.

According to the general view, as expressed by the Apostle Gernsback, they are beyond power of description. Some of the Nonfans say the same, only they mean it differently. Actually they are the camp-followers of Scientifiction."

"Oh, I see!" said the Neophyte, a light of understanding dawning upon him. "You mean readers of Astounding, Thrilling Wonder and Amazing!"

The little man shuddered and his ears twitched in a beautiful Immelman turn. Don't mention Amazing", he whispered fearfully, "the Aristocrats have fallen out with the Editor, and in revenge he comes out now on the 5th Tuesday and as there isn't always a 5th Tuesday in the month, no-one knows when or if the next Amazing is coming out. As a result they have to maintain a continuous watch on the book-stalls in case a lower Fan should get a copy before them. It's all very unsettling."

"Who are the aristocrats?" questioned the Neophyte.

"They are The Top Liners", capitalised his friend - "the Big Fans you know. But we mustn't waste time talking now. I have to present you to the Council. They see all new arrivals and give them their ranks in fandom."

Clutching the Neophyte's hand tightly, he raced off down the hill towards the city which beckoned from about a mile away.

It was a long mile, the Neophyte thought, and it seemed that his companion was of the same mind for he soon stopped for breath, and rested on the velvety grass. For a while the Neophyte was too occupied with getting his second

wind to ask questions, and by the time he had recovered his attention had been drawn to a group of people approaching them across the fields.

They were an odd collection of people, but in the van were three who seemed to be leaders of some sort. One of these was bent double under what the Neophyte realised at last was a Grand Piano! He enquired of the little man if he was right.

"H'm, you're right, alright" returned his friend. That is the Fantasy Reform Publications assortment. The one with the big feet calls himself the Fantaspoet. That one on the left with the thing like a cornet (actually a clarinet) is John F. Barke, while beneath the piano is Macinpain. The rest are their adherents - there aren't many: the rest of us don't want reforming."

The Neophyte was still unsatisfied. "But why the clarinet and the piano?"

"Well, it's like this. Those three are always composing anthems and songs, so they have to carry their instruments with them. The best off in this respect and by far the most annoying is the Fantaspoet who sings. Barke plays the clarinet so he's not so bad, but Macinpain would learn piano and being very stubborn insists on carrying it around. He can't see how silly it is."

As he spoke the party had milled around into an irregular troupe and were marching off. Across the meadows came the strains of a song:-

"For ten long years they had suffered it in silence -
Tripe, tripe, tripe, tripe in Science-Fiction's name;
But when new magazines came sweeping in a cloud on them
They made a list of everyone in any way to blame.

Then they rose, from 'Frisco and Los Angeles,
Minneapolis, Chicago and Boston, Mass. as well,
From Texas they came, from Zenith and from Podunk,
From Arkham and from Providence - and one or two from Hell.

And then they moved, like Zombies on an outing,
Trekking with determination on the Last Crusade;
Brave the rumble and sparkle of their ray-guns,
Brave the marching of the Fantasfan's Brigade!"

Several verses after this were indistinguishable -- and when they next became audible they were carolling:

"The Fans were marching, marching through America,
They found a nest of authors and viewed the sight with pain.
They took Nat Schachner and threw him in the lion-pit,
But the lions didn't like him and they threw him back again.

New York they seized, and captured all the Editors -
 Palmer, Weisinger, Campbell and the breed.
 They rounded them up, and sent them to Australia
 And only the Australians failed to thank them for the deed."

The wind carried most of the rest away and but for
 one verse it was lost. This seemed to run,
 "Then the mood spread far across the ocean,
 Fans arose from Nuneston, from Eastleigh and from Crewe;
 From Liverpool, from Manchester, from London and from Bir-
 mingham,
 From Upper Wallop, Lower Wallop, Nether Wallop too."

His guide was apparently refreshed now, for he rose
 and beckoned him to follow. A little reluctantly, for he was
 tired, the Neophyte obeyed, and they soon reached the open
 gates of Fanopolis. Before he followed the little man thru
 them, he cast one look back and saw that the procession had
 split up. Macinpain was rolling down hill on the piano,
 while on the breeze came the faint but heated voices of Barke
 and the Fantaspoeet luridly discoursing on the merits of Rob-
 ert E. Howard.

Puzzled he entered Fanopolis.

BY

"FANLACYNIC"

+==+==+

A N A P P R E C I A T I O N

There are few scientific fiction authors that can
 to have come so near perfection in the field of the long
 -short story as Don A. Stuart. His best stories are models
 of the art and practice of short story writing as applied to
 the greatest form of literature yet conceived. They contain
 the first essential, a new and magnificent idea, backed up by
 a wealth of convincing scientific detail work. They contain
 characters, each of which is distinctive, unique and natural.
 They are built up neatly and skilfully, without wastage of words
 or omission of essential detail. The climax comes in its
 proper place, inevitably, without any mutilation of the natu-
 ral time-order. The prose is unhurried and unspectacular --
 but with far more snap and vitality to it than the jerky and
 superlative-ridden styles of the action-and-glamour school.

"Forgetfulness" is in a class by itself, the grand-
 est short story yet published in the magazines. In the scope
 of this short work the author covered the same ground that
 Stapledon pounded massively over in "Last and First Men", and
 with greater imagination. Stapledon was conventional and
 prosaic, Stuart original and inspired, and he succeeded in

giving us a glimpse of the glorious future of mankind and the greatness of the knowledge yet to be won. A superb piece of literature, one that has a right to a place amongst the immortals.

"Twilight" and "Night" are two other stories that give us a vivid impression of the vastness of Time; "Elimination" a splendid tragedy; "Who Goes There?" a drama that might have been the result of the amalgamation of the best in Lovecraft and Howard. These I place as his outstanding efforts.

"Frictional Losses" was perhaps the best of his brilliant stories of scientific rebellion and battle, and "The Escape" a delightful little story. But there is little to choose between any of these lesser stories for they are all so far in advance of the average that it would be churlish to say which is the worst, if, indeed, such a word may be used in such a connection. The Stuart facet of Campbell is the most brilliant of the sparkling aspects of this truly masterly author.

BY

D. R. SMITH.

FANTAST'S A FOLLY

XX

(Ken Chapman writes: "Editorial should have been included in 'Fan's Folly'...." Good advice!)

First of all, our sincere thanks to all who obliged with comment on our first issue and our heartfelt gratitude for the articles, essays, stories, etc., which the more energetic have supplied. We trust that these will continue their valuable support and that the lazier brethren, too, will cast a pearl or so before our snouts.

We judge from experience that you will have read all else before turning reluctantly to our vapourings. You will agree, we think, that the promise of improvement made last

month has been well kept. The duplicating and type are better and, as an experiment, page 5 and onwards have even edges in text. This naturally entails more work for us, and, unless it is fairly enthusiastically greeted, will be dropped in future.

Also, without a doubt, the contents are far better. There are two definitely humorous articles which we think will serve as an antidote to the famous "No Grave!" We regret that co-Editor Burke rather ruined MACK's cartoon with a similar joke in the latest "Sally" but such unfortunate accidents are not always avoidable.

In conclusion, we congratulate the S.F.A. on getting the "Satellite" as their monthly publication. Perhaps now Mr. Cernoll will have time to improve "New Worlds", were such a thing possible.

Colleague I.F. Burke writes from 57 Beauclair Drive, Liverpool

"The cover is a bit odd - the space-ships are too highly decorated, and there are a hell of a lot of stars knocking about in the sky. Or is it meant to be symbolical? Anyway, no symbolism can account for the very squashed appearance of that guy's head in the foreground. That's the hard top to his shirt for -- must have taken some starching to get like that, and he's liable to cut his throat every time he looks round to watch a pretty girl go by. Full of bright ideas as usual, -- that collar is shadow under Egg's chin! The lettering is grand -- keep it like that. Before I go on, let me tell you a story. When this thing arrived, I gave a happy shout, and descended upon it. I then attempted to remove the sticky tape. After tearing half the back off, the advertisement of "Sally" we hope I removed the tape from the magazine, and transferred it to my thumb, where it remained. Several flicks of the index finger only served to transfer it to that finger and eventually I had to shove hard against the mantelshelf and leave it stuck thereon, to the subsequent wrath of my aunt who had some difficulty with it, I think. Tired of this, I cut all the tapes with scissors, opened the magazine to read it, and got caught on a loose end that was hanging over. For cryin' out in an unmodulated voice, use ordinary sticky paper, or, better still, buy some envelopes. Egg's poem failed to click. Nice, but not inspiring. Dave's little thing is very pleasant. I rather expected one of his usual demoniacal 'twists' at the end, and was surprised to find the ending so straightforward. My fault - last two paragraphs editorially written The next article in the mag is no good that I can't find words to describe it, we're not surprised but will just pass over breathlessly. "Dreamer 3" is nice - where's "Dreamer 2"? Rejected "No Grave!" - no more! In its way quite a good story, but rather unsatisfying, and certainly not good material for a fan-mag of this kind. Did you write it -- the name sounds artificial. Or maybe I'm wronging

your girl friend? Both answers emphatically in the negative! The Editorial is hectic in the extreme, but Editorials usually are, and I don't think anyone ever pays any attention to the things, anyway. I had been stroing up some lovely cracks about letters. You said you would have a large readers' department, and I was waiting for the first issue so that I could write in and demand why you hadn't got one - for obvious reasons. I have, however, been failed. These letters all seem very straggly though, and will probably puzzle some of your readers quite a bit. Still we hope for the best in the future. I retch at the horrible DRS-worship throughout your pages. Damn it all, there's no need to fawn over the fellow - he's only human (more or less). And DON'T obtrude yourself in the answers - you're the Editor, don't forget, and if you start to chuck your own personal opinions about people get annoyed. You can do that in other folks' magazines but if you do it in your own it's all wrong - silly isn't it? Ridiculous! If we go to the trouble to edit and publish this magazine, we intend to express our opinions in it. And as long as we allow opponents equal space, we think it fair enough. Generally, the "Fantast" is a swell magazine, and it packs a punch. For a first issue it's really swell, and I can see it being the mag wherein people take off their coats and say all the nasty things they've been wanting to say for years. Encourage 'em to be nasty - you'll do fine then. No encouragement needed in some cases we could mention, were we so minded. Your attitude over conscription is very low. Higher now! I intend to fight that with everything I possess (even to the extent of chucking portions of my collection at people who attempt to arrest me). In the first place I refuse to bear arms against any human being, and in the second place, I am certainly not going to fight to defend a country overburdened with taxes, oppression and restrictions as ours is, and stinking from top to bottom with the rule of the patricians and a form of Fascism just as dictatorial as Germany or Italy."

The new pen illustrator and our cover artist, Gordon Robb, writes from 107 Montgomery Street, Edinburgh:

"You did a nice job of work on the first issue of "Fantast". I liked your terse review, why blame us? Someone's been kidding you! and should welcome others of the same high calibre. McIlwain's short amused; although delightfully original in treatment, it awoke memories of Well's humorous satire "The Wonderful Visit", with which it has many points of similarity. As for "No Grave" - I can understand your reasons for hesitating over it, but in my opinion at least it was a strikingly well-written essay in the macabre; I don't say that you should make a practice of running such tales but one every now and then is quite all right. The sketches for

"Fantest's Folly" were genuinely funny in their deliberate absurdity. Did noone else like our faery elephants? No other comments received/ I await "The Introvert" with ill-disguised impatience. From your advance notices I sense a 'mutant' plot development - more deserving of that description than Campbell's much-publicised innovations. /? I take it that we shall see more poetry in future numbers - your "Decemer 3" was hauntingly beautiful and one of the best things that you have done, while Clarke's contribution was like meat and drink to the true fantasy-lover. What do you think of conscription? /?e hardly like to say/ As a pacifist I am against it; I disapprove of wars as an instrument of policy and I must therefore disapprove of any measure to facilitate war. Even were I not a pacifist I should still doubt the wisdom of the Premier's decision, arrived at in spite of repeated pledges to the contrary. Conscription is the thin end of the Fascist wedge that may be driven between us and our freedom of thought and action; there are not wanting Parliamentary advocates of a muzzled Press - that may well be the next step - and succeeding stages with such precedents behind them will be correspondingly easier of accomplishment. At a modest guess, we should think we are two years off concentration camps, and fans will contribute handsomely to the personnel/ If to meet the threat of totalitarian aggression this country is turned into a totalitarian state, then we have been conquered from within as surely as otherwise we should have been conquered from without. Signs of the times The newsreels are going all jingoistic; Other complaints received/ hardly one is shown without its complement of marching troupes, Union Jacks waving in the breeze, and big guns in action, all to the accompaniment of super-patriotic comments in B. E. C. accents. We hear one reel calls itself "This England of Ours" - we could weep/

As was to be expected our severest critic hails from the western vale of Nuneaton. D.R. Smith writes from 13 Church Road, Hartshill, Nuneaton, Warwick:

"The subject of the day is, of course, the first issue of your stupendous production, THE FANTAST. To lend some degree of system to my remarks I will start with the first feature of the magazine and work systematically through it to the last. The cover was obviously symbolical of no end of things, but my attention centres on the grim-looking person holding up his arm in what is too slack to be either the Fascist or the Communist salute, and which cannot be, in one so blood-and-ironish, a mere friendly wave of greeting. However, I suppose it could be more confusing than it is, and it is certainly fantastical. The contents page is well laid out, though as a matter of fact I did not know there was one until I stumbled on it by accident a few minutes ago. To be frank I did not enjoy the "Twilight of a Sun". For one thing I could not make up my mind for a long time whether it was supposed to be poetry, or only a prose recitation set in a novel

form. When I had got rid of this confusion it still took a good deal of solemn thought /how un-British of you, Smith! before I got at the meaning. It wasn't worth the tag. My mood has not yet toned in with "The Parson and the Fairy" which seemed to me a very flat-footed sort of fantasy. The first page and a half seemed quite promising, but when the fairy began talking like an exceptionally brainless flapper and generally behaving exactly like a full-size girl my interest in the story vanished, for the sense of the fantastic was no longer there. If fairies are exactly like humans there is no point in writing of them. Burke makes a timely protest on the over-anxiety of editors to publish every last word of a defunct author of note. But I don't agree that "The Tree" or "The Nameless City" ought not to have been published, because they were both about average standard, and I certainly don't think that Weinbaum would ever have become a hack. There was nothing published during his lifetime that even indicated such a possibility. "Dreamer 3" was a decided improvement in technique on Clarke's effort but I am out of sympathy with the sentiment and I have a very take-it-or-leave-it attitude to poetry which does not appeal directly to some existing feeling in me. "No Grave!" I feel justified in saying that it is so fan-magazine-ish that it is not worth its place. /No more horror in "Fantast". We don't like it and nor, it seems, do you. After all there is nothing fresh or original about the plot, and it is written very much in the "and then" style. We are not brought to realise the true horrors of the heroine's plight because the style is neither consistent to the simplicity with which she would herself tell the tale, nor the dramatic skill with which it must otherwise be told. To get the real effect such stories must be told in the exact manner with which the old lady herself would have told it, which would be to see the horror in retrospect, and to give not the feelings she had then but the feelings the memory aroused in her, particularly in view of her age and the imminence of the grave. "He Gets on My Nerves" had sentiments that appealed directly to me, and some day I will send you an effort of my own on that subject. The editorial was suitably modest yet optimistic and properly ambitious. The letters were as entertaining as anything in the issue which is going some as the Americans would have it. By the way, I hope this accursed conscription does not affect you? /Not yet - and then in a negative sense/

Now for it! Erstwhile Guardian of the Books, and Very Busy Fan, Eric Williams, cat-calls from 11 Clowders Road, Gatford, S.3.6:

"Your argument that because I had not asked for a copy of "Fantast" you could not know whether I wanted a copy, cuts both ways for, without first seeing a copy, how could I know whether it was worth having? As for my being a Very Busy Individual, that's only a rumour I've been spreading around in order to get a bit of peace from writing letters to twerps

Mr. Williams' correspondents please note - please don't take this as meaning you. We're still suspicious. Perhaps it is fortunate that I've backed out of some things because it seems as though the King's Army will swallow me into its blood-stained bosom any day now... The cover by Osmond Robb was very disappointing. Then the rumour went round that you intended to turn out a fan mag, one or two of us said 'you can bet your life it will be an arty turn-out'. But that cover! So like those flashy hectographed things turned out by young Americans, and such an ordinary study! Considering the difficulties of working with stencils, Mr. Robb has made a pretty detailed picture in parts, but he could not have chosen a more hackneyed subject or a more difficult one to put with effect on a stencil. Here's where your editorship should have come in; you should have asked for the drawing first so as to give your OK on it and then let him get on with the jobperhaps you did. Well, if you did your lack of taste is further emphasised. Boy oh boy, I guess this is shaking you some! Private Williams, you flatter yourself. Let us tell you a few things. 1 - Osmond had never seen a stencil before in his life. Upon receiving instructions, he lit three covers and despatched by return of post. He had no correcting fluid. 2 - We liked his cover and damned be all who gainsay. 3 - As for hackneyed work, see first two covers for Mr. CORLEDS -- by a pro. artist. 4 - How do you like "Atlantis"? Arthur's poem did not go down so well with yours truly; it was so confused and so obviously a poem, if you know what I mean. Half the time I could not tell whether it was the planet speaking (just imagine!) Corporal Williams, you have one swell imagination or a human being. And this breaking of sentences into two verses was just being deliberately eccentric - like the majority of these cubists. And such incompetents as Tennyson Flockor and Shakespeare, Sergeant Williams Your poem on the other hand read smoothly and its words were well chosen. ASTRA's was so definitely of the Burke-McIlwain brand that for a moment I thought I was reading beloved Sally. Dave's "The Parson and the Fairy" was just the sort of thing I like, it has that quaint air that characterises some of Dunsany's incredible tales. It seemed likely to flop at the end, but the very last paragraph picked it up and smoothed all frowns away. Johnny's sarcastic article tells the truth with his usual acidity. "No Grave!" considering its extreme brevity told a meaty story. The idea is somewhat reminiscent of Lovecraft's "Tickman's Model", but taking into consideration that it is about 100 times shorter than that classic and only 10 times less horrific, then I congratulate you on a good piece of editorial selection and Miss Hawkins on a nice bit of writing. The "Review" by FANTASYNIC is welcomed from me. Too many of these reviews are by people who are afraid or incapable of putting down the sordid truth about the stuff we get today, if Dave - sorry, FANTASYNIC can keep an unbiased or unperverted judge on SF then I for one will delight in having my views confirmed from an intelligent source. And so I draw to a conclusion with a few words on your little tid-bit on the

last page. I might say that you, as a comparatively new reader of SF '32 vintage are a poor judge of whether Stuart and Paine are the brightest lights in the sky, but I won't say that because it would not be fair. Ye thank you, Captain Williams! I will venture to remark that Paine's plots, particularly his "Tine Stream", are very confused. Puff Cooper forgive you for the blasphemy, Major Williams! And that Stuart's pictures of nostalgia might be considered stilted and over-poetic. Wide 'Appreciation' by an old tiger. But we sincerely thank you for your comments, General Williams, and we wish you the best of luck in your new career-ah.

SCULPTURA IN PARVO

(For the Scientists --- Folly in Brief --- or almost anyway.)

From the one and only (thank God!) McIlwain of 14 Cotswold Street, Liverpool 7:

"Osmund's cover is very well done, but what has the chappie got a quill-pen stuck in his chest for? The Contents page is very neatly laid out and easy to read. As for Arthur's poem -- well it was good, definitely, but rather hefty for fanfare, doncher think? Can't take it? "He Gets on my Nerves" was much more to my liking; a bouquet to ASFA. "How to be Famous" by co-ecrivateur JPB was tip-top, and there is much truth in his argument. And now we come to "No Grave". I hate to hurt the feelings of Miss Harriett Hawkins (a pseudonym for your honourable self I suppose), come again! but this story most definitely was not. The idea embodied was fair, but the striving after effect was too obvious to be successful. The ending would appear to be one of the surprise type -- too bad it didn't surprise us. Actually the whole trouble lies in the fact that the story is far too morbid and gloomy for a fan magazine. I object to one thing in the Editorial, and that is the apology tacked on the end. Nobody would have noticed your pronounical grammaticalapse call in the anti-Acherman squad someone! had you not mentioned it. The readers' feature was without a doubt superb! How do you like it now? And does anyone object to it occupying the enormous amount of space it does?

M.I.S. Brain-Bulge, Arthur J. Clarke from 88 Grays Inn Road, F.C.1, Fushes:

"Fancy, I've got a cover at last! But I don't care for the block on it ... I never did like Hannen Staffer. I liked Deva's effort quite a bit, and enjoyed Miss Hawkins' gruesome little story more than somewhat. As Maurice remarked, it was in the best charnel house tradition. John F. Burke's article was also good, and I'm drawing Bill's attention to it. The writing of all three items was much better than average. Your verse, I'm afraid, was over my head, and ASFA's was rotten. That sort of thing has to be written very carefully to redeem itself. I agree largely with Fantacyric's comments. "Valley

of Doom" I thought very good so did we and told Wally so. He went up in a sheet of flame and as soon as he cools down I'll tell him again."

Spriggaphobe Eric Hopkins of 2c Stirling Road, E.13, says, in the course of a 23 page letter:

"The immortal question: does stf. appeal to broadminded geezers or does it make them so, has reared its ugly head again. Your reply to Skerbeck's letter is exactly right. To attribute broadmindedness, love of art, and a sugar-coated scientific education to S.F. is now the sole prerogative of Vollheim, Tucker and other mentally ten-year-olds. But I wonder why we fans always assume that a World State is necessary for surely to construct such is a titanic task and one that would need such a concord of wills that at the distant time when it is possible it will be unnecessary, all war-like tendencies having been bred out. Concerning this double-damned Conscription, I think the most nauseating fact is that the collection of fools in power should find it necessary to forcibly train youths of twenty in the delightful arts of war, in order to "frighten" the dictators into a pacific mood; something that the inexplicable stupidity of the present Government found it impossible to do with all the other powers at their command. That the course of events should have been clear to a pore proletarian like me, and not to those ramifications of Croesus that are supposed to represent our most brilliant minds, speaks a great deal for our fine democratic principles. I don't think."

J. Rathbone, Editor of the projected "Macabre", comments from 7 Parkhill, 24 Heriot Place, Edinburgh 3, Scotland:--

"I was surprised when I read in your Editorial that you were doubtful about "No Grave!" It was the best bit of writing I've seen in any fan magazine and deserves much praise. Would it be possible for me to get in touch with the author, in order to secure as good a story for "Macabre"? But if not, would you inform the author that there will be a magazine called "Macabre" and wed very much appreciate a contribution? Page Miss Hawkins! And any other budding weird authors! "The Parson and the Fairy" was far more doubtful - and though it was all right, obviously doesn't belong in "Fantast". Uh? "How to be Famous" was all right. It had some construction in it and was as reasonable as fans are able to reason. The essay on "Education" was very like an H.G. Wellsian scheme on a small scale, and interested me. Maybe someone will begin to tell people things one day. Meanwhile the people able to do things are very conveniently dying out."

Exhortation and Appeal -- When you comment on this and future issues of "Fantast", would YOU be so kind as to write down a list of contents and administer marks out of ten? We know you are lazy but it won't take long and will help us with a kind of "Analytical Lab." Contents include everything - cover even