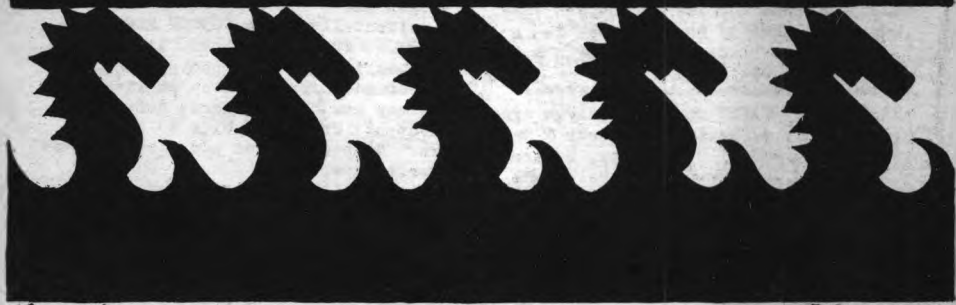


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fantasy
advertiser



VOL III
NO. 3

10¢

DEC.
1943

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FANTASY ADVERTISER
 Volume III Number 3
 DECEMBER 1948

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EDITORIAL This edition of FAN ADS represents at least three issues just lost into the limbo of hurly burly - August, September, October, November and December. Many things happened; too many to burden you all with now. However, my condition continues to be poor; I'm looking for a co-editor or a typist or a slave or a minor god to work a few miracles.

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No FANKIND'S FANZINES in this issue because of lack of space. We received fifty or more in this extended period, some of which had reviews written up, but rather than ignore dozens of them, we choose to ignore them all. Perhaps next time.

Send American Currency to:-
 Norman E. Willmorth
 1603-3/4 12th Ave.
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NOVA TOMES is a travesty, reviewing two books - two Shasta Publisher books mainly because they were the ones submitted for review that got reviewed. Perhaps next time.

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Beyond the Poe article, Ghu knows what will be in the next issue. If it comes out soon after this one, there probably will not be many ads in it. I am sorry to have blown a long record of pretty good service to high heaven, but could see no way around it. If you wish to continue to trust me with your business, rush some ads in and I'll attempt to take care of them. If an assistant is found, they are sure to be. We have more news already for the FANTASY FAN FIELD section that came in too late to hit this issue even! That will get in.

In lots of 15 or more, FANTASY ADVERTISER may be purchased for 1/3 less than cover price. Contact the Editor.

Except for Vol I Issue 3, which I will pay 10¢ for, back issues of FANTASY ADVERTISER may be purchased from the publisher for 10¢ per copy. The number of some of these issues is a limited one. Late orders may not be filled. Get 'em in.

FANTASY FAN FIELD representatives are:
 Canada: C. J. Bowie-Reed, Arts & Science Bldg, McGill University, Montreal
 England: John Newman, 36 Balstrode Avenue, Hounslow, Middx; or
 Frank Fear's, 6 Ferme Park Mansions, Fern Park Rd, Crouch End, London, N-8.

Incidentally, the TORCON REPORT is out now. It looks good, and if you want some interesting reading, (including a come-on from this publication which may now be considered defrauding in content) drop four bits to Ned McKeown. 60pp of Torcon addresses drafts and write ups.

CONTACT THESE MEN WITH YOUR NEWS.

We can still raise our heads slightly over this issue, however, since it contains close to 10,000 words of this and that above many pages of ads. If we could've put in the rest of NOVA TOMES and FANKIND'S FANZINES, we'd have had a fairly respectable publication.. We'll get service yet.....gus

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THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE

by Decil

.....which consists in the main of noteworthy bits of fan comment taken from the letter sections of previous mags, both pro and fan.

* * *

"...the Soviet represents a system radically different from any other in Europe and if it ever got into the control of such fanatics as I have mentioned (for the sake of the story) it is not at all improbable that Russia would set out to clean up the world, as revolutionary France did in the past."

Fletcher Pratt, Science Wonder Stories, September, 1929. (Mr. Pratt was referring to a story that he had written in a previous issue.)

"As I have been a reader of Amazing Stories for over a year, I thought you might publish this letter for me. I read three science fiction magazines and I have to admit that yours tops them all."

Olon F. Wiggins, Amazing Stories, February, 1933.

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Henry Hasse, Amazing Stories, August, 1933.

"I've heard of candy fiends and many other types, but I'm a new kind; I'm a Wonder Stories Quarterly fiend! Forest J Ackerman, Wonder Stories Quarterly, Fall, 1930.

"'Spacehounds' is splendid so far-but not quite as magnificent as that positive orgy of science --- 'Skylark Three!'"

John Russell Fearn, Amazing Stories, January 1932.

If U come across anything U'd like to see in this column, send it to "Decil"; 170 'C' St., Apt #2; Upland, California. Thank!

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GERMAN FANTASY ANNEX.....

S. Ostlund, our sole Swedish subscriber, sends a few notes on the German fantasy article in the last issue.

"It is, however, possible for me to inform you about some other titles:

Dominik, H. - Atlantis
Die Spur der Dschingis-Khan
Befehl aus dem Dunkel
Treibstoff SR
König Laurins Mantel
Das Erbe der Uraniden
Lebensstrahlen
Ein Stern fiel vom Himmel
Himmelskraft
Kautschuk
Taeschner, T. - Atlantropa

The above books I own myself. Besides, I have also of those you mentioned "Atomgewicht 500" and "Die Macht der Drei." I have read the following:

Daumann, R. - Macht aus der Sonne
Abenteuer met der Venus
Dominik, H.- Land aus Feuer und Wasser
Das Stählerne Geheimnis

I know of the following titles, which I have not read:

Daumann, R. - Protuberanzen
Dünn wie eine Eierschale
Das Ende des Goldes
Gefahr aus dem Weltall
Patrouille gegen den Tod
Das Insel der 1000 Wunder
Richter, H. - Der Kanal
Turmstadt
von Laffert, K.A. - Fanale am Himmel
Feuer am Nordpol

These titles I can remember off-hand but I am quite sure there are a lot more. If you are really interested in German s-f I might be able to get some of the above titles for you. They are, however, rather difficult to get hold of, but I could try.

Personally, I think Dominik the best of the authors above, i.e., of those I have read, though he sometimes gives his books a strong political slant (nationalistic, but not Nazi, as far as I can judge). Apart from that, he handles his stuff most convincingly and with great detail. Daumann writes adventurous stuff and Taeschner deals with the Atlantropa project, described in one of John Knittel's later books.

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<u>- AND UP</u>	<u>- AND UP</u>	
ANSTEY: The Tinted Venus, London 1898, 1st ed. \$2.00	HOWARD: Skull-Face and Others, new, d/w, Ark. House 1946 \$5.00	
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WHO GOES THERE?, John W Campbell, Jr.
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Shasta's first book of fiction is this collection of 'Don A. Stuart' stories from ASTOUNDING from the five years 1934 to '38. Not all of them, of course, for Shasta itself has at least one more book of Stuart stories scheduled and there is material for a couple others, but a fair selection of material including the title story, TWILIGHT, NIGHT, FRICTIONAL LOSSES, ELIMINATION and two others. These stories have been popular and well-read since they were originally printed; there is not doubt that this will be a popular book, nor that it will be out of print soon.

As a job of book binding, this book is not bad. It doesn't set any great height to shoot at, but it is neat, has few misprints, is readable and compact. The jacket, illustrated by Hannes Bok, is printed in red and blue. Here is my single beef about the book: The jacket paper is poor and the printing is worse. Red blobs where ever someone thought they'd be needed. However, you don't have to read the cover, and the contents are excellent!

SLAVES OF SLEEP, L. Ron Hubbard -
Shasta Publishers - \$3.00.

This is the third book of Hubbards to see print this year, and, so far as a job of book-making goes, is the best of the lot. Originally printed in UNKNOWN in 1939, this swash-buckling adventure yarn is a lovely example of the light fantasy for which that publication was famous. As in its companion piece, CITY OF BRASS, a flimsy young chap from modern times is thrown haphazardly into the world of the Arabian Nights, filled with Ifriti, Genii, and bloody knives. As said, the story is light fantasy and adventure and will charm away some delightful hours. I personally like the story, having read it three or four times from Unk and once for this review, and recommend it, natch!

There is a wrapper illustrated in full color all the way around by Hannes Bok. It is good. And the printing on this one is good - not the harsh splashes of Shasta's prior fiction book wrapper. The book is well bound, - much better than the prior book. In fact, for our money this is one of the best jobs to come out of the small publishing group this year. Jacket, book, and story are superlative; I say you need them. gw

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HIGHER THINGS * Michael Harrison 1.75
(Fan Ads carried material by this man!)

DEATH OF A WORLD - Farjeon - Collins
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And there are others, all of which have been printed during the last two years.

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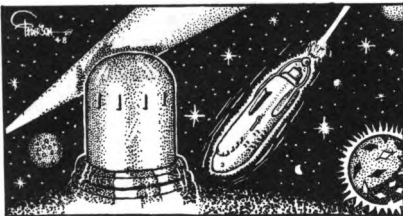
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FANTASY FAN FIELD

The big news in Canada these days is the Torcon managed very successfully by the 'Derelicts' of Toronto - needless to say it was a top notch convention with ye fen in attendance from hither and yon. The excitement over the convention even overshadowed the organization and formation of the Canadian Science Fiction Association - a milestone in Canadian Scientific-tion.

The 'CSFA' was safely delivered on Feb 23/48 much to the relief of the three anxious parents - Toronto, Hamilton and Montreal. Tutelage for the first year will be under the firm but gentle hand of the Lakehead SFS (Hamilton). One of the constituent science fiction societies is elected to the executive for a term of one year. This executive then names specific persons as Executive Officers.

Executive officers named to date are: Honorary Presidents: Lloyd A. Eshbach; President: James Templar; Secretary-Treasurer: Paul Rebey -100 Arnold, Hamilton; Publicity Directors: Greg Cranston; National Organizer: Jack Bowie-Reed.

The 'party' organ, the CSFA Newsletter, has seen its first issue--and a very worthy one it is too (open letters, printed constitution, membership cards, and fee levies have also made themselves familiar to the CanFen.)

Other projects underway are a story classification system by Alastair Cameron, Secretary of the 'Fantasteller Association'; a prozine listing by Moe Diner, secretary of the 'McGill Science Fiction Society'; and a fantasy film listing by Paul Walton, President of the 'Picton SFS'.

The initial response to CSFA has been, to say the least, slightly terrific! On formation of the CSFA, Canada was represented by three SF societies and the defunct CAFF. Today there are over ten - though not all are as yet affiliated with the CSFA as Constituent Organizations. There is now a revitalized CAFF - several fanzines have appeared and several more are in the projected state. Perhaps the most significant of these is the reappearance of 'Censored' after its demise of six years. Sponsored by the M/MSFS, but continuing its old traditions, Vol II, No 1 still has the silk-screen covers that made Vol I famous, and still has the same editor - Fred Hurter, Jr.

WEIRD! WEIRD! WEIRD!

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Other recent items of note include the naming of Eric Temple Bell, Ph.D. as Honorary President of 'McGill SFS' and his acceptance of this post. The change of the Hamilton club's name to the 'Lakehead SFS' from the 'Digamma Sigma Phi' and the subsequent reorganization must also be noted; best wishes go to the new president, J.C. Richards. Picton has also come up with a first with the completion of arrangements with the 'Picton Gazette' to run a weekly science news column sponsored by the PSFS. Leslie A. Crutch also walked off with the Hon. Presidency of the PSFS.

Formation of the 'Halifax SFS' and the Deseronto SFS has been announced, and a recent airmail from the U.K. hints at the possible formation of a World Science Fiction League.

It is rumored that there will be a change of editor and publishers of CANADIAN FANDOM, Beak Taylor dropping out and Ned McKeown picking up the reins with plans for fall publication. Confirmation of this will probably appear in the TORCON REPORT scheduled for appearance soon.

-- C. J. Bowie-Reed

English author Eric Frank Russell dropped into the White Horse for a chat with the London Circle crowd during the later days of August. Quite an occasion for the young blood.

Wally Gillings is considering a change in FANTASY REVIEW. It will probably increase by 12 pages with the price raised from 6d to 9d with out extra space being used in advertising. His other alternative to increase the size was to double the pages, but only come out quarterly.

The New Worlds publishing project is coming along strongly, reports Ted Carnell. Each shareholder will have to have a minimum of \$5 worth of shares as the number of shareholders is limited to 50. Ted also announced a scheme whereby authors will not only get a basic rate per thousand words but they will also get a bonus calculated on the number of copies sold a week before the publication of the next issue. (More will be released on this scheme soon.)

Ken Slater has sent plans (in a lengthy prospectus) for a "Science-Fantasy Fan Federation of the United Kingdom" out to many British fans asking for comments and advice. This is

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LEST DARKNESS FALL, by Sprague de Camp, N.Y., 1942, 1st, Mint, \$6.50

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FANTASY FAN FIELD (cont'd)

the first post-war attempt to organize British fandom. The general reaction seems favorable.

Ted Carnall has booked a passage to visit the 1949 Cincin as Anglo-fandom representative. The Big Pond Fund, raised to bring Ted to an American convention, benefited to the extent of \$60 from the Whitton. There is a Possibility that Wally Gillings might be able to accompany him.

Arthur C. Clarke gained a B.Sc. with first class honors in his examinations this summer.

An infantile Rosenblum arrived on July 16th and is now known as Howard Adrian Rosenblum. Has dark blue eyes and dark brown hair. Yells quite a bit, but the medical report says he is perfectly healthy. Mother a m d father both doing well.

-- J. Newman, F. Fears, & JMR.

The Avalon Company finally announced the completion of the Keller book LIFE EVERLASTING and Other Tales of Science, Fantasy and Horror. It is ready for immediate shipment, running 382 pages, and accompanied by a free bibliography of Keller's published work.

The Western Conference came off fairly well in its test flight. This first of a hoped for annual affair began with a slap happy auction Labor Day Sunday (Sept 5th) with originals and reading matter being sold, swapped and given away. Young fandom staggered away from this one with a heap of booty.

Ackerman slashed into the afternoon of speakers, Evans MCing him in. He spoke of the pros and their plans and demands for the coming years. He also gave some data on contents of the Unknown anthology, and let gok the fact that it would be illustrated inside and out by Cartier. His other big news was that Norton is to revive Super Science.

Many of the big names lined up for the affair squeezed out at the last moment: Hubbard went to New York, Taine's best friend died and Brackett the Kuttners and Boucher could not make it for various reasons. Since some of these folks were to have been speakers, there was a certain amount of confusion in getting things in action.

However, Claire Winger Harris delivered an address on fantasy writing. Don Bratton presented a report on the Fantasy Foundation library, and Guy "Genius" Gifford delivered a harangue against fantasy artists and their sad lack of imaginative detail.

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Weird Tales with covers.

FANTASY FAN FIELD (cont'd)

Van Vogt held the afternoon session well down with a talk of sex and stf. That is, he outlined some of the gripes of the female against the collector. For instance, that mag collection clutters up the living room. Bind it, or stick it in closets or the garage. Joe Fann spends too much time on his hobby. Well, youse dames have got to get a hobby of your own to go with the hubby you've got, or else get interested. One mistaken concept of the long suffering femme is that stf is for kids and not for the mature male. vV pointed out that stf is read by the upper IQ brackets: technicians, & scientists.

There was an auction here somewhere and Bradbury spoke briefly upon the dreadful & threatening future revealed by the march of science. He also solemnly swore to continue to scare hell out of everyone. Stan Woolston walked away from the Big Pond Fund Raffle with a TWS original cover.

In the evening Rocklynn & Walton showed up too late to speak, but John Scott Campbell delivered a wondrously interesting speech on "Exercises in Imagination". This was followed by Dr. Richardson's discussion on changes in the Earth during the past few years. The evening speakers had a hell of a time vying with dance bands, but the speeches were the best of the day.

Perhaps 75 showed up at the conference, mostly from LA and vicinity, but one or two from Frisco, etc. A great many who had written from the northern countries with hopes did not show up. The one day conference was well-planned in advance, but the plans were shot to hell, and all had to struggle thru, but I think that the majority of the mob enjoyed it. gw.
*** and ****

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FAIR WARNING

The game INTERPLANETARY is soon to be sold to a large novelty company which will put out a smaller board using smaller color plates. Other changes, including the discontinuance of the expensive 108 deluxe plastic parts, will be made with wooden and cardboard substitutes at no drop in the price of the game.

We still have something over 100 sets of the original edition still selling at the 1946 price of \$2.00. But hurry up. The original edition will soon become a collector's item at several times this price.

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J. E. Macdonald, 25 Dochfour Drive,
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(Cash desired, but exchange items may be considered.)

7 Footnotes To Merritt

by Thomas Carter



- foreword -

One thing should perhaps be made clear here. Even though the reader will find in the following article many firm and positive statements, they are intended only as personal opinion; the author does not claim to be an authority. Encouraged by the fact that any standard of literary criticism must reflect the personal opinions of many people, I hope a lot of you will agree with what I have to say

--- # ---

Abe Merritt is probably one of the luckiest of that old circle of great fantasy writers who were published in ARGOSY back in the twenties or thereabouts. Merritt was not only one of the most popular at the time his stories came out, but he has continued to be so while others very nearly as good are forgotten. More important even than that, however, is the fact that Merritt's stories are still appearing in various editions; and that his name yet attracts much publicity.

many new readers. I yet attracts many new readers. In this respect, it should be remembered that no undue publicity has been given Merritt by publishers, except the usual amount given a pocket-book, and that his fame is due largely to the enthusiasm of his fans.

One attribute of Merritt's work is that it does seem to have a certain timeless appeal. The reprints of his novels seem to be as well-liked now as ever. Many of the old-style writers, when compared to modern fantasy, come out quaint, old-fashioned, and insipid. Judged by our present standards, the time factor isn't too important. Merritt's stories read as though they were written yesterday.

His earlier tales do contain many expressions which are not in popular use today, and the novels have a certain rambling method of narration which is alien to modern straightline story telling. However; in the thought behind his writing, and the general overall effect, appear as undated now as when they were conceived. Furthermore, when the serials were printed in book form, Merritt first revised them and did away with much of the looseness of plot and condensed the excess wordage.

As an author grows older, his thinking (and his markets) change, and his work undergoes a process of evolution. Of all fantasy writers, it is easier to trace this course in Merritt, for his stories appeared one at a time over a period of years, and the change is more apparent.



The first of Merritt's long serials to be published was "The Moon Pool", which came out in ARGOSY as a novelette and a sequel entitled "Conquest of the Moon Pool". However, we shall discuss only the combined version.

I don't know how "The Moon Pool" affected those readers when it first appeared long ago, but when I read it in book form, I was as enthusiastic about it as any book I had then read. In retrospect, many faults become obvious, but these are more the faults of the time in which it was written than of the author.

For one thing, the basic structure was in places rather loosely built. Another fault would be in the spots where the poetic style is somewhat overdone. Criticism has been leveled at some of the characters who have been labeled "stock", particularly the German villain.

With all these faults conceded, "The Moon Pool" remains a classic example of fantasy at its best, and those scenes involving the Dweller on the Moon Path are as great as any in our imaginative literature. Frankly,



I admit that I am prejudiced for this story, because it was the first of its type that I'd read, and it fascinated me, completely and thoroughly.

Before going further, it might be wise to go into the appeal of Merritt writing. Merritt was one of the few fantasy authors who had appeal not only to the fan of the unusual, but to the general reader. Even to the most indiscriminating, the fast action of his stories would make easy reading.

This brings up a point in connection with Merritt's next serial, "The

Metal Monster". This story is in many respects the most fantastic of all Merritt's work, and peculiarly enough, the worst. I do not mean that the author spent less work on it, or that it has any essential fault which you can put your finger on. But the story holds less appeal for me, concerned as it is with an isolated, but terrifically fantastic, race of metal people.

Despite the above, the story isn't poor, for many people think it one of Merritt's top yarns. The discrepancy of opinion is probably a matter of basic taste, some people preferring the very fantastic theme, while others prefer the adventurous, close-to-earth fantasy of the rest of his serials.

Nearly everybody has his own special favorite among the Merrittales. In fact, Merritt seems to be one of the most "un-hack" writer to enter the science-fantasy field. Each story was carefully and sincerely written, with none of the haste necessary to one living off the proceeds of his writings.

The third of Merritt's novels is the ambitious "Face in the Abyss", which represents a culmination of his efforts in the earlier yarns, and shows rather definitely the direction which his later work takes.

His wonderful style, which before had been graceful, flowing and smooth but which had belonged to the old relaxed school, now became concentrated, brisk and effective, building up to climax after climax. His beautiful descriptions were still there, but not obtrusive.

Don't misunderstand me. Compared to the clipped accents of some present authors, Merritt's style seems easy and unhurried. Nevertheless, the "Abyss" yarn is a clear-cut step forward in its telling.

In all justice to Merritt, most of his yarns contain a strong, wry element of humor that helps to make his characters real, and to relieve the very real suspense he is capable of creating.

"Face in the Abyss" is, like the first two, a story of a lost race and civilization, with its strange, alien gods. Furthermore, in this serial Merritt uses his marked ability in making his monsters credible. No matter how odd, how horrible the monster, Merritt could make it seem almost a real person and even likeable.

Next came "The Ship of Ishtar", which quite a few people believe to

be Merritt's finest. At any rate, it is certainly different from the other yarns, concerning a strange ship sailing in a timeless sea. In this Merritt succeeded where, in "The Metal Monster", he didn't quite carry it off. Although the story is wildly fantastic, it is also a darned good adventure yarn of absorbing interest. This should rank with our other American classics.

"Seven Footprints to Satan" was published in 1923, and is not fantasy in the purest sense of the word, for there is nothing in it that breaks any basic laws of the universe. Its happenings are so improbable as to be impossible, but there's no physical reason why they can't happen.

According to the publisher's blurb, this book was a best-seller. That is understandable, since the story was simply a melodrama -- a remarkably well written one, but the popularity of such melodrama has been often demonstrated. This yarn is of perhaps less interest to the fantasy-fan than any of the rest, but it is nevertheless quite entertaining.

Here Merritt has evolved the strong fantasy of "The Moon Pool" to a slick, convincing portrait of a master criminal who assumes the terrifying proportions of a modern Satan.

After the "Satan" novel, a marked variation from his norm, Merritt turned once more to the hidden civilization theme, and produced "Dwellers in the Mirage". So carefully composed are his stories that each, while you are reading it, seems to be the best he's ever done. However, this particular story is generally regarded as tops among his serials.

For those who are interested in Merritt's style, "Dwellers" is an absolute gold-mine. Now it has reached the stage where it holds up as well as any prose being written today. Excess wordage is avoided; two words are never used where one will serve, an effect Merritt had often scorned in the past. Moreover, the poetry-like writing, which before had impressed some as florid and extravagant serves in a beautifully expressive manner.

The last two yarns should be classified together, both of them being about modern witch-craft. The first "Burn, Witch, Burn!" is really little less than a prelude for the one which follows, but it is nevertheless a good story.

The action is fast-paced, melodramatic; the central figure is a remarkable woman capable of capturing and imprisoning the souls of people within tiny, life-like dolls. Although this tale is dis-similar to the others Merritt's refreshing touch is evident.

"Creep, Shadow!" is a fascinating account of a present-day witch, who like all Merritt's sorceresses, is a little good and a little evil, and quite convincing. This is one of the best books of its type, and it seems a shame that it is not more completely known among the general readers.

Despite the above paragraphs which practically put Merritt on a pedestal, it cannot be denied that he has faults. Many readers, excited by the praise of fans, buy all Merritt's books, and read them at a setting. And they are disappointed, justifiably so. For Merritt's narratives are all set in the same general pattern. However, an overdose of any author will turn you against him. Merritt's works appeared over a period of years, and to be properly appreciated, they should be read with the same time lapse in between.



Merritt has had many critics, for there is something about his yarns that repels certain types of people. Usually you are very enthusiastic about him or you don't like him at all.

However, you can take nearly anyone, and let him read, say, "Dwellers in the Mirage", and he may hedge, or claim he didn't care for it, but he usually will admit that it is a fine and beautiful story, certainly as powerful as any of his best sellers. Surely that is enough of a test for any writer!

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Fall 1948

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THE SHIPS OF ISHTAR

Somewhere I read or someone told me, or it came to me in a vision, that A. Merritt almost sold us down the river. It was around late 1923 or early 1924 -- the time isn't too important. He brought a novelet in to the editor of *Argosy*. If this story is true Bob Davis was probably at the helm.

He read the novelet, liked it -- and told Merritt he thought it would make a lot better book length serial, if Merritt cared to revise it. If, again, the incident is true, readers of fantasy can thank the editor for spotting the greatness in the story; and Merritt for listening to the advice to go after it.

So, on November, 8, 1924, *Argosy All-Story Weekly* presented the first installment of Abraham Merritt's great THE SHIP OF ISHTAR. The story, which ran serially in six parts, is considered by many aficionados as the greatest fantasy novel of all time. This I know -- I can turn absolutely green with envy of the person just reading the story for the first time.

It is interesting to follow the SHIP through its editions to see what publishers, editors and artists do to it. Watching them work on the story, the conclusion - that they do not regard Merritt as wholly competent to do a job of writing - is almost inescapable. The changes wrought by these would-be collaborators with Merritt are usually for no reason; and in some cases amount to sheer senseless butchery.

For example, take The Ship itself. In the story, The Lord of Fantasy gives us a description of the galley - a jewelled craft of enchantment sailing on a lace-tipped sea - clear enough that no illustration is needed to visualize it. The details are there, details no artist could miss if he read them.

Modest Stein's conception of the Ship, on the cover of that memorable first-installment issue, is rather good. The painting itself is beautiful, and his interpretation of the appearance of the Ship is in the spirit of the story. It is a jewelled,

*Copyright 1948 by G. Gordon Dewey.



enchanted craft. But if we can believe Merritt's description, then Stein has put the oars too far aft, & there are too many of them. The text states that on each side of the ship there is "... a single bank of seven great oars, ..." Suspicious of Merritt's figures, Stein shows twelve oars to the bank.

I do not recall whether Merritt anywhere tells us the color of John Kenton's hair. Modest Stein's Jonkenton has red hair -- probably not quite what Merritt intended, since Sharane has red-gold hair, and Merritt is a deft enough literary craftsman to give us some contrast between his characters.

The interior artist or artists, in this first appearance of THE SHIP OF ISHTAR, are equally distrustful of Merritt's ability to count. Stein's arithmetic is suspect, also. The interior illustration for Part I shows nine oars to the bank. Subsequently the artist played it safe, either not showing the Ship, or keeping it at a distance so there could be no check on the oars.

But in Part 6 either a new artist has come along, he too certain that there has been a bad count on the oars; or the one doing the series has decided that he can come closer than any heretofore --- can even better his first estimate by bringing it down -- and he does! This time the Ship carries six oars.

The next appearance of THE SHIP OF ISHTAR is as a clothbound book, copyrighted 1926 by G. P. Putnam's Sons. I have five separate printings of this edition, and have been unable to find conclusive evidence as to their order of appearance.

The copy I suspect to be the first printing is bound in brownish-maroon cloth, with titles stamped in tan enamel. The top edge is stained red. Such staining, with some publishers, would indicate the first printing of the first edition. I do not know putnam's practice here - but have no other clue as to the first printing.

Copy number two is similar to the above, the only difference being the lack of red stain on the top edge.

Copy number three is similar to copy number two, except that the cloth is reddish brown.

Copy number four is bound in dark wine-red cloth, with the titles stamped in yellow enamel.

Copy number five is bound in bright red cloth, with the titles stamped in black ink. I suspect this of being the last printing -- not necessarily the fifth, since there may be others I do not know of -- because a cheaper cloth is used, and ink, rather than enamel, on the titles.

There are no interior difference in these five volumes, all apparently having been printed from the same plates, with identical pagination, & using same logograph.

As a story, the book version is a sad patchwork of wanton vandalism. Compared with the original version, it reads as though the publisher had handed the manuscript and a pair of thinning shears to his office boy & told him to snip it down to size. Entire sequences have been ripped out bodily for no apparent reason, and to the detriment of the story. The entire sense of the ending is changed by the omission of the vital sentence: "It hovered -- and then upon its white breast two flames whiter than it appeared and clung!" With this sentence as in the original version, not even death can part Jonkenton and Sharane. Without it, there is only unrelieved tragedy.

The Ship appears in silhouette on the front of the jacket and on the title page of the book. The drawings are similar, and this time the artist counted those oars carefully, made certain that he added them correctly. There are seven to the bank! And with reasonable fidelity the outline of the ship follows the description in the text. This is unfortunate -- the artist has placed the helm at the prow, and the oarsmen are facing forward instead of aft!

The Frank A. Munsey Company, publishers of Argosy, were traditionally opposed to magazine reprints. However, in the late thirties times were tough, and pulp magazines did not find it easy going. Munsey was in the same boat with all of them. So on October 29, 1938, he broke the tradition, and to the delight of fantasy readers and lovers of Merrittales that issue of Argosy carried the first of six weekly installments of THE SHIP OF ISHTAR, reprinted!

Probably because of the breach of policy, there was no cover illustration merely an announcement of the story, "By Public Command." This version is substantially the same as the original

with but minor changes, and with the restoration of the vital sentence in the ending that was omitted in the book version. There are interior illustrations. Those for parts 3, 4, 5, and 6 represent the same scenes used for the same installments originally, but have been redrawn.

The artist is still having trouble with the oars. The illustration for Part 1 shows nine oars to the bank. That for part 6 shows five. Merritt is not to be permitted his seven oars.

Seven years later, THE SHIP OF ISHTAR appeared again as a large-sized paperback book, reprinted by the Avon Book Company as #34 in their Murder Mystery Monthly series. The text in this version is substantially that in the Putnam book version -- shamefully mutilated and showing the same witless alteration of the ending. There are no interior illustrations.

The May 10, 1930 issue of Argosy begins a six-part serial by Kenneth Perkins entitled VOODOO'D. The cover painting is the work of Paul Stahr & clearly illustrates Perkins' story. The cover illustration on the Avon edition of THE SHIP OF ISHTAR is a copy of Paul Stahr's painting noted above, redrawn and somewhat revised. It is inconceivable that this drawing can illustrate anything or anyone in THE SHIP OF ISHTAR. But if it does--then John Kenton's hair has turned from red to black, and he has raised a trick mustache. It is almost superfluous to note that the illustration is unsigned; nor is the artist given a credit line.

The latest appearance to date (August 19, 1948) of THE SHIP OF ISHTAR is in the Revival Issue of Fantastic Novels, dated March 1948. The text here appears to follow the original version, with no more than minor changes, if any, and the ending carries its intended meaning for the story characters.

The cover illustration, by Lawrence, is a honey. Sharane is something to sit down and dream about -- wistfully. You'll never meet anyone like her. Kenton's hair is black, which is what Merritt probably intended. The Ship is gorgeous, and its details of structure and ornamentation are quite similar to those by Modest Stein. But the oars seem a bit far forward, keeping Merritt's description of the ship in mind.

Lawrence, lacking the cock-sureness of other artists, cleverly avoided responsibility for the count of the oars -- a portion of the near bank is obscured by Kenton, and only four are visible.

But not so Virgil Finlay, who did the interiors, and who refuses to be outdone. The first drawing shows the Ship with a bank of twenty-two oars! There may be even more -- again Kenton's figure obscures the stern portion of the vessel.

Some of the interior illustrations in this printing of THE SHIP OF ISHTAR show interesting antecedents. The second one, for example, depicts the same scene as that illustrated in part two of the Argosy reprint, though not, of course, the same drawing, or even a copy of it. The third interior shows the same scene as that appearing with part three of both Argosy printings. And the fifth interior bears the same relationship to part four of both Argosy serial versions.



Only Nabu knows what future publishers and editors and artists will do with Merritt's great story. Surely the above record, which hardly begins to assess the extent to which these meddlers have carried their tamperings, promises little better for the future. Though a mutilated Merritt is better than no Merritt, and we accept it gratefully, it is to be hoped that there will be no addenda to the score thus far, except to note that future editions have "followed copy."

As a parenthetical afterthought, I'd like to ask any reader of this article who has any SHIP OF ISHTAR item not listed herewith to communicate with the author, with a view either to selling or trading. It is to be hoped that in time complete bibliographical information on such items can be made available to all collectors, and the help of any willing reader is earnestly solicited.

*** the end ***

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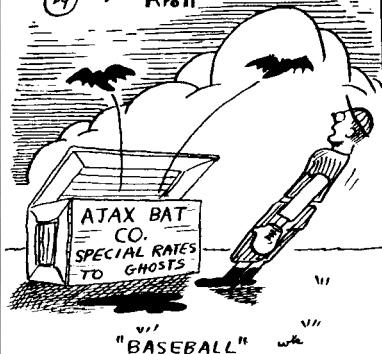
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TORCON

by E. E. Evans

I was one of those fortunate enough to be able to attend the TORCON and enjoyed it very, very much. Personally, I rate it second best of the five I've attended.

The boys in Canada certainly deserve a lot of credit for the grand job they did in every department. The whole thing ran so smoothly at all times--with one minor exception-- that it added greatly to one's pleasure.

It was unfortunate that more pro's were not there; but that can hardly be charged against the Canucks. There were only four or five--Bloch, Geo O Smith, Keller and Vollheim--but quite a number of semi-pros (guys and gals who are fans but have sold some stories). There was also a certain big-name fan who has so back-slidden badly he now writes, and SELLS, who-dunnits.

The physical arrangements were fine. The majority of the attendees were housed at the King Edward hotel a really fine place, with excellent service (particularly one certain House Dick). The Hall, while a walk of several blocks away, was large enough to seat us all comfortably with plenty of space around the edges for the exhibits of books, pictures and so on. A soft drink bar in the rear.

The handling of the auction was especially well done, I feel. The idea of having all pieces numbered and a mimeographed sheet prepared listing them was impressive. I believe this could well be made a traditional habit for future convention auctions.

My own personal main reason for attending these conventions is the pleasure I get from meeting old friends, and seeing in the flesh others of whom I know, whose stuff I've read or with whom I've corresponded.

I got in late Friday night (about 1:00 AM) and went right to bed. A couple of telephone calls kept me from immediate sleep which I needed as I was tired from two days on the trail. Then, just as I was dropping off, my room-mate Ed Counts from Battle Creek came in, and we talked for some time while he was getting ready for bed. Got up late the next morning, all ready for the big doings.

The program got under way just about on time, with Ned McKeown, convention chairman, presiding--and let me say here that he did a great job all the way through.

There was the introduction of various Canadians who had been on the committee, and the usual mentioning of other names, then the talk by the guest of honor, Robert Bloch.

Bloch makes a fine talk at any time. He is a great humorist, yet can be serious when the occasion calls for it. Most of his talk was serious, sensible, and vastly interesting. He gave both his own and some other people's ideas of what Fandom means from a psychological standpoint. It was a really thought provoking talk.

After a brief intermission, the various publishers got up and gave out with their plans for the coming months and years in the way of books they are to publish, and so on. Start saving your pennies, folks - some fine volumes coming up you'll want to get.

The film that evening was the minor exception of which I spoke earlier. To some it was intensely interesting, tracing as it did, man's attempt to conquer the atom. It was a strictly technical type of film, and those who understood what it was all about got a lot out of it. Some of us dumb-bells couldn't understand much of the later details, and so began wandering around the outside halls, or congregating in the back of the hall around the soft-drink stand. At one point the convention officials stopped the film and asked if the gang wanted it completed and they voted to go on.

After the film George O. Smith gave us a splendid talk on Interplanetary Communications. George, too, is a humorist who can be serious on occasions and on this talk he was mostly serious giving us technical information tending to show that right now, with the technology we have at present, it would be possible to communicate with Mars or Venus if only one single factor was present. That is--if there were someone up there to receive our communications.

Sunday afternoon the auction took place, and it was a dilly. They had some fine pieces for sale, and Erle M.

Korshak did his usual fine job of auctioneering. High-light of the event was the duel between Alfred Prime and Harry Moore for the Finlay cover of "The Devil's Spoon", which both stubborn nuts refused to concede to the other until finally Prime dropped out at \$76.00--an all-time high that I, personally, hope stands forever. I've paid some high prices at convention auctions, but that was ridiculous.

The Sunday evening sessions was mainly Wilson "Boob" Tucker's long-awaited Fannish Survey, complete with some really fine graphs done largely by Mari-Beth Wheeler. The talk was vastly interesting and entertaining and brought out some quite surprising angles on fans, their ages, occupations, outside hobbies, etc.

There was supposed to be reports from various editors after that, but unfortunately none of them were there except Don Wollheim, who did talk a bit about the Avon Fantasy Reader, and its plans for the future.

Monday afternoon's speaker was Dr. Keller, who gave a surprisingly good talk about the evolution of Fantasy--surprising in that it was written and not too long. I like Doc Keller--don't get me wrong -- but sometimes when he starts ad-libbing he gets long-winded and repetitious.

Then came various items of fan business, the financial report of the convention and choosing the next site. The Canadian boys had kept a fine set of books--they knew exactly where every cent came from and went. It was a very business-like method of handling the funds.

For the first time there was really some "politiking" about the next convention city---~~make~~ filled rooms and all. It seems that certain people in the New York area wanted it to be there, as next year is the tenth anniversary of the First convention, held there. But the old and ugly spectre of two divided factions reared its head again, and outside fans didn't want the chance of such a contretemps as happened at the first convention. So the fans who are most interested were worried, and figured something must be done.

Unfortunately no one from the West Coast was present and prepared to bid for the convention--and it should've gone there. Ackerman, Hevelin & Evans were there from LA, but did not feel that it was right for them to ask for another convention after only three

years. Everyone had hoped that the growing and live Portland, Oregon, club would bid, but nothing was heard from them.

Neither Milwaukee and Minneapolis, two other acceptables, were in a mood for bidding, for one reason or another. Harry Moore wanted it for New Orleans, but this didn't seem to meet with much approval. The kids from Detroit wanted to bid, and were prepared to do so, but Detroit is so close to Toronto that it was felt that their time should come in a few years.

Nearly thirty fans assembled in Korshak's room Sunday evening, or after the evening session. Finally someone had a brilliant idea -- how about Cincinnati? There is a fine gang of adult fans in that neighborhood, spear-headed by Charley Tanner. Don Ford was present, and he thought they'd like the idea, but wasn't prepared to accept the responsibility of making the bid. "Let's phone Tanner," someone suggested, and Korshak put the call in, while the gang started throwing money on the bed to pay for the call.

As a result, Dr. Barrett was authorized to make the bid, and did so Monday afternoon. The Detroit boys seconded it; and others from different sections lent support. It was carried. So it's over the Rhine in '49 -- the convention for Labor Day week-end. Start making plans RIGHT now to attend. It'll be a big event, I'm predicting.

The evening session was a Buffet dinner and the fan entertainment, MCB by the irrepressible twins, Bloch and Smith. Those guys are really funny. High-light was the trio by Dave and Pam McInnis and their pooch, Goldberg Soda. After their rendition I moved that Ackerman resign as No. 1 Face & that the position be given to Goldberg Soda. The idea seemed to click. Bloch gave his "Survey", with charts yet, & it was a scream. The Philly gang put on a radio soap-opera. Rothman gave a talk on semantics that was serious and interesting. Sam Moskowitz recited Poe's "The Raven" -- well-done, too.

And then, suddenly, we were all standing and singing "Old Lang Syne" and it was all over! How swiftly those three wonderful days flew by.

Oh, well, only about 365 days until the Convention. Will you be there? I expect to be, and you'll be missing a really grand time if you don't attend. Those conventions are certainly the Fan-Highlights of the years.

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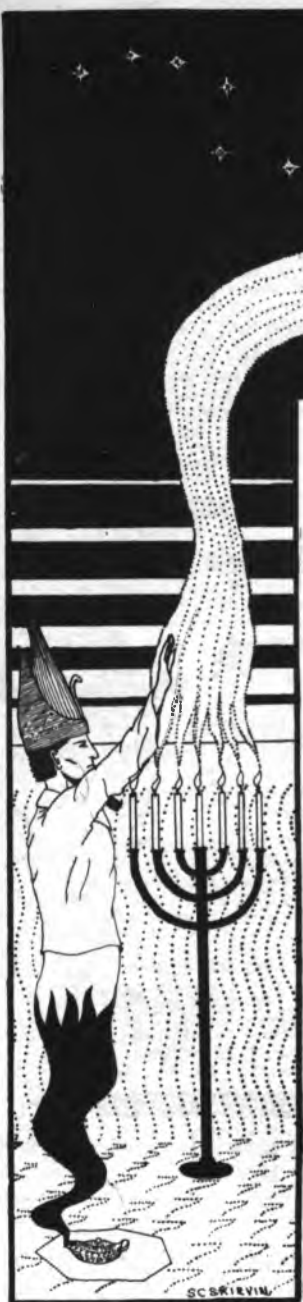
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