

#29

Horizons persistently continues to appear each three months, through the good offices of the Doubledoubletoilandtrouble Mimeograph, owned and operated by Harry Warner, Jr., at 303 Bryan Place, Hagerstown, Maryland. This is volume 3, number 2, EAPA number 23, whole number 29, and the third issue to be circulated into the VAPA. Bear with me, boys, and remember what I said last issue about a separate publication for each ayjay group if I'm not drafted by next summer.

### Memories from Manila

Although it has been officially pronounced a part of the 36th mailing, the post-posting that arrived here at the end of September is going to remain esconched in my 37th mailing review and envelope. The 36th's envelope almost suffered a severe vertical rupture when I tried to stuff these extra magazines into it; besides, it makes the bulk of the latest, rather skimpy, mailing look more impressive. So, first the postpubs: Sustaining Program: I don't think much of the suggested change in reviewing methods. It would lead to undue extra complications that would more than offset the benefits. My work would be more than doubled, for instance—I would have to write separate letters to everyone whose magazine was commentable, then once every three months sort through correspondence to find incoming comments, get them all together, and stencil them. Further, the plan would probably result in even longer review sections than we have now—it would be a great temptation to expound at length when you knew it wasn't going to take up valuable space in your own publication. That would throw an unfair burden on every editor—if he had published a few particularly controversial remarks in a magazine, he might get more than enough comments to fill the entire next issue. Either he'd have to do some editing, or there would be room for no new material. And finally, when I want to make a remark badly enough to put it into Horizons, I want to be sure that it is seen by the entire EAPA membership. Under the proposed new system, what of the many EAPA publications which contain no comment sections at all? And only four of us—Speer, Stanley, Ashley, and I—make a real effort to review every magazine in every mailing promptly. "The scrapbook items remind me that the United Press has consistently given more publicity to proposed moon rockets and other science fiction-like matters than the Associated Press. Someone pretty high up in the UP apparently reads Astounding. " I thought that the real nature of the critters in "Giant Killer" was supposed to be a secret until pretty well along in the story, maybe until the very end if the reader was particularly slow on the uptake, which could account for the ambiguous pix. I disagree violently on the value of "The Code", which I'd rate as the best thing in Astounding last year. Random Thoughts should start plenty of controversy among those better equipped than I am. I'll content myself with the statement that I'm glad to see Will active again, and the belief that you'd need many more EAPA bundles to get the advantage of the cheaper rates he mentions. FA Lean-To: The postmailing really could have been dispensed with altogether; postals could have told of the election results, and nothing else in the publications would have spoiled by waiting one more month. " This thought suddenly occurred to me that maybe we could do away with elections in the EAPA on a regular basis: instead of annual elections, hold a special election for one or more of the posts only when petitioned by a certain number of members. That would end a lot of confusion, and permit the riddance of unsatisfactory officers before a year had elapsed. The petitioners might be required to pay the expenses of elections that result in no change, to discourage calling them with no real reason. Moonshine: What was the great event that happened 'in 2000 BC? I think the review section would be more interesting if you remarked at length on a few items and just forgot about the magazines which inspire you with no comments, Len. One-Shot Fanzine: Betcha this was merely dummied spontaneously. Spectra: See what I mean about how hard it is to comment when you've nothing to say, Len? The Riders: As many others have pointed out, the magazine prices are at least

as high as those asked by dealers. The book quotations are right on the ball, though; fans who live where they can obtain second-hand stuff and don't assist Rusty in this cause should be excommunicated from fandom. Me, I can't even find a used copy of Thrilling Wonder Stories at Hagerstown's lone back-issue emporium these days. Clayton Astounding Index: Highly valuable, and I can think of no manner in which it could be improved over the present arrangement. The Miltonish poem also strikes home, expressing beautifully the way we should all feel about fan activities. En Garde: You gave up on Steve Mallon too quickly, Donn. Even if his college records were lost, there would have been a record of his high school and maybe even elementary school work. Birth certificates, I think, are filed in duplicate, at the place of birth and at the state headquarters for the health department or bureau of vital statistics. If his parents died when he was a boy the chances are good that his rearing became a matter for court or welfare department record at one time or another. Most newspapers, regardless of how large the town, carried the names of the enlistees or draftees during the war, and his home town paper would certainly have carried his name in the casualty lists. So would the college paper and maybe the yearbook. The Anti-Michelism Omnibus Dummy: Vaguely interesting in a nostalgic sort of way. Neutron: The hextoing is too uncertain for me to find out whether I can read the shorthand. S-F Reactionary: And I hope Speer appreciates the labor of love the FAPA members must wield to preserve these miniature publications from disappearing. And so, on to the regular mailing: Plenum: I'm stupid enough not to know what that formula on the cover means, but I get an impression that it is something very dramatic like  $E=mc^2$ . That "sticks and stones" quotation is one that I expected to find at the beginning of every chapter of "Science and Sanity", but it never did turn up, despite its obvious null-A significance. Milty's article on semantics continues to be one of the finest expository condensations of a complicated subject that I've ever encountered, in or out of fandom. It is a little depressing to think that I might have saved myself the summer I spent with Korzybski simply by reading Hayakawa and Rothman, though. Weird Tales Want List: First legal-length FAPA publication in a long while, if memory serves. Walt's Wramblings: I'll bet that none of these books are as good as Thyril makes them sound, except maybe the S. Fowler Wright volume. But it's fun to read about them, even though I've seen a couple of dozen reviews of "Out of the Silence" in the last year, most of them terming it a neglected volume. Moonshine: Outre Space might turn into something really funny with a thorough reworking and organization. Matters of Opinion: Why not set the number of publications required for a mailing at 60 instead of making the three extras mandatory? I know I'm going to raise a tremendous ruckus if I ever get cheated out of a publication just because the editor refused to be guided by his conscience and sent in only the bare minimum. Reader and Collector: It might be worth noting that the Hodgson book is the first Arkham House volume to receive really good newspaper reviews since the original Lovecraft compilations. That "bibliography" of Butman's article apparently is simply a listing of the fantasy yarns and related books that he has read, although it is hard to see how he could have been familiar with Fantastic Adventures and missed Weird Tales. I'd also like to know where the line between "source material" and "critical material" was drawn. Guteto supplement: You're far too modest about your powers over the English language, Myrtle; the Esperanto accent is hardly noticeable, and I'd like to see you write what you think about the FAPA and its publications. Venal: I have commented on this material before, although the asphalt was ~~mentioned~~ asphalt at that time. Fan-Dango: Fran omits mention of one very important consideration: almost all his trouble, and a great deal of his fan activity, have lately been in the form of face-to-face fanning. Even if he is 100% right about these matters, only a small number of fans are in the same situation. It is the most devastatingly convincing analysis of the unpleasant side of fandom that I've seen in a long while. The mildness of the tone is startling, too, when we consider the impassioned dialectics that have issued from Lenny typewriters over matters that didn't really count in the long run.

But I know of no fan who allows fandom to be his whole life in the manner traditionally ascribed to fans. Unless someone reaches that point, his participation in the field isn't likely to do him as much harm as he might encounter in other modes of hobbing. The Pacificon Dairy—I mean Diary—is swell stuff. It is time that someone emitted a philosophical and critical essay on the realist trend that seems gradually to be creeping into fan writing. You didn't see such plainspoken and unidealized accounts of the Nycon and Chicon as we have of the Pacificon, as exemplified here and in the Speer account in Shangri-L'Affaires. Oddly enough, it's coming at a time when lawsuits and threats of lawsuits would seem apt to make everyone extra-cautious. Devil's Advocate: This was interesting enough that I read it while it was oozing out from the rollers of the Double-doubletoilandtrouble mimeograph, even though most of it was a familiar story through correspondence. Glom: I don't think Ackie has kept the objective viewpoint that he urges very well. Flagg was so far from being a genius that the lack of any critical comment sounds suspicious. The idea of uniform obituary booklets is a good one, though even better would be a series of booklets about authors before they die. Micron: The null-A "Musings and Meandering" come uncomfortably close to the guff that I almost turned out last issue. Fortunately, Jack doesn't pretend that this is any real introduction to general semantics; Rothman's is still the authorized version, and free from the misstatements that are present here. Fantasy Amateur: Three cheers for the Elmer declaration of policy on deadlines. However, that business of putting out the last one by express is liable to prove pretty expensive to the Perdue purse. Gruzak: It is very good to see Kennedy in the FAPA, where he belongs. All the fine things that are ordinarily said about Kennedy publications fit this one, only more so. More, every three months, please! Sustaining Program: There's one important objection to the strictly sic policy of editing a magazine, which no one has ever pointed out in print. It is the huge burden on the editor who dummies his magazine before stenciling it. The danger of messing up the writer's idiosyncracies are tripled, when the editor must first type off the manuscript onto paper, then copy from that paper onto the stencil, and has no one handy to hold copy while proofreading is done against the original. That is the main reason I tried to keep important matters of typography in Spaceways uniform. There is, naturally, the more obvious point that only a half-dozen fans are as likely to know what they are doing with each comma and gerund as Speer. If the editor is to be consistent, he must copy off a heck of a lot of illiteracies, and cannot clear up phrasing that obscures the meaning of a passage. I got the idea that the "review" of the Dunwich Horror which Swisher quoted was published by a radio editor of a newspaper who had been sickened by the press release about the production. And those press releases are really out of this world; I see a lot of them, and would run choice excerpts in Horizons if the FAPA members were a little better able to undergo the agony. Just in case anyone has been worrying about it, that chain letter is moving again. It was stuck in New England for three months. Jabberwocky: The tone sounds as if Spence were trying just a little too hard to please, with a resultant slight lack of naturalness. That should disappear by next issue, and it's still a very valuable addition to the FAPA. The ad oversheet from the index page is a beautiful example of nature improving on art, as Danner would agree if he were a member of the FAPA.

#### Through VAPA With Rod and Camera

VAPA Poll: Hopelessly overdetailed and uncomfortably reminiscent of our FAPA struggles with laureate awards. I'll probably succeed in my current struggle to fill in all the blanks and mail it in by December 31, but the response is bound to be so poor that the results won't mean anything. If we must have polls, keep them short. Embrasure: This at least solves one of the humorous item nominations. Vanguard Records: Very good to see the project revived and revised; it will undoubtedly be more valuable from the artistic standpoint this way. The

ahler and Franz disc should attract a lot of buyers, and the Morgenstern-Davis platter is almost enough to cause me to go out and buy a record player which would make it practical for me to buy the record. Blitherings: I like the poetry, Seedy, although I'm not well enough versed in the mechanics of criticism to tell you just why. It seems to me that "Lumatic" achieves most of the things that the VAPA poets include among the desiderata in poetry, without being obvious about it and still retaining artistry. Very nice to see another blast at Hurley's high-sounding nonsense. Joe's Jottings: The Rothman articles in Plenum are the best possible introduction to general semantics and null-A Josephus. The cartoon on the last page (if there is such a thing as a last page with that format!) would have been considerably improved without the dialogue and the labels. Vanguard Amateur: Noted and received, and a merry Christmas to you too, Doc. Snark: So the Snark was a Boojum, I see. I would like to see Sam Russell enlarge his "What Are Patterns For", citing chapter and verse to demonstrate his ideas of poems which are purposely obscure because their meaning couldn't be conveyed in simple language. A re-working might also make clearer the connection of the last paragraph with what precedes it, and I admit that I don't quite get the point of borrowing (Upper Lower Slobbovian for "borrowing") Amy Lowell's words for the title. Be thankful you live in a city big enough to have access to the decent books of musical criticism which others will undoubtedly suggest to you. Hereabouts the only thing above the sappiness of the Sigmund Spaeth level is Sir Francis Donald Tovey's "Essays in Musical Criticism". I can't imagine anything better for the field that they cover, although they stick pretty closely to the standard field of 18th and 19th century orchestral classics, and touch on modern music pretty exclusively in the form of those horrible concoctions by people like Sir Ed Elgar. You might look over a volume or two; I'm sure you'd be fascinated by the combination of erudition and good humor, and the unusually full musical quotations that are included. Arguing about the respective literary values of weird and science fiction is hard to do without simply falling back on personal preference and prejudice. I don't take back my original statement, though; the weird fiction writers showed enormous stupidity and lack of originality up until comparatively recent years, were content to introduce only minute alterations in the familiar old formulae, and a book like "Who Knocks?", claimed as a good ghost story anthology, is almost as painful to read through as a 1946 issue of Weird Tales. But more of this, much more, will go into a letter to you if the current good intentions don't go the way of most of my good intentions. Stefantasy: This seems to lack a little of the verve of recent issues, but that is no complaint. I saw an ad in The New Yorker for a home recording outfit, designed primarily for vocal letters to friends, which appears to be utilizing the tape or wire principal. Principle, that is. The change-over from the present discs will probably be slow not because of monopolies or capitalistic fear of competition, but rather because it'll take a while to get the public used to the new idea, and because of the enormous cost of switching over the manufacturing details and waiting for enough people to buy the things to build up a market for the new kinds of recordings. Turnbills: It is good to see that someone still writes about cats. Arenbite of Inwit: No remark that sounds even remotely intelligent occurs to me. I would like to see Jim define some of his "symbols", though. Fan-Tods: "The Mystery Men of Mars", page 134: "The good of the whole!" said the machine surprisingly. "Hac iklakic." "What does "hac iklakic" mean?" demanded Alan. .... "Hac"--it is not so. "Iklakic"--below the permitted intelligence level," translated the machine. "Ask no questions. Talk. More words." The Claudy book is still about the closest thing to good writing that Grosset and Dunlap ever published for boys outside their reprint series, though. Maybe that circle of snakes problem could be tested with dragonflies. One of them will eat itself about half-way, and could probably do much better under scientific encouragement. Vanguard Boojum: Haven't completed the job of reading this yet, on account of the need to get this here publication out before Noel. It really is "Erehwon", though, and don't ask me why Butler spelled it "Erehwon".

## Recent Trends in Science Fiction

by

Thomas S. Gardner

### Fifth and Concluding--Amazingly Fantastic

Thus was quoted the high mazook of Skooldoogery University when requested to comment upon Amazing Stories and Fantastic Adventures. "The existence of such a type of publication in America is indeed amazingly fantastic, and a sad commentary on the low level of information and education--and a credit to the money-making instincts of the editors," he said.

The career of Amazing Stories under Ray Palmer has been one of the most extraordinary of all science fiction magazines. No one had any idea that Palmer was such an acute business man as he has proven to be. No matter whether one likes, dislikes, tolerates, abhors, or loves Amazing Stories, there is one fact to remember: It probably outsells any other science fiction magazine on the market. That has been due to two things. The first is that it appeals to the freshman high school type of mind that has not had enough education to worry about poor science, plot, and such things, but is interested in action, slush and snappy endings. I have talked to several persons who read only Amazing and do not like the other magazines. They invariably state they don't care whether the science is accurate or not, whether the stories have anything in them or not, they are interested in having things happen, happen fast, and happen often. The second smart move by Palmer was to suck in gradually the half-cracked, emotional, and mentally insane elements in Amazica as readers by gradually developing in the lost civilization motif, the pyramidology racket, and similar themes, in the stories. To get the vast group of paranoid types, the Lemurian hoaxes were put over as true accounts.

Now let us examine some trends in regard to the stories. Frankly, Palmer has ruined more good series than any other editor in Amazica. For example, time after time he has had good beginning plots to starts in Amazing, has begun a series with a fair story. But by the second or third story, the series has regenerated into puerile, insane, fairy tales of a hack type. For example, the first of the Pragnell stories, entitled "The Ghost of Mars", was fairly good, but the sequels that followed it! Well, that has happened several times. A large percentage of the stories have dealt with the lost civilization bunk. It has been observed that it requires less imagination, education, and brains to read that type of story than, for example, the type Astounding publishes. If you don't believe this, take four or five of the lost civilization novels that appear in Amazing from time to time, and ~~compare~~ or the Astounding type of stories, and get high school students to read them all. The students like the lost civilization theme, because it takes less brain work to follow through the story. I have tried the experiment.

However, to be perfectly fair, Palmer has introduced one thing that is good and highly popular. That is the cartoons in Amazing. Most of them are clever.

The readers' departments of Amazing and Fantastic Adventures indicate that a brand new field of readers has been opened up. It consists of, apparently, high school students in the main, or adults whose education stopped with high school. That is not necessarily anything against Amazing and Fantastic Adventures. In fact, I suspect that many of the readers of the Thrilling group are in the same class. The above is a statement of opinion, and need not be accepted by the readers of Amazing and Fantastic Adventures as criticism.

I have heard several families kick against their children's reading of Amazing and Fantastic Adventures, on the basis of the drawings and the descriptions formerly published on the back of the magazines. Paul's drawings are good, but the captions with them and the descriptions are written as if they were truthful accounts instead of imagination. However, more recently these have been more



## When We Were Very Young

One nice thing about the former set of mailing days was the manner in which the publishing members could give forth with Christmas greetings in their December issues. Several of them took advantage of this in the December, 1941, mailing, including Art Widner who devoted the whole front page of *Yhos* to these sentiments in something that looked very much like old English lettering, holly, and assorted other attributes of the season. This issue of *Yhos* also contained the exposition of Art's suspicions that maybe war has a "useful purpose", which caused so much ink to be spilled in the year or two that followed. "Is Man sailing thru a tricky, narrow, uncharted, rocky channel? And is War the anchor that is keeping him from barging ahead full speed onto a rock? Of course there is the humorous possibility that in his impatience, Man may die of apoplexy while trying to pull up the anchor. Or he may take an axe to the cable, slip, and cut his head off." Harry Jenkins was at his activity peak back in these days, although he never did participate in FAIA affairs as violently as in other phases of fandom. He was represented here by a one-sheeter, Stf Hash, and a more substantial issue of *Jinx* with a dandy knight cartoon on the cover. Reader and Collector appeared almost every mailing around this time. This particular one had a lot of interesting comments on a subject which causes me to see red, limited and special luxury editions. Wrote Hiss Honor: "Most of Mrs. Shelley's other novels and short stories have been over shadowed by 'Frankenstein'. For instance, how many of the readers are familiar with her 'The Mortal Immortal' or 'Transformation'? The former tells the story of a man who drank a potion of an elixir compounded by his master and lived to write the story—three hundred and twenty-three years later. 'Transformation' is about an ugly dwarf who trades a treasure chest for a beautiful body—and wins the love of a fair damsel. Something of a fairy tale; but the theme has been used in many of our weird tales." The article also referred to her "Last Man", which tells how humanity is wiped out by plague and pestilence. HCK though "Frankenstein" itself "was needlessly long and rather tiresome reading, particularly the opening chapters. The same criticism might be leveled at one of her other novels", "The Last Man". Larry Farsaci distributed copies of a newspaper page on which his poem, "The Flower City", had appeared in praise of Rochester. Sample lines: "'Kodak City' fairly bustles with machines and wizard men, Yet, of all, I have to wonder if of wisdom there are ten?" Here's a good sample of how fantasy back issue prices have risen "in just five years. Julie Unger, who was considered then as the highest priced gent in the field, was asking only fifty cents a copy for *Amazing and Wonder* monthlies from 1929 through 1934, except for a few issues containing Skylark stories. And one of those "before" matters, from an Evans or Ashley publication in this mailing, we learn that Claude Degler of Newcastle, Ind., had been named Indiana director of the Mid-West Fantasy Fan Federation, working with the NFFFP, at the "Michigan First Annual Science Fiction and Fantasy Conference". Joe Fortier was publishing the *California Mercury*, and put the December, 1941, issue in this mailing. He said that Minneapolis, Washington, and Detroit would present their claims for the next convention site at the Pacificon. Various other items: "Ad Astra is going to issue its long-planned microfilm issue in the future. . . . Futuria Press is a member of the Starlight Trilogy which was formed last August by Tom Wright, Phil Bronson, and Joe Fortier. This organization intends to cover the field of fanmags and offer the best in each classification. Atkeman wrote an open letter to British fandom, telling of his intention to visit England after the war. He had also been deferred for physical reasons, from the draft for an indefinite period of time. And the S F Check-List continued to pursue its commendable and now stalled course. Nowhere can you find more fascinating reading. Example: "Tower Turble-Burley and Courier-Examiner, The--(See It)." Or the Gilbert-caused complications over Unfamous Fantastic Masterpieces, Unfamous Fantastic Mysteries, and Un-Famous Forgotten Fantasies.

STORM, THEODOR  
Der Schimmelreiter

Gebruder Paetel, 1909.

Theodor Storm is known in this country primarily for his longish short story, "Immensee", which many students of German encounter during their second or third year of ~~scholarship~~ study. It also finds a place in several school anthologies of "world literature", in translated form. But "Der Schimmelreiter" is quite another matter altogether. Aside from being much longer than "Immensee"--Storm calls it a "novelle", and it approaches the length of a short novel--it has almost none of the syrupy nostalgia and liebeschmerz that characterizes "Immensee". I presume that it is available in English translations, though the only copy to which I have access is in the original German. "I know of no work of fiction which balances so remarkably the weird and the mundane as this work. The supernatural is present in the very beginning and very ending as a ghost which appears on a white horse whenever floods threaten in a certain north Friesian district. The great bulk of the tale is on the other hand mundane--the story of what that ghost was when it was alive. To complete the effect is a sense of strange things just beyond the borders of reason that run through the book, seldom explicitly explained or even described. Occasionally these take the form of simple distortions of natural happenings, sometimes they consist of grotesquely acting and simple-minded characters, and there are two or three totally inexplicable occurrences in the main, mundane section of the volume. For restraint and subtle suggestive powers, Storm's writing in this book should be a model to every author of weird fiction. "The author, in a few introductory paragraphs, claims that he heard the whole story when a boy, but was never able to find it in print. Then he launches into the account itself, of how a traveler in the low Friesian country encountered on a stormy night a strange, apparition-like white horse and mysterious rider watching the dikes. The traveler is forced to take refuge for the night at an inn, tells of what he has seen, and is half-believed by the company there assembled who feel secure in the protection of the seawalls as long as the apparition is visible. One of the group, an old school-teacher, then launches into his account of the story behind the ghost, and this occupies virtually all of the volume. "Hauke Haein was moody as a boy, liked to spend his time watching the sea and speculating how the protection against inundations might be improved. Despite poverty and ignorance, he manages to learn something of the subject, gets himself apprenticed to the "deichgraf", finally marries the boss' daughter, and lives happily but not ever after. For Hauke eventually succeeds to the job of dike supervisor, and after much difficulty with the reactionary people of the surrounding communities persuades them to build a new dike, along a new theory which he has conceived as affording more protection and longevity. This is done, and all goes well until a great storm arises. The new dike holds firm, but the place where it was joined to one of the old ones gives way under the weight of waters. Hauke's wife and child attempt to escape from their home; he watches them swept beneath the flood, and rides on his white horse into the waters to follow them in death. Ever after, the book concludes, Hauke's figure and that of his horse can be seen in times of danger to his dike, which has withstood every storm. "Reading the book in the original is not too simple a job: it contains so many idioms of the region that the author was forced to add a list of definitions for the benefit of Germans. But struggling through it is rewarding, and the reader is left with a strange impression of things acting subtly out of accord with normalcy. The mystery of the origin of Hauke's horse, the huge cat that he kills in a moment of rage, his mentally retarded child, the frightening mists that dance on the sea in certain kinds of weather, are infinitely more effective than the titanic efforts that Lyvecraft's gods make to break into our space.

## Up from Slavery

By the time this issue of Horizons is distributed, I shall be free from official connection with the NFFF for the first time in several years. In fact, my fan destinies seem to have been interwoven around that organization in strange fashion. I rejected the original article by Damon Knight that provided the impetus for forming the club, I came in handy during its first months as editor of the official organ and in several other manners, and even drew up a constitution back in the good old days when the NFFF constitution was not scrapped oftener than twice a year. All this experience has left a certain amount of bad taste in my mouth, but I'm still unable to be sure whether I think there should be a national fan organization.

Clubs and joiners are funny things. It shocked me no end to find the idea of noblesse oblige that exists among some NFFF officials: those who construe any public criticisms of the club's activities as high treason, when they come from an officer. An effort was made at the beginning of 1946 to keep all board of directors discussions and business secret; probably no one ever felt himself strictly bound by the request, it has prevented me from speaking freely until now, to prevent arguments with fans whom I like and respect.

Looking back, I'm convinced that the officers of the last two or three years have not been responsible for the abysmal effort of the NFFF to live up to its potentialities. I felt rather unhappy when I allowed myself to be talked out of running for president at the end of 1945, but looking back now, I don't think I could have achieved more than Dunkelberger did. My reign would not have been so turbulent, probably, but concrete accomplishments would have been unlikely. It isn't easy to fix the blame for this situation, but I think that most of it rests with the 90% of the NFFF membership who show no incentive whatsoever in the direction of activity and efforts for the club. They are essentially the same kind of people who join the Weird Tales Club: they find pleasure in the thought that they belong to an organization, get to see their name in print as members, and receive little odds and ends of ego-boo every now and then without effort on their part.

It is strange that the only NFFF achievements during the last 12 months have been those designed for the club itself. This is even worse than the barbarians' service clubs; probably as much as one per cent of the money spent by Rotarians and Kiwanians on their dues, luncheons, and other activities actually does help the community or parts thereof in the form of free lectures or Christmas treats for the orphans. The NFFF's only claim to fame in this direction is that it almost made available to fandom in general the opportunity to buy Finlay reproductions. During 1946, we cooked up a deal whereby members could get their stationery printed at little cost, eliminated the lack of nominees for election by putting one man in charge of the job of finding candidates for all posts, and wrote new constitutions at an awe-inspiring pace. But that is the sum and substance. But not a single "project" out of the dozens that have been suggested since Evans revived the group has come to completion ~~since~~ the Fancyclopedia, and the part that the NFFF played in that was not exactly monumental.

Laying the blame is a hard job. I set out once to list the proposals and the apparent reasons for their failures, in an effort to discover who or what groups were most often to blame. The results were completely inconclusive. Somewhere along the line, every sensible idea got itself tabled, and no one ever showed enough initiative to try to start things moving again. Whether the projects were being undertaken by single persons or committees, whether they were big or little, at some point between the undertaking and the accomplishment something invariably has gone wrong.

There are several excellent reasons why a national fan organization is unnecessary, if it takes the form the NFFF as assumed all these years. However, I still can't bring myself to join the ranks of the all-out fanarchists. Instead, I'm swung around to the belief that there is need for fan organization only when the majority of its members want to see ~~something~~ done which can't be accomplished

without formal organization. The FAPA is the best--in fact, the only contemporary--example of a fan group which makes possible advantages that would not prevail under total fanarchy. Without the FAPA, we could publish and give away our magazines somewhat as we do now, but the regular mailings would not materialize, and there would be no definite mailing lists.

If the NFFF is to survive, one thing is necessary: elimination of the annual elections. They cause utter chaos in the organization for three months before and three months following the election dates. Their purpose could be served as well and much more efficiently by eliminating scheduled elections altogether, with constitutional provision for special election whenever a petition was signed by a stated number of members requesting recall of an officer or officers. Forcing the sponsors of the election to pay the costs when the incumbents were not put out of office would discourage special balloting for trivial complaints. Another purely administrative arrangement, that of the directorate, is of very questionable value. My experience on the NFFF board has indicated that the body becomes either a superfluous rubber-stamp group, as it was during 1944 and 1945, or a house divided against itself which wastes all its energies in squabbling and technicalities, as in 1946. Even this year, there has been a disconcerting tendency to okay every proposal and every action, unless outrageously stupid. Witness the okaying of that ridiculous NFFF emblem, with only one dissenting board vote--my own.

So I'm going to retain membership in the organization, but for the first time since its formation I'll refuse to participate actively. If certain people in Los Angeles will get the lead out of their pants, The Fantasy Foundation may go places and do things on so grand a scale that the NFFF will become a matter of trivial concern. The Foundation can do something that neither fanarchy nor the NFFF can do: put big sums of money at the disposal of those who want to undertake expensive projects.

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#### Ad Astra Per Press Releases

The final year of Spaceways' existence was marked by the occasional appearance of a page devoted to the activities of the United States Rocket Society. It was published under a mutually beneficially arrangement: the USRS purchased quite a few copies of ~~them~~ each issue in which its rows appeared to distribute to members, helping the finances of Spaceways and giving USRS members a little more for their money than a single mimeographed page. After Spaceways entered fanzine heaven, I made a half-hearted effort to help the USRS boss, Robert L. Farnsworth, in locating another fanzine to serve the same purpose. Nothing came of this attempt, and I lost touch with the organization altogether until a copy of the latest issue of their official organ, Rockets, arrived with Donn Brazier's weekly late in November.

The USRS seemed to me from the start to be potentially more important than the larger and wealthier competitive groups. Farnsworth worked principally from an entirely new angle. Instead of spending the club's money on materials with which to build miniature rockets for experimental work, he concentrated efforts on publicity and propaganda. I don't think that the organization ever openly stated that this was the underlying theory, but it very obviously was.

So it is very interesting to note what has happened in the last four years. The club has obviously grown considerably through the paid and free advertising that it has been receiving in so many publications. Farnsworth apparently is still the real inspiration behind the group--this issue of Rockets gives no indication that the club would have any chances of survival if Farnsworth dropped out. However, there seems to be a strenuous effort under way to attract the rocket people who like to do actual mechanical and chemical experimenting, too. This 16-page, printed issue contains one two-page article devoted entirely to the worth of acid and aniline as a rocket fuel, and several smaller pieces that deal

with mechanical matters. In addition, the USRS is not hesitating to keep on the good side of various other groups, although it is finding some rather strange bedfellows for itself in this manner. It is difficult, for instance, to understand why a rocket society would say flattering things about The Fortean Society. There are also a few references to fandom and science fiction, together with a suggestion that the magazine might start to run fiction.

One fault that was apparent in the group from the start is still obvious. It is an effort to make the group seem more imposing than it is, done in such a clumsy way that no one is going to be fooled. Occasionally this shows up in a deliberate vagueness. An article by Farnsworth is claimed to be a talk delivered before a group of businessmen, without specifying where, when, and what group. Another speaker is referred to simply as a professional instrument maker, which is apparently supposed to be impressive, whatever it may mean.

Otherwise, scanning the pages of this expensively printed publication is a fascinating experience. There are touches of delightful if unconscious humor, such as the advertisement for asbestos suits to be used when experimenting with rockets. Someone writes to tell about his chemical and electrical laboratory; Farnsworth answers with the suggestion, apparently made in all seriousness, to start trying to discover the nature of gravity. Farnsworth does a little fanzine reviewing, eagerly snatching on an article in Sun Spots which attempted to prove that fans are turning from science fiction to weird fiction. We learn in another article that the accompanying illustration shows the only photograph of Mars that is available. There is a lengthy list of members whose addresses are unavailable, prefaced by a deep purple passage describing the days when there will be missing legions roaming the intergalactic wilds. The Society doesn't even know the first name or initials of one of these "members", and another of the names listed is represented with a letter elsewhere in the issue, complete with address. Irreparable harm is done to the literary reputation of John W. Campbell, Jr., by an assertion that he writes the stories which appear under the name of George O. Smith. Farnsworth apparently doesn't trust the press to be sufficiently reverent about the USRS' ambitions, for he includes a warning to members, not to release any publicity without approval from headquarters.

The issue also contains a remarkable editorial, which I can't quote from because Farnsworth is very specific about copyright. It starts out by assuming, apparently, that the only way man could have spread to all habitable parts of the globe was by finding intrepid explorers who would make the long and perilous journeys. This is a rather shaky analogy with the present-day situation in which Farnsworth says one of two things must be holding mankind back from the stars: mental inertia or a condition of being "kept" in the Charles Fort sense.

At present, I'd say that the USRS suffers very severely from the effort to be all things to all men, and from certain ill-advised directions the propaganda line has been forced to take at times. The continued emphasis on the commercial advantages of the moon is the best possible thing; the wartime "Hitler wants the moon!" theme, and the present warnings that Russia is getting ahead of us in space travel spoil everything. If any rocket society is responsible for the first space flight, my guess is that it will be the USRS, but I don't expect to see any rocket society claim that honor.

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Famous Fantastic Mysteries

Headline in the Pacific Rural Press, via The New Yorker, November 23, 1946:

STERILITY MAY  
BE INHERITED

For members of the audience which don't have culture, you'd better investigate the new Penguin series of all-out classics. The first in the 25c series, Homer's Odyssey, shows clearly influences of Weinbaum. Other weird tales and pure fantasy by foreigners like Dante and Sophocles are due to be published; all of them will be newly translated, and unlikely to duplicate anything in Derleth's anthologies.

### To Speak of Many Things

It has been a year or more since I wasted a page of Horizons in pure ramblings, and I don't like to do it this time. But Christmas is coming, so is the FAPA mailing deadline, and I want to get the parcel into the mail before the lines at the parcel post window become too elongated. Therefore: It might be well to say something here about the latest developments in the great Shaver saga. The action taken at the Philco, which almost resulted in a direct move on the part of fandom, was not too well advised. It is no more proper for someone to spring a resolution on a group of assembled fans and expect a vote within the ensuing hour than it is to try to get an amendment to the FAPA constitution on the ballot before the pros and cons have been thrashed out in print. Reports from Philly say that resolutions at the Philcon will be requested on the first day of the convention, but not put up for vote until the final day, which seems like the proper way to work the matter. As for Shaver and his acolytes, it is rather surprising to see Hamling, Geier, and maybe others of the old Chicago fan group swing around in apparent support of the Lemurian movement. At this distance, it is almost impossible to decide what their motives may be. But the whole thing has turned into a preposterous sort of religion in everything but name, and the best people very often find egoboo most easily obtained through religious activities; that includes quite a few members of the clergy, lots of Sunday school teachers, and practically all leaders in missionary societies, church "youth" group, and ~~miscellaneous~~ assorted allied fields. Gardner is probably the closest to being right about what is back of Shaver's stories. The Palmer situation is still mixed up. When the story of his "breakdown" first broke, I expressed skepticism, but thought it would turn out to be the basis for stories by Palmer about his experiences while in the mental clutches of the dero. ' ' The fiction of another queer person, slightly more famous than Shaver, has been interesting me lately. It's "Remembrance of Things Past" by Proust, through the first two novels of which I have plowed my way. I'm obsessed by a ridiculous, irreverent, but inescapable thought: that Proust could have written the finest fantasy and weird fiction the world has ever known, if he had only tried. However, I'll agree with quite a few other important people, in that this gigantic work has its points of merit nonetheless. Marcel's sentences are the most astonishing things imaginable; and I used to think that I held the record for getting myself involved in endless sentences! ' ' Return of the Alchemist to the fanzine scene is interesting, in that it's one of the very few attempts to revive a discontinued fanzine with the same policy and part of the same editorial staff. Skimming through the issue didn't reveal any trace of Olon Wiggins, though. Does anyone know what may have happened to him? He was in the services, last I heard, about four years ago, but is presumably discharged by this time. ' ' I want you should all go to see "Dead of Night", the British flicker. Someone said that it has been drastically cut for showing here. I wouldn't know about that, but could detect no loose ends that might indicate omissions. It's far different from the usual run of weird movies, with its stories-within-a-story, and Dali-like sequences at the very climax. Also of third-hand interest as science-fiction is "Gallant Journey", which allegedly depicts the life of the man who beat the Wright Brothers in building airplanes. I was more impressed by the way the hero was allowed to turn up his toes and die than by anything else in the show, though. ' ' That leaves just about enough room to wish everyone a merry Christmas a month too late. I also might express my apologies for inadvertently leaving anyone off the Christmas card list. It will probably happen to several people, despite all my good intentions and efforts. Coping with the relatives, people with whom I must show sincerity of "The Hucksters" variety because they're important to my work, and fandom is a real problem when the jolly Yule season arrives. If I try to make up lists in advance, that takes so long that I barely get the cards into the mails at the proper time, and someone's name gets skipped anyway. Let us be thankful that it isn't necessary to remember fandom on Mother's Day, wedding anniversaries, and other occasions that call for greeting cards.