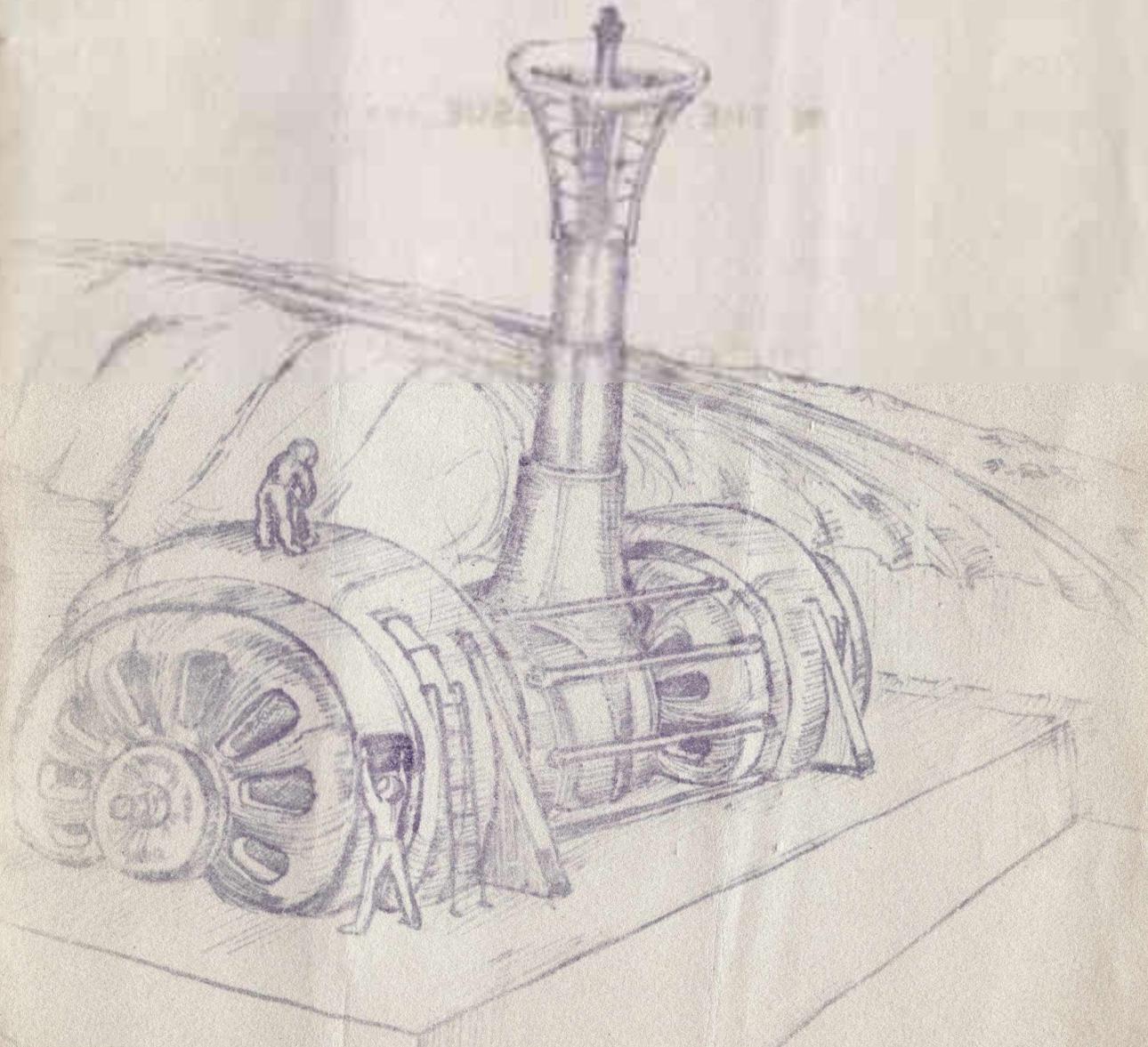


PLANETEEA

LAWRENCE MANNING



LAURENCE MANNING

IN THE APRIL ISSUE ~ ~ ~

"COAL THIEF"

THE PLANETEER MAGAZINE

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JOE BLISH

BILL MILLER

Managing Editor

Art Editor

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Whole No. 4

LETTERS FROM THE EDITOR'S END

This issue--and the last one too--should be dedicated to Carl Spellmeyer and Gerard Miller, without whose unusual kindness you would not be reading these words now.

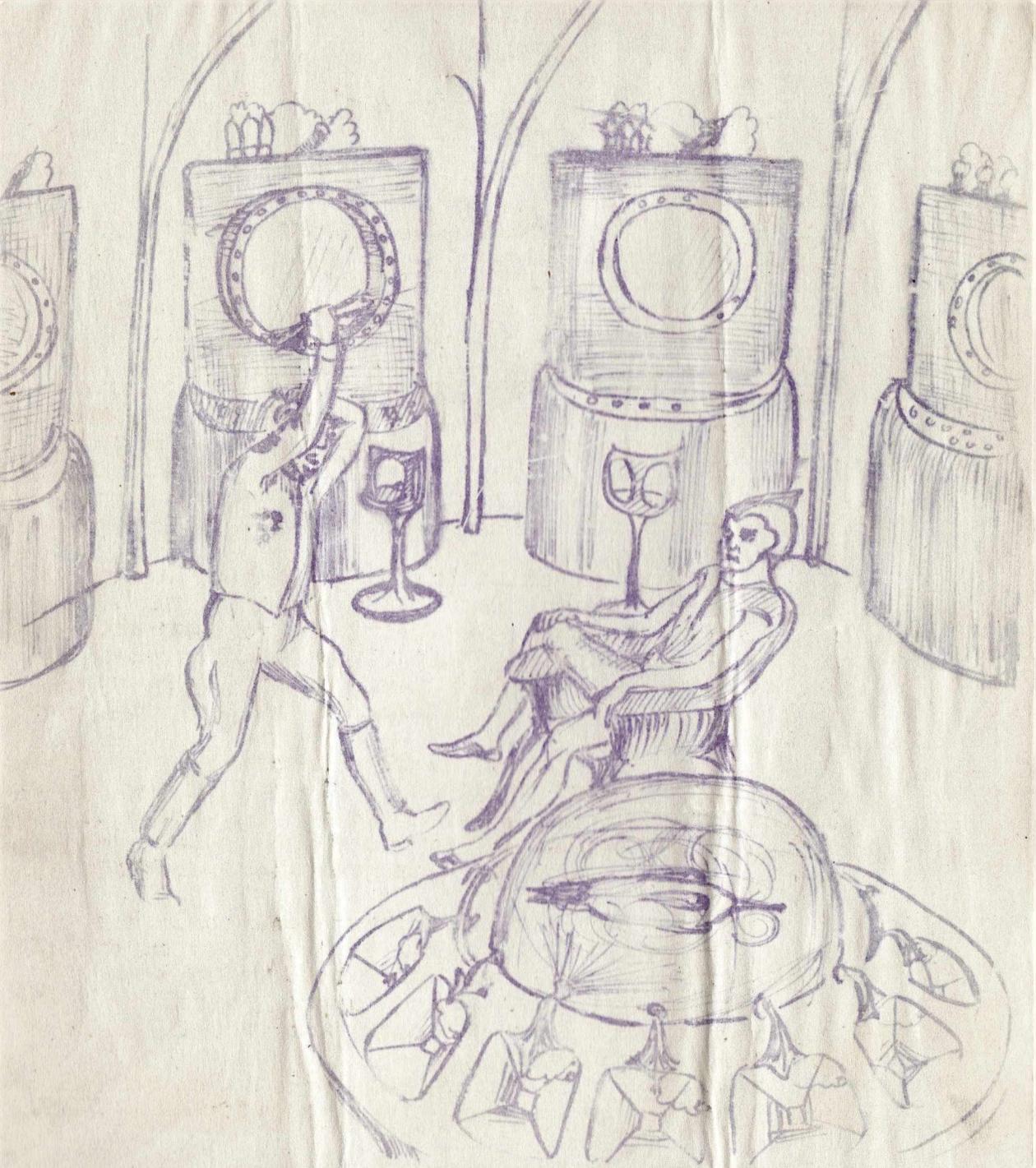
The first contest starts this issue. We wish you luck!

An announcement: We are now open to stories--not over 1000 words--from outsiders. Rates must necessarily be very low at first, but we will jack them up with time.

More improvements this issue; note the quarter page "trailer" illustrations and stapling and chapter capitals. All signs of our steady improvement; it won't be long now!

Try to interest your science-fiction-minded friends in us, and above all write in your criticisms; we can't change the magazine to suit you without knowing what you want.

--THE EDITORS



There was a... file this... day...

THREAT FROM COPERNICUS

Adapted from the annals of the
space patrol by
JIM BLISH



The sky was brilliant with huge stars, glowing brightly and steadily in the dome of the heavens. There only did color touch the scene--grayish-white horizon meeting black lusterless canopy in which the blue and red and silver stars gleamed. Against the darkness the bleak, ragged ramparts of the great crater loomed dimly in the half-light, like some sprawling, loathsome creature of uncomplaining stone.

A faint glow suffused the horizon, an aura of dying sunlight, but of the green and brown brilliance of the Earth there was no sign, nor had the hulking crater ever known such light. It was night on the Other Side.

A swift meteor flashed abruptly downward, landing inside the Cyclopiian walls with a silent thunder that flung clouds of smoke into the greedy vacuum all about. Perhaps the crumbling towers winced a bit as the impact conjured up long-dead memories of the mass that had raised them into the skies, in the days of Creation...

But this was no meteor! The silver cylinder which lay silently and still on the split rock floor was no all-metal meteorite... Such creations of Nature are not equipped with portholes, nor do they possess gleaming turrets with slender gun jets projecting watchfully from them...

Abruptly the enigmatic shape from space became animated with a malignant life. Great, dazzling spears of opaque, iridescent light flashed suddenly from the now-whirling, smoothly-faired turrets, to smash with the force of an earthquake upon the topmost peaks of the circular mountain range--

The titanic ramparts seemed to hurl themselves inward, crashing to the ground with irresistible force.

Whirling rock dust fountained high into the vacuum, and and through the swirling, expanding clouds mighty thunders raged and tore, shaking the airless world with its first sound since the Beginning.

The pumice clouds dispersed like phantoms, leaving the silvery meteorite in the mist of chaos. Two tiny, insignificant forms were visible now, climbing about among blocks of masonry such as might have composed a planet, and the starlight glistened metallically from them like the surface of their ship. They stayed only a moment, then vanished again.

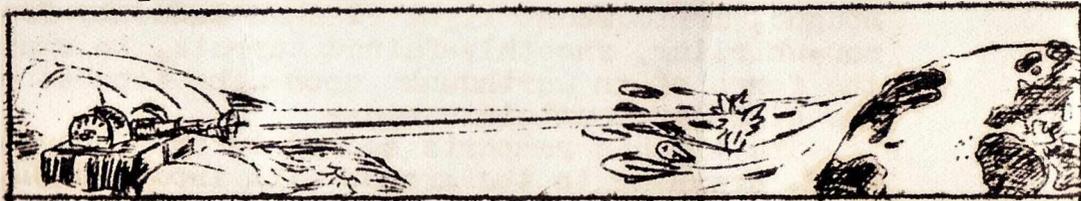
Suddenly there was machinery everywhere, emerging in a steady stream from the armored cylinder and towering high above the ruins. Beams began to flash and rip, and some of those monstrous stone chunks disappeared with a flash and a disturbance that shook the ether like a thunderclap.

Then the things of metal were gone again, and for an instant the ship lay quiescent, as if crouching to spring--

Red flashes licked and swirled around the tapering, turreted torpedo, and it shot upward in a long zoom from the wrecked crater, rockets reaching in rapid blasts from its tail. Tinges of yellow mixed with the red, and quickly the flames grew in brilliancy to an eye-searing white. The ship vanished in a flaring arc over the horizon...

And still the age-old, mysterious rest of the Other Side was disturbed by the glint of man-made metal... a smaller, top-like skimmer low over the gray stone of the surface, just clearing the tops of the towering rocks, toward the horizon over which the white flame of the turreted cylinder was fading...

"So far, so good," the Planeteer announced, clicking his fingers over the button-studded control wheel. The



high whine of the generators dropped a note.

"So far, but no farther," the Asteroid predicted gloomily. "I'm telling you, guy, this is too big. Even you can't pull this and get away with it. You can't hijack a planet."

"Can if I want to," the other corrected. "We've got power, mine pal, as you seem to have forgotten, and with those lever-beams no installation is too big as an engineering job. All we're limited by is our generators, and you know yourself that they can take any imaginable load and a lot of incredible ones too."

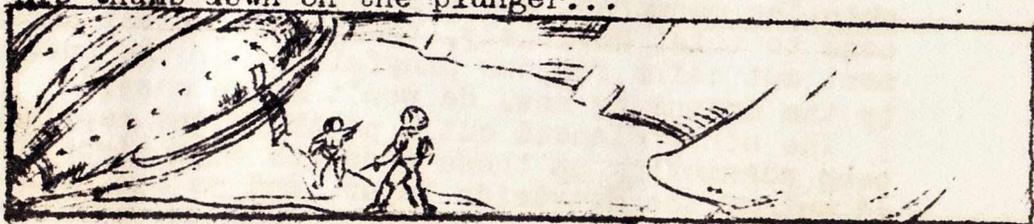
The Asteroid put his eye to the portable telechart and grunted. He seemed unconvinced.

"Besides," the Planeteer proffered, "the Avenger is our only worry and he hasn't the slightest idea where we are at present."

The Asteroid laughed sharply--a sort of sarcastic bark, absolutely humorless. "Do you believe that?" he asked disgustedly. "I don't. What do you suppose he'll do while radiograms are flying around thick and fast? Just sit back and read them?" He snorted and turned to watch the great mouth of the crater Copernicus open for them.

"The Earth can't get a message out from under the Kennelly-Heaviside layer, and we are about to attend to the relay station on the moon," the other replied clamorously. "We'll have to take our chances with ships getting out, that's all. Besides, as far as the Avenger is concerned, I think we're too hot to handle with this new stuff of ours, and I'm positive we can account for that ineffectual Earth fleet."

The Asteroid shrugged and swung to the gun controls. Looking into the short telescopic sight of the disintegrating rifle, he watched the rounded dome of the Earth station drift toward the cross hairs, then drove his thumb down on the plunger...



The fleet commander raged and thundered and tore at his almost-bald head. "Where was the self-styled Avenger while this was happening?" he roared, waving the abruptly terminated radio-gram from Copernicus at the man in the chair before him.

The other smiled crookedly. "Where was the fleet?" he countered softly, biting. "You make too much noise, Jack, and the public just eats it up. Just because you happen to be the only one who knows I'm a blaster doesn't give you leave to rip away at the poor Avenger, who after all can't rely upon pure hatred to locate this pirate."

"Well, at least he spotted that Ganymedian gunner who was helping out the Planeteer," replied the commander. "So help me, I still don't see how he did it." He looked at Blaster 19 quizzically.

The latter repeated his crooked smile. "I do," he said slowly. "Maybe I'll enlighten you some day. Going to send out the fleet?"

"Half of it. Probably lose the whole bunch, too. Never saw a guy that could pull so much new stuff as that Planeteer. Needless sacrifice of good ships, but it has to be done."

"Worthless ships, you mean," Blaster 19 corrected. "I always said that obsolete navy of Earth's should be junked, and the Planeteer proves it. Well, I'll be off toe--who knows but what the Avenger's on his way."

"To get crashed with the rest," the commander prognosticated sadly, but there was a twinkle in his eye.

"All done," the Planeteer turned to his companion and waved his hand. "Besides the big projector, I've others hidden all around the rim. We're going to have some fun with that fleet, I can see."

The Asteroid looked around him in mock sorrow. "Poor ship," he murmured. "She's served us well, and now she's come to this! Seriously, though, the fleet has probably sent out calls for our playful pal of the hood and cape by the dozens by now. He won't be so easy."

The other glanced out a porthole and replied, "I've been scrambling up those messages ever since they pulled out of the Heavenside layer. And we can handle him."

The fleet hovered some 100 miles out from Copernicus while the Planeteer's position was examined telescopically. The captain of the squadron was the first to look--

"Good Lord!"

The radio man turned from his useless transmitter and stared dully at the captain.

"What?" he asked. "The ether is as tangled as the orbit of Eros."

"And no wonder! Come here and look, man!"

The captain relinquished the eyepieces to him, and he bent and set his eyes to them.

Outlined sharply in the circular field was a section of the crater's rim, and gaping hungrily up at him was the mouth of an enormous projector, which was supported by a shimmering latticework between two staggeringly huge generators. The whole mechanism was planted solidly on the cliffs, which had been leveled off at the top as if by a disintegrator. Far down on the crater floor glittered the "Flaming Arrow", quiescent and yet queerly sentient.

He withdrew his eyes in astonishment.

"How--How on Luna did they erect that in this time?" he gasped.

"Don't know," the captain replied. "The commander's new assistant mentioned attractors and repellors--"

He rippled his fingers over the panel banks, blinking his signalling spotlight at the rest of the fleet. The mighty battleplanes dropped rapidly for Copernicus.

The Planeteer's hands lanced at his myriad buttons, and he shouted, "Now show your gunnery!" The Asteroid grasped a wheel and a rheostat--

Intense searchlights flared out suddenly from the crater's rim, catching the attacking planes squarely in a blinding glare. Shutters dropped over their port-holes, gutting off the brilliancy, and the Planeteer knew that they were flying by televisions alone--

"Now!" he cried. The Asteroid, locking the wheel in position, swung the rheostat two or three points and punched the handle in to the contact.

A searing bolt of white lightning spurted from the

great machine outside, to smash in the midst of the massed attackers. A heterodyne beam--harmless against the magnetic meteor screens--but--

The beam raged and flamed into a blast of cosmic rays about the screens, then faded swiftly into nothingness. No change in the dropping planes was visible, but the Planeteer knew that the televisions inside had shattered and burst. The fleet was blind...

The battleplanes scattered abruptly, and their steel shutters shot open, to snap shut again as the great searchlights followed them. Tremendous dinitron concussions blasted about, aimless shots, good only to distract the gunner's attention--

but the Asteroid refused to be distracted. Relentlessly the rheostat swung points in the opposite direct on and made contact...

The vibrational vortex which sprang this time from the giant gun was a fairy-green sword, pursuing the blind planes with a savor of one all death...

In the Earth central communications spot, the great tight beam of the Planeteer blanked out the incoming messages to deliver another one--a message of warning and demand. A shipload of uranium, or the great Moon-ray, took its toll!

but the message ended abruptly in a rattling squeal, and then the beam snapped off. Fifteen minutes later, the screens cleared into the face of a hooded figure. A gasp of relief shook the stat on.

"Just in time!" the venger cried. "Send the rest of the fleet out here--I can't handle him alone!!"

The Asteroid leaved excitedly to his companion.

"Got it!" he exclaimed. "Right through the Heaviside Layer! C'mon, I can't hold it long."

The Planeteer seized the microphone and began to talk, and the Asteroid jerked off the radio helmet and jammed it on his head. The short waves raced on with their fateful message--

The Asteroid turned and stared thoughtfully out a port, listening. The Planeteer was nearly done, when--

The other gaped in amazement as an eye-searing

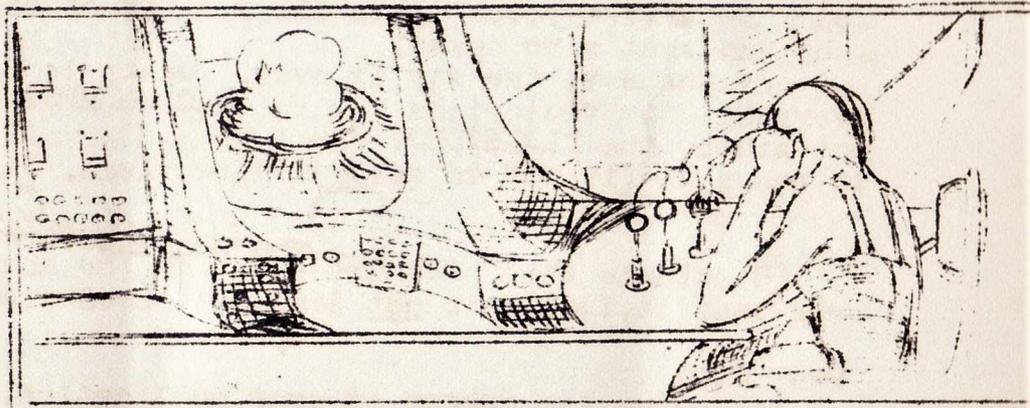
burst of red exploded in the midst of the great Ray-
gun's glittering lattice work, and the colossal rock-
enism blew up in a mushrooming cloud of dinitron
smoke, red flashes and flying metal. The next instant
the amazing scene was blotted out by a green wave as
a disintegrator furrowed the rock just outside.

The Asteroid grabbed the microphone from his
friend's hand and ripped it from its socket. "The Avenger
er has arrived!" he shouted, gesturing excitedly to the
port. "I told you you couldn't pull this! The rest of
fleet will be here any minute, too, I'll bet!"

The Planeteer jumped to the controls. Swiftly he
hurled the "Flying Arrow" from the center and shot it
into space. "I've just gotten a new idea anyhow," he
muttered to himself. "It doesn't make any difference."

But the Asteroid knew he was thinking mournfully of
that monstrous projector, and he smiled to himself as
he took his station at the gun controls.

END



Don't Miss

TRAIL OF THE COAST

next month's thrilling Planeteer Tale
(See announcement on back page)

THE PLANETEER'S TELEVISOR

Part Two. Heavy Artillery

No. 1. The Moon-Ray

Once called the City-Destroyer but was confused with a specially prepared bomb by the same name. Used mostly from moons of enemy planet since it requires massive equipment which prohibits its being carried in a ship. Is directed upon large building in center of city, and heterolynes the matter-waves into Milliken or cosmic rays. Can also be adjusted to simply nullify the matter-waves completely but is far less effective as heavy artillery although it makes an excellent ship weapon in that case.

Next month--THE CITY-DESTROYER PROJECTOR.

T H E R E A D E R S P A N K S

Dear MR. Blish,

Got the latest PLANETEER, and it's a pip! Veritably. Just congratulate you on doing a really nice job. Your new artist lives up to all you say of him. He's good and that's no hokum.

By the way, the war is over, Tucker is dead, and everything is victorious for the LAOPUMUMESTEPUSA. Why not staple the PLANETEER? for that's its main trouble, it wants to fly off in several directions. Staple!

Donald A. Dollheim

(We staple with pleasure--but for the anxious reader's benefit, Tucker is not dead, not even sick.-Ed.)

Dear Sir;

Regarding the makeup of your publication, I must truthfully say that its a good deal better for a hektograph job than many others of bigger backing now on the market.

Your story was excellent. It had a good adventure theme and with the science you state you are adding, it will be very good.

Geo. S. Clark

(Thank you. We hope to make as good a job of mimeographing as we did of hektographing.-Editor.)

FLASH! FLASH! FLASH!

THE FIRST PRIZE CONTEST RULES!

1! anybody who has read the PLANETEER is eligible to enter!

2! Contestants must answer the following question in not less than 250 words;

WHO IS THE "AVENGER"?

3! Pick your choice from the following list and give your reasons why you think that person is the Avenger.

The Fleet Commander
The Asteroid
Buck Rogers
Scout-Ship Pilot
The Planeteer
Flash Gordon
Tuvqz-jk
Greg Halnson
The Ceres-Phobos Ship Commander
The Ganymedian Gunner
"Blaster 19"

SPECIAL NOTE; IT'S NOT AS EASY AS IT LOOKS!

4! To think we know who the Avenger is but if an essay on somebody else is better than the ones on the person we're thinking of, we'll change our mind!

5! All entries must be in by February 30, 1936.

6! Prizes are subscriptions.

GOOD LUCK!

NEXT MONTH--

The great Earth freighters sail only to Saturn, Jupiter, and Venus now, for Mars is on the other side of the sun from the third planet. Mars still carries on commerce with the far outer planets, but no Earth ships are in her great wharves, for the Earth is far away...

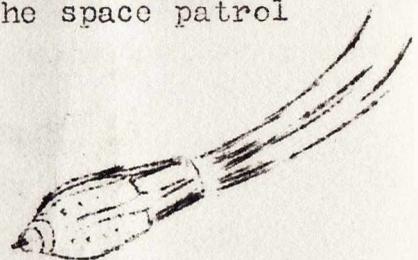
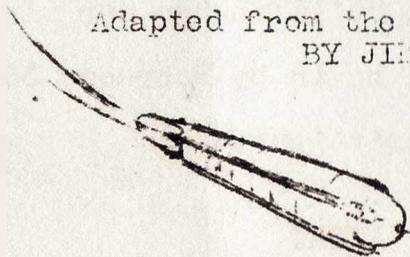
Yet the Planeteer, who only three days ago was fighting for his life among the towering mountains of the moon, swoops like a vulture from space upon Mars' richest freighter, which is almost unguarded--for Mars had thought that she was inaccessible to the Planeteer.

How has the Planeteer surmounted the vast obstacle which has confronted rocketeers since the first shell which ever transversed space was fired? How can the avenger, and the fleet itself, reach Mars from Earth in time to curtail his freebooting activities?

Don't fail to read

Trail of the Comet--

A Thrilling PLANETEER Tale
Adapted from the annals of the space patrol
BY JIM BLISH



A BRAND- NEW DEPARTMENT!
SIGNS, QUESTIONS, AND ANSWERS

1. Q. What is a sign?
A. A 'sign' is what people start doing when they have no more PLANETEERS to read.
2. Q. What is a good sign?
A. When AMAZING prints "When The Top Wobbled"-
When WONDER drops to 15¢-
When ASTOUNDING trims its edges-
When the SCIENCE FICTION CRITIC is printed, at
no change in price!
3. Q. What is the SCIENCE FICTION CRITIC, and what
does it do?
A. The SCIENCE FICTION CRITIC is science-fiction's
fastest growing fan magazine--
It is ten pages of the best material you can
find in any sci. fan magazine-
It is the only magazine giving detailed reviews
of all stories appearing in sci. magazines-
It contains news of all fan publications-
It contains book and cinema reviews-
It contains interviews with authors and fans-
(J. Harvey Haggart, this issue)-
IT IS THE BIGGEST AND BEST NICKEL'S WORTH IN
ALL OF SCIENCE-FICTION'S MANY FIELDS!
4. Q. So what?
A. So wrap up a nickle, send it to the address be-
low, AND YOU'LL NEVER REGRET IT! (And don't for-
get to mention the PLANETEER).

SCIENCE FICTION CRITIC, 214 East Seventh Street, Reno,
Nevada