

The

No. 14

Satellite

VOL 3

No. 2

" STAR - DUST "

Beloved, rise! The questing sun has gone,
And stairways open to my seeking eyes
Where, draped in three white mists, the moon has shone,
And roam to other lands and skies.

Now that the stars shine softly o'er thy head,
Down where the purple star-pools glisten deep,
Night spreads her star-wings after day has fled
And kissed the daughter of the Sun to sleep.

We shall walk silently where the star-born play,
And phantoms whisper, and the joyous Night
Laughs, and the phantoms creep away
Filled with the first sweet shadows of delight!

JAMES. P. RATHBONE.

JANUARY 1940

D. R. SMITH

PAGE 6

H. T. KAY

" 3

FANTACRITIC

" 5

" MOONSHINE "

" 2, 7, 8

THE SATURDAY

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EDITOR: John F. Burke.

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MOONSHINE.

FROM D. WEBSTER (Aberdeen): Oh fabjous day! Calooch callay! Sally is back in the fold. Salaams /This was received in green ink on a postcard -with a 1½d stamp! We shall never laugh at any stories about Aberdeen in future/

FROM ERIC S. NEEDHAM (Manchester)
NO TWO OBJECTS CAN EXIST IN THE SAME SPACE AT THE SAME TIME. Therefore any time machine sent into the past could never return, since on its home journey it would meet itself at midtime between the start and the finish, & since the time machine would be 2 completely different time machines, one coming and one going, this means that TWO bodies would occupy the same space at the same instant, and would explode with terrific force owing to the intolerable strain set up in space time by two bodies being so placed...Even this outburst of mine does not take into account the Earth's spatial motion. The time machine would materialise in a sector of the Earth's orbit corresponding to its position two months in the future, and unless Toynbee's machine could retrace space tracks as well as time....

FROM WILLIAM F. TEMPLE (London):
The cover was a masterly piece of work. I gather that the Tarzan fellow, symbolic of man, has mastered Time and dispossessed him of his hour-glass. What has he done with the old chap - shoved him into a concentration camp, or on to the old age pension? I also gather that the city is London - from the gasometers in the fog in the background, the milkcart in the foreground, and the London Coliseum on the right (between the factory chimney and the building with the anti-aircraft gun on the roof). /It's a lie - our tame genius knows darned well that he ~~aren't~~ ^{aren't} perpetrate militarist designs on our cover - the A-A gun is a telescope!/ AM baffled, however, by the queer perambulating creature like a giant cockroach coming along the street towards the milkman, who looks (on my copy anyway) justifiably surprised. /This month's cover is, of course, a lift from Sam Youd's "Fantast" - we don't bother to apologise/. Ignore Sid Bounds, and don't concentrate on news. Forster's letter about the mutilation of Weinbaum's stories was very interesting. American editors seem quite conscienceless about these things. So do English ones sometimes. I remember once Wally Gillings cut out a really brilliant crack from my.....Oh, sorry, that's advertising. /As some of you will already know, Bill Temple's AMAZING story, "The Four-Sided Triangle" has proved to be the most popular story in its particular issue, and thus wins the 50 dollar bonus. Nice work!/

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7.

Criticism is a useful thing; but all comments on stories and pictures are not criticism. Far from it. Intelligent constructive criticism is essential to the development of literature; but the less 'critics' of the useless, unintelligent, destructive school there are, the better the real critics can work.

Science-Fiction fans are, in general, ruthless. If they like a story they say so, if they dislike it they say so. But what they do not say is why. Here is a letter that is, in some ways, typical; if anything, it is more intelligent and useful than most, it is from TWS August:

"DAWN OF FLAME cuts a deeper niche in Science-Fiction's Hall of Fame for Stanley G. Weinbaum. My only regret is that it wasn't twice as long. Keller's 'No More Friction' and Kline's 'Stolen Centuries' were excellent. Smith and Taine were fair - it is quite obvious that both of them needed more room to get into their stride. Smith just got the guns boomin when the story ended".

Now, what useful information can be gleaned from that? That Taine and Smith had better confine themselves to long stories. Well we knew that, they are not short story writers. Still, it is something. Usually a 'criticism' consists of a string of titles, each followed by one outworn adjective.

That is not criticism.

Blind approbation or condemnation is not criticism. For a criticism to be valuable it must state, in detail, what is wrong with a story and how it can be improved. Without this all criticism is destructive and worthless.

Perhaps the worst form of this unthinking criticism is condemnation. A story is described as 'lousy' for no apparent reason. More condemnation is expressed on the subject of art than the stories (I am considering percentages) but there is more intelligence displayed, and constructive criticism is often offered. Indeed, it might not be an exaggeration to say that more careful thought is expended on the art than on the stories. A person who will discuss a cover for half a printed column, dismisses a story with one word. I should like to see at least as much detailed criticism of the stories as of the illustrations - surely they deserve more?

We have heard of Weinbaum worship, and of Smith Worship (E.E., not D.R.) /We've heard of the latter, too - ED/ There is, however another creed. For every two good religions there is, on the average, one bad one. This third worship in Fantasy is a Nazi worship. The main essential of Nazi-ism is that a Nazi must have something which he can attack on any and every occasion, and on any and no pretext. If the attacked is, in reality, better than the attacker, then, provided the attacked is also defenceless, the Nazi is better pleased than he would be if he had a legitimate grievance. The Nazi must make himself feel a better man than someone, or something, that is, in reality, superior to him.

This is the king-pin of Nazi-ism, the militarism of Germany is just an expression of it. It is, essentially, a pandering to an inferiority complex.

This Nazified religion is, of course, expressed by the anti-Fearn pogrom. It is to be noted that all these anti-Fearn chants are of the unintelligent kind. Those which merely say:

"'Mathematica' by Fearn.....Lousy"

or

"Fearn was lousy. He always is, and always will be".

or

"Fearn is the worst author alive, he isn't even a decent hack".

or combinations thereof.

Now, independent of whether these criticisms are true or not, they are valueless because they merely express a personal opinion, with absolutely no attempt at justification.

It is also interesting to note that these Nazis - who are, like all Nazis, weak-minded creatures with a caterpillar-like ability to unintelligently follow an imbecilic leader- are very few in numbers. Looking through recent magazines for evidence for this article I found a pedestrian, obtuse and utterly ridiculous attempt at sarcasm by McIlwain, which blunderingly dragged Fearn in as the worst author in the world. One letter, mind you, and a particularly unintelligent one at that, condemning Fearn, while there were very many praising him, one or two even going so far as to list his story as the best in the issue. These were stories which I had expected to see condemned, for they were far from good. Obviously the only conclusion that we can draw from this is that the Youd-Nazis are very few in number, perhaps less than fifty, while the members of the other two religions are, we know, numbered in thousands. It is not, then, their numbers that make them noticeable (nothing could make them important) but their noise. Without invoking the old saw about empty vessels, I will say that in their ability to repeat witlessly the same meaningless formula, they exceed Lord Harry Bohun.

None but a fool would say that Fearn had not written any bad stuff, conversely, none but a fool, e.g., a Nazi, would say that he had not written any good. Off hand I can mention 'Mathematica', 'Mathematica Plus', 'Liners of Time', 'Zagribud', 'Summons from Mars', and 'Subconscious'. Four outstandingly different yarns and two well above the average. 'Summons from Mars' stood out from a bad magazine like Southend seen at night from the Kent coast.

No author with these successes can be very bad, and no author with Fearn's output can be consistently above average. The fact that his stories average out at the high level they do is a great credit to him, few other men can claim such an achievement.

Certainly none of the Youd-Nazis can claim an intelligence equal to Fearn's, and I have yet to see one of them produce an intelligent criticism of his work, either in general or particular. I will not appeal to the Youd-Nazis to stop their pogrom, as it requires will-power to change one's mode of life, and will-power presup-

oses intelligence. Such an appeal would, therefore, be useless.

I do appeal to the others, however, to be detailed in your criticisms, and to give reasons for your conclusions. In this way only can your criticisms become of value.

XX

B O O K S H E L F

by 'FANTACRITIC'

In case there may be some who haven't heard of last month's S.F. book; "The Death Guard" by Philip George Chadwick (Hutchinson 8/6d.), here is a short review of it. At first sight, the title gives the impression of "normal thriller", but perusal of the contents soon dispels this. It is, of necessity, a war story, but what a war. An inventor, to make up for losses of life caused by European wars, creates synthetic men, robot monsters, made of living matter, obscene lumps of greasy muscle, impervious to pain and trained only to kill. These "Beast Battalions" are catapulted across the Channel to the Continent on their errand of destruction. The inventor's grandson, (the narrator) lives to see the day when all mankind revolts against these horrors, when a sane world is given a chance to emerge. Here is fantasy, with many curious excitements and a wealth of imaginative detail. Nobody will forget the scenes of the "next war", with Electric Gas and the unwanted coming of Neoblastic life. This book will be a great addition to an ever-growing library of fantasy-fiction.

Of a totally different theme is "Miss Lucifer" by Ronald Fraser, (Cape 7/6d.) and concerns reincarnation, something out of the way in fantasy. Miss Lucifer is a modern witch, and also a witch from the bad old days; she is able to travel backwards in time and see herself in previous incarnations. By resting her head against a sarcophagus, she is able to transport herself in an episode of the past, in Ancient Greece or Egypt. To the very critical, the story may seem unsatisfactory, but to those who think with the author, the book will seem inspired.

In "Dark Moon" by Francis Vivian (Herbert Jenkins 7/6d.) Mackay, a brilliant young scientist, declares that he has harnessed atomic energy for the benefit of mankind. In seeking legal advice, he alleges that attempts have been made to rob him of his secret, that a "Death Master" has tried to tap his mind by occult means. A Scotland Yard detective, sent to investigate the case, comes face to face with the wiles of black magic, testing his courage almost to breaking point.

For those who like a real "Christmassy" book of ghost stories, there is one by a past master of the short story, H. Russell Wakefield. In his "The Clock Strikes Twelve" (Herbert Jenkins 7/6d.) the author makes the highly improbably seem reasonably credible, so here's your chance, you weird fiction fans!

XX

OUR DUMB FRIENDS' LEAGUE: The girl who thought that "Washington Nocturne" was a sequel to the "Lullaby of Broadway".

HOW TO ENJOY "PULP MAGAZINE" SCIENCE FICTION

BY D.R. SMITH

The first mistake which may be made by the careless reader is to skim, or even to skip entirely, the introductory remarks of the editor. In recent times this is becoming increasingly easy to do, for the editor no longer concentrates them all at the beginning of the story, but spreads them artfully about in separate little departments or even in the previous issue. Wherever they are they **should be read carefully**, for the editor naturally knows far more about what constitutes a good story than you do, and if you read his wisely balanced comments you will realise the great worth of the story before you look at it. Some editors are such masters of style that it is hardly necessary to read the story at all, in fact a real connoisseur often will not do so.

Certain magazines have excellent features in which the authors describe how and why they wrote the story. Always pay great attention to these, for they give you great insight into how clever the author really is. And such great fellows these authors are too! You will feel really proud to know such men through the medium of their writings. When I read these little excerpts I am reminded of the well-known Prologue to I Pagliacci, and I sigh to think of the many who admire the one way of expressing the sentiment and who would scoff at the other, perhaps nobler, means.

Having thus absorbed all the editor has to say about the story and all the author has to say about himself, and his work, you are in the right condition to tackle the serious business of reading the story itself. Begin by studying the illustration, remembering that all pictorial works should be viewed from a distance to get the best effect. Do not be afraid to allow sufficient distance; far, far better too much than too little. It is usually best to ignore any so-called caption to the picture, for no great artist is going to allow himself to be tied down by a few words.

Now fetch back the magazine and commence to read. Here there are certain rules to be observed. Science-fiction being such a new branch of literature the English language, and even the American, has not yet been developed sufficiently for the author to convey all his marvellous ideas. If you had not read his and the editor's comments you might even miss the ideas altogether, but being prepared you will know when to stop and think deeply over the meaning of the sentences you have been rereading, and will be able to picture in your own mind the wonders the author is talking of so calmly. But use your imagination. Don't fetter yourself and the author with the commonplace facts of reality. Above all, if you see a long, awe-inspiring word do not look up its meaning in a stodgy dictionary. This will destroy the atmosphere the author was trying to work up by the use of that word, and is not playing the game.

A good author will always introduce human interest into a story. It being a well-known fact to all editors and authors of rank that the only things humans are interested in is that phase of human activities covered by the simple word "sex", the usual way is to introduce a love affair, or, in the case of a very skilled man, a triangle drama. The necessity for this is so great that no objection is raised if this love affair holds up the action of the story, which cannot be permitted of any other consideration. If the new and inexperienced reader fails at first to see the point of the introduction into the story of an entirely superfluous woman he will be well-advised not to mention this failing in his mental vision, for it will lay him open to charges of mental immaturity, misogynism, and illiteracy. I hope that no-one who has read and put into practice the rules outlined in this article will need the warning.

If, after taking all these precautions, you still don't like the story, do not write a hasty letter to the editor condemning it. It is the author's profession to write stories, the editor's to publish them. If two such experts, as these are agreed that the story is a good one it is the most arrant presumption for a mere reader to disagree with them. To object to any story they think is good enough to publish is but to exhibit your appalling ignorance. If you do not like any story in a magazine, the trouble is an internal, subjective one, and you should take such steps as are necessary to eradicate the poison from your system.

XX
MOONSHINE (Continued from Page 2)

FROM ERIC C. HOPKINS (London): A few comments upon November Sally.... W.P. Cockcroft endorses Harry Turner's condemnation of "religion", and if by this somewhat ill-defined word he means the worshipping in churches of an apparently most indifferent deity, and its accompanying primitive beliefs in Original Sin, Flaming Hell, etc., I must confess that his attitude seems well-founded in clear-thinking and parallels both civilisation and savagery - BUT, if he is decrying the Bible, I must register an indignant protest. To whatever depths the self-appointed servants of the God may have dragged the fine thought of the Bible with their cruel persecutions, petty squabbles, and frittering of faithful people's money upon useless edifices, the very great fact remains that even if the Bible is a legend unfounded in fact, and I'm open to conviction either way /We recommend "The Age of Reason", available at 1/- in the Thinker's Library - by Thomas Paine/ it contains some of the grandest poetry written, and is unequalled in its magnificence and scope of thought, and depth of vision

FROM THE "LIVERPOOL DAILY POST" - 'Mr. Harry Stephen Keeler is a most prolific author with a slick style and an ingenious invention that makes his books worth reading. His latest, "The Magic Ear Drums" (Ward Lock) is a mixture of melodrama and thrills and is about a man who, by using artificial ear drums, can hear sounds inaudible to his fellows.

FROM C.S. YOUNG (The Bard of Eastleigh): The cover was nice. Such symbolism does not seem altogether suited to wax and stylus, but Alfie has made the best of a difficult job. Eric's article was interesting, and I think I'll have a shot at supplying you with my gems of scientific fiction. I, however, will bravely go right back as far as my collection allows. Thusly:- ASTOUNDING: I can't honestly describe any of the Clayton opus as "gems", despite a certain fondness for "Out Around Rigel" and "The Finding of Naldgren". The policy wasn't suited to genius. With Street & Smith, however, it is different. It may be sloppy sentimentality, but I have a great liking for Wandrei's "Colossus". Along with this, there is "Rebirth" and later in the year, "The Bright Illusion" and "Time Haven", not, of course, forgetting "Twilight". Early '35 brought nothing terribly good - the Weinbaum works were pleasant and all that except Stuart's "The Machine" and "The Escape". The other 'epic' of '35 was "1287". '36 had only "At the Mountains of Madness" and "Shadow Out of Time", while '37 brought only "Forgetfulness". There have been no gems since. AMAZING: Very little here. Flagg's "Cities of Ardathia" and Keller's "No More Tomorrows" and "Life Everlasting" are all I can think of. AMAZING QUARTERLY: "Birth of a New Republic", "White Lily" and "The Sunk-en World". WONDER: "Time Stream" and "The Final War", possibly with "Brood of Helios". "Green Man" and those two very ill-acclaimed Connell stories "Reign of the Reptiles" and "Dream's End". Also "Pygmalion's Spectacles". WONDER QUARTERLY: Only one - but what a one! - Burgel's "Cosmic Cloud". WEIRD: I can recall only "Celephais", "Quest of Iranon", "Globe of Memories" and "Roads", although there must be more. If you want that list condensed.....THE TIME STREAM.

ADDENDUM - We unwittingly omitted from our fanmag column last time a magazine that needs as much help as possible at the moment - the new "Macabre", designed for weird fiction fans. Send 2d. to James P. Rathbone, c/o Parkhill, 24 Heriot Place, Edinburgh, for your copy at once!

MAGAZINES FOR SALE: All in good condition.

Wonder Stories - April, Dec. 1932, June, July 1932, Jan, Feb. 1933 @ 1s. each.

Jan, Feb, May, June, July 1934 @ 8d. each post free
Dec 1933, Sept, Oct, 1935 (trimmed edges) @ 6d. each

Astounding - Feb, April, May, July, Aug, 1936 @ 1/2d. each.
June, September, 1935 @ 1/6d. each.

Write now to 57 Beauchair Drive, Liverpool 15 - the "Satellite" offices.

WEIRD TALES, DECEMBER - Features a story "Nymph of Darkness" by C.L. Moore and Forrest J. Ackermann, reprinted from the famous old fanmag, "Fantasy Magazine". The issue is well illustrated, and the standard of the stories is fairly high. Frank Belknap Long's "Escape from Tomorrow" is excellent, and Seabury Quinn makes pleasant reading...JFB