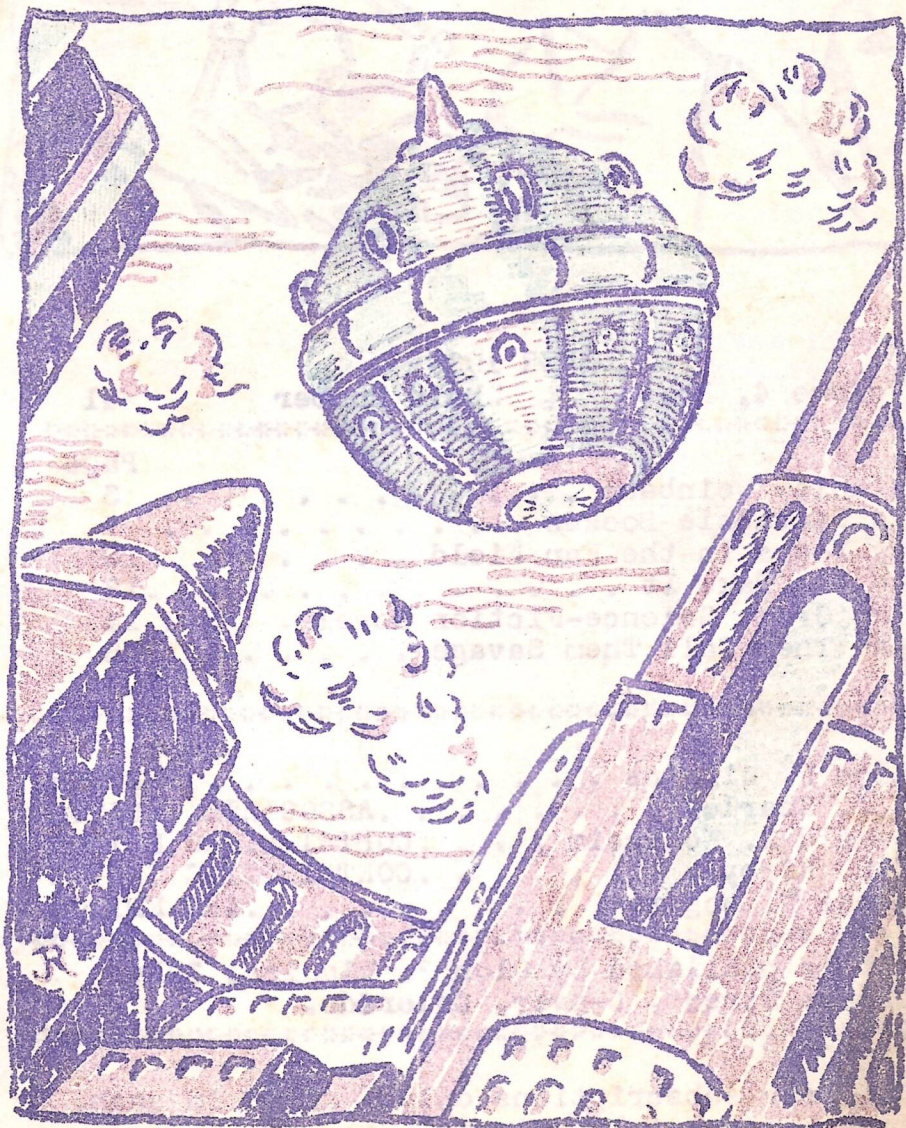


# The SCIENCE & FICTION FAN



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"STANLEY WEINBAUM: - AN APPRAISAL"

BY

AUTOLYCUS

What would have been the nature of Stanley Weinbaum's maturity? Did his untimely death cut short a career of genius, a career that would have left an enduring mark on the world of literature, or had he already reached his summit? Would he have gone on to higher and higher peaks, or would he have descended into the valley of mediocrity, having once, from a mountain top, seen in the distance the land of everlasting fame.

I never knew Weinbaum and have never talked with anyone who knew him, hence I must rely on the evidence -- surely the best evidence after all -- of the writings he left behind. Actually the written evidence indicates the trend of Weinbaum's thought, the nature of his progress, the goal he set. At once I must mention that I have not read all of his romantic novels and adventure stories, and the comments that follow are based entirely upon his output of science-fiction and what may be called "prophecy" or "philosophy".

We must admit that some of the early Weinbaum efforts were youthful and puerile, amusing perhaps to the 14 year old but hardly of interest to adults. These had best remain unmentioned and unremembered, relegated to the private limbo possessed by every creative being. I might, at the same time, barely mention and dismiss a later mistake, probably written under pressure, perhaps only a pot-boiler, but certainly far from a masterpiece - I refer, of course to "The Red Fox". It could well have been omitted from the memorial volume as, in my opinion it detracts from rather than adds to the author's

undoubted lustre.

Weinbaum's position in literature will rest upon (a) a few stories in the science-fiction or fantasy vein (b) "Dawn of Flame", and (c) "The New Adam". In the first category are several original, highly diverting yarns, such as "The Mad Moon", "A Martian Odyssey", "The Lotus Eaters", "The Worlds of If", "The Adaptive Ultimate" and others. Several traits characterize these stories. They are really "science-fiction", i.e. they combine a modicum of science with a heavy dash of improbability and fantasy. The plots are new - not heavy handed and laborious attempts at being different, but just "new" because the author, apparently without effort, thought of them first. The characters are real -- not puppets, wooden at that, with no Edgar Bergen to animate them, but genuine, living people. These three traits are essential to good "science-fiction", and Weinbaum had them. But over and above, he also was striving to put thought, intelligence, philosophy into the stories so that they became more than mere adventure tales. It is obvious that Weinbaum had developed a mode of thought all his own, a mode not entirely palatable but one which was essentially his and which, in sugar coated form, he was passing on to his readers. I refer to his growing belief in instability, impermanence and general chance in the universe, a belief that rejected "Ultimate Causes" or any supernatural mechanism.

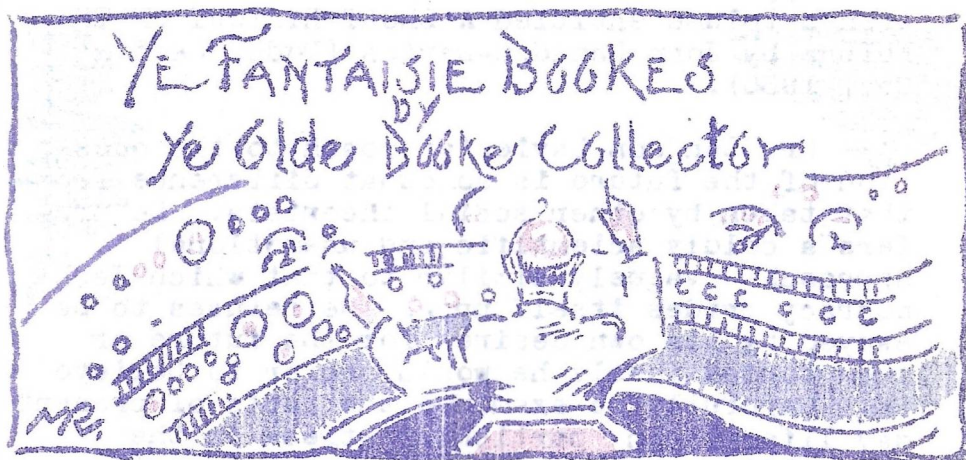
"Dawn of Flame" to my mind was an aberration I hastent to add (before infuriated readers start heaving brickbats) that it is an engrossing tale, well written, and in some literary respects superior to what Weinbaum had previously written. It had social significance - also of a kind unpalatable and enraging to many - and a unique reversal of roles, but it definitely broke with

the output of the earlier Weinbaum. He began to display, if only surreptitiously, a leaning toward what might be called the "superiority complex", the "will to power". There is a feeling of "elevation" in his character, not just a physical or brute strength, but an intellectual "Elevation" that tends to place one individual not only above the crowd, but even places him (or her) in a separate category. Black Margot is perhaps no more genuinely human than is the Wonderful Boy in Stapledon's "First and Last Men". She sprang from the human race but she is a different nature.

Weinbaum's place as a philosopher will be determined by general acceptance or rejection of "The New Adam". This is more than science-fiction, more than fantasy. Here he is interested little, if at all, in action, and almost totally in thought. And here-belatedly - he uncovers a deep concern in the essential relations between man and woman. Edmond and Vanny, Edmond and Sarah. Which relation, physical or intellectual, has a permanent value, which brings happiness, which determines the development and growth of a being?

These, and all other questions that are posed in the book, remain unanswered. Weinbaum obsessed with negation and futility, with a belief that "the sum total of all knowledge is zero", with a certainty that beauty and value are entirely subjective, disposes of the superman in a logical, thoroughly Nietzschean fashion. And, to make the gloom more Stygian, there is the conviction that futility would be bearable if it were not for the realization that Time returns upon itself, that it is all to do over again.





We are living in times of great stress and change when it is proper to say that the future is in the making. Perhaps if we want to look at it in that way we might even say that a future era was overlapping with a past and as a result of this conflict in time-periods, we now have war, growing chaos in most of the world, and general crisis in the lives of man. Be that as it may, no library of science-fiction could be complete without at least some small collection of non-fiction. What might be termed science-fiction non-fiction to use a paradoxical term. Such works as are science fictional in scope and nature in that they cover what are usually considered fantasy topics but nevertheless are not fictional romances themselves. One type of this would be such a volume as *TOURING UTOPIA* by Frances T. Russell or Lewis Mumford's early volume on Utopian writings-- which are literary analyses of Utopian romancing. But less obvious than this are volumes which deal individually with the topics of science-fiction, books which might be said to correspond with the sort of articles Mr. Campbell is fond of presenting in *ASTOUNDING* -- books dealing with

interplanetary flight, speculation on the cosmos, the future of man, his inventions and society, etc. I have in mind for consideration a volume entitled A SHORT HISTORY OF THE FUTURE by John Langdon-Davies (Dodd, Mead & Co., 1936).

Mr. Langdon-Davies' approach to the question of the future is somewhat different from that taken by other social theorists. He prefers a coldly scientific and unemotional approach - vaguely similar to that which Technocracy prides itself upon. He refuses to be swayed by his own desires for the future or the Utopian ideals he would prefer to believe in. Carefully he examines the facts of present day life, laying particular stress on the scientific development of the various nations, on their actual political histories, and on their economic status. Basing his observations upon these -- and he speaks not as an arm-chair theoretician but as a practising scientist (he is author of works on the atom and on radio) who has also travelled extensively both as a tourist and as a reporter, he then ventures upon a series of 24 prophecies of the future. These prophetic remarks are what he constitutes his short history of the future.

He carefully analyses the concepts of democracy, determinism, and individualism, surveys the mechanistic concepts of society as represented in the ant world and applies his observations to human society. He is not entirely right in his observations which can be proven by his belief that the next war would be fought by Britain, France, Spain (Republican) and Russia against the Fascist axis. How much this is true and how much false we have only to see by observation of our daily papers.



One observation however is fairly accurate -- he said there would be no war in Western Europe until 1940 (written in 1935). This was because no nation dared war because of fear of its own people's opposition but that the political game and the economic crisis made outbreak inevitable. He also predicts that victor and vanquished governments in this war will be destroyed if either had a hand in its origin.

After the war he predicts a coldly scientific order and the institution of an economy of abundance. Democracy, he says will be dead by 1950 and a "super-biologic" rule instituted. Eventually individualism will return as we become acclimated to the new social order. His other observations on the state of mankind in this period of scientific reorganization cover the fields of art, family, religion, marriage, etc. It is noticeable throughout that nowhere does he state that he himself desires such a rule or advocates it. He predicts it, often with regret, only because as he sees it the cold facts of observation make any other conclusions implausible. One of his observations is that several years after the outbreak of the European war, America will suffer economic breakdown and enter upon a period of ruthless fascism. This in turn will break-down as the need for scientific management will grow.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE FUTURE is a grim book but an exceedingly interesting one. It should be made required reading for such writers as Robert Heinlein and other sf authors who venture into this field of spcial speculation. A few cold facts may make their romancing seem rather weak.

MY YEARS IN THE FAN FIELD OR WHY PEOPLE POINT AT ME

OR

HOW IT FEELS TO BE SEVENTEEN

OR

PART 1

By Jack Gillespie

It all began sometime in 1937, when I joined the Science-Fiction League. Joining the League, as you may know, means getting one's name and address in the S.F.L. column and that might mean, at least it might in 1937, getting sent to you a throwaway copy of Stickney's AMATEUR CORRESPONDENT. The Amateur Correspondent thrilled me beyond words, just beyond words, and as a result I subscribed to every fan mag I could find advertisements for.

One of these magazines happened to be a small printed thing put out by Dick Wilson, and that precipitated a correspondence. I remember distinctly my mother saying to me in soothing tones after I had written my first letter to Wilson, "But Jack, do you think he, the editor of a magazine, will reply?"

Well, he, the editor of a magazine did reply and that's why I am where I am today, hah! A frenzied correspondence with Wilson led to a visit and an invitation to visit the Sunday meeting of the New York Fantasy Association. This was sometime in October.

The N.Y.F.A. came as an outgrowth of the Phantasy Legion Guild which came as an outgrowth of the Phantasy Legion, but don't quote me. Well, anyhow I went to Burford's house that Sunday climbed a few flights of stairs and hesitated for about ten minutes outside the door, principally because the door had no ball to it, but a little screw which made a noise when one turned it. As

I stood pondering the situation somebody rushed up the stair, flustered past me, looking at me coldly as he fluttered and went into the apartment. This I later learned was Thompson. Eventually, I got into the place, and met the various inmates. Taurasi and Dockweiler impressed me as being the most amiable and human of the group. I didn't catch Wollheim's name at first, I thought it was something like Landoza. Wollheim I didn't like at all. The only thing I recall of the meeting was a discussion of the coming convention in Philly.

"How about going by car?"

"Has anybody got a license?"

"Kyle has a license."

"Hah! Would you drive in the same car with Kyle."

Kyle sounded okay.

The next meeting brought about Pohl who distinguished himself by drinking a concoction consisting of beer, one cigarette, mustard, sugar and a few things that happened to be kicking around on the delicatessen floor. Pohl was okay too.

On the train to Philadelphia, I met Moskowitz who talked to me like a father all the way in, on the subject of fan magazines. The Third Eastern Science-Fiction Convention's big event was the now well known resolution with a preface, written by Johnny Michel and read by Wollheim. The vote, I believe, was eleven to eight against it. I voted against it. Sykora was very impressive.

The winter that followed consisted mostly of hectographs, mimeos, stencils and dummies, which finally resulted in a forty page 4th issue of Cosmic Tales, a product of collaboration with Jim Taurasi and Thompson. (Science Fiction Fan sincerely regrets that due to an error on the part of the Associate Editor Part III was published ahead of Parts I and II).

By

Bob Tucker

Oh, yeah? A big, lusty, rousing OH YEAH? Perhaps you recall the quote. It appeared in about the second issue of STARTLING STORIES, presumably written by Mort Weisinger as an editorial notation in the 'Fan Magazine Review' column. That issue, as usual, STARTLING reviewed Fantasy News, and suggested they add a column of professional ratings, to better give an editor an idea of how fans liked his efforts, and not to spare the horses because "...we can take it." That's what prompted the "oh yeah's".

Judging from the readers letters that appear in STARTLING, STRANGE AND THRILLING WONDER, I don't quite believe the writer of that quote. Surely you have read the letters in one of those magazines lately? Have you noticed the columns and columns of beaming, praising, back-slapping, "bravos" that appear there, and the practically total absence of any letter giving them a good kick in the pants, which many of their stories deserve?

All three magazines run an amazing number of rotten stories, and by all the laws of chance, if nothing else, they should receive many a bag of brickbats, but by some miracle, everybody seems to praise the magazines! No one has a bad word for a single story they print! (At least, none show up in readers letters!)

Of course, I happen to know of a few kicking letters sent them. Ackerman sent one. But when it was printed even Ackerman didn't recognize it! He finally had to print the original

in whole in a fan mag to get his letter in its entirety before the public. Weisinger (presumably) snipped out everything he didn't care to print.

Now "PRISONER OF MARS" run in STARTLING a couple of issues back was no four bell story. In fact, some, including myself thought it stank most foully. But not a letter showed up saying so. And many were sent. I myself sent a very sarcastic postcard. Did it appear? It did not! But a sappy, oozing letter from some reader no one ever heard of before did, and only because the guy praised the story, I am left to think. (And don't think I am belly-aching just because editors won't print my letters!)

Palmer of AMAZING practices this too, to a certain degree, but he does allow a little bit of criticism to creep in. He gets plenty, that is certain, for about 75% of the fans think little of AMAZING. But he prints very, very few critical letters, preferring instead to run the "great story, old chap! Give us more!" sort of thing. Who the hell do they think they are fooling.

I could, also go into a rage over Palmers practice of cutting anything from a letter he doesn't think worthwhile to print, without the writers permission, but gadzook! the futility of it all! They will go on doing it until somebody else buys the magazine, or until somebody else doesn't buy it.

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FILM REVIEW "The Human Monster"

British-made "horror" film featuring Bela Lugosi in a dual role. All about a murder mansion and how ironically Lugosi's blind servant in the end in error disposes of his master. Adapted from Edgar Wallace' "Dark Eyes of London".

--Leaver Wright.

## THE GREAT SCIENCE-FICTION NOVEL

By C.S. Youd

A recent account of an interview with E.E. Smith, appearing in Fantasy Digest, inspired me to re-read the early Smith novels as a prelude to "Grey Lensman". My original intention was to begin with "Skylark of Space", continue with "Three", the two parts I have of "Tripehounds", the three parts I have of "Triplanetary", "Valeron" and to finish off with "Patrol", by which time I calculated the new serial would be ready.

I was more than a little surprised to find the going far from easy. The first instalment tried my patience in many ways but, nothing daunted, I struggled gamely along. By the time I had finished Part 3, however, it was plain that a rest was essential. And in the interval between finishing "Skylark" and steeling myself for "Three" I am committing these brief notes to paper.

The most obvious fault with Dr. Smith's greatly famed trilogy is the bald unreality of the characters. This is the point that has been most stressed by those few who have dared to question the fanatical devotion held for the great Ph.D., and the point which is by far the most vulnerable. Seaton is disgustingly handsome, tough, intelligent and moral. He has the capabilities of a Jurgen and the inclinations of a Quaker spinster, and in addition, like a certain American President, he never tells a lie. A true genius, he will work himself into a daze at the end of which he always emerges with a world-shattering discovery. Thus overworked his tortured nerves are soothed

by Dorothy leading him (by violin) from the military marches which are the only things his singularly unaesthetic mind can appreciate to passages in which "she pours out her soul". Much to the annoyance of the maids who clean the room next morning, we suppose.

Crane, while fundamentally a better and more credible type, is just as ridiculously the dilettante Boy Scout. He is clearly intended as a foil to Seaton, the super-hero, and thus is never allowed to develop his capabilities to anything like their full. One cannot help feeling that if he did he would, as Falstaff, overshadow the true hero, and that Dr. Smith knows this. Margaret is even more a shadow than Crane.

There is only one character in the series who can gain the appreciation of a person with a mental age of more than 10. DuQuesne (how does one pronounce it?) is to Seaton as Mephistopheles is to Faust, and like Mephistopheles he steals the thunder. His Pragmatism is at least an understandable philosophy, in contrast with Seaton's veneration of sturdy American principles, but even here Smith must ruin his effect. After the adventure on the prehistoric planet, Seaton offers friendship to DuQuesne and the latter rebuffs him. This is entirely illogical, for it would have been useful to "Blackie" to have Seaton's confidence and his creed would permit him to break his word as soon as its period of usefulness had ended.

Wholly apart from the characterization, the writing style is melodramatic and often laughable. In relating space battles, battles with monsters and the rest, this shortcoming is less evident beneath the bludgeoning of

swift action, but when our heroes and heroines start making love, this reader at least allows an irreverent snigger to wander over his features. Allow me to quote from the third instalment of "Skylark".

"He pressed her to his heart in a mighty embrace and his low voice showed in every vibration the depth of feeling he held for the beautiful woman in his arms, as he replied." Under such circumstances, one is hardly surprised that the Great Boss of the Road refers to his bride as "Dottie". Somebody is dotty, we are sure.

There are many other minor things, too numerous to mention, but which some more enthusiastic critic will surely tabulate one day. There is for instance the code of the Osnomes. These remarkable people believe that by destroying all physical weaklings they will become the highest race in the System. On Seaton's wedding day the Karbix(not an advert.) grandiloquently spouts a lot of balderdash about the coming of Seaton meaning that their system is vindicated, and that their hateful enemies will be destroyed root and branch. Emotional Dottie is in tears after this peroration and describes it as indescribably grand. The Boss of the Road replies: "It sure was all of that, Dottie mine, little bride of an hour. It gets down to where a fellow lives - I've got a lump in my throat right now so big that it hurts me to think." This magnificent animal, the code of all honor in person, is quite prepared to help in the destruction of an entire race because its leader tries to betray him. Even on that he is relying on Dunark's opinion.

To close this chapter of fault-finding we shall strike a note that rings from 99 out of every hundred SF stories. Seaton is a



chemist of private means. Dorothy's father is an eminent judge, Crane is a multi-millionaire - all, to put it plainly, are entirely suitable for the drawing rooms of Boston's best. Subtly Smith tells you that this is the class of honour, of truth and sanity. Here are none of your dirty Reds, your wobblies. These are men of American tradition (we can imagine Seaton joining the American Legion on retiring from space-conquering) who call a spade a spade, and leave Art and such bunk to starving poets. It is this refusal to consider the class struggle that stamps magazine SF with the other bunk purveyed to moronic fools who can be lulled into content with a quite hopeless lot. The great American novel of space flight has yet to be written. It will have as its heroes human beings and it will take cognizance of the class war. And, of course, it will never be published except privately.

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History Repeats

Charlestown, S.C.

Federal radio play describing experiments with an anti-aircraft defense ray in the Santee swamps struck terror in the minds of several hundred listeners and had many running from their homes in their night-clothes. Seven interruptions were made to announce that it was only fiction but over 600 frantic phone calls came to the station. Program was entitled "Ratnetto Fantasies".

-- Philip Lehr



AND They  
Call  
Them SAVAGE

Walt by  
Daugherty

I'll never  
forget  
that day  
as long  
as I live.

I was fresh from Yale and a bit of tenderfoot must have showed all over me as Dad took me down into the old Indian village to see the savages in their own life setting. The sight was magnificent: Pawny, copperskinned and almost naked bucks, as dad called them, were either sitting around with a white Teepee as their only support or elsewhere, in a leisurely fashion, parading around thru the cluttered up streets as though the whole village were their own private property. The squaws were busily scampering about with a job to do here, and a job to do there, kicking aside one of the numerous cur dogs that ran underfoot, or trying to quiet a papoose that was voicing a protest or desire.

"My, my, Dad" I exclaimed, "I didn't know there were still people living primitive style these days."

"That's something I don't believe anyone fully realizes until they visit the parts of the old west that remain almost the same as they were in the days of the buffalo."

OH! Excuse me, dear reader, I almost forgot in the excitement to tell you that I came out to visit Dad in hopes of getting a new plot for a story I was trying to write for a contest in a science fiction magazine. I am quite a fan of science fiction, you know. I read every copy that comes out with the money my father gives me. Though I am only 11, my English teacher says I might make a very good writer. My father wrote me of some very interesting caves that were mysterious so here I am. Mr. Daugherty, a science fictionist from Los Angeles is writing the other part of the story for me but I put in this part, but I'll let him tell you the rest on paper as I tell him the story.

(Daugherty's note: "Egad! Shall I let him live")

We continued on through the escampment until we came to a large open arena where there were several magnificent bucks in ceremonial attire doing some type of dance to the beat of a tom-tom that was very well handled by an Important looking fellow with a beautiful headdress of eagle feathers. For some reason this fellow held my attention for he was more savage looking than any of the other Indians I had seen. To look at him was like gazing into the past at a ferocious Sioux that was ready to lift my scalp at any moment. After several moments had passed he arose and joined the other Indians at a small pit where they were removing live rattlesnakes from their enclosure and putting them in their mouths. I watched that gruesome sight for several minutes until they were finished. Then to my amazement and fright I saw the buck who had done the

drumming cast aside the snakes which he had in each hand and head towards us. I shrank back closer to my father in terror of the sight expecting the worst any moment until I noticed he had his eyes on my Science Fiction League Button. Then as he drew nearer I saw him reach into his small buckskin pouch hanging from his loin cloth and withdraw a small piece of faded blue cardboard which he held up in front of me a childish grin covered his face. I was amazed, relieved and greatly shocked to see there in his hands in large bold letters:

CHIEF YOUNG EAGLE

is a member in good standing of the  
SCIENCE FICTION LEAGUE

\*\*\*\*\*  
I ACCUSE, subtitled "That they Lay Live", is a French-made scientifantasy film which U might miss, as your reviewer almost did, because of its prosaic title. Picture is a potent plea for Peace, showing, in 73 unforgettable minutes how a veteran-scientist of the First War fulfills his vow to his dead comrades to make the Next War Impossible. With his ambition about to be accomplished he comes to realize that the world is rapidly forgetting the last terrible tragedy & war-clouds once again are surcharged with lethal lightning. He temporarily goes insane and when he regains his mind it is to find his formula for the invulnerable steel-glass that was to make war impossible has been manufactured under his name to bring to his people "a preponderance of power". And all Europe is again in arms, the black flame of Bellum about to burst into its deadly bloom once more. The inventor Victor Frances (star of the Camille Flammarion scientifilm "Fin du Monde" or "End of the World") speeds to Verdun where he invokes the dead who have been betrayed to arise and avert this catastrophe. And the dead-portrayed by les Gueles Cassees, the Mutilated Veterans of the Last War --

rise! Your hair may rise, too, during the 13 climactic minutes of this definitely recommended film. FJA