



All bright-eyed little slans will discern that this is issue the fourth of SPACEHOUND'S GAZETTE, which is published for the Spectator Amateur Press Society by Joe Kennedy, 84 Baker Ave., Dover, N. J. -- We are an irregular amateur effort, it says here, but of late our quarterly schedule has been regular to a disconcerting degree. Never fear, folks -- it can't last.

SUMMER 1948

BONK!

EDITORIAL:

Gads, what a screwy-looking cover set-up. To tell the truth, I never really know what's going to turn out when I grab hold of a stencil. Sometimes, the cover turns out nicely. Other times---

Well, this is obviously one of the other times.

We have a decent item of material or two lurking in the cargo this trip. Got some book reviews, too, for a change, but before we get into those, it giffs a few editorial lamentations.

Dear reader, what is your opinion of the Spectator Amateur Press Soc'y? Do you think there's room for improvement? You do? Fine -- what's to be done about it?

First and foremost, I think it is probably pretty obvious to anyone with half a brain that

SAPS wouldn't be hurt if we had some better fanzines floating around the mailings. While it is fun to hold a one-shot fanzine session and slap a lot of tripe on a stencil, it is not always fun for people to try to read the results. There is but one way, as I see it, to improve SAPS intrinsically. And that is to improve the magazines. Oh, it may take a few minutes more to ponder a little before you bat out your thoughts for publication. But the few minutes might do a heck of a lot toward boosting SAPS' standards, 'twould seem to me.

By organizing and supporting a new amateur press association in fandom we have, intentionally or not, thrown ourselves into competition with FAPA. Such competition ain't to be sniffled at. FAPA is big. FAPA is more'n ten years old. FAPA has prestige. FAPA has talent by the tubful. SAPS might continue to draggle along, subsidizing on the skimmed-milk after FAPA has taken the cream of the fan publishing field. Then again, we might make fandom sit up and take notice, and justify the existence of our organization by producing something a little better'n usual -- some well-thot-out humor, perhaps some colorful attempts at splashy format, or some serious literary criticism -- just for the heck of it.

I'll continue to be happy with SAPS if we continue bumbling along in our cock-eyed, happy-go-lucky rut. But the idea has occurred to me that we might get more enjoyment out of our club if we put more effort into our effusions.

Incidentally, has anybody noticed the peculiar fact that several actifans have suddenly and mysteriously dropped out of fan activity shortly after they joined SAPS? Rex Ward. Al Budrys. John Cockroft. Tom Jewett. Fred Burgess.

Who knows, folks, maybe we have created a Frankenstein monster..!

We shore could use a little recruiting work. If you know any budding actifans or hardened stefnists who might be fool enough to join up, why not mention SAPS to 'em? And don't be afraid to slip in a plug for the club in the next issue of that subzine or FAPA mag. Leave us not be afeared to rear up on our hairy hind-paws and bellow to the world and fandom at large that our organization exists, that it sometimes contains some fanzines worth reading, and that new blood would be welcomed indeed.

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The *FLYING* CORNISHMAN

THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF PETER WILKINS, A CORNISHMAN - by Robert Paltock. (First printed in London, 1751; reprinted in 1925 by Dulau & Co., Ltd., London.) 416 pages. Illustrated by Boitard.

The Peter Wilkins was written nearly two centuries ago, few later-day novels can match its assortment of marvels. For what Peter Wilkins hasn't seen or done is hardly worth mentioning. In the course of his wanderings through the world he is captured by pirates, encounters lions and crocodiles in the jungles of Africa, is sucked into an underground cataract, visits a lost land inhabited by winged people, fights a war, invents a flying machine, marries twice and fathers approximately ten children, and in general manages to escape boredom.

There are many sources from which Robert Paltock might have drawn his inspiration -- Gulliver's Travels, quite likely; possibly More's Utopia and the Icarus story -- but the life and adventures of Peter Wilkins seem to be the product of an original and highly unorthodox imagination. Most of the book's fifty-two chapters concern Peter's experiences among the gulphs and gawreys -- a race of men and women whose bat-like wings can be flopped open and shut at will: when closed, the wings fold around the individual's body like a suit of clothes! Since Peter is unaware of this fact when he takes one of the winged women to wife, a ludicrous scene occurs the first time he gets in bed with her. Not only do the gulphs and gawreys use their strange appendages for aerial navigation; they can also spread their wings, lie flat on their backs in water, and scoot along the sea-surface like sailboats.

Wilkins, being unable to fly, is obliged to build himself a chair which can be borne aloft by the winged men. In the palace of the King of the flying folk, Peter witnesses among other things a peculiar method of illumination. This section of the book contains something of a prophecy of modern incandescent lighting. Brilliantly glowing globes are attached to the ceilings of the rooms, the light being given off by a worm-like animal within. When the light begins to get dim, an attendant comes around, unscrews the globe, and takes the animal out to lunch. Thus refreshed, the worms glow as brightly as ever once more. In the lost land, biology is considerably different from England. Fishes and fowl grow upon trees, just like fruit, and the populace presumably goes around plucking fresh fish by the basketful.

Peter Wilkins employs a plot device which has been useful to science-fiction writers from the ancient Greek who recounted a voyage to Luna right down to Edgar Rice Burroughs. The winged aliens are divided into two warring camps. Peter eventually reconciles them, of course, but not before a terrific war-in-the-air has transpired, which is considerably enlivened when Wilkins introduces some European cannon into the fray.

Our hero engages himself with teaching the gulphs to read and write, sets up a paper factory, and soon compels all the winged folk to become faithful Bible-readers. Eventually Pete hankers to return to his native England, builds a new flying chair and sets out across the sea -- but a storm comes up, knocks his winged bearers sprawling, and dumps him into the sea. He is fished up by the crew of a passing vessel, to whom he relates his bizarre experiences.

The book is written in a tongue-in-cheek style which I personally found delightful. Paltock is in no hurry to rush his narrative. The leisurely eighteenth-century pace of storytelling may occasionally require a little patience on the part of the reader; but I think it is well worth it, since the marvels are unfolded in convincing detail, and with subtle humor. The volume is enhanced by curious drawings of the winged folk, reprinted from the book's original edition. According to the publishers' foreword, Peter Wilkins found "considerable favour" with such reomanticists as Coelridge and Walter Scott. It seems regrettable that the book isn't better known and appreciated today. As a forerunner of modern SF, it is of unusual interest; and considered purely for its entertainment value, Peter Wilkins is still a bang-up adventure yarn, enjoyably told.

Our thanks to Col. David H. Keller for the loan of the volume, without which the preceding review of the book wouldn't've been writ.

TWO POEMS

by

DAVID H. KELLER

I.

My grandsire walked from Cornwall to London
Gathering poppy seed
And always he had bread, cheese, and beer
To satisfy his need.
He sang a song as he walked along
Altho he was clad in rags
And the little ladies on mountain and vale
Put poppy seeds in his bags.

My grandsire walked from London to Cornwall
Scattering poppy seed
And he sang a song as he trotted along
Doing this lovely deed:
He said, "Someday I will not be here
"But beauty will cover my trail
"Because I have scattered poppy seeds
"Over the mountains and vale."

II.

THE FEMININE SAVANTS

They study books and gain in knowledge,
Wasting their bodies going to college.

Yet in their sleep they cannot rest,
Because of hunger in their breast
For baby hands and baby lips.

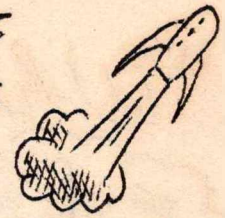
They stretch their hands towards the star
Where all their orphan abbies are

But, waking, once again they find
Solace in books to feed their mind

And do not hear their children cry
Across the voidland of the sky.

S.G.

SHORT-SHORT STORY PAGE



THE LADY OR THE BACILLUS?

Jom Glorp opened both his eyes to find himself staring into the unshaven face of Black Skull, the evil space pirate.

"No! It can't be!", Jom Glork gasped. "Skull, you devil! How did I get here?"

Black Skull leered uglily. A thin, brown stream of saliva dribbled down and bounced in little droplets upon Jom Glorp's nice clean space suit.

"Don't you remember, sonny?" Black Skull chortled. "You were cruising along in your pea-green rocket ship when I put a paralysis ray on you. Knocked you out cold. Now you're in my ship! Heh heh!"

Glorp sucked in his breath, found he disliked the taste of it, and blew it out again. "Now I remember," he ruminated. "You filthy, despicable cur! What have you done with my beauteous wife, my beloved Dora?"

Black Skull's thick lips rumbled open, disclosing a perfect set of pearly white teeth which had fallen out long ago. "Heh heh, sonny! That's the fiendish part of it." The villianous space pirate pointed to the further end of the room. On the floor were two huge coffins, made of brass. "See those coffins?" Black Skull slavered. "In one of those coffins is your wife. She is -- aheh-heh -- unharmed. All you have to do is raise up the lid and she will be in your arms."

"Then let me at her."

"Stop!" Black Skull's face froze into a frown of ice. "But you don't know which coffin she's in. And the other coffin -- heh-heh -- is full of a hideous cloud of hungry bacteria which will swarm up and instantly dissolve the flesh from your bones. Which coffin will you choose, Jom Glork? If you don't open one of the caskets within an hour, your wife will suffocate to death. Very well, Jom Glork, the choice is up to you." Black Skull tip-toed out of the room, slamming the door behind him.

Jom Glorp arose, cast a terrified eye at the two coffins. If he opened one -- maybe his beauteous Dora would be there. Or else--- a hideous death, more horrible than human mind could conceive.

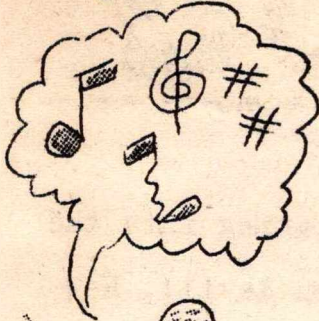
"Aw, the hell with her, let her suffocate," said Jom Glorp, as he stepped through the porthole.

THE FLYING DISC JOCKEY

On May the seventeenth, 1952, the skies above New York began to rain ping-pong balls. They fell by the thousands, bouncing hollowly off the heads of pedestrians. Soon the streets were filled. Traffic halted. They rattled into the subway and clogged up the tunnels; they drifted upon George Washington bridge and piled up until that immense structure shuddered, creaked, and thundered down into the river.

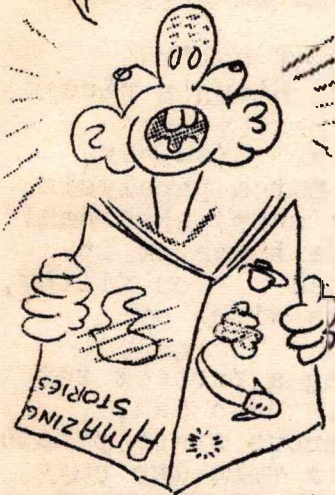
Today, October the twelfth, 2017, as I sit in my office atop the Empire State Building, watching the ping-pong balls come drifting downward, a happy thought occurs to me. Since May the seventeenth, 1952, everybody in New York has learned to play ping-pong.

"When they bring out ----"



...SOME RANDOM MUSINGS ON CURRENT PROZINE TRENDS

Recently like a damfool I shucked out a quarter for the July issue of Amazing Stories, because my name was mentioned therein. Out of curiosity, I plowed through the magazine -- and here are some findings which dumfounded me.



For one thing, Amazing no longer seems to be the smoothly-edited melange of entertaining hack which it was five years ago. The issue of July '48 gives me the impression that it was put together at 3 A.M. by an illiterate Eskimo who'd just finished sipping a quart of imitation vanilla. Rap, in The Observatory, begs the indulgence of his readers for "certain minor irregularities in our pages". Well might he beg. The bottom paragraph on page 107 of the story "In All Probability" has been weirdly screwed up by the linotypist. Two different type-faces are used to set the filler columns. The tail-end of one of these features is abruptly jumped from page 93 to page 105. On pages 133 and 123, small columns of type have been shoved into the middle of the page, leaving a yawning void of blank space on either side.

Ignoring these editorial fluffs, however, the mag's fiction still seems a lot less readable than the shrewdly concocted corn which used to be Rap's forte. For entertainment, in my 'umble opinion, one copy of AS from the days when Binder and Burroughs were in their prime is easily the equivilant of half a dozen of the current Ziff-Davis crop. (The thot occurs that the first vowel of the alphabet might've been more appropriate than the 4th vowel, as used in the last word of the previous sentence.) I fondly remember the Amazing of January, 1944, in which every single yarn in the issue ended with the curvesome heroine melting into our stalwart hero's arms! Nowadays -- and this is what really flabbergasted me -- Amazing's happy endings seem to have become post-war casualties. Out of the eight tales in the July number, five of 'em wind up unhappily -- with the good guys losing out!

Galloping green grulzaks! When you 'n' I used to hold back nickels from our lunch monies to buy Cap Future, Planet, and the Amazing of yesteryear, the thud-and-blunder never gave us that kind of let-down! When Clark Vance, super space-pilot, had to ray-blast his way out of a nest of Jovian tentacle monsters in order to rescue Donna Dewdrop, exotic princess of Polaris IV, we knew sure as tomorrow's sunrise that everything would turn out triumphantly in the end ... with the monsters vanquished and the homo saps looking forward to the usual brave new world. But, m'gawd! look at the stuff Palmer's printing these days, for the perusal of kids who'll be the actifans of tomorrow.

In Bill McGivern's "The Death of Asteroid 13", the gallant spaceman and his gal friend pilot their ship smack into the Martians, killing themselves and everybody else for the dubious glory of deah old Earth.

Charles Recour's "That We May Rise Again" is in a similar vein. In the world of the future, giant ants have become the dominant life-form on Terra. One of the last male humans meets one of the last females; after having known the girl only about a thousand words, our hero is copulating with her; then they go out together and commandeer a rocket ship and smash into the giant ants' Mutual-Mind, killing themselves and presumably whomping hell out of the ants, too. Irving Gerson's short-short, "In All Probability", concerns a scientist who transgresses the bounds beyond which mortal man is not meant to go, tra-la-la-la, and gets killed in a decidedly grim fashion. I somehow suspect that there's the germ of a decent story in this one, but fail to see how the author could possibly have managed to present his idea in a more yawn-provoking manner. The tale begins with a drab, drawn-out description of the room in which the story's set, then launches into some highly abstruse metaphysics.

Berkeley Livingston's "The Triumph of the Pig" is not much happier. Not only does the story end with a mob of gigantic pigs (by-products of atom bomb bursts) about to gobble up everybody on Earth, but the author concludes that the whole thing is a damned good idea anyway, and serves us right. In Rog Phillips' "The Supernal Note", an airliner with the hero on it gets destroyed by some mysterious gods from beyond, just for the heck of it.

Gentle readers, shall we all go stick our heads in the nearest river and let 'em stay there?

As for the remaining tales -- Recour's "Amoeba 'ROID" is alien world stuff, formula 9, sub-plot B, variation #4. The author's treatment of the love interest is strongly reminiscent of "Skylark of Space". The lead novel, "The Man from Agharti" by the de Courcys, I just didn't have the fortitude to wade through; but it looks pleasant and is written in short sentences with huge globs of dialogue. A. K. Jarvis's "Mystery of the Midgets" is an enjoyable quickie which postulates that side-show midgets are little men from the moon. It is, I think, the best-written thing in the book.

Artwork smacks of competence. Settles' back cover -- depicting jungle apes gawking at an overgrown coffee percolator -- is painted with admirable restraint and good color composition. The blurb, however, might leave a bad taste in your mouth: "Fawcett, the explorer, ventured deep into the Matto Grosso, and was never heard from again. * * * Was it a ship from another world that picked up Colonel Fawcett and abducted him from Earth?" Unquote. Or maybe a leopard got him??

Sad as the editing may be, sorrowful as the stories may be, the small-type filler articles are positively tear-jerking. "Vignettes of Famous Scientists" read as tho they were copied verbatim out of the encyclopedia. Starting on page 156 an anonymous somebody who the contents page informs us is Dick Shaver babbles on and on for six columns about subterranean brothels and blood-red bedbugs on the bodies of slum children and how blind we all are not to recognise the obvious facts about the deros, et cetera.

A slightly curtailed installment of "The Club House" benevolently ladles out a few oozing plums of ego-boo, and Graham gnashes his molars at the Emergency Committee of Atomic Scientists because they're soliciting funds for the purpose of distributing information, instead of writing revelations for Amazing and getting paid too, the jerks.

Most intriguing advertisement in the issue is the announcement that if you send ten cents to Ziff-Davis, you will receive the "1947 issue" of "Inner Sanctum Mystery Stories - An eight-page magazine of murder and mystery". Are Messrs. Ziff and Davis going into the amateur publishing field? Stand by your mimeographs, men, and prepare for action....

In conclusion, this humble scribe believes that the most amazing thing about Amazing Stories is the fact that the mag continues to sell. One New York prozine editor has opined that most of the people who buy AS are just after a big, thick pulp for their money and don't givva damn what they read. If this is the case -- and 'twould seem so -- let us all rush out and sink our lives' savings into printing plants, and start publishing pulp mags a full inch thick, stuffed full of the most abysmal crud available -- then settle back to watch the greenbacks thunder in.

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FAMOUS FAN - TASTIC CONVERSATIONS

---Number One---

The time is Sunday, March 23, 1947. The scene is Ron Christensen's palatial dining room out on the salt-flats of Brooklyn. Sam Moskowitz, astride a creaking chair, is intently holding forth about the place of science-fiction in the world today. Christensen, the host, looks dour. Sprawled around the table in various postures are Ron Maddox, Alex Osheroff, and Kennedy. Phil Froeder is studying a fly on the ceiling. Slumped at the far end of the table, his corn-yellow hair veiling his gaze, George Fox stares grimly at a crumb on the table-cloth.

The dialogue is as follows:

Moskowitz: I suppose you boys realize that if the world crisis becomes more ominous, you may be inducted into military service.

Kennedy: When the Russians are storming the gates of Newark, Fox will volunteer.

Fox: Yes. For the Russians.

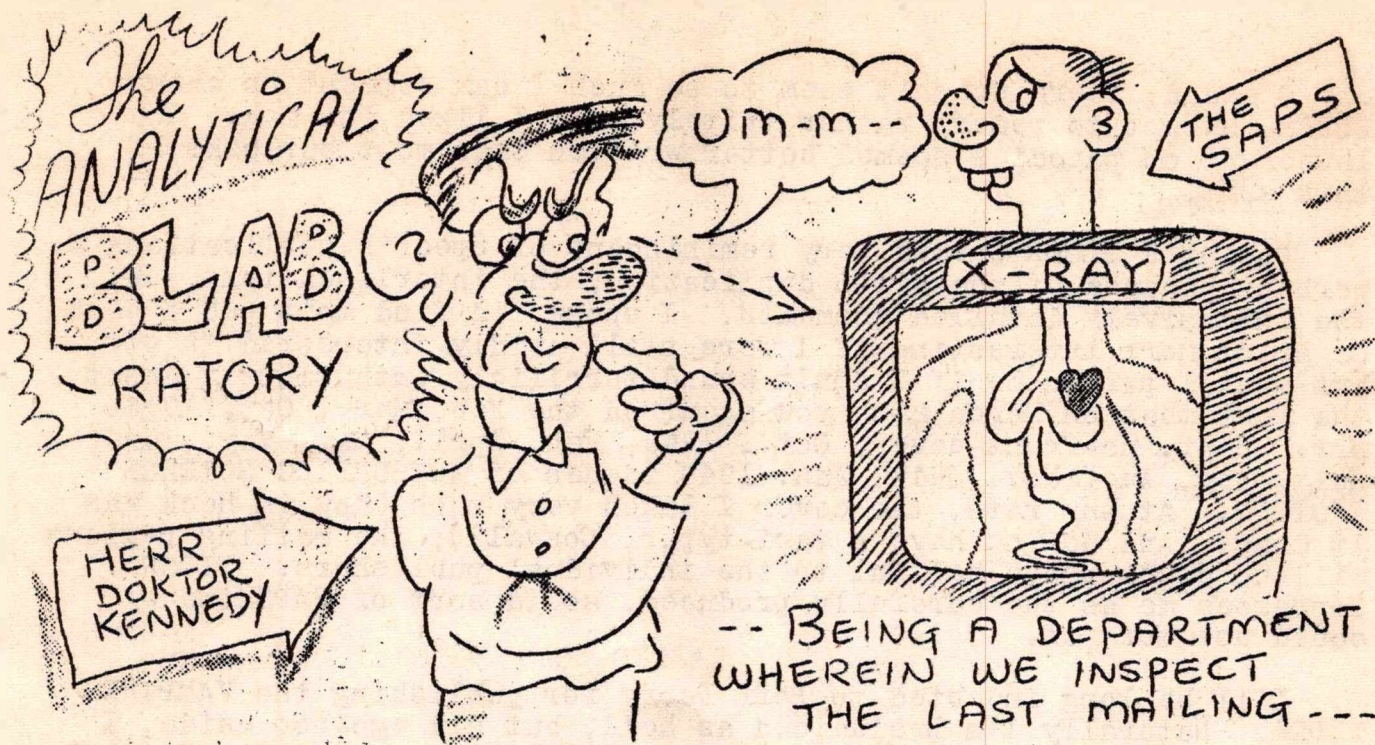
--(curtain)--

* * * * *

THEE'RE A VIN

One sap pond dame mid nitre tree re. wile eye pond heard we canned we're Rio vermin Eeee-e-e! aquaint anchor yes volly who muff four gut ten lawyer why lie not dead knee are Leigh nabbing sod den lethe her game may trapping ass off sum won gent lear aaaa-a-a-a! pin rap in gone might chain burr drawer kiss sum viz. at her I'm a third tap ingot migraine bar tore own lethe is sand no thin mower odd is stink lee ire ream ember hit waa-aa-a-a! sin Thebes leek dissembler an teach sap rot tying amber ought hits go west up on thief lore.

----- Add Girl Alone Po



Of all the stuff in the third mailing, THE HANDS AND OTHERS is probably the item I'll remember longest. When I opened the mailing and the little book fell out, I grabbed it and spent nearly ten minutes examining the thing with delight. It's one of the neatest amateur cardboard-bound jobs I've seen -- and truly a fantasy collector's item. Ackerman, Searles, and H C Koenig should gnash their molars in frustrated wrath -- a fantasy book has been newly published by a fan publisher, without their acquiring it. I, for one, heartily appreciate the time and effort Cheney must've expended to produce the little book. The material I'd mostly read before, of course, and think that all four of the tales were worthy of preservation in this form. Nice blueprint cover. This sort of thing suggests plenty of possibilities: with a good mimeo and plenty of spare time, one might start issuing collections of memorable fanzine material, or collections of amateur poetry, or lots of other things, and selling 'em at a quarter a copy or so -- enuf to cover expenses. You could even set up another fan publishing house, specializing in stuff which has a limited appeal. I am fascinated. My battered chapeau is hereby doffed to Harold Cheney for a highly original idea, well executed.

Froeder's FROZINE proved surprisingly good. I didn't realize Phil's sense of humor was so highly developed; hope this mag will be a regular in future SAPS envelopes! Schaumburger's "Spawn of the Purple Vortex" and Froeder's "Decline and Fall of the Martian Empire" both were chuckle-provoking. I'd rate this item the best periodical SAPSzine in the mailing this trip.

JOSE-PIEN: We quote from the last page: "This SAPSzine is sponsored by, directed by, and cast off by Joe Gross to help other fans see what a mess one man can make out of his life." I don't know whether JOSE-PIEN indicates how much a life can be messed up, Joe; but it sure as heck proves how much you can mess up a stencil! But don't be glum...I liked the artwork.

Offhand, there doesn't seem to be much I can comment on about QUEER, except to remark rather tritely that I liked the mag. The Lovecraftian parodies seemed better written than most burlesks of this sort.

Coslet's PLOOR seemed very reminiscent of Speer's publications -- perhaps because of the ditto duplication, the interlineations, and the intensively detailed comments. I spose I'd find this pub a heck of a lot more interesting if I were still avidly interested in stf, but you'll pardon me if I don't sound terrificly enthusiastic about the fact that on March 20th you acquired the Feb, Mar., Oct, 1944, Mar., Sept. no-front-cover, Oct., 1946, Feb, April, May, May, June, July, Aug, Aug, Nov. 1947, Jan. 1948 issues of ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION. At any rate, the cover I liked very much (how in heck was it done? And do you have a vari-typer, Coswal?); the mailing reviews will no doubt prove helpful to the individual publishers. PLOOR impresses me as the carefully produced, solid sort of SAPSzine we could use more of.

I'll be long indebted to Boff Perry for publishing the VAMPIRE INDEX. Naturally I'm prejudiced as hell, but all ego-boo aside, I still think Boff did an excellent job on this item. A more thorough index would be well-nigh inconceivable. Set-up and mimeoing neat, too. Gracias, a thousand times for the compliments spewed forth in your introduction, Boff.

Goody-goody gumdrops! SAPS has uncensored editions of YELLUM. This gives everybody a chance to view the portion which Burbee snipped out of the copies circulated in FAPA.

SPACEHOUND'S GAZETTE: Please, Chris, I was only kidding!

Alpaugh seems to have a genius for collecting odd excerpts from prozines and other literary pinnacles. Gawrsh, look at that tall, frosty glass of Ballantine's! A SAPSzine with illustrations printed in full color, no less! SUN SHINE #2, that is.

HAROLD CHENEY JR. contains what are, in my opinion, the most intelligent SAPSzine-comments in the mailing. As for that smeary ink on the cover of SPACEHOUNDS G. #2 -- well, no wonder it smudged. 'Twas plain ordinary mimeo ink which I used to print the linoblock, and I had to ooze it on in huge, thick globs to get the cut to print! ... As for nudes in SAPSzines, I'm forced to agree with you -- most of us are overdoing it. "...how anyone put of adolescence gets a thrill out of publicly displaying smutty, over-emphasized drawings like these..." ?? Shucks, HWC, most of us are still either in adolescence or just growing out of it. 'Tis hardly surprising that we should display an interest in this field of -- ah -- human activity which cannot be attributed solely to our appreciation for art! I wouldn't worry too much, tho; we'll grow out of it in time. Yes, this includes Jogros...! However, I fail to see why you condone the nude on the cover of your own mag while attacking the delightful (to me, that is) doodle in YELLUM. How can a female breast be obscene if viewed from the front, while seen from the side, it's art? ... Clever back cover on your mag. Especially the "footprints" of the pogo stick.

No more room, folks. A decent mailing.

HERE, THERE, AND EVERYWHERE...

..... A DEPARTMENT IN WHICH WE SIMPLY RAMBLE

MOST INTRIGUING COMPARISON OF THE MONTH CORNER

From the last page of the second issue of Norm Storer's QUEER:
"Just what did you guys think of that letter in Planet ("Summer")
... from a narrow-minded son-of-a-venusian-sea-cook named Cox?
He should drop dead in his own foul juices, thass what I say."

From the membership list, as published in THE SPECTATOR #3:
"...Paul Cox, 3401 6 Ave, Columbus, Ga...."

War in SAPS!! War in fandom! FEUD! FEUD!! I'll hold your coat,
Norm...

I think SAPS is corrupting my literary standards.

Below are the first paragraphs for several stories which I began
to write, and never did finish.

You may form your own opinions.

(1) Glaal Norq oozed deeper into his brain vat. Luxuriously,
he contorted the squiggling folds of his mental tissue. He sighed.
What was keeping T'raagllu with the slaves from earth? Damn
T'raagllu. Every hour another ten humans suffocated in the salt
mines of the ninth planet. At this rate, within twelve hours all
the mine workers would be dead. And then -- production of salt,
the precious substance which the Plutonian conquerors needed to live,
would be stopped! Glaal Nord sighed again. Within twelve hours
he would die. He sighed for a third time and popped another lump
of salt into his mouth.

(2) The sun sent beams of golden light shimmering downwards.
To the four-year old mind of Fido, it was the most glorious day he
had ever seen. The little dog stopped chasing the bouncing, illusive
butterfly and looked at the sun. It had nearly reached the top of
the sky. That meant it was almost noon. It would soon be time to
feed the humans. Regretfully, Fido took one last look at the
tempting butterfly. Then he barked once in frustration, stepped
into his rocket plane and flicked a stud. The little ship knifed
into the clouds.

Only ten years ago, Fido reflected, dogs had finally gained
supremacy upon earth. Thanks to Professor Hyman Stanislaus, the
mentality of canines had been raised to superior heights by careful,
scientific breeding and glandular injections. With an intelligence
quota of 420, it had been a simple matter for Fido to establish
himself as dictator of the world. The first human to die had been
Professor Hyman Stanislaus...

Now do you see why I never finished those stories?

STF. EVERLASTING

LIFE EVERLASTING AND OTHER TALES OF SCIENCE, FANTASY, AND HORROR - by David H. Keller. With an introduction by Sam Moskowitz. (The Avalon Company, Box 8052, Clinton Hill Station, Newark, N. J. 1948.) \$3.50. Edition limited to 1000 copies. 382 pages.

Fans who have come into contact with the works of David H. Keller seem to fall roughly into two categories -- those who can see nothing praiseworthy in the man's plots or style, and those who adore everything Keller writes. Be this as it may, there is something in this book to please nearly every taste in scientifantasy. The editors -- Moskowitz and Will Sykora -- have selected a representative cross-section of Colonel Keller's best work in the realm of fancy: a novel and ten short stories, including one which has never seen previous publication in any form.

It seems well-nigh certain that many Kelleryarns are destined to outlive most of science-fiction's accoladed "classics", for Keller has wisely based his work upon human values, rather than upon test-tubes, space ships, and superscientific gadgetry. His style is deceptively simple . . . his stories are written in plainspoken, straightforward language which will not easily be obscured by the passing of time. In spots, the critical reader may suspect that Keller's work has all too seldom been subjected to the merciless blue pencil of a soulless and meticulous editor. Notwithstanding the fact that much of Keller's work in the science fiction field was written swiftly, without extensive revision, for pulpwood magazines whose editors lacked the time to polish up accepted manuscripts, Keller has maintained a remarkably good batting average.

Sam Moskowitz's 25-page-long introduction to the volume fulfills the dual purposes of presenting an outline of the life and personality of Keller the man, and of providing a critical analysis of Keller's works. This is unquestionably the best essay about Keller which has been written to date; Moskowitz, unlike some less fortunate compilers of fantasy omnibus volumes who have had to write their introductions from long range guesswork, has been able to meet Keller and to work with him. This lends authority to Sam's statements. Moskowitz has chosen his material intelligently; his judgments seem well thought out; and he writes with his usual vigor and directness.

The lead novel, "Life Everlasting", is in itself an excellent justification of the "good old days" type of science fiction. In direct contrast to the presentday school of SF writing which attempts to bedazzle the reader with slam-bang action, roaring rockets, and planet-shuddering mechanical marvels, "Life Everlasting" captures and holds one's attention by interesting him in the story's basic premises . . . by getting him to sympathize with its convincingly human cast of characters, and to wonder "How will all this turn out?" The central theme is an extraordinarily powerful one -- would immortality, without crime, disease, or poverty, be worth the price of sterility? There are some master-strokes of writing in "Life Everlasting". Perhaps especially memorable are the words of the scrubwoman tortured by asthma, when the scientist asks her: "Suppose I told you that in a little while you would be well . . . What would you do then, Sally Fanning?" And she replies: "I would cry, Mr. Ackerman. I would be

so happy -- I, who have never been happy -- that I would cry for the joy of it. I would brush my hair till it came alive, and wash myself, and put on clean clothes, and go and sit in the park, in the sunshine, and just breathe deep. It is a terrible thing to fight for every breath, as I have all my life. I used to dream of being a bird, flying high in the sky, and yet having enough air left in me to sing; but always would come the waking and the asthma." Sentimental? Damright that's sentimental, but the reader who can regard that paragraph without being prejudiced by falsely cynical sophistication will recognise its value. Then there is the tabloid newspaper, The Purple Flash, which changes its tone when people are no longer interested in murder and rape . . . and the husband who longs for children, and spends his time in the cellar whittling wooden dolls . . . the mass production of robot babies to satisfy the maternal and paternal instincts of the sterile immortals -- these and other touches clearly indicate that Keller knows his people. "Life Everlasting" makes absorbing and highly enjoyable reading -- and you'll find its ideas a banquet for thought.

Exactly one half of the book is composed of short stories. "The Boneless Horror" is a tale of prehistoric lost lands, somewhat in the tradition of Lord Dunsany and his modern disciple, Clark Ashton Smith. The goings-on, which include a mysterious table that rises on telescoped legs and pushes half a continent into the air, apparently by the power of suggestion or something, are far-fetched as all billy-hell. I suspect that the main reason "The Boneless Horror" is included is the fact that an incident in the story purportedly inspired Tom Gardner to experiment with queen bee royal jelly and discover that the stuff aids longevity.

"Unto Us a Child is Born" prognosticates a superscientific state in which marriage and childbearing are rigorously controlled by the government. The story is simple and effective; it seems to reflect Keller's belief in, to quote Moskowitz, "no scientific advancement merely for the sake of science, but for the sake of man."

The more I study "No More Tomorrows", the greater my respect for the yarn becomes. If there is any story in the book into which Keller might have written an allegorical significance -- consciously or not -- it is this tale. It is as vivid as a fragment of a nightmare, and connects with a powerful wallop.

Most fans have read "The Thing in the Cellar". Those who haven't done so, have an experience in store for them. It is a little gem of supernatural horror, and because the horror is deftly under-played, it is all the more effective.

Perhaps equally horrifying, but in a slightly different mood, is "The Dead Woman". Whereas in "The Thing in the Cellar" the horror is concentrated into one terrific ending, the element of terror in "The Dead Woman" is introduced in the first paragraph and keeps building up and building up, with mounting intensity, until it finally pays off in the horrific climax.

"Heredity", a gorey horror yarn which first appeared in the late lamented fanzine, Vortex, is guaranteed to make your hair leap toward the ceiling, and give you goose-bumps the size of oysters.

I'd nominate "The Face in the Mirror" as the best split personality story I've ever encountered -- the famous "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" not excluded. Since the book appeared, this story has aroused a flurry of conflicting criticisms, with some readers frankly admitting that they didn't understand the yarn, and others panning it unmercifully. You may comprehend the story's significance more clearly when you realize that the "house" which the insane man enters is really his own mind. "The house must need minor alterations," he says. "Everything must be made spotlessly clean, cobwebs removed, and any dead fly taken out and properly buried."

In order to include a representative selection of Col. Keller's work, one of the Taine of San Francisco detective stories has been selected, and one with a somewhat scientific slant at that. The character of Taine, the unprepossessing little man who refuses to use tobacco because it removes the delicate enamel on his teeth, certainly warrents a place among the most memorable fictional detectives in popular literature. Technically, however, "The Cerebral Library" is not a science-fiction story, since the events which seem to go beyond the bounds of present-day science are explained away by a mundane ending; and the idea of combining five hundred brains to produce one library of knowledge doesn't seem quite plausible enough to make a convincing detective story.

"A Piece of Linoleum" deserves to last as long as any short story in the English language. The dominating, self-indulgent wife who decorates her husband's room in infantile pink, and provides him with a china spittoon handpainted with tea-roses, in which to spit the single stick of chewing gum that she allows him daily -- how well this bears out Keller's conviction that true horror stems not from "the gods beyond", but from everyday life!

"The Thirty and One", a Cornwall story which got into Marvel Science Stories, is in my opinion fantasy at its best -- for it is indeed rare that a story of such fragile beauty has so neatly-wrought a plot. Especially memorable is the character of the learned Homunculus who dwells in a bottle. "The Thirty and One" is truly of the stuff from which dreams are made; it is a fitting conclusion to the book.

In regard to format, the book is exceptionally attractive. It is well bound in black cloth, with the spine stamped in gold or reasonable facsimile. The publishers are especially to be complimented on the clear, large, readable type face, with ample spacing between the lines, and with wide margins. One might wish that the bibliography of Keller's published stories had been incorporated with the book proper, instead of being issued as a supplementary pamphlet. In a couple places in copies I've seen, the printer's slips are showing, with the type-frame leaving a smear on the margin on one or two pages. But these are extremely minor gripes indeed, and do not detract noticeably from the book's value or appearance.

I'd recommend the book unhesitatingly to every science-fiction fan, yes, and to the general reader as well. It is perhaps one of the most significant tomes yet issued by a fantasy amateur publishing outfit. Collectors are advised to grab it, for once it goes out of print it will be more scarce than The Outsider and Others. It is a monument to the literary accomplishments of a man who has proven himself an author -- and a volume to read with pleasure and to place with pride on your bookshelf.



YE EDITORE MUTTERS IN HIS WHISKERS ---

...ABOUT A WRITERS' MAG...

Down in Southern California where they grow the oranges and movie stars and other produce, some publishing outfit manages to bring out every month a mag called Writer's Markets and Methods, which is worth your attention. It has a heck of a lot of items which are of scientific interest. Its book review columns frequently plug stf books like Of Worlds Beyond and World of A. One of the mag's assistant editors is George Gordon Dewey, a Merritt fan and a member of the LASFS, which perhaps explains why so much material creeps in which has a scientific tinge. Whereas The Writer seems to slant mainly toward aspiring literateurs, and Writer's Digest slants toward professional pulp writers and would-be pros, Writer's Markets and Methods seems to style its contents to appeal to struggling amateurs -- interviews with glamorous bigname writers, instructions on how to type neat-looking mss., and so forth. At any rate, there's some interesting stuff in it, including reviews of various published stories, written by one Peter Granger, about whom I know nothing except that he used to subscribe to Vampire. A couple issues ago, the mag ran a picture of Ray Bradbury on the cover, and the feature article was a highly informative interview with Bradbury, who confided that he doesn't work on a story unless he feels in the mood. When the mood wears off, he works on some other unfinished tale. It sounds like a workable system. In the current issue of WM&M (I guess it must be the June number), there's an article by Weaver Wright -- all about Forrest J Ackerman! It concerns Forry's penchant for coining strange new words, and boosts him to the skies for inventing "Ackermanese". Nice ego-boo, if you can get it! (And apparently you can, if you write it yourself!). Also in the same issue, there's a juicy plug for a new amateur press association -- the C.A.P.A., these cryptic initials standing for Christian Am. Press Assoc., which apparently intends to get everybody to become good Christians and swap ideas by publishing amateur magazines. Ahem. When I noticed that the C.A.P.A. requires that members publish eight letter-sized pages of material per year, I thought to myself, "Gad! whoever organized that bunch must be familiar with the workings of F.A.P.A." Thus 'twas no shock to discover that the Official Editor of the club was one Dorothy Coslet, of Box 6, Helena, Montana. All of which goes to show that you find all sorts of educational things and stuff in writers' magazines. I wonder how we could wrangle Writer's Markets and Methods into giving a juicy plug to the SAPS.

...ABOUT NEXT YEAR'S CONVENTION...

The present SAPS mailing will probably appear around the time of the Toronto convention, so this might be an appropriate place for me to stick in a few random thoughts anent the subject of the '49 con. There seems to be a movement in the East, centering around the ESFA, which advocated holding next year's convention in New York City. Now, personally, I'd find such a set-up highly convenient, for then I'd be

certain of attending the affair. But it would really be giving West Coast fandom the dirty end of the stick. The Philcon was in the East, the Torcon is in the East, and having the '49 conflag in N'Yawk would indeed leave the rest of fandom holding the bag. Let's give all of fandom a break, sez I. Let's hold the next con someplace where the convention has never been before -- preferably in the Northwest (and I'm thinking particularly of the Portland Science Fantasy Soc'y) or else in the Deep South. As Lloyd Alpaugh says, "I hope the '49 convention is held someplace way out west -- because then I'll have an excuse to travel."

I N T E R L U D E

And if, Tom Kusk, your shuffling feet
Should freeze upon the safety isle:
The honking chariots all still,
No hand to turn the stile;

And if the sign that flashes DRINK
HECHT'S MALTED MILK in red and blue
Crumbles to burnt-out krypton bones,
Then what of you?

Suppose, Miss Baitsch, this haggard line
Awaiting supermarket veal
Should stand here till the world runs down,
And need no evening meal?

The blimp that lolls above the bank
Shall fracture neatly with a pop;
The presses shall not churn the news;
The candybars shall melt to slop;

And when a rain like needlepoint
Shall fall in stitches on the street,
The rust-scales of the Dodd Place bus,
Dropping, shall toll a cadence sweet.

No treadmill turns;
No atom whirls;
No quarters into cashdrawers ring:

Live on its liquid branch,
A thrush shall sing.

---John Holbrook Caley

A T L A N T I D E

Careless of staring star-eyes,
The sprawling breakers white
Stagger, collapse on the surfside:
Drunk with the essence of night.