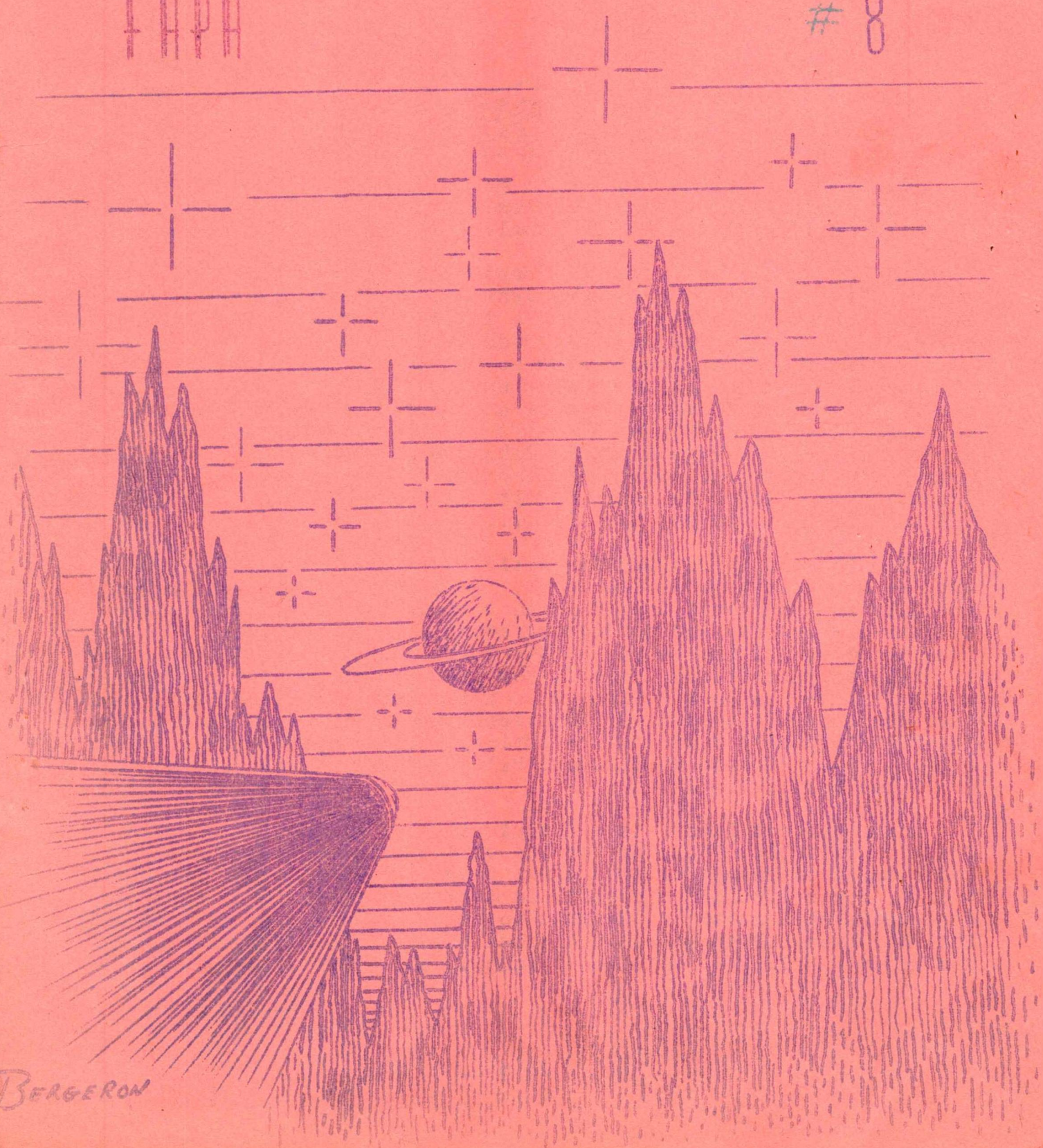


The **STAR ROVER**

FAPA

# 8



BERGERON



....WHAT HATH TIME WROUGHT....



Plenty, chum, plenty... Some good, some bad. But who can dwell on their past miseries and joys when spring is here? "Not us," chorus the Bosnian Irregulars (namely Keasler, Young, Shapiro, and myself).

And so I shall not...tho the past year has brought a lot to think about. Attending the Chicago convention. Meeting Willis, Elsberry, Tucker, Ackerman, lovely Lee, and a lot of other nice people. Can't say that I met a single person I didn't like. Although it was a rather lonely affair for me since I knew so few people there. Even those I did get acquainted with would soon suggest "say, let's crash in on room 1581, 1309, so some other place or another!" I didn't care too much for room-crashing, so I walked the halls -- alone. I had been forewarned about BeAle -- and even if I did take the rap on his malted and hamburger tab across the street at Wimpy's, I thought Ken was a pretty decent guy. (Seem's he asked to sit next to Madle and me, then waltzed off and forgot to pay his bill....)

Then there's my renewed fan activity since my discharge from the army -- for what that may be worth. (One fan wrote me "you are too inconsistent and don't take fanning seriously enough. Your mags are too hit-or-miss and you don't correspond with enough fans. From what I gathered by talking to you at the Morrison, your primary interest is still science-fiction. Don't you know by now, as far as fandom is concerned, s-f is just the means to a fannish end?....") This nameless character (a so-called BNF) also pointed out to me that a few other BNF's didn't read sciene-fiction. "Look at the record," he said. I don't know what record he's speaking of, and besides I can't see that far....

Last, but not least, is my acquisition of a crazy lime-green Chevy convertable. And the forming of the Bosnian Irregulars, a loose crowd of cosmic poltroons who haunt the streets int the dark of the St. Louis eventide. Shapiro is leaving the air force soon and presumably will return to Detroit to badger DeVore, so guess we will lose him from our group of regal boulevardiers. It's been nice having you around, Hal.... Come again soon....and bring Alice along.

-- Van Splawn



# DANGER-BEMS AT WORK!

by RUTHVEN TODD

(Excerpted in part from an article appearing in PARK EAST, July '51.)

The background of science fiction is varied and far extended, going back to the multitude of utopias and the early moon voyages, such as that written by Bishop Wilkins, founder-member of the Royal Society of London and inventor of a new scientific or "philosophical" language, and even to the satirical adventures of Lemuel Gulliver. In the nineteenth century the novels of Jules Verne, French master of the boys' book, passed as science fiction, but in reality Verne was more interested in strange settings than in exploring the wildness of scientific possibility. He seized upon the idea of the early submarines and sent his Captain Nemo twenty thousand leagues beneath the sea; the enthusiasm of that mid-century for ballistics lifted his voyagers to the moon in a cannonball; and the mining interests of an industrial age conveyed other travelers to the center of the earth.

Until the middle of the nineteenth-thirties the science-fiction writer had a pretty free hand. This was the period when bems (bug-eyed monsters) rioted on every asteroid in space and Buck Rogers characters shot them down with portable death-rays, winning their girls and settling down to adventure among the stars forevermore. Mars was a dream in the mind of Edgar Rice Burroughs where transplanted Tarzans carried out their feats of derring-do. Robots murdered their human masters and found, to their mechanical dismay, that in doing so they had bitten off the hand that fed them. An old packing case with a few knobs served as a time machine to carry the hero back to the expulsion from Eden or forward to

the date when Earth had become an arid red dying planet like Mars. Possibility was not so much in demand as excitement, and the majority of the novels of the time were little more than westerns transmogrified into celestial settings.

Today, however, the reader expects and asks for more than this. Although the old-fashioned bug-eyed monster is fast becoming extinct, and many will be sorry to see him go, as yet no one has founded a Society for the Protection of the Bem. The inhabitants of an unknown world are still as strange as imagination can make them, but it is not their strangeness as alien entities which is frightening or awe-inspiring. They are possessors of incredible powers, are





telepathic, or indulge in teleportation, the mysterious art of moving one's body by merely taking thought, or live in a system built upon a pure but alien logic. Variations are played on this theme of utter foreignness, as in a recent novel, Needle, by Hal Clement. In this the plot hinges on the symbiotic relationship between a benign filter-passing virus, from a distant planetary system, and a small boy. The virus, a virtuous and indeed at times an almost priggish organism, is a detective in his system and flies to earth in a submicroscopic space-ship in pursuit of a fleeing criminal of his own kind. Taking up lodgings in the body of the boy, he teaches him to co-operate and finally runs down the villain, hidden in the body of another human. This is probably one of the more successful efforts to make use of the detective technique in a purely science-fiction setting.

In the best of modern science fiction there is an insistence upon the characters being more than mere cardboard outouts, puppeteering about space at the behest of their authors. They are expected to behave in accordance with recorded human behavior and, if not human, still to correlate with some scheme of logic which is consistent within its own rules. The only exceptions to this seem to be the radiant mutants, usually homo superior, who remain man but, brightened incredibly by an atomic bomb, surpass him in intellect and ability. In this case the imagination of neither writer nor editor can be expected to keep pace with characters so far their mental betters. A neat solution to the problem was found by Wilmar H. Shiras, who wrote a series of stories about mutant children with an adult mental age, still retaining many of the characteristics of childhood.

Machines may still appear vague in outline and lacking in precise detail, but they also have to behave in a logical manner. The time traveler, the man who takes a tuck in time, behaves in accordance with the dream-time theories of J. W. Dunne and the space-time theories of Albert Einstein, who Unified Field Theory, in addition, is beginning to be exploited by the more up-to-date writers.

In philosophy, the non-Aristotelian logic of the semanticists has been used as the basis of a whole series of novels by A. E. van Vogt. Work on calculating machines, known today as the science of cybernetics, at Harvard, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Princeton, and elsewhere, as well as in the laboratories of International Business Machines and other firms, has become the theme of a large number of stories, including one, by H. Nearing, Jr., about a poetry-writing machine invented by a professor, which, after its product has been criticized, is found dead the following morning, a mechanical John Keats killed by a review. ((The Poetry Machine, F&SF, Fall '50 - VS))

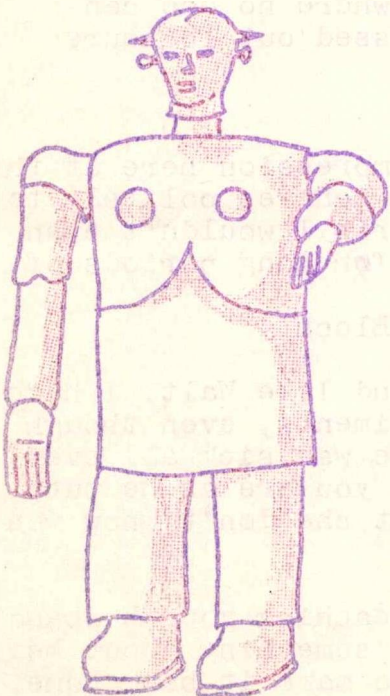
One aspect of science fiction is unique -- the followers. It is impossible to imagine the readers of historical or detective novels banded together in the same manner as the science-fiction fans. There are, it is true, a few groups of detective addicts, such as the Baker Street Irregulars, devoted to a rather whimsical study of the life and times of Sherlock Holmes, but such organizations are the exception rather than the rule, and their activities are social as much as intellectual.



Things are not thus with the science-fiction fans. They are active groups which hold weekly or monthly meetings and annual conventions, the last attended by writers and editors, at which serious subjects, such as the probable date of the first successful flight into space or the inevitability of Armageddon, are discussed with due solemnity. The fans issue a myriad of leaflets, usually hectographed or mimeographed, but sometimes printed. These, to distinguish them from the regular, or pro-zines, are known as fan-zines. Often the contents of these ephemera consist of badly digested scientific information, culled, apparently by illiterates, from the pages of scientific informational journals or the Encyclopaedia Britannica, and accompanied by badly written stories with impossible plots; but in a few of them a higher standard is reached, and many of the younger present-day pro-zine writers made their start as contributors to the fan-zines.

Despite the appalling childishness of some of the fan-zines, no one who has studied the letters of fans in the better pro-zines can dismiss them with an airy wave as the mouthings of cranks or ignor-amuses. Scientists, engineers, and doctors are among the readers, and writers, of science fiction, as if, perhaps, they were curious about the future of a world which they themselves have planned. The readers include people from every profession. Last summer, for instance, a smartly dressed model was observed on the New York subway reading a copy of Amazing Stories, with its garish cover enclosed in a copy of Flair. It is sad to have to confess that she was not trying to read it through the hole in the cover.

((Heck, your crank fan-zine editor just can't go on with this. I, for one, am positively sick of these incompetents who take an ill-timed swipe at sf and fandom without knowing exactly what they're talking about.))



## Shades of THE "Good Ole Days!"

NEWS ITEM, Sept. '52.

'VIENNA, AUSTRIA, Sept. 14 (Reuters).-- A giant robot man ran amok in a department store here and threatened to trample on a crowd of panic-stricken children.

A passer-by stumbled over a cable yesterday and pulled out the plug connecting the robot with the electric current. He quickly stuck it back again.

But this gave the impulse necessary to set the robot in motion. He marched forward toward the children. An engineer quickly gave signals and the colossus turned about and marched back to his place.'

((Believe this was Sabor; the Swiss robot talks, smokes, can hear, but isn't very strong! Sabor weighs 700 pounds and is 7½ feet tall. Pic at left is from LIFE, Sept 1st, '52. -- VB))



Robert Bloch writes.....

Dear Madelaine:

One of my more subversive activities at the Convention was intersect these immoral (or I believe that's spelt immortal, it's just a t here and there that makes the different) words. They were addressed to:

Mrs. Madelaine Willis  
170 Upper Newtonards Road  
Belfast, Northern Ireland.

They were signed:

Bob (informal type-fellow-critter) Bloch

Bloch was his usual extravagant self and wrote them on post cards (Morrison Hotel postcards). Here they are, in some what of an order.

Dear Madelaine: I have just met Walt and am most pleased. He impresses me as a sort of poor man's Max Keasler.

Bob Bloch

Dear Madelaine; I certainly admire your husband's taste in women. If you are anywhere near as pretty as some of the girls he has picked up here in Chicago, you are to be congratulated.

Bob Bloch

Dear Madelaine: If you are worrying about Walt, set your mind at ease. He is safe and sound under my bed where no one can step on him -- and has been ever since he passed out 18 hours ago. He is in good hands.

Bob Bloch

Dear Madelaine: Walt sure is making a good impression here at the convention. He is the soul of courtesy. He behaves politely to even the worst tramps and loose women --- girls I wouldn't even dare be seen with. Of course he disappears for long periods of time, but he always comes back for more.

Bob Bloch

Dear Madelaine: You can be proud of a husband like Walt. I have just heard him pay you the most lavish compliments, even though the poor chap could hardly speak-- indeed, he was sick all over the room not 5 minutes later. But I am sure you are as he puts it -- "The bes'lil' women inna world, and what she don't know won't hurt her" Bob Bloch

Dear Madelaine: A Man named Bob Tucker is teaching your husband how to play a game called "poker." Walt says something about being a good swimmer, but I doubt if he can hone to make it back home.

Bob Bloch

Dear Madelaine: No matter what you hear or read in the papers, don't believe it. Walt did not set fire to the hotel or attack that colored maid. If anything, it was the reverse -- at least, with the maid. Have faith in your husband, as I do.-

Bob Bloch

Dear Madelaine: Your husband is just as funny as his writing. His jokes delight me- like yesterday, when he walked into the Convention Hall naked and, with a straight face, insisted he was a nudist fan. It made a big hit, outside of a few hundred stuffy women, who fainted. I admire him for it.

Bob Bloch

Dear Madelaine: I am writing this for Walt. He is feeling a little low but says to tell you, in spite of what happen, he loves you. Shelby Vick is raising another Willis fund to get him out on bail.

Bob Bloch

Dear Madelaine: Don't worry--- we'll get Walt back to you. Those wild threats he keeps making about never returning are obviously just done to impress the women here. He'll get over it.

Bob Bloch

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COME, LET US VOYAGE...

Come, let us voyage up the stream of Time,  
To look on ancient wonders of renown;  
As when on Angkor-Wat the moon shone down  
On sculptured Titans, jeweled and sublime -  
And when the sun on Babel's terraced towers  
Outlined tall, templed peaks against the sky,  
Yet saw them crumble, when Supernal powers  
Ordained that human vanity must die.

Still westward, where swift currents subtly lead  
To distant futures, Terra's final goal,  
We find a mire of aimless thought and deed,  
Where Mankind battles on beyond control -  
Until at last by Fate's remote decree  
Time's stream flows into vast Eternity.

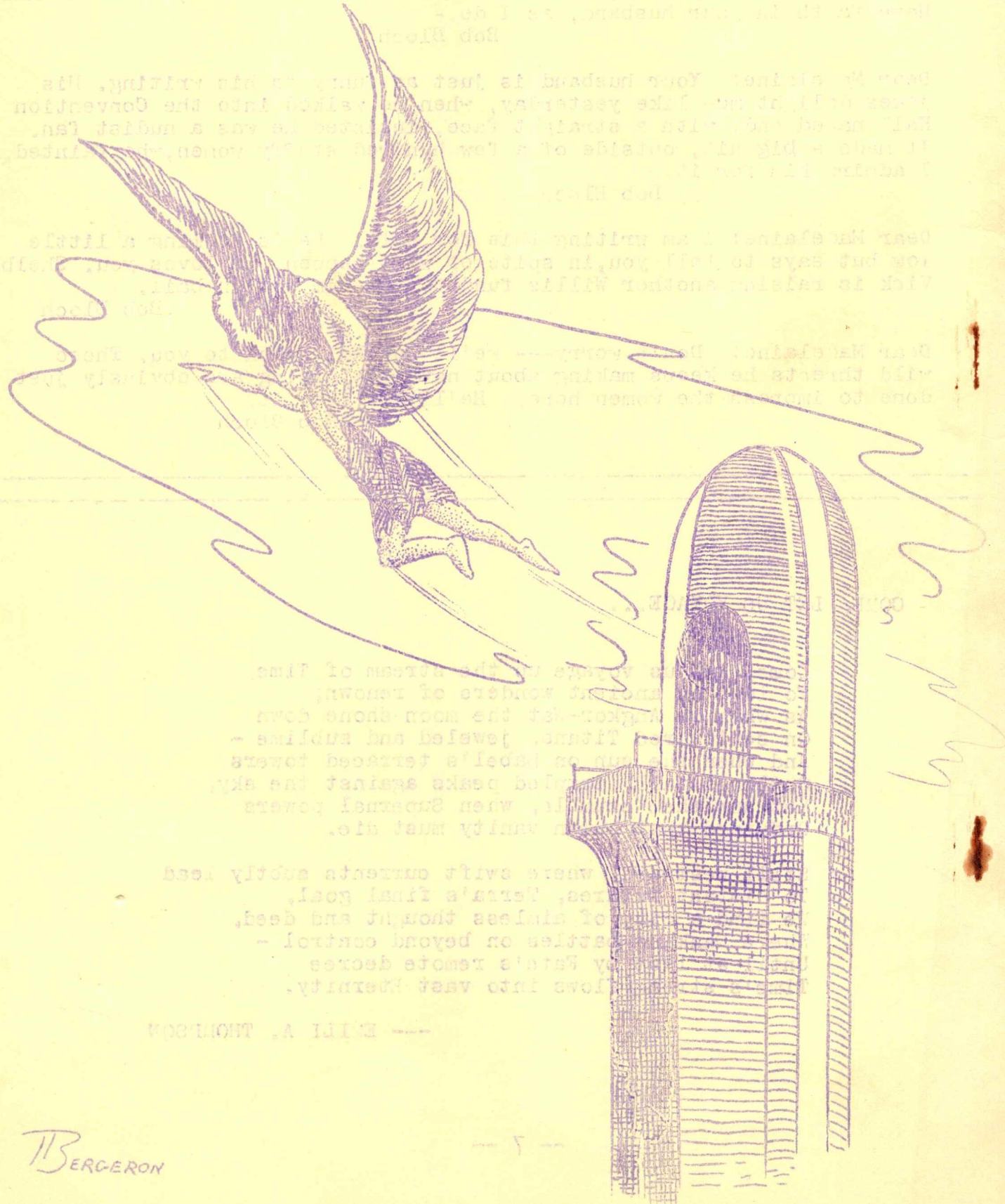
--- EMILI A. THOMPSON



Dear Mr. ...  
I have been thinking of you a great deal lately.  
I hope you are well and happy.  
I am, as usual, your devoted friend,  
Bob ...

Dear Mr. ...  
I have been thinking of you a great deal lately.  
I hope you are well and happy.  
I am, as usual, your devoted friend,  
Bob ...

Dear Mr. ...  
I have been thinking of you a great deal lately.  
I hope you are well and happy.  
I am, as usual, your devoted friend,  
Bob ...



--- ELLI A. THOMPSON ---

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