

MOBILIZER



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You may (or may not) have heard of an article in the Writer's Digest for January 1940 by one Jerry Westerfield, entitled "The Sky's no Limit". The article dealt with science-fiction magazines in general, Amazing Stories and Fantastic Adventures in particular, and ended up with remarks upon fandom. Unfortunately these remarks were erroneous in many places, and in some cases might be construed as being libelous. Consequently, your columnist wrote to the editors of the Writer's Digest setting things aright, and requesting that our letter be published in the Forum column. The editors replied about three weeks later, claiming that our letter was much too long (although they have many time published letters twice as long in reference to nothing at all) and asking us to boil it down "so we can give the case succinctly". We did so, mailing said replies on March 4th. Two issues of the Writer's Digest have since appeared, without mention of the letter, but we hope they will publish it in their next issue. As a matter of interest we append the text of the second shortened letter we sent them.

"Forum Dept. Writer's Digest, 22 East 12th

Street, Cincinnati, Ohio. Gentleman: "In "The Sky's No Limit", I regret to say that the author is not as well informed on the fan field aspect of science fiction as he might be. Science fiction fans can be divided, generally, into two types: (1) those fans who adhere to the Jules Verne type of science fiction, that run of story which places its accent on the role that mechanical science will play in shaping the future, and (2) those fans who adhere to the H.G. Wells type: that run of story which accentuates the role of social sciences in making the world of tomorrow.

"Thus we have the Vernians, who think that fans should become scientists in order to justify their position, and help make science fiction come true; and we have the Wellsians, who claim that fans should participate in some form of sociological movement, that their roles so far as science itself goes should be no more than defending scientific progress against those who preach a doing-away with the further march of science. The latter, Wellisian, fans are more or less loosely known as "Michelists".

"But they are not "old-time Technocrats" as Mr. Westerfield put it. In the first place, Michelism did not begin to assert itself until late 1937; Hugo Gernsback was plugging Technocracy in his magazines in 1933. There are some Technocrats among the Michelists, but they speak only for themselves; the Michelists have never actually organized or accepted, as a whole, any specific philosophy, credo, or scheme of action. Because of a great deal of personal enmity between prominent Michelists and prominent Vernians, both sides have been accused of nearly every crime imaginable.

"Thus, Mr. Westerfield is incorrect when he states: "Heading the Michelists is a New Yorker named Donald A. Wollheim." The Michelists have no leader; Mr. Wollheim has, however, twice been

voted the nation's number one fan. And the Vernians do not like this at all.

"Mr. Westerfield also errs when he stated that Wollheim: "Points a scornful finger at the Bell Telephone Company, accusing them of suppressing patents." Reference to the article in question (vide: Science Fiction Fan, July, 1939) will show that Wollheim merely quoted the patent study of the Federal Communications Commission.

"Furthermore the comment: "Most fans resent the intrusion of the Michelists" is far from correct. The Vernians resent the very existence of the Michelists, true. But the Vernians are not "most fans". Since Michelism is a phenomenon peculiar to science fiction fans alone; since all Michelists are fans, there could not be any "intrusion". Moreover, the Michelists have ~~never~~ been confined to any particular section of the country, such as New York.

"The most glaring mistake in Mr. Westerfield's statement is: "And during the science fiction convention, held in New York last July, the fans refused to let them (Michelists) invade their ranks. As a matter of fact they literally threw them out".

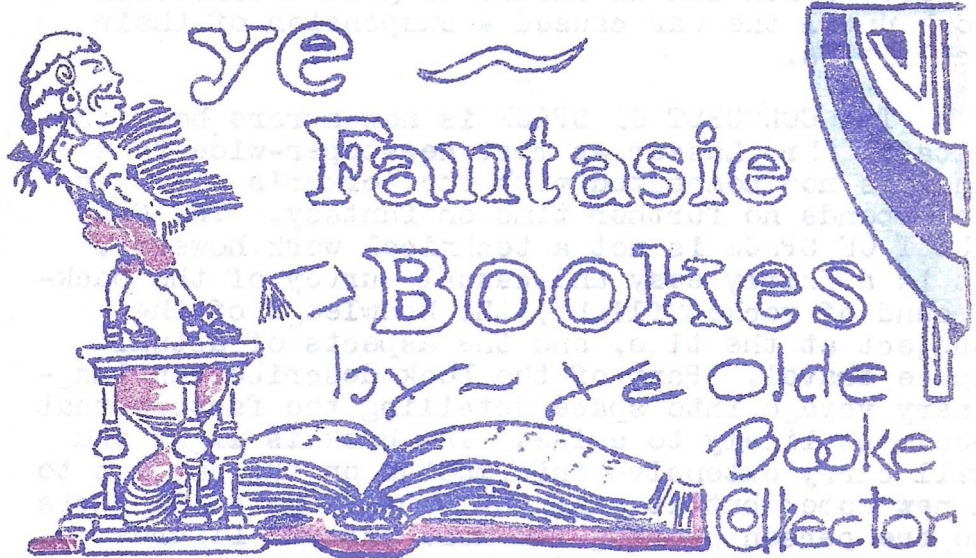
"No one was "thrown out" of the World Science Fiction Convention. There were a large number of Michelists in attendance. However, six prominent fans were denied admittance by the Convention Committee, although the Convention had been widely advertised as "open to all fans". These six were particular Michelists against whom the Vernian Convention Committee felt particular personal hatred. Despite a concerted effort on the part of the entire assemblage to over-rule to Committee's decision, and admit these six, the tiny minority in control managed to block this effort by simply refusing to allow resolutions of votes of any kind. For confirmation of this, I refer you to editors Frederik Pohl (Astonishing and Super-Science Stories) John W. Campbell, Jr., (Astounding Science Fiction and Unknown) and Charles D. Hornig (Science Fiction

and Future Fiction), as well as authors Jack Williamson, Manley Wade Wellman, Leo Gregor, Ray Cummings, Isaac Asimov, L. Sprague de Camp, and Artist Frank R. Paul, to name a few.

'The reaction of fandom as a whole was one of complete sympathy with the six fans barred; even those expressly Vernian condemned the action of the Convention Committee, I refer you, for example, to the statement made by the Los Angeles Science Fiction League; this is typical of the reactions of fandom as a whole, with the exception of a few close friends of the Convention Committee. That Michelism itself was not the grounds for barring these fans is shown by the statement you quoted from Mr. Sykora: that statement is 100% Michelist.

'In conclusion, I might add that science fiction fans are the most energetic and vituperative body of magazine-adherents to be found. Any number of feuds, resulting from the essential differences in outlook between the two groups have arisen and have been raging many years. But despite it all, the fans manage to do things and go places.'" Sincerely, Robert W. Lowndes.

It is hoped that the editors of the Writer's Digest live up to the fairness and sincerity they indicated in their first letter to your writer by publishing this reply in the forthcoming issue of the magazine.



Strictly speaking these works are not classifiable as fantasy - at least not to the science-fiction fan but no one can doubt as yet that their general theme tends still to be fantastic. I refer to two books on astronautics by two persons known to stf - THE CONQUEST OF SPACE by David Lasser (Penguin Press, 1931) and ROCKETS THROUGH SPACE by P.E. Cleator (Simon & Schuster, 1936). Fans will remember Lasser for his editorship of WONDER STORIES FROM June 1929 to October 1933, and they will remember P.E. Cleator for his articles on rocketry in the first British stf magazine SCOOPS as well as for his story "Martian Madness" in the June 1934 WONDER. Both these persons became interested in rocketry and the science of space-flight (whose technical title is astro-nautics) through their connections with science-fiction. It was as editor of WONDER that Mr. Lasser came into agreement with the idea growing out of the Sciencecers and out of Gernsback that a society should be formed for the specific purpose of research into space travel. Mr. Lasser was first president of the American Interplanetary Society now known as the American Rocket Society. Cleator became president of the British Interplanetary

Society which did an amount of good theoretical work until the war caused a suspension of their activities.

THE CONQUEST OF SPACE is now a rare book to obtain. Mr. Lasser as most newspaper-wide fans know is now connected with the Worker's Alliance and spends no further time on fantasy. THE CONQUEST OF SPACE is not a technical work however. It is a fairly easy and casual survey of the background of rocket flight, the knowledge of the subject at the time, and the aspects of actual space travel. Part of the book describes an imaginary voyage into space detailing the factors that would be likely to arise. The book is light and will carry extensive information on the subject to a new comer but it will not convey any solid facts to the person probing for more factual figures. The book is illustrated by four plates - two of which are scenes from the German motion picture "By Rocket to the Moon".

ROCKETS THROUGH SPACE, subtitled "The Dawn of Interplanetary Travel", is a far more up-to-date volume and contains far more information statistics and diagrams of actual rocket models, designs and experiments. Plates show Pendry (Gawain Edwards) and the ARS rocket which made a record of 700 miles an hour, scenes from Jules Verne, from the UFA film, from various rocket mail and rocket experimenters flights. Rather than dealing with imaginary flights through space itself, the greater part of the book recounts the actual experiments made on the subject of rocketry, detailing the work of the German Society and its "Maraks", the American Society's trials, the various mail-rockets, both winged and otherwise, and other experiments.

One or both of these books should be must reading for at least nine-tenths of the writers whose dizzy yarns of space-adventure appear in the magazines today. A few cold facts on the subject would douse their fine fantastically nonsensical space-pirates, garbage men, warships, and malignant Lartian marauders into thin soup.

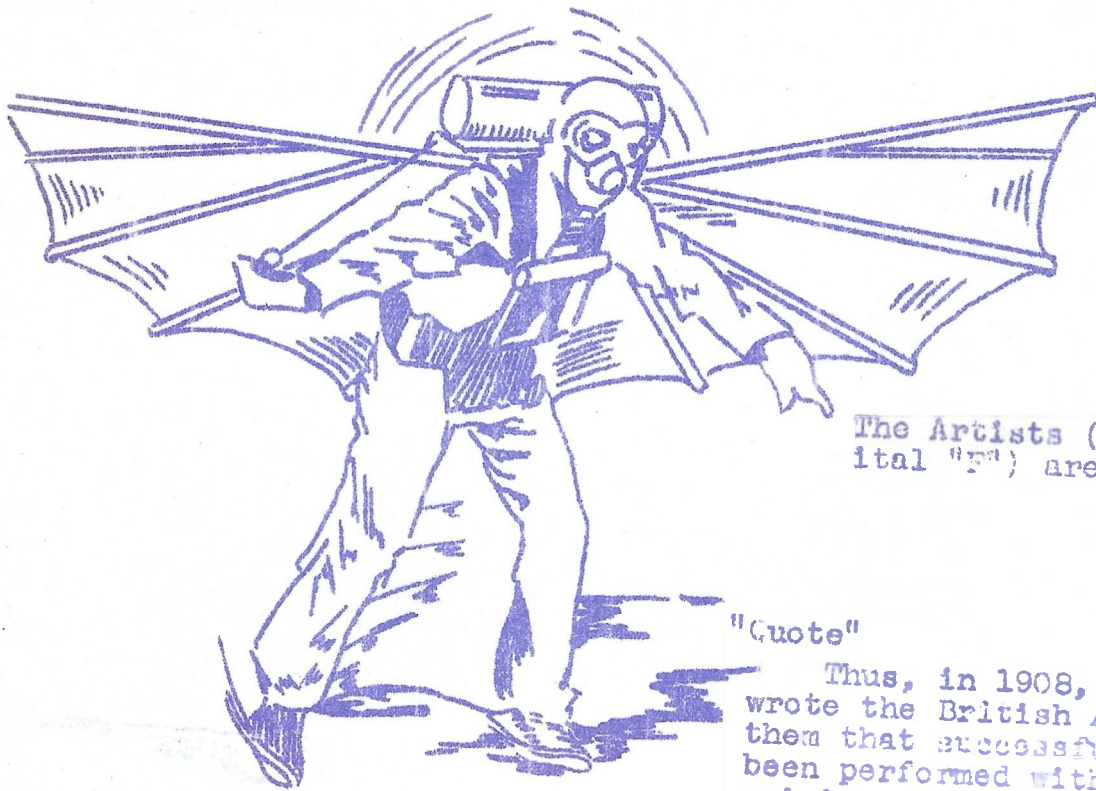
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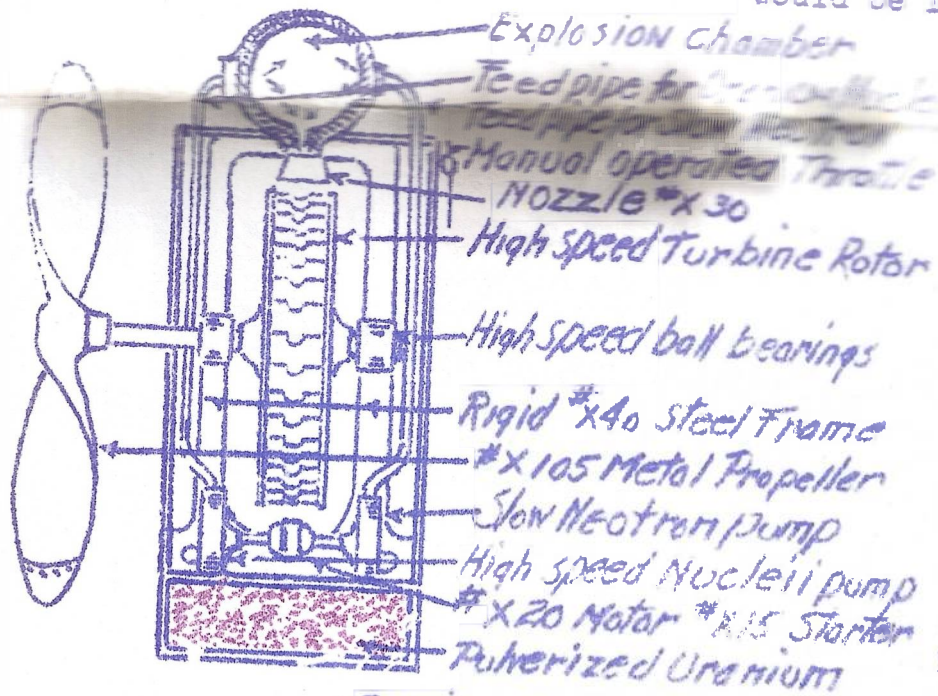


Oh!
yes=
BUT

The Artists (spelled with a capital "A") are still drawing 'em

"Quote"

Thus, in 1908, The Wright Brothers wrote the British Admiralty informing them that successful experiments had been performed with airplanes and inquiring whether the British Admiralty would be interested in this new potential weapon of war. Some



Crossing range 25000 miles
Speed unlimited
Weight 75#

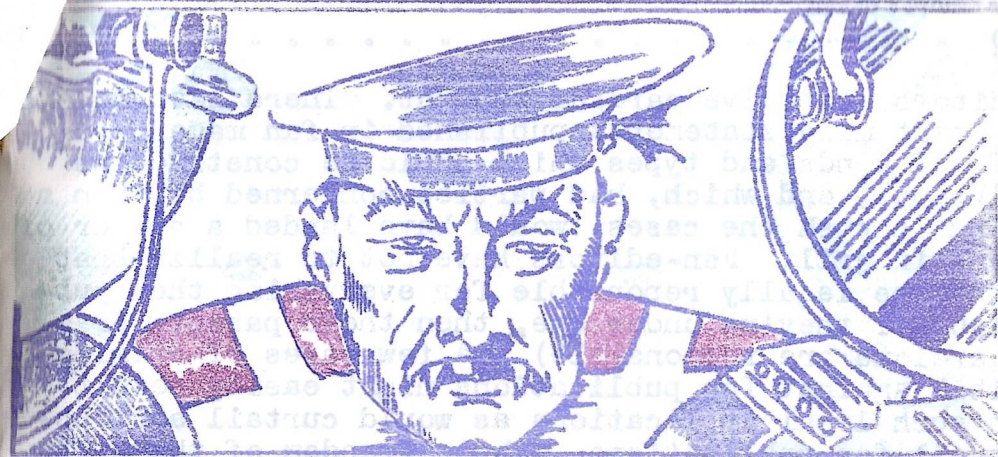
Note
This Fantasy is strictly from a Vernion view point.



can shave now

...the reply...
...years before German air-craft were bombing London...
"With reference to your communication concerning the use of aeroplanes, I have consulted 17 technical advisers and regret to inform you that the Admiralty are of the opinion that they cannot be of any value for naval purposes."

NOTE:
The simplicity of this motor is astounding. Fresh Air is drawn thru fine pulverized uranium passing into a chamber where it is hit squarely in the nucleus, by a slow Neutron fired from a cyclotron (atom smashing machine). The Uranium Nucleus then breaks into fragments which are hurled literally into a cosmic expanse of space. The explosion simultaneously of billions of these nuclei produces energy far beyond the dreams of man in the past.



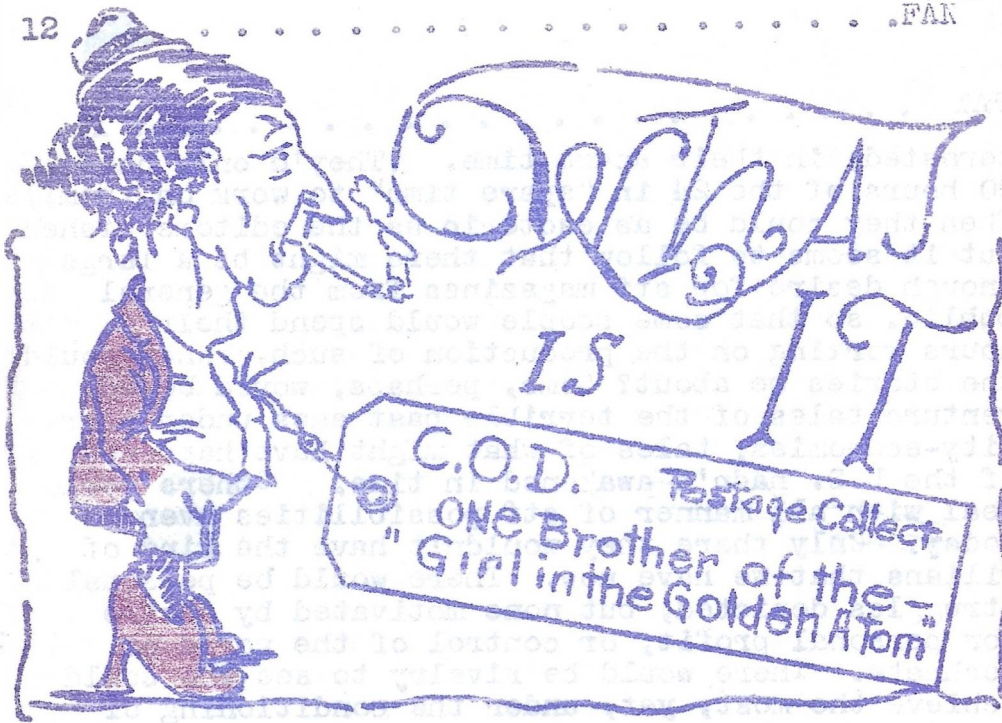
VAGABONDIA or Doc's Ditherings

A pleasant diversion for any stf fan these days is to behold newsreel photos of 1940 super-bombers, etc., and recall that Wesso and Paul were drawing planes such as these as far back as 6 to 8 years ago. Yet, today, they don't seem to be drawing planes such as one might conceivably be seeing five to eight years from now. Nor, as a matter of fact, does any artist seem to be doing so with the possible exception of Krupa. A bright new penny to whoever who can tell us why. *** A worthwhile job for some fan who is sincerely interested in being of service to the fan-world, one who has had experience in mimeograph work and who can turn out a neat job, and, finally, one who knows his onions about fan-history, would be going through all the fan magazines, and picking out the numerous items which are really worth the readers' while. There are a good number of them, tho the amount is small in relation to the total amount published. These carefully selected items would be published in a large-sized, neatly-mimeoed monthly fan-mag, which would carry no editorial comment or reader's section but merely the goods. Anyone want the job? *** The matter of libels which has just recently been aired in relation to a particular publishing company, is one which fan-

editors must give careful thought. There have been a great many statements published in fan magazines of all kinds and types which could be construed as libelous, and which, had parties concerned been in a mind to push the cases, would have landed a number of fans in jail. Fan-editors have got to realize that they are legally responsible for everything they publish (if they're under age, then their parents or guardians are responsible). A few cases of criminal libel against fan publications might easily result in such legal applications as would curtail seriously all fan-publications. While freedom of the press is not actually withdrawn, still qualifications can be made which would prevent many fans from publishing. *** It's most discouraging to learn that the British Flat (England's version of the Ivory Tower) has fallen apart. Dave McIlwain's 2nd issue of Gargoyle carries the story on that; and it matches out own Futurian House and Ivory Tower in general supersanity and delightful doings. *** At the Ivory Tower, Technocrats Lowndes, Wollheim, Michel, and Cohen can be discovered almost any time speculating (in a most un-Technocratic manner, as Technies ain't supposed to speculate -- at least not on the record) on how stf magazines will be published and run under the Technate. Of course, chirps the Daw, there isn't any real science fiction being published today. Naturally: any stf story laid in the future, which did not show the USA under a Technate (or functional system equal thereto) or in increasing chaos, just isn't based on scientific deduction. It's sheer fantasy. Whereat non-Technocrats Wilson and Kornbluth snicker loudly. *** This seems to be a fruitful subject: how would our stf magazines be run? Under a Technate or functional-control system equal thereto. Since expense (in energe) is no object, any motives of personal profit is out, the mags would have to fulfill a considerable demand if the Technate were to subsidize them. Otherwise, they'd have to be brought out privately, by individuals in-

terested, in their spare time. (They'd only have 20 hours of the 24 in "spare time" to work on them!) Then they could be as esoteric as the editors wished. But it seems to follow that there might be a large enough desire for stf magazines from the general public, so that some people would spend their 4 hours working on the production of such. What would the stories be about? Some, perhaps, would be adventure tales of the terrible past ages under scarcity-economies, tales of what might have happened if the U.S. hadn't awakened in time. Others would deal with all manner of stf possibilities even as today. Only there they wouldn't have the kind of vilians that we have now. There would be personal struggles depicted, but none motivated by desire for personal profit, or control of the world or Technate. There would be rivalry to see who could achieve the most, yet, under the conditioning of the Technate, would rivals stoop to sabotage? An interesting point.

There would certainly be all manner of adventures on other planets. And no doubt the building of new civilization there. But what form would these take? In the stf tales of tomorrow, they would take the same forms, at their best, that the present (then) showed. They would be functional rather than based upon Price System ideas, which would be things of the past by the time homo sap arrived at the moon. *** Would these stf tales of tomorrow be as interesting and thrilling as the best of today; I rather think they would -- to the readers of tomorrow.



Introducing Yula Gree, our Supper Science Editor, in charge of this proceeding and all similar future mistakes. Yula Gree used to be our Morning Miracle Raster, but has been recently elevated because of rare (you'll see!) ability in handling such Scientificontests.

He presents this one:.

A sparkling idea came in today on the Time Train from one of our investigative readers up in 1944. He writes (four years from now); and that fact he presents, and conclusion he draws, is the subject of this unusual chance for one of our readers to win any of four of two valuable science fiction classics.

His amazing statement: "The other day I trained my telescope south in an effort to view the offices of STF. Failing to see them"---his astounding conclusion---" I decided that the earth must be curved!"

What are our readers reactions? (careful with those ray guns!) Which do you join of two factions?

(At least we have no puns). Do you say our world's Mae Westy!?

For the best answers received after the issue of contest-announcement-winners has gone to press, we will award: 1. An order good for one shower installed in the "Moon Pool"; 2. Flit for "The Second Swarm"; 3. One translation of a Clark As an Smith fantasy; 4. Two boxes, John Taine's "Seeds of Life"; and 5. The brother of "The Girl in the Golden Atom".

It is understood in entering that all prizes are sent C.O.D., and number 3 is subject to change as we may not be able to find anyone who can translate a CASmith story.

Now, how do you like our contest? There will be more. You can send your complaints to my sister, Ia Gree; but there'll still be more ...

P.S. the 5th is the booby-prize, "cause--heck--who wants the brother of the "Girl in the Golden Atom"?

Applause for Campbell who has given us Hubbard's "Final Blackout" in Astounding. The Science Fiction world needs more stories with depth and penetration to them.

And speaking of such things, how about "But Without Horns" in Unknown. Ghastly and depressing, yes but who know but that it may be an accurate forecast of the future, perhaps the very near future.



Three rousing cheers for dear old Frank Munsey Company. It is, of course, no news to our multitude of readers that "Famous Fantastic Mysteries" has for months been giving the fans a sumptuous banquet. The Chinese like to bury eggs for years and later dig them up and eat them. (They really are delicious as I know from having eaten them many times while living in China). Similarly science fiction and fantasy fans like to "bury" some of their favorite stories and dig them up years later for rereading.

Unless a science fiction or fantasy devotee is a riproaring fan who collects and hoards every item in the field (a predeliction that takes time, space and money), he will miss or overlook many choice tidbits. Also many of us do not feel like saving every magazine ever published merely to have on hand for later rereading a few prize stories. That is just where "Famous Fantastic Mysteries" step in. From the files of innumerable magazines, and to a large extent at the request of readers, the editor selects outstanding science fiction and fantasy yarns for republication. Many of these

stories have never before been seen by most of us and come as a most delectable surprise. Others were perhaps read years ago and then lost and consequently appeal to us today just as would a renewal of a valued friendship.

The editor has done a suprisingly good job in avoiding hackneyed stories that have been reprinted almost ad infinitum and which can be found in any library, and has concentrated on lesser known, perhaps obscure tales that pleased the fans a decade or a generation past. The venture is exceedingly welcome, and I, for one, wish it all success. One fan recently wrote me that he considered "Famous Fantastic Mysterries" the finest magazine of its kind. I do not entirely agree, because I feel that while resurrecting the past is of importance and interest (that's why archeologists exist), we must also go forward with new writers, new kinds of stories, new flights of science and imagination in our attempt (meager and feeble though it may be) to insure a better world. At the same time I give full praise and thanks to those who have produced "Famous Fantastic Mysterries" and thus given us a treat that we otherwise would never have enjoyed.

Not satisfied with publishing "Famous Fantastic Mysterries" the Lunsey Company goes on to prove to the fans that they are offering not a Barmacide feast but rather a real banquet by bringing out "Fantastic Novels". The two magazines are supplementary. The former will hereafter be devoted to short stories and will, so we are assured contain no serials. The short stories will consist almost entirely of long wanted reprints. Long stories or complete novels which normally would appear as serials will now be published complete in a single issue of the latter magazine. The first novel to appear was "The Blind Spot" a classic comparable to "The Moon Pool". Next issue will bring England's "Darkness and Dawn" and a little

later we are promised "The Spot of Life" and others.

The writer of this article is in no way connected with the Munsey Company, has never met anyone connected with the Company, and has no interest in boosting the two magazines except as most welcome additions to the science fiction and fantasy field. More power and success to them.

Among the stories which I would like to see reprinted are the following - some of which I have heard but never read and others which I want to re-read:

- Odd John, By Stapledon
- The Hampdenshire Wonder, By Beresford
- The North West Smith Stories, by C.L. Moore.
- The Dwellers in the Mirage, by Herritt.
- World Divided, By Winiki
- The Titan, by Miller
- Doctor Fogg, by Matson
- They Found Atlantis, by Wheatley
- The Human Zero, by Gardner
- Red Twilight, By Vincent
- The Great Stone of Sardis, by Stockton
- The other Side of the Moon by Hamilton
- Beyond the Rim by S. Fowler Wright
- Cassandra by Berkeley
- Into the Infinite, by Hall
- When Worlds Collide, by Balmer and McHaig
- The Phantom in the Rainbow by La Master
- Triplanetary by Smith
- The Second Deluge by Serviss
- After Worlds Collide by Balmer and McHaig
- Master Minds of Venus by Sonneman
- The Council of Drones, By Sonneman
- Venus Adventure, by Harriss
- War of Two Worlds by Hamilton
- The Man from Beyond by Harriss
- The Laughing Death by Hall

Worlds Adrift by Hall
Succubus by Ziska
Man of Ages, by Ziska

What do the rest of the readers think of that list. Terrible? All right, send in your own list to us, and Also send it to "Famous Fantastic Mysteries" or "Fantastic Novels".

Why don't you send a vote to Arthur L. Widner, Jr., Box 122, Bryantville, Mass., for his poll as to the "best ever" writers of science or fantasy fiction? Believe it or not, Campbell leads the parade to date with the genius of them all (in my opinion) Lovecraft in 7th place.

When, oh when, will Hazel Heald do some more writing? Her "Horror in the Museum" which appeared in Weird a few years ago was a splendid piece of work, and so were her other stories. She has produced very little but it has all been first rate.

I still hope (for a confirmed pessimist I do a lot of hoping), I still hope someone will soon publish Weinbaum's last work "The Mad Brain". A lot of nonsense has been said and written about it being "too strong meat". Since when have fans balked at anything that was well written? I, for one, will guarantee to buy and read it, whether in magazine or book form.

What has happened to "Stardust" lately? Beautifully printed and worth continuing even though some of the contents were rather sad. At least it was legible. Speaking of legibility, has anyone's eyesight been enough for the Moskowitz, et al publications?

* * * * *

Another hope - that Marvel Tales (Crawford's magazine) will be revived. There have been some rumors along that line.

* * * * *

Sykora, Taurasi and Moskowitz,
Always give me lots of fits.

Moskowitz, Sykora, and Taurasi,
Always drive me crazy

Taurasi, Moskowitz and Sykora
Are always sure to bore ya.

(Rotten rhyming, but the idea is there)

* * * * *

Rumors have been floating around for months that Farnsworth Wright is going to start a new weird or fantasy magazine of his own. I hope it is true. Wright did a grand job with "Weird Tales" He has a flair for the outré and although curiously enough he never seemed to appreciate Lovecraft as a genius of the occult and non-human and showed this non-appreciation by rejecting some of the master's finest stories ("At the Mountains of Madness" for example), he did present to his readers some truly great pieces of fiction. I, for one, hope he tries his hand again. One thing certain is that a magazine edited by Wright will never print the puerile, infantile trash that is now flooding newstands in the guise of "science fiction" or "fantasy". A question - who is the most childish or moronic, those who write or those who read such tripe? (I apologize to tripe which is a fairly good dish).

Speaking of such things, "Weird Tales" seems to be going down hill rapidly. I still read it because of an occasional good story and because I still hope for a renaissance. For years nothing could compare with it - I am speaking of "fantasy" magazines only, not "science fiction". Those were the days of Lovecraft - may his name persist forever - C.A. Smith, Merritt, C. L. Moore, Derleth, Wandrei, Hazel Heald and a dozen others. Even Williamson was good in those days before he ran out of imagination and began to repeat. And how about the early Hamilton, to say nothing of Quinn, Bloch, Hoffman Price and so on?

Today's "Weird Tales" makes me bow my head in sorrow. I have read one story in a new series by Bedford Jones, called "The Professional Corpse". Now I have read a great deal of Bedford Jones' output in various fields and admire his ability and industry, but his new series is just about the nadir in fantasy. It should be hastily interred. Similarly, many other stories in recent issues of "Weird Tales" are decidedly inferior. I don't ask or expect masterpieces in every issue - masterpieces can't be bought at any corner store - but I do ask reasonably high quality. Dear Editor of "Weird Tales" please for the sake of one who has read every month every issue from Number One to the present time and who for seventeen years has eagerly awaited its monthly arrival, please find some good writers with good stories. Sisyphus after every failure returned undaunted to his task of rolling the stone uphill. Cannot you do the same?

August Derleth is working on the second and third volumes of the Lovecraft Memorial, one to be ready in 1941 and one in 1942 - provided he gets fan support and provided his own serious

writing permits giving the project the attention it requires. We owe a world of thanks to Berleth for the "The Outsider" and should support the remainder of the venture.

With all my ballyhoo and enthusiasm for Lovecraft, you may think he is to me what King Charles' head was to Dick, (go read "David Copperfield" if you don't know what I mean). Well, I do consider him the greatest writer of fantasy that ever lived---and I haven't forgotten Poe, Tachen or Blackwood.

* * * * *

In medieval days water for the Black Sea port of Theodosia on the Crimea was obtained in a curious manner. On nearby heights were erected great piles of broken stones upon which the moist breezes from the sea would condense some of their water. Thirteen of these piles, connected with the city by a system of sandstone pipes, supplied 16,000,000 gallons of fresh water daily and permitted Theodosia to become the most important point on the north coast of the Black Sea.

Barbaric conquerors permitted the stone piles to become overgrown with vegetation, which destroyed their effectiveness. In the nineteenth century modern engineers attempted to restore them to usefulness, but the effort was not successful. The theory of operation is simple and if it could again be worked out in practice it would bring to productive life many arid seacoasts.

* * * * *