

ASTOUNDING

SCIENCE-FICTION

TITLE REGISTERED U. S. PATENT OFFICE

Contents for May, 1942, Vol. XXIX, No. 3

John W. Campbell, Jr., Editor, Catherine Tarrant, Asst. Editor

<i>Novellettes</i>	
ASYLUM	A. E. van Vogt 8
"Among the thousands of stars, in the ages of time, somewhere, some race must have developed interstellar travel. Why haven't they visited us?" Maybe the answer is—	
FOUNDATION	Isaac Asimov 38
A hundred thousand men and women—scientists, they believed themselves—worked on a project. The project they thought they worked on was a fraud; the one they had really been assigned to—	
THE PUSH OF A FINGER	Alfred Bester 108
The destruction of the universe could come about because of a very inconsequential thing—if it were misunderstood by the right man—	
<i>Short Story</i>	
FOREVER IS NOT SO LONG	F. Anton Reeds 34
If the much-sought knowledge of the future were attained—how many could get from it the full flavor of what happiness it allowed?	
<i>Serial</i>	
BEYOND THIS HORIZON—	Anson MacDonald 55
Second of two parts Concluding a picture of a world where bejeweled and lacetrimmed men with scented and painted nails were hard, lightning-fast gunmen at the slightest insult—	
<i>Article</i>	
THE BIRTH OF A SUPERSTITION	Willy Ley 98
Everybody now knows that the ancient Greeks could not see blue, as modern man can. That "knowledge" came about in a queer sort of way, and happens to be cockeyed!	
<i>Readers' Departments</i>	
THE EDITOR'S PAGE	6
THE ANALYTICAL LABORATORY	33
An Analysis of Readers' Opinions.	
IN TIMES TO COME	53
Department of Prophecy and Future Issues.	
BOOK REVIEW	54
BRASS TACKS	104
Concerning Purely Personal Preferences.	

Illustrations by M. Isip, Kramer, Orban, Rogers and Schneeman

Cover by Rogers

OCT THRID
 FRIDAY
 EACH MONTH
 NEXT ISSUE ON
 SAJE MAY 1942
 \$2.50 per YEAR
 25c per COPY
 16
 Printed in the U.S.A.

Monthly publication issued by Street & Smith Publications, Incorporated, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Allen L. Brennan, President; Henry W. Nathan, Vice President; Gerald H. Brock, Secretary and Treasurer. Copyright, 1942, in U. S. A. and Great Britain by Street & Smith Publications, Inc. Registered at Grand Central Station, February 7, 1938, at Post Office at New York under Act of Congress of March 3, 1917. Subscription in Canada to Post American Union, \$2.75 per year; elsewhere, \$3.50 per year. We cannot accept responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts or artwork. Any material submitted should include return address. The editorial contents of this magazine have not been published before, are granted by copyright and must be reprinted without the publisher's permission. All stories in this magazine are fiction. No actual persons are depicted other by name or otherwise. Any similarity to actual persons is accidental.

STREET & SMITH PUBLICATIONS, INC. • 79 SEVENTH AVE., NEW YORK

BOOK REVIEW

Got a piece of paper and pencil handy? All right—take this down: "The Days of Creation," by Willy Ley, published by Modern Age Books, New York—320 pp., illustrated. \$2.75.

Don't borrow this book. Buy it. Buy two copies if you can afford it, one for yourself and one to loan to your friends.

Now don't misunderstand me. Neither I, nor Street & Smith, have any financial interest in the transaction. This is pure love, unsolicited admiration. I wish I had written it. I wish I could write it.

All right, all right—I'll get around to telling what the book is about. Don't rush me. It is a short biography of the Universe, starting with "In the beginning" and closing with the Age of Man—and a brief, thrilling prophecy of the future. This book does not discuss the politics and wars of the human race; it discusses everything else. This book is the nearest thing to a complete picture of the world we live in I recall having seen; it may be the best such picture possible for one book, one author, this date.

Mr. Ley has arranged his account to parallel that given in the first chapter of Genesis, not only because that arrangement is simple, dramatic and familiar, but also because the account in Genesis is, bearing in mind differences in language and its extreme brevity, remarkably similar to modern scientific conception. The book has seven chapters, the Seven Days of Creation; the appropriate verses from Genesis stand as chapter headings. But do not let me lead you into thinking that the work is an attempt to reconcile "Science" and "Religion." I had better let the author speak for himself on that point. After discussing, in the preface, the amazing and delightful similarity between almost all ancient accounts of creation, he says:

"Not reasons of high philosophy nor attempts to reconcile ideas that need no reconciling, but the pure joy of comparing two stories, each of them fascinating in itself and doubly so when regarded together."

First Day: "Let There Be Light." A sparkling account of all the stories of the origin of the physical universe, mythological, classical and modern, with detailed rendering of best to date. Cosmogony, astronomy, astrophysics and modern nuclear physics.

Second Day: "The Division of the Waters." From cosmogony we proceed to geogony, to geology, to biology and the first appearance of life on this planet.

Third Day: "The Conquest of the Land."

Paleontology and genetics combine to explain the story of how Life made the incredible jump from the seas to the barren, sterile, forbidding rocks of the shore.

Fourth Day: "The Great New Invention." It is alleged that a devout Moslem rug weaver will always introduce an imperfection into his pattern, as Allah alone is perfect. It is almost a pleasure to find, or seem to find, a fault in Willy Ley. It restores one's own self-confidence. There are two "Great Inventions" in this chapter: I am not sure to which the title refers. One is—quite seriously!—seasons. The other is warm-bloodedness. One led to the other. After a considerable period, some millions of years, of uniform climate, things began to happen to the weather—hot days and cold nights, winter snow and summer sun, tropical ages and ice ages. Some of the animals acquired a built-in thermostat and ceased being reptiles.

Geology, meteorology, vulcanology, paleontology, genetics, chemistry and a seasoning of other sciences, suffices to get us through this chapter. But do not be alarmed—this is a lecture course with no prerequisites: Ley supplies all the necessary information, wittily and charmingly.

Fifth Day: "The Triumph of the Reptiles." See: Disney's "Fantasia." Better yet, see Ley's "Days of Creation." I am very fond of stegosauri and still more so of triceratops, but these self-contained panzer divisions have received more than their share of publicity—I won't add to it. But Mr. Ley gives them their due, with no bonus.

Sixth Day: "The Glory of the Mammals." We can't all live near the Bronx Zoo, and, anyhow, some of them have been in the La Brea tar pits—which means the "tar pit" tar pits—a long time. Smylodon, and the lovely short-faced bear, and many others.

Seventh Day: "The Consolidation of Brain Power." Man got here late, and poorly equipped—naked, soft, unarmed and unarmed. He had to be smart—or die. But other animals had brains, too. Just what was it he had that brought him to the top? And will he stay there? Buy the book.

Mr. Ley has convinced me that Man will stay on top. I now believe that Doc Smith's most supergalactic dreams are no more than hard-headed prediction. The book concludes with a prophetic peroration which should cheer up the faint-hearted these depressing days.

Thank you, Willy Ley!

R. A. Heinlein.