

PANTASTIC

ADVENTURES

VOLUME I
NUMBER I

MAY
1939

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Front cover by Robert Fuqua, depicting a scene in Revolt of the Robots

Back Cover by Frank R. Paul

Illustrations by Julian S. Krupa

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608 South Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.

William B. Ziff, Publisher, B. G. Davis, Editor, Raymond A. Palmer, Managing Editor, Herman R. Bollin, Art Director

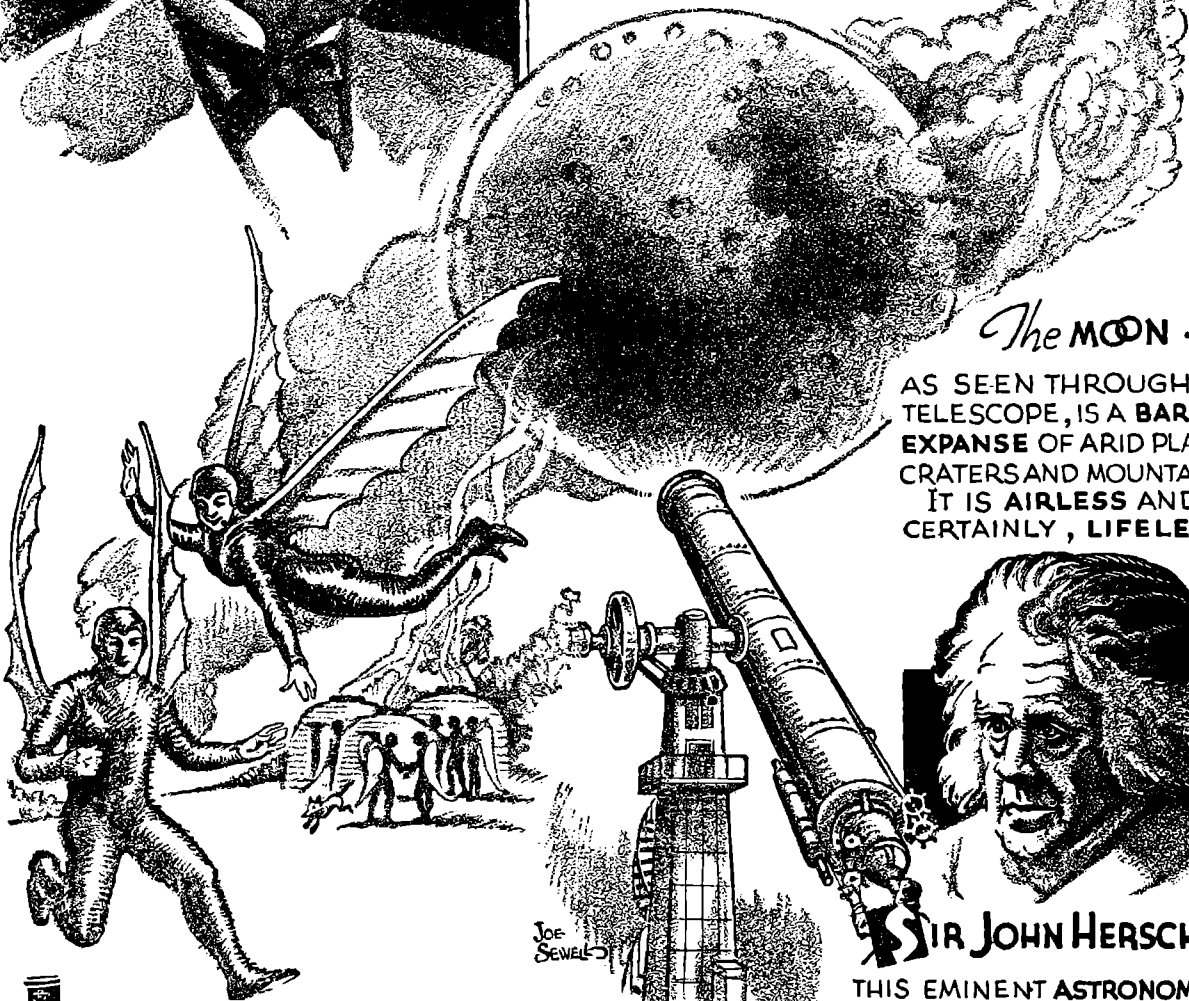
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Pantastatic



RICHARD ADAMS LOCKE
 WAS ONE OF THE LEADING-
 REPORTERS OF AMERICA IN 1835.
 BUT HIS REAL CLAIM TO FAME
 CAME ON AUGUST 21 OF THAT YEAR
 WHEN HE CONCEIVED THE IDEA OF
 A GIGANTIC HOAX THAT WAS TO
 STARTLE AMERICA. HE WROTE,
 AS **TRUTH**, A STORY OF THE
 DISCOVERY OF LIVING BEINGS
 ON THE MOON.



The MOON . .

AS SEEN THROUGH A
 TELESCOPE, IS A **BARREN**
EXPANSE OF ARID PLAINS,
 CRATERS AND MOUNTAINS.
 IT IS **AIRLESS** AND
 CERTAINLY, **LIFELESS** .



SIR JOHN HERSCHEL

THIS EMINENT ASTRONOMER,
 WAS MADE THE FOCAL POINT
 OF **LOCKE'S HOAX**, AND IT WAS
 SUPPOSED TO BE HIS DISCOVERY,
 MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH HIS
 INVENTION OF A **SUPER**
TELESCOPE IN CAPE TOWN .
 BACKED BY HIS NAME THE
 PUBLIC ACCEPTED THE
 ARTICLES AS **TRUTH** . . .

REGARDLESS OF THE FACT THAT THE **MOON**
 HAD ALWAYS BEEN CONSIDERED TO BE A DEAD
 WORLD, **LOCKE** PEOPLED IT WITH A RACE OF
 BEINGS LIVING IN IDYLIC PLEASURE. HE GAVE
 THEM WINGS, AND FURRY BODIES. THEY LIVED
 IN SIMPLE HUTS, AND DID NO WORK. LOLLING
 ABOUT, SWIMMING IN WARM POOLS, EATING
 ABUNDANT FRUIT, HE PICTURED THEM AS A
UTOPIAN RACE . . .

JOE SEWELL

HOAXES

Science records many fantastic science hoaxes, perpetrated on the gullible public. We present here one of the most famous deceptions.

IN 1835 the *New York Sun* perpetrated one of the most famous hoaxes in history. However, in so doing, its intent was not a mischievous attempt to fool the public; it was not intended to be a profit-making scheme, as are most hoaxes. In fact, the *Sun* itself, actually enacted the role of believer with millions of other guileless Americans.

On August 21 of that year, there appeared in the *Sun* a short item quoting from the *Edinburgh Courant*, relating very briefly that Sir John Herschel (a very well known astronomer of that period) had just made certain remarkable astronomical discoveries by means of a new tremendous telescope, at his observatory in Cape Town, South Africa. Since Herschel was noted for the advances he had made in the construction of astronomical instruments, such an announcement was not entirely implausible.

On Tuesday, August 25, began a series of seven feature articles concerning these amazing discoveries written by Richard Adams Locke, one of the leading reporters of the day. The information in these articles was credited to the *Edinburgh Journal of Science*. It may be readily seen that these accounts of Herschel's discoveries were false because the *Journal of Science* suspended publication several years previous to this time. But in the United States, nothing was known of this publication, and since the telegraph and undersea cable were unknown, there was no way of proving the falsity of the story, even had it been doubted. The public tacitly accepted the articles as truth.

Looke, the author, who conceived and executed the whole affair entirely by himself, did a wonderfully convincing job. In the first place he beguiled the public with all sorts of technical terms. Then, being a good reporter, he could write very convincingly, and refrained from exceeding the bounds of the public's credulity. Every point of the story could have been true. To make his statements more believable, he accompanied them with drawings, supposedly made in the observatory by Herschel himself.

The account began by relating the story of Herschel's researches in optics and went on to describe how he had, after many failures, come upon a formula for glass which would make a lens of any desired strength.

The construction of the giant lens was given in great detail, and was quite correct, too, resulting in the stilling of numerous unbelievers and scoffers. Then came an excellent and extremely interesting description of the moon, its flora, fauna and topographical details.

The moon was inhabited, Locke said, by all sorts of beings. There was abundant vegetation covering large portions of the satellite, animals were numerous, and while many resembled earthly fauna, others had no earthly counterparts. But most interesting of all were the human-like beings also detected by the Herschel telescope.

These creatures, male and female, as on earth, were possessed of the advantage of being winged, their wings being somewhat like those of bats. These wings were not covered by hair or fur although the remainder of the bodies of both sexes were clothed in fur. They wore no clothes and appeared to be simple and primitive in their customs and organization. They lived in small groups and were not permanently located even then, since members of one group often wandered to others. It could not be determined whether they had political, social or religious organization.

Their habitations were the only artificial things on the moon, being crudely constructed huts of a bamboo-like ma-

The moon beings possessed the knowledge of fire, for smoke was often seen pouring from holes in the roofs of the huts. Weapons seemingly were unknown for none were ever seen. Their food seemed to consist of the various fruits which grew plentifully about them.

Life on the moon was simple and pleasant, and probably happy as described by Locke. The various groups were at peace with each other, there were no dangerous animals, food was to be had without effort at all times, and thus, these people spent most of their time lolling about, swimming in the many lakes and rivers, wandering about their world, and in long discussions which lasted several days.

Locke made his sole error in the description of the lens. "So powerful is it," he said, "that when the sun's rays were concentrated through it, a whole line of trees was set afire." Any rank amateur ought to know that a lens concentrates rays in a point, and not in a line as the above statement implies. But an enthusiastic public either ignored or failed to notice this error.

The denouement was swift and complete. A week after the beginning of the series of articles the *Journal of Commerce* decided to reprint it. News of their intentions reached Locke, who advised them not to do so as the story was a hoax. The secret was out in less time than it takes to tell.

Locke admitted that he had gotten the idea for the whole affair from one Dr. Dick, who had previously published a work on means of communicating with the moon. He also stated that he had no accomplice except the editor of the paper who had permitted the printing of the articles. If what he says is true, we must rank Locke with the leading fantasy authors. The Moon Hoax was one of the greatest products of the human mind in the direction of fantasy. And, although the hoax itself lasted only a few days, it lingered for several years in stage versions which were presented everywhere. Even today it causes a quiet laugh at the expense of the credulous people who believed Mr. Locke. Simpletons indeed, to believe all this could have been seen through a telescope!

But are the people of today less credulous? We wonder.