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John Erskine, Guest Editor

Six Stories Chosen by Mr. Erskine

GOOD FOR THE SOUL ..... Margaret Deland 257
NAAMAN, THE LEPER ..... The Bible 303
THE LADY OR THE TIGER? ..... Frank Stockton 308
LOVE IN OLD CLOATHES ..... H. C. Bunner 317
SALOMY JANE'S KISS ..... Bret Harte 333
RAPPACCINI'S DAUGHTER ..... Nathaniel Hawthorne 365

Other Fiction

PROVIDENCE SENDS A DRESS COAT ..... Henri Murger 280
THE WESTERN ISLANDS ..... John Masefield 299
URIAH'S SON ..... Stephen Vincent Benét 349

Special Features

SO THEY SAY ..... People Who Talk 279
"PLATONIC LOVE" ..... Irwin Edman 285
THE TRIAL OF JEANNE D'ARC 292
JOHN MILTON ..... John Aubrey 305
ADVICE TO A YOUNG FRENCHMAN ..... André Maurois 313
THE NEW LEARNING ..... William Bolitho 325
A TORCH IS REKINDLED ..... Ladislas Reymont 328
"LA BIBI" ..... Noel Coward 361

Hors-d'Oeuvres

CONVERSATION —Arnold Bennett, and others 284
THE MOST UNKINDEST CUT —Carlyle, and others 289
A RESIGN —Bill Nye 290
JAZZ—AN EARLY PROTEST —Plutarch 298
HOW THEY KEPT UP THE QUALITY —H. T. Riley 324
BATTLE CRIES —Queen Elizabeth, and others 346
IS THE EARTH INHABITED? —Alfred Bassano 347
FAMILY TREES 360
A POET BREAKS THE NEWS TO MOTHER —W. C. Bryant 364

Poetry

AN ELEGY —Oliver Goldsmith 278
THE TWO —Hugo Von Hofmannsthal 302
BRAHMA —R. W. Emerson 316
COALITION POET —R. T. Wombat 327
TWO COUPLETS —Landor, Harington 384

Departments

AUTHORS AND BOOKS 8a
FROM THE NEW BOOKS 16a
INTRODUCING JOHN ERSKINE —Fannie Hurst 23a
THE GUEST EDITOR TAKES A BOW 24a

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Is the Earth Inhabited?

"No!" Thunders this German Philosopher, and — Beware of Logic — Proves It.

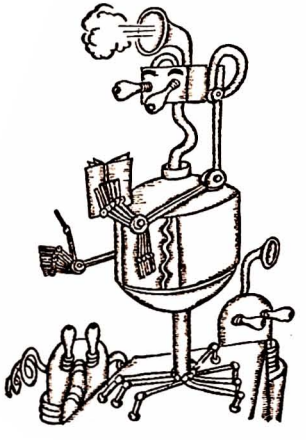
By ALFRED BASSANO

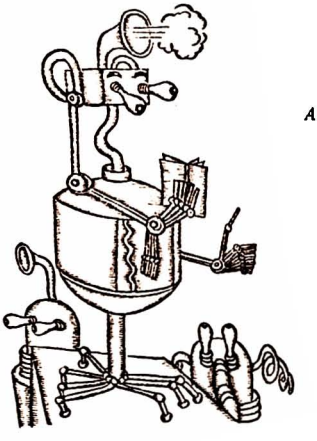
Translated by Jack Borut

It is not at all surprising that certain imaginative laymen should for years have wasted their time on this absurd question, and it is entirely logical that the Sunday sections of some of our more lurid newspapers devote space to fatuous speculations on the subject. We have, so far, proceeded on the unwarranted assumption that any part of the Earth presents physical conditions which would allow human life to exist. There is no reason for such belief. It is definitely proven, for instance, that the earth is entirely surrounded by a gas known as Oxygen. We know, of course, that oxygen spells death to all living things. It has been persuasively argued that the hypothetical inhabitants of the Earth might have certain physiological appendages which would make survival in this poisonous gas possible. We can only assert that the apparatus required for such a life would have to be so complex that the slightest derangement would throw the entire organism out of balance. Obviously this could hardly be a suitable equipment for creatures living in an unstable climate. The most important reason why the Earth cannot ever have been inhabited has been overlooked by our scientific sensationalists: namely, the almost complete absence of gravity. The inhabitants, if any, would be creatures so light and airy that they could move about with almost incredible speed. And since we know for certain, that nothing is more destructive to life than motion, the needless and rapid change of location would of necessity breed great psychological instability and bring about a destruction of the poise, concentration and thought which are the requisites of life. I have estimated

that a man living on the Earth could so easily change his place of location merely by shifting his center of gravity that he could reasonably achieve a speed of approximately two miles a day. The restlessness engendered by this fantastic capacity for meaningless movements would rob him of any right to be called Human.

There remains still the matter of the canal-like indentations or structures which have been observed on the foolish notions which the general public holds regarding this subject. Let us make plain that the Earth has always been a defunct and empty sphere where life could only have survived at a cost so great that no creatures entitled to be called man could possibly have survived there. I am willing to allow that perhaps some primitive organism outside the ken of our wildest imaginings may lead a low form of existence there. I am even prepared to grant that





Drawings by Alexander King

the Earth's surface and which seem to have originated according to some deliberate plan. All the reasons I have offered to prove that the planet is uninhabited can be applied to demonstrate that these so-called canals are, at best, the relics of a civilization which has completely disappeared. I am not prepared to grant even this, and I offer as a much more logical clue to their creation the simple explanation, that some extra-terrestrial force once planned to settle there but abandoned the idea because of the hazardous conditions which prevailed.

Let me state in conclusion that it is time for serious scientists to combat some of the insect-like creatures which are frequently observed near this moribund planet belong to some unknown biological species which is vainly attempting to leave for a more congenial abode. But this is as far as I am ready to go with my imaginative colleagues, and I defy any man who has examined the testimony dispassionately to challenge the evidence I have offered.

If man is, as we believe, the highest pinnacle of biological development, then the Earth can never have been his home. And if, as some of us maintain, he has in him the divine spark, it is sheerest blasphemy to connect him with this arid and meaningless cinder.