

Presenting The Author



MARGARET ST. CLAIR

I WAS caught more or less by surprise when the editors of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES asked me to send in a photograph and autobiography of myself. Luckily I just had a few snapshots taken and so was able to airmail one in—to meet the usual editorial deadline. (It never fails to happen this way—whenever an editor gets in touch with you for something, it always has to meet a deadline.)

As much as the old saying goes about women liking to talk about themselves, I for one, don't. Maybe it's because I'd rather write fiction instead of fact. At any rate, I'll try to give my memory a few whirls and see what comes out.

I first ran across science fiction when I was nine or ten years of age. I remember reading Frank Stockton's "My Terminal Moraine," and being very much impressed. From that it was just a short step to Jules Verne and his "Journey To The Center Of The Earth," and this in turn led me to the old Hugo Gernsback publication, *Electrical Something*. All this was a preamble to the modern age of science fiction most prevalent in the thirties and which has certainly matured in the present decade.

It was an interesting thing to watch science

and fantasy fiction grow from the "battle between worlds" theme to the current "human interest" type of story. Really, I'm glad it has taken this trend, because it seems to me that a story about people—their problems, emotions, triumphs, and failures, is a far more interesting story to read—and write. At any rate, I find this to be true.

NONE the less, when I first turned to writing, it was not through the one medium I enjoyed the most, namely, fantasy. I first tried my hand at detective and mystery stories, and even the so called "quality" stories. I had some success with these types and my work has appeared in detective and quality magazines. But there always seemed to be something lacking, as far as I was concerned. I didn't get the same kick out of them that I thought I would. So as a last resort I turned to the field my personal tastes naturally ran to. I think I've found myself in fantasy. It is not only a great deal of fun to write fantasy, but I enjoy the freedom of imagination attained in this sort of writing. I like to write about ordinary people of the future, surrounded by gadgetry of super-science, but who, I feel sure, know no more about how the machinery works than a present day motorist knows of the laws of thermodynamics. I think this adds to realism because it is essentially true.

During the odd moments when I wasn't writing, I received a degree from the University of California, got married, and concentrated on some of my pet hobbies. These include raising carnations and exotic flowering bulbs, and the more difficult and absorbing task of raising Dachshund puppies. This latter hobby has its financial attributes since I've sold more Dachshunds than I care to think about.

As a native Californian you'll probably think the Chamber of Commerce hired me to say that I like it out here in Richmond, but I assure you it's my own idea. Our home is on a hilltop six miles from Richmond, with a view that reaches from here clear around to there. The weather is invariably fine, the country is fine, and it we could build a thirty foot wall to eliminate an occasional wind, we would have a terrestrial paradise.

Unlike most pulp writers, I have no special ambitions to make the pages of the big slick magazines. I feel that the pulps at their best touch a genuine folk tradition and have a balladic quality which the slicks lack. But I must admit to a fond affection for the columns of the *New Yorker*. Right now I hope to keep doing science fantasy fiction which will please both editors and readers.

—Margaret St. Clair

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Front cover painting by J. Allen St. John, illustrating a scene from "Shadow of the Sphinx"

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The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

NEXT in line we're presenting a newcomer to our pages, one Margaret St. Clair. We were wading through the slush mail one day and came across a story entitled, "Rocket to Limbo" which we started to read. We kept on reading and a check went out as soon as we finished with the story. Miss St. Clair is new to the pages of science-fiction, but if this first story of hers is any indication of the future, we'd say you'll be seeing her name again. You'll find a photograph and autobiography of Miss St. Clair on page two. (We might point out that Miss St. Clair is really a Mrs. It seems that authors invariably drop their husbands or wives, as the case may be, when they use a by-line. Anyway, it probably sounds better that way.) But Miss or Mrs. we think the lady knows how to write. See if you don't agree.