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January 8, 1935.

Dear Dick:-

Your fine letter of the 2nd was greatly appreciated. I was particularly glad to get your thought on my writing; for it checks my own sentiment exactly. I have been struggling with this Patrol thing for quite a while, and I can't get to first base. It's all either repetition or hack-work—and I don't think that I have to tell you that if I can't write something new and original, I won't write at all. And, between you and me, that is probably what it will be, for a year or so, anyway. For, so far, I haven't been able to figure out a new basic idea that promises to be worth writing about; and, until I do, I probably won't write. As you say, I don't have to write for a living (Thank Heaven!).

I could write an extension of Spacehounds—but, even so, I would have to have a really good idea to work on. And, in spite of your plaudits of that story, it was not particularly well received. So many of the readers, while they think they like scientific fiction and like to do a lot of talking about it, do not want really scientific fiction at all, but pseudo-science of the pseudoiest kind. I can write that, too (witness Triplanetary) but even in that I like to have an idea. In Triplanetary I had inertialessness—an entirely new conception, so far as I know—but right now, I haven't got anything. In fact, last Sunday I threw a mess of junk into the furnace and swore I wouldn't lift a pencil until I got an idea—which may account in part for my sounding low in my mind!

You're about half right, I think, in your criticism of present stf. Amazing and Wonder are lousy—I would cancel my subscriptions if it wasn't for sentimental reasons and the sake of my complete files. Astounding is far and away the best—but, as you say, even they are getting intesa lot of hack-work. Also, Campbell's latest reads as though he wrote it in thirty days—and he is doing too damuch copying.

Getting disgusted with ny attempts to write another story, I went back to experimenting a while ago, and have been having a lot of fun. One of my experiments wound up as a temperature controller which may fill a real place in the world. As you may already know, the best present types of controllers on water-baths, etc., break several milliamperes at the contact points, resulting in corrosion of points, fouling of mercury surface, etc. Also, they usually have intermediate relays which, operating on AC, are prone to chatter terrifically. Well, not to waste space in explanations, this thing of mine breaks only THREE MICROAMPERES at the contact points, and, without relays, operates a magnetic switch capable of breaking SIXTY AMPERES AC at 125 volts. I have had it on a water-bath for three weeks now, with no corrosion whatever—in fact, the spark is invisible, even in the dark; and it is holding the bath to within 0.05°C total variation, as against the 0.2°C total that was the best I could get with the so-called "super-sensitive relay" furnished with the bath.

In fact, I was so impressed with the performance of the experimental model that I am taking it up with the Raytheon people to see whether or not it would be feasible to patent it and manufacture it in commercial quantities.

What do you mean by asking ~~me~~ whether I am still sticking to interplanetary yarns? What else would Doc Smith write about? Or, having written something else, who would read it? You ought to know that if I were to try something—anything—else, all three of my fans would yell bloody murder.

As to the last page of your letter; you already know ~~that~~ that if there is anything in the world that I do really believe in, it is love. And, having been married to Jean for almost twenty years with no trouble in sight yet, I believe that you will admit that my ideas are based upon something more than academic theory. In that connection, the best possible advice I can give you is so old that it is trite—"Be sure you're right, then go ahead". But both the man and the woman have to be square shooters to have it last—it's this underhanded deviltry that raises Cain with most marriages.

As nearly as I can remember, I've covered the points brought up in your letter. If not, will pick them up next time.

Cordially yours,

Doc

P.S. Yes, I do get about as much kick out of the Henderson as Rod does — I rode it a lot while riding was still possible, and probably will some warm next season.

And no more word apropos "love." Most young people nowadays seem to think that it is necessary to have an income sufficiently large to afford all the luxuries of life before marriage should be contemplated. I don't believe it. An income above subsistence level is of course necessary — but man and woman should work together for the luxuries. Jean and I got married in Washington, D.C., in war-time, on \$700 per month, and I was still working for my Ph.D. We had some hard sledding, of course, but neither of us has ever regretted it for one single minute. *Doc*