FANTASY REVIEW

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Over fifty years ago, a young writer who was destined to become world-famous for his imaginative conceptions of things to come sat down and wrote his first successful fantasy. It 'was the story of an inventor who fashioned a machine on which he journeyed into the future, stopped off to take a look at mankind in the year 802701, and travelled on into the dim vistas of the world's end before returning to the security of the 19th Century.

It is said that Wells' tale of "The Time Machine" set the early British film pioneer, Robert Paul, thinking about the possibilities of the screen play. It has even been suggested that the author himself may have been influenced, if only subconsciously, by the awakening technique of the new art form when he wrote his amazing tale. At any rate, he and Paul got together in a project which, if it had not failed for lack of capital, might have resulted in the filming of the Time Traveller's adventures—or, at least, in an attempt at something which even today's film-makers would scarcely dare to tackle.

But could he possibly have dreamed, in 1894 (any more than we did only a few months ago), that "The Time Machine" would be presented to an audience of thousands, sitting comfortably in their own homes before their television screens in 1949? In spite of difficulties which were readily recognised, such an ambitious production was not too much for the B.B.C. to attempt; and if they did not succeed to the extent of satisfying the arm-chair critics of the Press—one of whom described it, with a yawn, as "The Crawl of Time"—at least they were quick to see in the brave try the making of television history.

There were, actually, two attempts, the first having caused such a furore of caustic comment* that several revisions calculated to improve the whole production were made in the second showing. Even then viewers who looked-in on both versions found difficulty in deciding which version was the better. But it was generally agreed that "The Time Machine" had been worth the time and trouble—and the money—spent on it. For the fantasy fan, especially, it was a momentous event, indicative of the shape of things to come in TV.

The first announcement of the play caused quite a controversy over the courageous bid of producer Robert Barr and scene designer Barry Learoyd to present this corner-stone of science fiction in a medium to which, it seemed to the sceptics, it was quite unadaptable. The discussions between the producer and his staff over the ticklish technical problems it raised were the

* Especially by **Observer** critic W. E. Williams, who condemned "the ill-fated endeavour to confine the cosmic vision of H. G. Wells upon a miniature screen. Its resources," he argued, "are too pathetically meagre to cope with such a story . . . and its cardboard improvisations of the landscapes of Utopia reduced the fable to banality. The impersonation of the creatures who inhabited Futurity was another exposure of the limitations of the medium, and the delicate little citizens of the Golden Age (with their sinister troglodyte guardians) proved a mere rabble of pantomime elves dressed in horrible costumes."

FANTASY REVIEW

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subject of an article in **The Radio Times.** How could they give an impression of the passing of hundreds of thousands of years in the space of some three minutes? How to design sets strictly limited in size to really look like a bizarre world of the distant future? How to show the Morlocks in their dark underground domain?

An article in **Illustrated,** with three pages of stills and pictures of the production in the making, appearing after the first showing, revealed how some of these difficulties were overcome. It also reported how it was proposed to vary the second production to meet the criticism that the whole thing amounted to no more than "an exercise in elementary fretwork," in which buildings of the future had been cut out of futuristic photographs or plastic spheres, and mounted in frames only eight inches high before being made into film sequences.

My own reaction, on the first showing, was that "The Time Machine" was a first-class job of television, considering the limitations of Alexandra Palace with which all viewers are familiar through the Press. I thought Mr. Barr had succeeded, as far as anyone could expect with such a difficult subject, in making the show enjoyable and, at the same time, understandable to the majority of viewers. But the gentlemen of the Press, ever ready with their blunt instruments to do murder for the sake of a new angle, thought otherwise; so much so that the B.B.C., for the second showing, made changes in the dialogue and chopped pieces from the time-travel sequences in an attempt to pacify the reviewers and give those of its viewers who found it hard to swallow a better chance to appreciate the implications of the idea right from the first scene.

Condensed to a little less than an hour, the play opened with the Time Traveller, played by Russell Napier, discussing his theories with his friends after dinner. He shows them a model of the Time Machine, and while they watch, it slowly fades from the table on which it is resting. Then he shows them, in another room, the actual machine on which he proposes to travel, but they are even more sceptical and leave him to his reverie. Impatient to prove his case, the Traveller mounts the machine (a beautifully designed contraption) and sets off into the future.

In the first showing, after a brief interval in which the hands of the wall-

The Time Traveller meets the Eloi. A scene from the television version of "The Time Machine."

clock recorded the passing of many hours, the lights began to dip and rise to indicate the passage of the days, and as this effect speeded up the walls of the room gradually dissolved. In the second performance this was cut out, killing the impression of fast-moving time. But, outside, the sun moves ever more swiftly across the sky until it is a continuous band of light, rising and falling to indicate the equinoxes, and throwing into vivid relief the changing shapes of successions of buildings which become more startlingly futuristic as the Traveller flashes through the ages.

Eventually the buildings are replaced by domes and peculiar stilted erections, and as they fade the Traveller arrives in the era of the Eloi. These were played entirely by small women and children, the Traveller towering above them like a god—which they imagined him to be—and the difficulty of their speech was easily overcome by limiting their vocabulary to shrill laughs and twitterings.

The action became slower as the Traveller, having surveyed his surroundings, discussed the past and mused upon the present with the uncomprehending Weena, but grew in suspense with his discovery of the fact that the Morlocks had abstracted the Time Machine and his futile efforts to

recover it. On his descending into the depths where these degenerate machine-minders performed their mysterious tasks, it was completely dark and all the viewers saw of them was their glowing eyes moving in the blackness.

Escaping their clutches, the Traveller returns to the surface and the pathetically hopeless ministrations of Weena, with whom he tries to seek out a refuge for the Eloi against the depredations of the Morlocks. Thus he stumbles on a derelict museum where he finds decayed books and live matches before they are driven out by the Morlocks—who again remain unseen by the audience. To keep them at bay, he lights a fire, but Weena disappears and he returns to make another assault on the entrance to the underworld. He finds the door open, and his machine just inside, whereupon he continues his journey into the future and witnesses an eclipse at the world's end.

Throughout this sequence, Napier continued to tell the story of his adventure while viewers saw a shadowy scene in which a swollen sun hung in the sky above a dismal landscape dotted with stagnant pools of water. In the second performance, due to overrunning, this was hurried through and must have left a confused impression in the viewer's mind. Arriving back in his laboratory, the Traveller is revived by his friends, and is almost convinced that he has dreamed it all until he puts his hand in his pocket and finds a flower that Weena had given him. The show ends with the camera focussing on the exotic bloom from the future as he holds it in his hand.

Although there had been obvious amendments in the script and the scenic effects, such promised items as giant land crabs, fantastic birds and beasts, which were scheduled to appear in the sequence showing the twilight of the world (and which, it was admitted, were not ready for the first screening), did not materialise in the second showing. But in spite of its faults, "The Time Machine" on television was one of the most successful attempts yet made in any pictorial medium to portray an imaginative conception of the future. With the exception of "Things to Come," it far outrivalled any similar attempt by the film world, which has such a variety of tricks at its command.

It was a much more satisfying production than last year's television excursion into fantasy, "R.U.R.," which was totally devoid of futuristic feeling. Then, the sense of world crisis was killed by the use of a single setting for the entire performance, whereas the present technique of "mixing" prepared telecine films with "live" scenes might have made Capek's drama as animated as his robots. But it is significant that the B.B.C. is giving so much time and attention to fantasy themes and putting such presentations over with increasing skill.

READERS ARE INVITED
to let the Editor know which features of **Fantasy Review** they find most useful or enjoyable, and which—if any—they like the least. Constructive criticisms and suggestions for articles are welcomed.

During the past few months, we have been able to look-in on several weird plays, outstanding among which was Jean Cocteau's "The Infernal Machine," a title that belied the nature of the plot. Brilliantly acted against a background of ever-changing sets, complete with all the mystery of ancient Egypt, Anubis the wolf-man, and the beautiful keeper of the temple of the Sphinx, it might have come from the pages of **Weird Tales** of years ago. Among ghost plays, we have had an excellent production of J. B. Priestley's "Jenny Villiers." And often on Saturday nights we are regaled by the creepy tales of Algernon Blackwood, sitting nonchalantly in an easy chair and improvising as he goes along, gesturing and grimacing good-naturedly, quite heedless of the camera a few inches from his face. Fantasy fans who love his books are not alone in delighting in these occasions; he is probably television's most popular performer.

And we can hope for even more, and possibly better, futuristic presentations, according to **Illustrated.** That is, if Mr. Barr's further ambitions are realised. Among his plans are "a trip to the Moon, based on the official plans of the (British) Interplanetary Society . . . another story probing into the problem of Time," and one about the lost continent of Atlantis. Says Charles Hamblett, author of the article: "If young Mr. Barr has his way, televiewers are heading for a strange and unpredictable future." If he does, we may see fantasy developing in a form for which it seems to us peculiarly fitted, in spite of the reluctance of the critics to admit of its possibilities.

Walter Gillings' FANTASIA

More s-f anthologies coming . . . "Science Fiction: The Best of 1948," edited by Everett Bleiler and Ted Dikty, featuring recent stories from **Astounding, Thrilling Wonder, Blue Book,** will be first of regular annual volumes issued by Frederick Fell, New York . . . Dell pocket-book collection, compiled by Orson ("The Martians are Coming!") Welles, presents script of his notorious broadcast, reprints by Bradbury, Heinlein, Leinster, etc. . . . Doubleday will publish Isaac Asimov's "pre-Foundation" novel, "Grow Old Along With Me" . . . Frank Reade-ish plans for overhead bicycles, life-saver cabin trunks, non-horse-scaring trams, in "Patent Applied For—A Century of Fantastic Inventions," by Fred Coppersmith & J. J. Lynx (Press & Publicity, 10/6) . . . Arkham House collection of S. Fowler Wright's fantasies to be titled "The Throne of Saturn" . . .

Space-travel theme hit Hollywood—hard! Correspondent Forrest J. Ackerman reports—cautiously—Heinlein's "Rocket Ship Galileo" (see Book Reviews, last issue) may be filmed as "Operation Moon"; no less than five other interplanetary movies, including "The Rocket Men are Coming," "Men of Mars," being considered . . . Hollywood version of Benoit's novel, "Atlantide," now showing as Maria Montez vehicle, "Siren of Atlantis," in which nosey archaeologists are turned into golden statues . . . "The Perfect Woman" is British film about a robot rivalling Patricia Roc . . . Edgar Rice Burroughs narrates "The Legend of Tarzan" in short dealing with the screen character . . . "The Lost World" re-serialised by BBC, who also presented "The Truth About Pyecraft" . . . John Keir Cross, author of strange tales ("The Other Passenger," "The Angry Planet"), arranged weird classes for latest series of "The Man in Black," including pieces by Ambrose Bierce, Bram Stoker, John Collier . . .

Science-Fantasy Society sponsored second British post-war Convention—The "Loncon"—this Eastertide . . . Next year's Eighth World S-F Convention may be held in Portland, Oregon . . . Fantasy Foundation to finance **Fantasy Annual** for '49 . . . New Canadian S-F Association appointed Lloyd Arthur Eshbach as President . . . Master Mariner A. Bertram Chandler, in dock at Sydney, called on members of local Futurian Society . . . Frederik Pohl, former editor **Super Science Stories,** now literary agenting, married **Astounding** contributor Judith Merrill in New York . . . **Los Cuentos Fantasticos** (see this col., last issue) now borrowing illustrations from U.S. fan-mags . . . Another South American fantasy mag., **Narraciones Terrorificas,** also reprinting from several sources; while Barcelona's **Fantasticas** uses original Spanish stories . . .

Launching **The Lovecraft Collector,** editor-publisher Ray H. Zorn confesses "to an incomplete reading and little study of Lovecraft's tales, but . . . to an avid interest in the hunt for Lovecraftiana" . . . Selection of horror stories by authors from M. R. James to Ray Bradbury assembled by film director Alfred Hitchcock in Dell pocket-book titled "Fear and Trembling" . . . Robert Bloch's "The Scarf" (reviewed Dec. '47 Jan. '48 issue) now available in Avon pocket-book edition; his second collection from Arkham House to be titled "Pleasant Dreams" . . . Avon pocket-book fantasy anthology (see this col., Oct.-Nov. '48), featuring "The Girl with the Hungry Eyes," by Fritz Leiber, Jr., also out . . . James Branch Cabell provided title for "The 31st of February," collection of thirteen fantasies by Nelson Bond from **Scribner's, Esquire, Blue Book,** etc., coming from Gnome Press . . .

In article on "Solemn Troops and Sweet Societies," **The Leader** bracketed BIS with other organisations of "zealous citizens," said of "The Cosmic Travellers": "You (may) write them off as mere visionaries, but . . . members have published text-books . . . which are as far removed from Jules Verne as the director of a forensic science laboratory is from Dick Barton" . . . Radio talk by Charles Gibbs-Smith on "Space Ships," based on discussion with Society Chairman A. V. Cleaver, reprinted in **The Listener,** with Council members' designs for piloted rocket, space-station . . . After which came letter from Assistant Sec. Arthur C. Clarke lamenting overlooking of "supremely important philosophical implications of space-flight, (which) may lead mankind to a second Renaissance" . . . Meanwhile, **Time** reported Chicago publicist's founding of "new 'sovereign power . . . known as the nation of Celestial Space.' He presented a fancy document . . . staking out a claim to 'space in all directions . . .' Then he debated selling chunks of space as big as the earth, for a dollar each" . . .

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Science & Fiction

THE SEARCH FOR SUPERMAN

By JOHN K. AIKEN

What is going to happen to Homo Sapiens? In its purely physical sense this question must be daily in the mind of everyone who reads or listens to the news. Atomic war, catastrophic food shortage, rising population, exhaustion of coal and oil in the industrial and military scramble: will Man be able to extricate himself from the mess he has got himself into? These are the questions which frighten us into reading science fiction. And there, of course, we find innumerable answers. New power sources, world federation, synthetic foods, planetary development ... But the real problem is at a deeper level than the merely physical. Dr. Alexis Carrel, whose lifetime of medical research ended five years ago, has analysed it, and synthesised the beginnings at least of a solution, in his revolutionary and much-reprinted book*, which may yet (we hope) turn out to be literally epoch-making.

The problem, of course, lies in Man's own nature, in the biological-psychological pattern which evolution has imprinted upon him, and in his own ignorance of the manner in which he functions as a psycho-physical unit. Specialists — chemists, physiologists, psychologists, social workers, clergymen —have found out a good deal about the particular human facets which face their own field; but of the way in which these facets join and inter-relate to give the complete organism, they know nothing.

As a result of his ignorance about himself, Man has drifted into an environment totally unsuited to his vital needs. With lungs adapted for life in fresh country air, he has forced himself into living in cititles whose air is choked with smoke, dust and chemical fumes; his inevitable bodily response is a vast increase in respiratory disease, and the rapidly rising incidence of cancer may be due to the same causes. Muscles decay because of the substitution of the unnaturally violent but curtailed exercise of sport for the natural, steady exercise of outdoor work. Nervous disease and insanity are caused by the strain on nerves and brain of city life. Nothing is known—yet—of the effect of unnatural habits like smoking, persistent consumption of synthetic drugs, and so forth, for generations, on human heredity: there has not yet been time.

Medical care is saving the lives of millions of mental, moral and physical weaklings and allowing them to propagate. Man has assumed control of his own heredity, but the control is unplanned, almost unconscious. The result is a wholly unnatural selection. His inevitable psychological response is unhappiness, neurosis and, on a mass scale, war. His natural combativeness was a useful survival characteristic under natural conditions. Harnessed to an industrialisation which makes possible push-button war, it is deadly. The picture that Dr. Carrell has painted is a terrifying one. How can Man be re-made, to save him from himself?

This question, too, has been answered, fictionally, many times. What, then, will he be like, the superman who is really fitted to live in the complex and mechanised conditions his predecessor has created? His metamorphoses are as numerous as his creators. He may be a nasty little emotionless rat, like Andrew Marvel's "Minimum Man," or a far-too-emotional introvert such as Weinbaum's "New Adam," to choose two of the most infra-supermen so far conceived. He may be a vast, passionless brain (Stapledon's Fourth Man), capable of squeezing out the last mathematical secrets of the universe, but unaware of the extreme pleasure which may come from eating steak and onions or taking one's girl to a Bach concert. His social and intellectual adaptability may have been much improved by the acquisition of telepathic powers ("Slan") or a true mechanical instinct (Wells' Utopians); he may have an eidetic memory or a really synthetic mind, or the capacity for re-growing

*Man, the Unknown, by Dr. Alexis Carrel. Penguin Books, 1/6.

lost limbs or for mentally controlling matter, to mention only a few of the super-types due to van Vogt, an author who has surely done as much as anyone to increase the number of recognised varieties of Homo Superior.

Some of these imagined changes in human nature are not beyond the bounds of possibility. Men have been born—are alive to-day—with marked telepathic faculties, with "perfect" memories or an "intuitive" capacity for mathematics. Others have shown supernormal powers under violent stress, like van Vogt's fictional "Changeling." Dr. Carrel himself mentions the cures of "incurables" at Lourdes, suggests that senility may be merely the outcome of an attitude of mind, even that longevity and genius alike may arise simply from proper feeding, as the queen bee is produced from the undistinguished embryo. In fact, that each of us *is* a potential superman. One thing only is problematic: a controlled method of bringing about the change.

Here Dr. Carrel is less drastic, if more explicit, than some of his fictional colleagues; although, according to modern standards of world organisation, his prescription is drastic enough. First and foremost, a truly synthetic study of mankind must be made, particularly with regard to the phenomena of mind. For this to be possible, a group of brilliant men, brought together by a World Federation, must be trained not merely in one or two, but in all the special studies involved. Given an active life-span of fifty years, Dr. Carrel does not think this impossible: one can only hope that he is right, pending the advent of the super-synthesists. Then, when the broad outline is at last clear, the superman is to be brought into being eugenically, much as Bernard Shaw advocated forty years ago in "Man and Superman" but with a practical detail or two added.

While this major programme is going forward, preparations can be made by education, by a return to hardier and more open-air living conditions, by the teaching of higher human types to select fitting mates and (Dr. Carrel has skated rather lightly over this point) by restraining lower types from breeding. Like Shaw before him, Dr. Carrel favours a largely voluntary scheme in which, through education, the mass of humanity is brought to realise its virtues to the point where it automatically begins to operate. In theory, of course, he is right. In time, education, even at its present lamentable rate of progress, might rescue humanity. But is there time? The right to make a fool of oneself in one's own way is much prized to-day, at a time when such a prerogative has never been more dangerous. Never has "freedom" been more illusory nor its "sacrifice" more bitterly contested. There are many, as a result of conditioning and heredity, who would rather destroy the world with atomic fire than compromise their "principles"; one of these may at any time be in a position to do so. One cannot agree too heartily with Dr. Carrel's condemnation of the very idea of "principles," of attempts to adhere rigidly to any philosophic system. But, in the real world, how are we to protect ourselves from people who do?

In Stapledon's "Odd John" we have read of the danger—to him—of the superman's too early advent. The greatest danger—to us—is that it will be too late.

WALTER GILLINGS' FANTASIA

—Continued from page 5

Thrilling Wonder Editor Sam Merwin informed contributors: "We are currently altering policy to a somewhat more adventurous swing, and prefer stories whose opening locale, at any rate, is set quite close to the future" . . . Substitution of beauties for beasts on **Avon Fantasy Reader** covers reputed to have increased circulation by one-third . . . Editor Campbell's published invitation to **Astounding** contributor Martin Pearson for collection of unclaimed cheque, in recent issue, promptly answered by Avon Editor Donald A. Wollheim, owner of long-neglected pseudonym . . . **Writers' Markets and Methods** ran interview with L. Ron Hubbard, whose "present projects include a Broadway play, a book of psychology, ten novels published or finished . . . a slick serial just completed, and work for Street & Smith and Standard Mags." . . . Ray Bradbury's next collection, compiled from **The New Yorker, Weird Tales,** etc., to be titled "The Illustrated Man" . . . His "Dark Carnival" (see last issue) radio reviewed by BBC critic in "Bookshelf"; Willy Ley's "The Lungfish and the Unicorn" (reviewed last issue) ditto in "New Books and Old Books," which also covered "The War of the Worlds" . . . .

The Story of 'Wonder' *By THOMAS SHERIDAN*

THE DAYS OF DEPRESSION

Gernsback and the Technocrats

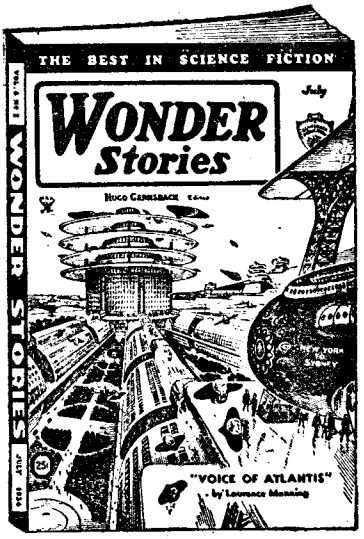
Wonder Stories was never less immodest than any other magazine. Early in its career, in reporting its "phenomenal success," it boasted of the "acknowledged fact that, in most cases, the masters of science fiction offer their stories first to **Science Wonder Stories.** And it happens, also, that mediocre stories rejected by us appear in other magazines"—a knock at **Amazing** this, perhaps, though it was doing quite nicely at the time. But there was one type of story, mediocre or not, which Editor-in-Chief Hugo Gernsback would not accept at any price, even if it was written by a "master." It was that which echoed the current cry against the evils of the Machine Age; for he was quick to see in the rampaging of "so-called authorities" a bigger menace to science fiction than any cosmic threat it could invent:

"If you admit that Machines and Science are wrong and that they are destroying humanity, then there should be no such thing as science fiction; and it would be useless to preach the gospel of science. I feel most strongly on the subject because during recent months we have received a number of . . . stories, probably fostered by the unemployment atmosphere, which I have rejected because they distorted the facts and, in many cases, were pure out-and-out propaganda against the Machine Age. Some of the authors, who should know better, maintained in their stories that, little by little, the machines and science are becoming a Frankenstein monster, and finally humanity will rise in revolt and destroy all the machines, and go back to the Middle Ages. The underlying plot is that, because of capitalistic concentration of wealth, the machines will be ultimately controlled by a few powerful men who will enslave the entire world to the detriment of humanity. This situation has never arisen as yet; and from past experience we know it cannot arise. And it is for this reason that **Wonder Stories** will not . . . publish propaganda of this sort which tends to inflame an unreasoning public against scientific progress, against useful machines, and against inventions in general."

That was in the middle of 1931. Within two years, Gernsback was editorialising on the "Wonders of Technocracy," whose aims and aspirations were "nothing new to science fiction," but which gave him an excuse to launch yet another magazine—**Technocracy Review.** In spite of the fact that the new movement offered "very little which has not been anticipated in stories from H. G. Wells down to last month's issue of **Wonder Stories,**" it also inspired Nathan Schachner's "The Robot Technocrat" (Mar. '33) and "The Revolt of the Scientists" (Apr.-Jun. '33); while Laurence Manning foresaw the world of the future in the thrall of a mechanical dictator in "The Master of the Brain" (Apr. '33). Gernsback, however, made it quite clear that he was "violently opposed" to the ideas of the Technocrats for curing the effects of the depression; he wished only to "give every side its say" and show "what sort of foolishness it might get us into."

And "The Magazine of Prophetic Fiction"* had other things to worry about, in these troubled times. Its size, for one thing; its price, for another. After 18 months of slow progress, it had made a mistake which almost proved its undoing. In abandoning the large size which distinguished both it and **Amazing** from the new **Astounding,** at the end of '30, it claimed to have taken a reader's survey which plumped for the "more convenient" size of the general run of pulps, and a scientific test which proved that the smaller page was easier on the eyes. It also promised improvements in typography and artwork—neither of which were very evident during the

*This tag was adopted as the result of yet another readers' contest in which $100 in gold was offered for a descriptive slogan and 4,362 entries were said to have been received.



'Wonder' in the small size

year which elapsed before it returned to its original nine by twelve inches.

These '31, small-size issues were hardly impressive on any score. Though Paul's covers were ever present, they were not always up to his usual standard, while his few interiors were hardly equal to those of Marchioni, who had made his appearance with other artists no more accustomed to the fantastic medium. As for the stories, apart from the introduction of Clark Ashton Smith† and John Beynon Harris, it was a pretty dull period, relieved only by the continued collaborations of Nathan Schachner and Arthur Leo Zagat—e.g., "Exiles of the Moon" (Sep.-Nov.)—and "The Time Projector" (Jul.-Aug.), in which Dr. Keller combined with Editor David Lasser. Unless your taste ran to the Interplanetary Police and future gangster stories of oldster R. F. Starzl, or the steady progression of Otfrid von Hanstein's "Utopia Island" (May-Jun.), there was little to commend and a good deal to criticise in "The Reader Speaks."

The criticisms were duly forthcoming; though the visitors were not disheartened by the resounding slaps of disgruntled fans. Pronouncing themselves in continued favour of free and open discussion of the magazine's shortcomings, they excused themselves thus: "After all, science fiction is a young art—it needs continual freshness, new ideas, new authors, new readers. We are getting them all, and we are happy." Again: "Science fiction is not perfect—it is too young, too struggling, too new. It is now cutting its teeth . . . learning by experience, and getting the wisdom of the world to grow up into the strong, healthy being it is sure to become . . . We must have faith and be patient."

But the readers were neither happy nor content to bide their time. They wanted a better magazine—and a bigger one. Only twelve months after its shrinkage, the editors admitted that the majority had not approved the change, many arguing that "a magazine of such educational value . . . should not be placed on a par with the 'pulp' magazine of a more sensational type." So, with the Nov. '31 issue came a return to the large size—and, unexpectedly, a brief period of printing on fine quality paper, which with trimmed edges and all gave **Wonder** a slickish appearance that has never been equalled by any publication in the field. At the same time, the contents improved as promising new contributors augmented the output of Ed. Earl Repp, Arthur G. Stangland, A. Rowley Hilliard, and other regulars, and Paul got back into his stride.

Among the newcomers were John W. Campbell and his **Astounding** star of later years, Clifford D. Simak. While Smith continued his florid fantasies, Jack Williamson returned to favour with "The Moon Era," in the same (Feb. '32) issue which presented Edmond Hamilton's "A Conquest of Two Worlds," ever since lauded even by those who consider his work unpraiseworthy. Meantime, John Taine's "The Time Stream" (Dec. '31—Mar. '32) was being serialised; but the Continental element, against which some readers inveighed, was not to be displaced. After the gloomy prognostications of Carl W. Spohr's "The Final War" (Mar.-Apr. '32) came von Hanstein's vision of life "In the Year 8000" (Jul.-Sep. '32), and other serialisations of foreign novels.

An innovation in this department was the four-part "unfinished" story, "The Moon Doom" (Feb.-Jun. '33), each instalment of which was written by a different—and obscure—author, in the fashion adopted by **Fantasy Magazine**

†See "The Poet of Science Fiction": page 14.

for the famous "Cosmos"*. There was even more originallity in the covers which, simultaneous with the reduction in the price and contents of the mag. occurring towards the end of '32, exhibited strange coloured spheres, circles and blots which were made the subject of two guessing contests. Prize-winners identified the spheres as colloidal particles, the circles as diffraction rings; and the blobs were a spot on the cover magnified sixty times.

The drop in price and content, occasioned by "the present financial state of the country" (which at the same time put paid to the two **Quarterlies** and the Clayton **Astounding**), was another mistake, which **Wonder** freely acknowledged in returning to its 96 pages at 25c. "We thought we were making a wise and just move. Events have proved that we were wrong! We are glad, even proud to admit that . . . even the Depression will not stop our readers from wanting and demanding science fiction." The next discovery, three months later, was that "our readers tend to spend the summer months out-of-doors and hence do much less reading"—and hence two "combined" bi-monthly issues, before **Wonder** once more reduced its dimensions to those of the new Street and Smith **Astounding** which was to play such an important part in the further development of the medium.

(To be continued)

*__Fantasy Magazine__ (formerly __Science Fiction Digest__) was the leading fan magazine of the '30's, which also published fiction by prominent authors. "Cosmos," an interplanetary story, ran for 17 instalments contributed by as many different writers, among them Ralph Milne Farley, John W. Campbell, Edward E. Smith, David H. Keller, Eando Binder, A. Merritt and Edmond Hamilton. The magazine was discontinued in '37.

In the next issue:

The Story of the Science Fiction League

by THOMAS SHERIDAN

An Interview with RAY BRADBURY

Among the Magazines *with KENNETH SLATER*

GOODBYE TO ALL THAT!

Readers Vote on the Shaver Mystery

At long last the infamous Shaver Mystery is finished—as far as *Amazing Stories*, which started it, is concerned. Having dropped it, Editor Palmer took a readers' poll on whether to take it up again, and although there were only six votes against it no more than 132 plumped for reviving the whole business. As RAP very justly points out in the April issue, it would need "a great many more letters to bring it back—say 75,000." It would seem that there are so few left to vote against it because those who were opposed to it—notably its erstwhile fans—have long since given up reading the mag., while of its new readership the vast majority couldn't care less. So that, dear friends, is that!

The cover of this issue is quite horrible, and depicts the villainous Englishman of S. M. Tenneshaw's story, "The Monster," who after berating American scientists as fools goes around trying to rape the heroine, a clean-living American girl, and is only frustrated by the hero, a clean-living American boy. To reverse the usual procedure, the story was written around the cover, but why it should have inspired Mr. Tenneshaw to such anti-British feelings is beyond us. If you can refrain from tearing the mag. to pieces, however, you will be rewarded by Rog Phillips' "Unthinkable," a thoughtful tale, unusual for *Amazing*. A new author, Lee Tarbell, also makes out with another explanation of the Flying Saucers in a story which should appeal to Kuttner fans. If Mr. Tarbell stays with the mag. and can keep this up, he and Rog Phillips may help to lift *Amazing* back to the level it once occupied as "The Aristocrat of Science Fiction." But it will take a long time for it to live down the Shaver Hoax.

Alexander Blade's "The Mermaid of Maracot Deep," in the March *Fantastic Adventures*, has a faint trace of Shaver about it; it concerns a race of mermen living in subterranean caves and making meals of ordinary humans. Much more appetising, for me, was "The Return of Lan-ning," by Guy Archette, an interplanetary short which might have been a good deal longer. Berkeley Livingstone's "City of Sand" proved to be one of those stories of dual worlds which seem so popular in *Amazing* these days, but left us wondering what happened to the hero in the end; and H. B. Hickey's "Checkmate to Demos" has to do with those four-armed giants we have met before, plus the usual menace to the Earth. "The Plaid Pterodactyl," by Geoff St. Reynard, amused me little more than the other "humorous" story; both seemed more suited to a kid's comic than a science fiction mag. Unless we have in *FA* the U.S. equivalent of *The Wizard*? I wonder . . . Anyway, next issue presents Blade's "War of the Giant Apes"!

Guy Archette did another good job in March *Amazing*, his "The Lost Power" far excelling the rest of the sorry set-up. My view is that he could do with a better vehicle for his stories—but who is he? "The Chemical Vampire," by Lee Francis, is about as silly as it sounds; "The Strange Disappearance of Guy Sylvester," by Chester S. Geier and Taylor Vincent Shaver (?), concerns mysterious beings who flit about on moonbeams, and Charles Recour's "The Swordsman of Pira" is a thinly-disguised adventure story. Don't let the title of "The Strange Tea of Ting Sun Fu" put you off, though, if you haven't read it yet: it has little to do with tea, and is quite a neat dimensional tale by Leroy Yerxa.

If your May issue of *Startling Stories* seems a trifle radio-active, blame it on Charles L. Harness' novelette, "Flight into Yesterday," which Editor Merwin described in the March issue as "a story so different from the ordinary run . . . that its very fabric glows with interest." It's a story picturing the world of the future divided into two great control centres, and grown so unwieldy that only the most centralised of power systems can administer it. Eando Binder's "Conquest of Life" is the next to be hung in the Hall of Fame, and there will be another story in Lafayette's "Conquest of Space" series, as well as a second article in Willy Ley's series on "The Road to Space Travel"

which started in the March number. In which I liked particularly Robert M. Williams' tale of the Martians' triumph over a lack of natural resources, "The Sound of Bugles," and Ray Bradbury's neat piece of horror, "Marionettes, Inc."

The cover of *Thrilling Wonder's* April issue illustrates Ray Bradbury's "The Concrete Mixer," with Miss California of 1963 (suitably undressed) hailing invading Martian hordes. His constant depicting of mankind as perfectly beastly must be one of the reasons for Bradbury's popularity, but I'm getting a little tired of being told an obvious truth—especially when it applies to you and me! The lead novel is "The Ultimate Planet," in which Noel Loomis apparently seeks to prove that scientific upbringing is not the answer to everything. Maybe there's a sequel in the offing, but the ending is far from satisfactory.

In "Alien Earth," Edmond Hamilton spares us his famous Menace and takes us into a weird world where everything moves so slowly that we can see the vines and creepers fighting for survival; but it moves fast enough to be enjoyable. "On the House," by Benj. Miller, transports Stieve Andro and Orig Prem (whom Oil preserve!) into the orbit of Antony and Cleopatra: I was amused this time, but only in spots. Among the seven shorts, Murray Leinster's "The Lost Race," which has at least two plots, is very good; Fredric Brown, though stuck for one, is highly amusing with "All Good Bems"; and Rog Phillips' pink rabbits from Venus add to the humour in "Quite Logical." Leigh Brackett, Raymond Z. Gallun, Margaret St. Clair and James Blish are also present. Next (June) issue brings Brackett's "Sea Kings of Mars," Arthur J. Burks' "White Catastrophe," and a Henry Kuttner story of the fabulous Hogbens, "See You Later."

Sight of *Super Science Stories*, which finally came through, proved sadly disappointing — and eye-straining. Printed in Canada, it is no advertisement for Empire goods. The cover is a blodge, bearing no relation to the contents: apparently a cosmic giant is very annoyed at an up-and-coming rocket-ship and is throwing the Moon at it. But the inside illustrations suffer much more from the general greyness and blurred impressions. Two stories are instantly recognisable, however, as reprints: "The Sky Will be Ours," by Manly Wade Wellman, and "Cabal," by Cleve Cartmill.

In "The Black Sun Rises," Henry Kuttner goes over the rebuilding-of-civilisation theme. Walter Kubilius gives a touch of novelty to interstellar travel in "A Handful of Stars," and fan-editor Stanley Mullen makes the grade with "Moonworm's Dance," a tale of hunters on faraway planets. "The Bounding Crown," by James Blish, a politico-fantasy with a Venus setting, and short stories by Ray Bradbury and Sanford Vaid, with fan departments and letter pages, complete the issue which took so long to produce, I hear, because the stories got lost in the mails on the way to the printers.

Alejandro's cover for March *Science Fiction* (the "Astounding" is almost invisible, now), depicts a robot with a heart pinned to its metal bosom: title, "Missing Ingredient." Quite impressive.... but when you turn over you come to a research quiz, which is rather a let-down. S. & S., it appears, want to know all about you, you and you, partly for the benefit of prospective advertisers. Well, if fan-mag. editors can do it, why not? One of the things they want to know is what other s-f mags. you read—"if any"; also what you think *ASF* lacks in the way of features.

Best of a good bunch of tales in this number is "Opening Doors," a sequel to Wilmar H. Shiras' much-appreciated "In Hiding." He develops the theme, this time, of an I.Q.-plus child who didn't adapt quite so well as Tim Paul. Sprague de Camp is back with an amusing piece called "Throwback"; Rex Graham's "Customs Declaration" is an excellent interplanetary tale with human interest; and "The Glass Eye," by Eric Frank Russell, reverses the problem of how we may recognise intelligence when we meet it on other worlds. In "Fireproof," by Hal Clement, is an answer to the question: what to do about fires in spacecraft? According to him, you don't do anything—you just don't have any.

Will Stewart's serial, "Seetee Shock," will be difficult to follow for those who have not read "Opposites React" (Jan. '43) and the other "Seetee" tales, which were much more alive than this one. It concludes with the current (April) issue, which brings another Doc Methuselah yarn, "Plague," and enables our Russell to score a hat-trick with "The Undecided," an interplanetary. Theodore Sturgeon is also present with "Prodigy," and a new cover artist, one

For selling more stories in 1948 than any other member, new writer **E. EVERETT EVANS** was honoured by Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society as winner of its amateur writers' annual contest. His work has appeared in **Startling Stories, Weird Tales** and **Fantasy Book.**

Santry, illustrates Rene Lafayette's latest.

Spring '49 *Planet Stories* may be recommended, at least, for Robert Abernathy's "Hostage of Tomorrow," the story of two men who get carried forward in time to a world in which the Nazis have won the war, and for Bradbury's "Dweller in Silence," about a man marooned on Mars. Henry Hasse's "Eternal Zmend Must Die" is space opera unadorned; George Whitley tells an amusing tale, "Moon of Madness," about the first men on the Moon; Damon Knight's "The Star Beast" is fair enough, and there are other pieces by Basil Wells, Stanley Mullen and Alfred Coppell Jnr. Next (Summer) issue will feature another Leigh Brackett novelette, "Queen of the Martian Catacombs."

Avon Fantasy Reader's eighth issue sports the same nude female on the cover—or, in this case, the ghost of one, from Robert E. Howard's "Conan" tale, "Queen of the Black Coast." Most old stagers will share my appreciation of the reprints Editor Wollheim is giving us, and the more recent devotee must find them both interesting and refreshing. Others in this issue are the evergreen "Machine-Man of Ardathia," by the late Francis Flagg, Frank Belknap Long's "The Man with a Thousand Legs," and Everil Worrell's "The Canal," all of which date back to '27; "The Cat-Woman," by Mary Elizabeth Counselman, one of the best off-trail stories *Weird Tales* ever published, and "The Temple," which is not one of Lovecraft's better pieces.

Of yet older vintage are "An Inhabitant of Carcosa," by Ambrose Bierce, and "The Other Wing," by Algernon Blackwood; while John Michel's "The Goblins Will Get You" strikes the modern, humorous touch and Ray Bradbury's "Zero Hour," from *Planet* of only 18 months ago, provides a striking contrast with the horror tales of past years. In No. 9 will be Otis Adelbert Kline's "The Man from the Moon" and P. Schuyler Miller's "Through the Vibrations," from *Amazing Stories*, and Clark Ashton Smith's "The Flower-Women," from *Weird Tales*, with others of the type which, we are told, "have hitherto been only the high-priced secrets of a few fantasy collectors." At 35 cents, it's a giveaway!

August Derleth's novelette, "The Testament of Claiborne Boyd," in March *Weird Tales*, took us yet again over the old, familiar ground made hallowed by Lovecraft, with frequent acknowledgments to the Master himself to add weight to the plot, which does not strike us cold with horror any more. But the rest of the issue was good. Theodore Sturgeon's "The Martian and the Moron" is a science fiction tale, more or less, about communication with Mars; "The Strange Island of Dr. Nork" a strictly whacky piece by Robert Bloch, who has taken the heroes of the comic strips for his characters—taken them for a ride, in fact! Arthur J. Burks has done another slightly screwy piece in "The Wizard of Bird-in-Hand," concerning a young genius who might well be a science fiction fan; Allison V. Harding is here again with "The Holiday"; Stanton A. Cobletz plays his favourite game of poking fun at our civilisation in "The Will of Raminchantra"; and Thorp McClusky persuades us in "The Other Santa" that there really is a Santa Claus—if we believe in him hard enough. Next (May) issue brings "The Damp Man Again," by Allison V. Harding, and a de Grandin story by Seabury Quinn, "Vampire Kith and Kin."

MASTERS OF FANTASY

The Poet of Science Fiction

By ARTHUR F. HILLMAN

This is the first of a series of articles which will deal with the work of writers who have distinguished themselves in the development of fantasy-fiction, especially in the magazines devoted to the medium.

More than twenty years have passed since Clark Ashton Smith, already noted at that time for his colourful poetry, decided to try his hand once more at writing fiction. Then aged 35, some fifteen years separated him from his early efforts in *The Black Cat* and other amateur magazines, and "The Ninth Skeleton," the first of his work to appear in *Weird Tales* (Sep. '28), gave little indication of the genius which had yet to flower. His rare and brilliant imagination was not used to the narrow confines of story-telling, and for a time he found the strictures irksome. Not until the May '30 issue did he appear again in the same magazine with "The End of the Story," whose title proved a misnomer: it was only the beginning of the story of a great writer of fantasy.

Set in the haunted regions of Averoigne, in the France of the Middle Ages, the abode of vampires and warlocks, of lamia and tempting succibi, it drew freely on the fear and mysticism rampant in those times. But the ingenuity of the plot was overshadowed by the colour, depth and erudition of the language in which it was told: Smith had applied his poet's tools to the craft of story-telling, and the results were most effective. The piece was received with approbation by *Weird Tales*' followers, even though he was competing for their praises with such past masters as Lovecraft, Long, Howard and Whitehead. This success started him on a cycle of similar stories, of which the next, "A Rendezvous in Averoigne" (Apr. '31), was even more colourful and beautifully written than the first. But by then Smith's work had already taken a significant turn: he was writing science fiction, and for a different market.

Though Hugo Gernsback has been given ample credit for the encouragement he gave to many early science fiction writers, it is sometimes forgotten that Clark Ashton Smith was among his protégés. "Marooned in Andromeda," which appeared in *Wonder Stories* (Oct. '30), was his first work of this kind; and it stood out strongly among the amateurish efforts that hampered the progress of this new type of popular literature. Science fiction, in those days, lived up to the titles of magazines purveying it: wonder and amazement were the dominant theme. The followers of Wells were being enticed along the fascinating by-paths he had signposted, and they trembled at the prospects on every hand.

To the wide-eyed acolytes who relished the work of these pioneers, Smith brought not only the delight of strange environments but a command of language that was breathtaking. In "Andromeda," the reader plunged with Captain Volmar and his crew into depths of space where far-strewn nebulae spanned complete emptiness; and even when three mutineers of the 'Alcyone' were cast adrift on a bizarre world, the human element was reduced to a minimum. With a solemn respect for the cruel hardships of alien surroundings, the author maintained a wholesome disregard of humanity and its petty moralities. The sequel, "The Amazing Planet" (*Science Wonder Quarterly*, Summer '31) showed Captain Volmar, once more united with his erring companions, engaged in further struggles with monstrosities such as only Smith's imagination could devise.

Of mechanistic concepts, however, little may be found in all his science fiction. Ray-guns, tractor-beams, McMillan projectors, Bergenholm space-drives, and all the scientific mumbo-jumbo of later writers are as rare as the reporter hero, mad scientist and beautiful daughter of a less complicated decade. Atmosphere is Smith's forte, even action being subor-

dinated to this main element, though when necessary he can urge his story along with the best of the hustling school. Generally, he followed the dictum of his colleague Lovecraft in his "Notes on Interplanetary Fiction"*, and practiced what he preached himself concerning the raising of science fiction's literary standards and the danger of too much "realism" being introduced into the medium†.

His fine attention to suggestive detail is strikingly illustrated in "The City of Singing Flame" (*Wonder*, Jul. '31) and its sequel, "Beyond the Singing Flame" (Nov. '31), in which the adventures of Angarth and Hastane among the queer denizens of an intradimensional world are described in words of rare beauty. The stories are examples of pure fantasy of the sort Dunsany used to write; but whereas Dunsany's style has the clear, logical expressiveness of Bible English, Smith invests his lines with an exotic, archaic cast that gives them a peculiar fascination. It has been said that some of the words he uses are of his own coining, and it may well be true, for many of them baffle not only the reader but every available dictionary.

*Written for **The Californian** ('35) and reprinted in "Marginalia" (Arkham House: '44). Said H.P.L.: "Atmosphere, not action, is the thing to cultivate in the wonder story . . . A fantastic author should see that his prime emphasis goes into subtle suggestion—the imperceptible hints and touches of selective and associative detail which . . . build up a vague illusion of the strange reality of the unreal—instead of into bald catalogues of incredible happenings which can have no substance or meaning apart from a sustaining cloud of colour and mood-symbolism."

†A matter which he argued with author P. Schuyler Miller in the correspondence columns of **Wonder** in '32-33. As he saw it, "the realistic wave (which) is entering science fiction, like all other trends, has both good and evil possibilities . . . The best possibilities lie in the correlation of observed data about life and human problems with inspired speculation as to the unknown forces of cosmic cause and effect . . . The evil lies in a meaningless Dreiserism, an inartistic heaping of superficial facts or alleged facts which . . . may be erroneous or, at least, too incomplete to permit the safe drawing of dogmatic inferences . . . It is partly because of this shifting, unstable ground on which the thing called realism stands, that I regard pure, frank fantasy as a more valid and lasting art-expression of the human mind."

CLARK ASHTON SMITH, poet, artist, sculptor and fantasy writer, was born of French-English ancestry 56 years ago in California, where he lives in a cabin on the outskirts of the small township of Auburn. Entirely self-educated, he began to write fiction and verse at an early age, and published his first volume of poetry when he was 19. For some years he was a journalist; he has also worked as a fruit-picker, a rock miner, a gardener and windlass operator. He has contributed fiction and verse to some 50 magazines, from **Thrill Book** and the **Buccaneer** to **Yale Review** and the **London Mercury,** and his fantasies have appeared in several anthologies in England and America. His four volumes of poetry, "The Star Treader," "Odes and Sonnets," "Ebony and Crystal" and "Sandalwood," are all out of print, but he is preparing a new collection of "Selected Poems" for publication by Arkham House. He has also received high praise from critics for his exotic paintings and the outre carvings which, cut from unusual minerals, often depict characters from the mythology of his own tales as well as those of his friend Lovecraft.

It is little wonder, therefore, that in this age of hurried reading many should find Smith's stories hard going; indeed, even in those days, there were readers who complained of being unable to cope with his obsolencences. But Gernsback continued to feature his

work for several years, and each tale was an achievement. "The Invisible City" (Jun. '32), "Master of the Asteroid" (Oct. '32) and "Visitors from Mlok" (May '33) were all stepping stones to a secure niche in fantasy's hall of fame. Unfortunately, his imagination too often outstripped that of the editor who received his work, and in several stories he had to make revisions to conform with orthodoxy. An example is "The Dweller in Martian Depths" (Mar. '33), the story of a dreadful monstrosity whose obnoxious habit is to pluck out the eyes of those rash enough to penetrate its lair. The original ending is reputed to have been so horrible than Gernsbeck objected, and insisted on a less heartrending climax. Even so, it still leaves a vivid impression on the reader.

This editorial squeamishness caused Smith to have several of his more fanciful tales privately printed. "The Double Shadow and Other Fantasies," a collection of six pieces which he himself published and sold very cheaply, eventually became recognised as a valuable collector's item. Subsequently, they found their way into *Weird Tales*. Another booklet of this period featuring "The Immortals of Mercury" appeared in Gernsback's *Science Fiction Series*. Meanwhile, *Weird Tales* continued to bring his science-fantasies—"The Monster of the Prophecy" (Jan. '32), "The Vaults of Yoh-Vombis" (May, '32), etc.—as well as his weird stories before its discerning readers, for whom he drew on his unlimited imagination to create the pre-Atlantean kingdom of Hyperborea, the lost continent of Zothique, the master wizards Malygris and Maal Dweb, besides enlarging on the Cthulhu Mythos of his fellow contributor and correspondent, Lovecraft*.

By '34 he had reached his highwater mark of production, his markets including *Amazing* and *Astounding*, in whose companion magazine, *Strange Tales*, he appeared several times while it lasted. But he and a few others were fighting a losing battle against the latest trend of heavy science which, with the growing awareness of the social and mechanical aspects of science fiction, brought a decline in tales of ingenuous wonder. Even *Weird Tales* had to adopt a more realistic approach in its stories of horror, and "pure" fantasy slumped in all directions. Smith's published work diminished to a mere trickle of short pieces, until by '38 it seemed no more than a fading memory. Then, in England, Walter Gillings revived some of his former glory by reprinting many of Smith's better pieces in *Tales of Wonder*, for whose uninitiated audience they were admirably suited.

The past few years have seen an increasing interest in his work among those of the new generation of fantasy fans who are able to appreciate the best of what has gone before, especially if it is presented with the added dignity of hard covers. Two collections of his short stories published by Arkham House, "Out of Space and Time" ('42) and "Lost Worlds" ('44) went quickly out of print and now command high prices. A third, "Genius Loci and Other Tales"†, has lately appeared, and two more are pending; while more of his stories have recently been seen in *Weird Tales*, giving promise of a welcome return to the finer craftsmanship of yesteryear.

Like all who have made their mark in this field, Smith has often been assailed with criticism far from gentle. He has been censured by some for closeting himself in an ivory tower. Reviewers such as Phil Stong have taken strong exception to his Byzantine language. Apparently such a rare vintage is too delicate for many palates. They would prefer him to write in Basic English, while tethering his soaring imagination to this mundane sphere. But his followers know that his attraction lies not entirely in the singing glory of his prose nor the vast scope of his fancy. There is in his work besides a sophisticated wit, a derisive vein of humour, and a degree of characterisation that few have equalled. Let Lovecraft, his friend and correspondent for seventeen years, say the final word: "In sheer daemonic strangeness and fertility of conception, Mr. Smith is perhaps unexcelled by any other writer dead or living."

*Who addressed him in his letters: "My good old friend and correspondent, Klarkash-Ton, Heirophant of Atlantis and High Priest of Tsathaggua."

†See **Fantasy Review**, Feb.-Mar. '49.

About Books By Geoffrey Giles

Fantasy Publishers Join Forces in Drive for Bigger Sales

With a six-page write-up on "The Growth of Science Fiction and Fantasy Publishing in Book Form," the American **Publishers' Weekly** has set the seal on the recognition of the specialist fantasy presses as a thriving branch of book production in the U.S.A. Cue for the article, which was illustrated by photos of a get-together by leading lights of the field and of some of its recent productions, was the formation of its own trade group, the Associated Fantasy Publishers*, "for mutual consultation, credit information and joint sales efforts."

The article reported that, although the field is still not large in terms of sales as the book trade sees them, it has "a very loyal public, (including) lawyers and doctors, engineers and scientists, students and technicians . . . who, for relaxation from their serious pursuits, turn to pseudo-science as others turn to detective stories. Though as yet small, (it) has produced at least two book clubs, the Fantasy Book Club and the Fantasy Guild, and is expanding into the 25-cent. reprint market; includes import and export ramifications; has for some years had its own group of avid collectors who will pay high prices for out-of-print volumes; and is the subject of earnest bibliographical scholarship."

It cited the established pulp magazines in the field (including the "more conservative, often straight scientific" **Astounding**) as providing "the basic market. A glance through such magazines . . . shows the avid interest of the fans . . . ; reveals the activity of fantasy fan clubs; shows thoughtful reviews of the better books in the field; and makes it plain that the fantasy book publishers and bookstores find it worth while to advertise in them repeatedly. Perhaps three-fourths of the fantasy publishers' books are taken from these magazines, but the number of titles appearing first in book form is said to be growing."

*Members of the group: Arkham House, Fantasy Press, Prime Press, Shasta Publishers, Gnome Press, and the Fantasy, Hadley and New Era Publishing Companies.

For evidence of "the extent to which the science fiction books are prized by their fanciers," **Publishers' Weekly** referred to **The Antiquarian Bookman,** which earlier devoted a special issue to the field.† "Some readers buy their books not only to enjoy but as investments, and at least one firm, Arkham House, advertises that its books are 'in small limited editions, never reprinted, especially for collectors'. Leaving aside the collectors' aspect . . . it can be said that the printings of new titles, while nothing like the circulation of magazines, are growing. At an average of 3,000 to 5,000 copies per title, somewhat fewer than the detective story average nowadays, the runs are four or five times higher than they were ten years ago.

"Such modest printings are only a beginning, the fantasy publishers believe, and they expect that general publishers will find it profitable sooner or later to go into the field more frequently than in the past. Already there are many booksellers who have found it profitable to set up special shelves of science fiction, to which little groups of fans gravitate if one or two copies are displayed in the window . . . The books seem to need little special promotion; their weird jackets are traffic-stoppers, but the fans will sniff them out in any case."

The article mentions several bookstores in various parts of the U.S. where the demand for fantasy titles has grown to such an extent that permanent displays have been given to them and standing orders placed for every title by enthusiastic customers. Conspicuous among these, it says, are physicists and psychiatrists; while 30-40 per cent. of the mailing lists of Shasta Publishers and Fantasy Press are made up of professional men. "About 15 per cent. are housewives evidently escaping as far away from housework as possible. The rest of the market consists of students and of just plain readers in all walks of life. But it is definitely not a teen-age market, say Mr. Korshak and Mr. Eshbach."

†See this column, Oct.-Nov. '48 issue.

After analysing the appeal and subject-matter of fantasy, the article went on to trace its "long and honourable ancestry," mentioning some of its finest exponents (August Derleth, H.P. Lovecraft, M. P. Shiel), and the work of military expert-book reviewer Fletcher Pratt and mathematician Eric Temple Bell (John Taine) in the science fiction tradition. It concluded by summarising the organised development of the field since the First World S-F Convention in '36, and the publication of the recent fantasy anthologies and "The Checklist of Fantastic Literature"—which "the editor hopes to bring up to date every two or three years." Appended was a list of over 60 titles in print or forthcoming from the eight Associated Fantasy Publishers.

COLLECTORS' GUIDE.

A boon to fantasy book collectors is *The Science Fiction Bookman,* a duplicated list of s-f and fantasy volumes incorporating current, forthcoming and out-of-print titles, issued at intervals by the house of Bookman's in Washington, D.C. Now in its fourth issue and edited by Roy W. Loan, Jr., it gives useful data on each book it lists, and is distributed free to all who care to write for it.

As a companion volume to Shasta's "Checklist," Everett F. Bleiler has completed a 450-page work which gives summaries, analyses, criticisms and historical evaluations of hundreds of s-f and fantasy books indexed by title, author and subject-matter. "The Guide to Fantastic Literature" will be much sought after when it eventually appears. Meanwhile, an essential work of reference for lovers of "The Works of M.P. Shiel" is this unique study in bibliography by A. Reynolds Morse, which is now available from the Fantasy Publishing Co. at $6.00.

HORRIBLE HUXLEY.

Aldous Huxley's new novel of atomic war's grim aftermath, "Ape and Essence," whose British publication we anticipated three issues since, has now appeared from Chatto & Windus at 7/6. It has been extensively, if somewhat grudgingly, reviewed, the *Times Literary Supplement* devoting a whole page to Huxley's works, the latest of which it acknowledged as "the most powerfully moving book that has appeared since the war," for all of its being "the most frankly horrible (one he) has produced."

Another book we mentioned recently "Sometime Never," by Roald Dahl, which has to do with the menace of the Gremlins, has also seen British publication by Collins at 8/6. "Tomorrow and Tomorrow" (Pheonix

LLOYD ARTHUR ESHBACH, Director of Fantasy Press, one of the first of the specialist publishers to concentrate on the presentation of science fiction classics in book form. With 20 years' experience of fantasy as a fan as well as a contributor to **Amazing, Wonder,** etc., and ten years in advertising and sales promotion, Eshbach launched his organisation in '46, in association with commercial artist A. J. Donnell, sales manager G. H. MacGregor and accountant L. H. Houck; by producing handsome, illustrated volumes and offering copies autographed by such famous authors as E. E. Smith, Williamson, Heinlein and van Vogt, soon made a success of the venture. In its first two years, the Press has reprinted ten popular titles by these and other notables of the fantasy magazines, as well as a new novel by John Taine and a text-book on science fiction writing. For the future it is preparing further classics by Weinbaum, de Camp, van Vogt, Verrill and Zagat, as well as additions to Smith's "Lensman" series and the sequels to Williamson's "Legion of Space" stories.

House, 12/6) is a novel by two Australian women, writing under the name of M. Barnard Eldershaw, which deals with the development of their native land as seen by an imaginary writer of four centuries hence.

"Atalanta: A story of Atlantis," by His Honour Judge Hargreaves, is a 30/- Hutchinson volume presenting a fantasy play with music and seven remarkable colour illustrations by the author (the most appealing part of it, for us). On the lighter side is "Heaven Takes a Hand," by Eliot Crawshay-Williams, a new 9/6 novel in the Stephen Vincent Benet tradition forthcoming from John Long who have also issued at 6/- a collection of the same author's short stories, several of which are fantasies, entitled "The Man Who Met Himself."

William F. Temple's "The Four-Sided Triangle" should be available from this house very shortly. Meanwhile, Eden Phillpotts' new science fiction novel, "Address Unknown," has appeared from Hutchinson's.

Eric Romilly's "Bleeding from the Roman" (Chapman & Hall, 9/6) is a de Camp-ish frolic about a man who, transported to the time of Boadicea, upholds Britain's prestige by beating the Romans at chariot-racing and advising on propaganda methods.

Geoffrey Dennis' poetic account of "The End of The World," which won the Hawthornden Prize in 1930, has been re-published by Eyre and Spottiswoode at 8/6. They have also added to their Century Library series a new 6/- volume presenting Conan Doyle's "The Lost World" and "The Poison Belt," with an introduction by John Dickson Carr, author of the much-noticed "Life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle" (John Murray, 18/-), which makes little reference to his science fiction.

Following "Krakatit," Allen & Unwin have now reprinted, at 12/6, "Three Novels," by Karel Capek, which presents in omnibus form the trilogy "Hordubal," "Meteor" and "An Ordinary Life," of which the second is considered among his best fantasies. And if you are interested in the work of Franz Kafka, author of "The Metamorphosis" (which, says one reviewer, may take the place of "Gulliver's Travels" in the nursery, centuries hence), you may find "Franz Kafka: An Interpretation of his Works," by Herbert Tauber (Secker & Warburg: 18/-), of value in enhancing your appreciation of them.

Book Reviews

The Wonder Woman

THE GOLDEN AMAZON RETURNS, by John Russell Fearn. The World's Work, Tadworth, Surrey. 5/-.

Reviewed by THOMAS SHERIDAN

If it were not for her antipathy towards all men, the Golden Amazon might make a very suitable wife for Superman. She's only five feet eight inches in height, with a lissom figure, invariably clad in skin-tight black silk. She wears a gold belt about her waist and a gold band round her blonde head; her skin is yellow, and she has purple eyes which can look daggers at times. When they do—watch out! For beneath the soft flesh of her arms and shoulders lie rippling muscles of steel, and her slender fingers can crunch a man's wrist in a grip like a vice. Any six-footer who rouses her ire is liable to get his back broken in a wrestling bout with her; and the man who casts a lustful eye over her rounded calves and thighs will find himself biting the dust, swung over her head "with effortless ease" or felled by a blow on the jaw from her iron-hard knuckles. She can kick, too.

When it comes to villainous scientists plotting to destroy the world, she will shoot a couple of them in cold blood without turning a hair. One man in this book, having suffered at her hands, calls her a "female gorilla." Another likens her to a tigress—cruel, deadly, subtle, but fascinating. Beneath her sex appeal, though, is a misanthropic contempt for the mere male. "If there is one thing on this planet I loathe as a species, it is a man! I tried once to break his power, and I shall go on trying until a world of women with myself at the head tramples all of them underfoot!" So you know what to expect.

Science, of course, has endowed her with more brain-power than any man, as well as superhuman strength. While others are fiddling with rocket-drives, she has a flier that works by ultra-gravity, and she has solved the problem of television without transmission. She has discovered a drug to beat the ketabolism (super-consumption of energy) which threatened to cause her to drop dead any minute. "Now I am normal, as far as energy is concerned. I might live a hundred years—even two hundred—grow old very slowly. Maybe I'll even find a way to defeat death . . . I'd rather like to be eternal."

Her first rebuff has made no difference to her driving ambition. "I haven't reformed, not by a long way . . . You can't keep a spirit like mine in chains, you know. I have not given up hope of ruling the world one day—and maybe the rest of the planets in the Solar System. But until I am asked to rule—thereby proving to myself that everybody wants me—I shall spend my time wiping out those who look likely of usurping my potential throne . . . That's all there is in it." No more than a slight touch of pique, excusable in any super-woman. But well might her mother intone: "There are times when I wonder . . . where it is all going to end!"

The Golden Amazon first made her bow in an early issue of **Fantastic Adventures** (Jul. '39), in a story which gained her creator a $75 bonus in spite of competition from Mr. Burroughs. The idea of a female superman was, undoubtedly, the best brainwave Mr. Fearn had had for some years; and her creation was simple enough for one so skilled in imaginative devices. In fact, lost on Venus as a perfectly normal baby, like little Topsy, she just growed. It was all on account of the alien climate that she became possessed of her phenomenal powers, which enabled her to make rings round the men and leave her terrestrial sisters gawping like so many dumb brunettes.

After two or three appearances, she faded from the American scene. But Mr. Fearn had developed such an affection for his brainchild that he resolved to write a book about her and, since it would be for home consumption, give her a more plausible rebirth. So, in "The Golden Amazon,"* she was a baby lost in the London blitz and operated on by a gland surgeon who wanted her to grow up a good influence on the world. Alas for his hopes! When Violet Ray matured to a ravish-

*The World's Work, '44.

ing, yellow-skinned blonde, her amazing grasp of super-science, coupled with a ruthless determination to make her mark, proved almost the death of mankind—and, apparently, of her. Whereupon the world breathed a sigh of relief; for, having created an exact duplicate of herself, her aim was to replace ordinary human beings with synthetic creatures who would dance to her dictatorial tune. As her foster-sister remarks, "I never think of her but what I shudder!"

But Mr. Fearn wisely decided that the Amazon was too good to waste on a few short stories and a single book. Hence "The Golden Amazon Returns," which is, in fact, only the second of a series of seven full-length stories he has told about her exploits to date. Five of these further adventures have already been published in Canada, since the **Toronto Star** featured the first of them, four years ago, as its Novel of the Week. Since there is no living genius who can solve the problem of Britain's paper shortage overnight, however, it will be several years before we are able to catch up with Violet and her ever more daring escapades, of which her creator has given us a somewhat breathtaking preview†.

It was as easy for him to bring the Amazon back to life as it was for him to create her in the first place. The strange thing is that nobody in the present book can guess the simple explanation for her sudden revival after five years. The beautiful tyrant whose body shrivelled up on receiving a bullet in the shoulder wasn't the Amazon at all, really, but only her synthetic image; and having been deposed, Violet herself withdrew to build her own secret city in Brazil, abstracting a few other females from Holloway Gaol to keep her company in exile. From which she now emerges to frustrate a plot by the remnants of Hitler's gang who want to establish a United Resurgent Europe, and who succeed in making a mess of much of the rest of the globe by bombarding its cities with atomic rockets from the Moon. This in spite of the Amazon's best efforts to safeguard from them the secret of space-travel and the ability to reach their Lunar outpost.

When she follows them, breaking all records for the trip, she and her puny fellows only manage to get sent back in a V-10 which will spread them over the landscape on landing. But Violet recovers herself just in time. Turning the rocket round by dancing up and down on its nose in mid-space, she contrives to land safely on Earth with the secret of hoisting the plotters in Copernicus with their own petard. Leaving her free to prepare for the next adventure, for which we can hardly wait.

†Other titles in the series: "The Golden Amazon's Triumph," "The Amazon's Diamond Quest," "The Amazon Strikes Again," "Twin of the Amazon," "Conquest of the Amazon."

The Eosian Records

THE COSMIC GEOIDS and One Other, by John Taine. Fantasy Publishing Co., Los Angeles. $3.00.

Reviewed by FORREST J. ACKERMAN

Billions of years ago, faced with the destruction of their cosmos, the dawn race of Eosians wrote: "We know that Eos must vanish like a dream, and that all our substance must become less than a dream. But we shall survive. Our life, our intelligence, shall outlast our extinction by ages. These records which we have sealed up in hundreds of millions of shells resistant of all destructive agencies except directly applied nuclear disintegration, will be scattered broadcast throughout the universe with the annihilation of our planet. For nearly the whole five million years of our Decline we have laboured to compile and safeguard (in) these records . . . all the science of our race, now about to vanish from the universe . . . "

In his new book, John Taine records that the first of these "man"-made meteors—spherical repositories of pre-human, extra-galactic history and wisdom—was found on Earth in 1879. The story opens in the 22nd Century, by which time another forty-three of the geoids have been discovered and their contents partially deciphered by members of the Alliance of World Scientists. The world is in a bad way, 300 years hence. The Seventh World War is in progress, and by the end of the story Earth's total population has been decimated to a mere

twelve million, and science has been scrapped. Man has turned his eyes from the stars, and with a clouded mind's eye looks to the star-gazers—astrologists—instead.

The Eos of this book has nothing to do with the Eos of Taine's "The Time Stream," incidentally. The author considers it his best work—or perhaps his second best now that he has completed "The Scarlet Night," on which he has been working for forty years—but I doubt if many of his admirers will agree with him. It is scarcely a story; rather, we have something which is a sort of combination of "Death into Life" and "Star Maker," and the style strongly suggests Stapledon. Yet I cannot enthusiastically recommend it—except to those who can't get enough of Stapledon.

I missed the crackle of character conflicts so engrossingly developed in "Quayle's Invention" and "The Iron Star"; though I must give Taine credit for his invention of a set of Stapledonian intelligences—the Controllers of Life, the Fully Living, the Living Dead and the Hopeful Monsters. As for "The Black Goldfish," which fills out the last 77 pages of the book, it does little more than that. Its science is slim; its plot and style second-rate. The original title was "Vitamines Alpha and Omega": the spelling of vitamins will give you an idea when it was written.

Lou Goldstone, whose outstanding jacket for "Death's Deputy" lost much in the reproduction, has again suffered by the presentation of his dust-wrapper in an unhappy selection of colours which all but nullifies the force of his original work. Since there is no description in the story of the Eosians, whom he elected to depict on the jacket and twice in the interiors, he can only be praised for his highly imaginative concept of these alien beings.

At least, I learned from this book what I am—a descendant of one of the Eosian Renegades. For they felt that life was but a torment to its possessors of intelligence, and that a nihilistic acceptance of planetary extinction was the only humane solution for "humanity." With which rare streak of sanity I heartily concur.

The Humour of de Camp

DIVIDE AND RULE and THE STOLEN DORMOUSE, by L. Sprague de Camp. Fantasy Press, Reading, Pa. $3.00.

THE WHEELS OF IF and Other Science Fiction, by L. Sprague de Camp. Shasta, Chicago. $3.00.

Reviewed by JOHN K. AIKEN

Mr. de Camp's best—now, alas, too rarely seen—is very good indeed: and in his two short novels he is very nearly at his best. Although "Divide and Rule" originally appeared in **Unknown** (Spring '39), and "The Stolen Dormouse" in **Astounding** (Spring '41), both are really science fiction, of which this author's output is better if sparser than his fantasy—perhaps because of rather than despite the discipline it imposes on his mercurial spirit.

Discipline or no, his science fiction is of a highly personal type. Its interest does not lie purely in alien monsters or metals combining the functions of irresistible force and immovable object, nor even in human mutants with remarkable mental attributes, but in the behaviour of real people living in unfamiliar social set-ups, logically developed from to-day's trends or from a given premise such as an extra-terrestrial invasion. His characters do not indulge in pages of dreary pseudo-scientific badinage of a kind foreign even to the most narrow-minded of laboratory specialists; and the novelties and perils of their age are properly subordinated to the fact that they live. In these dramas, the extra-planetary kangaroos and supra-magnetic beams know their place—among the stage properties.

This is not to say that Mr. de Camp's sense of humour does not sometimes run away with him, even in his science fiction. One will, for instance, readily grant the extremely improbable details of the feudal régime set up by the Hoppers in "Divide and Rule,' with its knights in mediaeval armour, packing radios in their saddles, and elephant-drawn trains. Granting this, one will admit the still higher degree of improbability of the motto, "Give 'em the Works," on a knightly shield; but improbability is here outweighed by entertainment value and by a certain wild consistency which is supported by the realness of the characters.

A scientific flaw in this story—a more serious kind of improbability—is that the fleas which bring the human victory, after breeding for a capacity to digest Hopper blood containing haemocyanine, should retain a liking for the human or canine blood which made their survival possible. But it is all great fun.

"The Stolen Dormouse" is more solidly based, as befits its original place of appearance; and with its industrialist clans whose lower orders duel with single-sticks and are in due course elevated to the rank of businessman (with insignia of despatch-case and fountain-pen), the political philosopher James Burnham would be quick to see in it a development of his theory of the Managerial Revolution. The reader, however, will recognise the irrepressible de Camp in the description of the hero's wedding night, spent under his wife's bed in the company of a tame puma and in the throes of hay fever.

Altogether, as sprightly and enjoyable a pair of tales as one might meet in a couple of years' reading; and that the book is unmarred by any attempt at illustration—a new and excellent departure by these publishers—makes it an unalloyed pleasure to possess it.

Mr. de Camp's second volume contains one novelette and half-a-dozen short stories, but is in every way less satisfactory. "The Wheels of If" was, as it first appeared, one of his very best other-worldly fantasies. It has been all but ruined by careless rewriting or editing. The setting is a U.S.A. in which, owing to divagations in early English and French history, the original settlers are much more purely Scandinavian, their language much more purely Anglo-Saxon, than in our own world. The author has apparently decided that in the original version (**Unknown**, Oct. '40) the talk was not Anglo-Saxon enough, and he has gone through it, pulling up some of the remaining Latin roots and planting English ones. Unfortunately and mysteriously, the reverse process has also been taking place, resulting not so much in restoration of the status quo as in chaos.

Half the time, the inhabitants of New Belfast are speaking of changelets in brainly kilter; the other half, they

talk, more intelligibly if less amusingly, of amendments in mental condition. Even their accent isn't consistent any more: in place of "nay," "ain" and "mair," which they remembered dutifully back in 1940, they now sometimes lapse into "no," "own" and "more." One can forgive the frequent errors of Allister Park, the New York attorney who has been projected into the body of a bishop of the Celtic Church—he has a virtually new language to learn—but not those of the natives. The general effect is that of a play (a highly entertaining one, be it said) being performed by a company of rank amateurs: one cannot settle down to its enjoyment because of a sympathetic agony lest the actors forget their lines. The de Camp plausibility, so much a matter of consistency and detail of background and character, has largely vanished. In fact, for this book-judge, the outcoming is soothly a most rueful and unbrookly brainkilter.

Nor do the short stories make a very distinguished group. Each in its original magazine matrix sparkled with a lustre of humour and humanity which, it now appears, derived a good deal from the contrast with its surroundings. All together, they reveal themselves as definitely thin. In the shorter length, there is no time for Mr. de Camp to block in his detail enough to make creditable his rather irresponsible ideas. The resulting trifles, shorn of the Astoundingly heavy setting of science in which most of them were once embedded, are too superficial to be really entertaining.

This is particularly true of "The Best-Laid Scheme," a flippant treatment of time-travel (a theme which lends itself all too readily to such); "The Warrior Race," ditto of the undermining of a despotic sway; "The Contraband Cow," ditto ditto, and "Hyperpilosity." On the last-named, incidentally, there seems to have been a sharp and stubbornly-maintained difference of opinion as to the right spelling, between the lower-case compositor who set up the bulk of the letterpress and the upper-case fellow who lent a negligent hand with the headings, Altogether, in fact, the proof-reading of the Shasta folk has slipped considerably; and if they can manage to forget their splendid faux pas on p. 160 in a hurry, they are a shameless bunch.

The Walkie-Talkie Man

THE RADIO MAN, by Ralph Milne Farley. Fantasy Publishing Co., Los Angeles. $2.50.

Reviewed by THOMAS SHERIDAN

Harry Bates, the first editor of **Astounding,** used to tell a story against himself which concerned author Ralph Milne Farley. Several of his offerings having been declined because they were "too juvenile," Mr. Farley called on Editor Bates, who lectured him for an hour on what he meant by the disparaging term. Mr. Farley, so the story goes, went away a sadder but wiser man. Some weeks later, Mr. Bates made the somewhat overwhelming discovery that the author of the "Radio Man" stories was a distinguished Harvard scholar, an Army ballistics expert, an inventor, an authority on patents law, and a former senator of the state of Massachusetts, to say nothing of his knowledge of unemployment insurance, the breeding of horses and the growing of giant irises.

No juvenile himself (he is now 62), Roger Sherman Hoar, to give him his real name, has been active in the fantasy field for a quarter of a century, no less. His output has been both considerable and varied; and although they may be classified as schoolboyish by the fan who has graduated to something rather more intense, his best-known stories still merit the appellation of "classic" so frequently applied to them, if only by reason of their honourable origin in the Munsey magazines.

It was in 1923 that he wrote "The Radio Man," as he himself has admitted, "largely to amuse my own children and interest them in science fiction." Bob Davis, the editor who had "discovered" Edgar Rice Burroughs, found the story of Myles Cabot among the ant-men and Cupians of Venus worthy of serial presentation in **Argosy** only a few months after Mr. Burroughs had related the adventures of Tarzan among the Ant-Men of this planet. Thus encouraged, Mr. Farley proceeded to enlarge on the Radio Man's exploits through the years* and to write other stories of equal popularity. With the advent of **Famous Fantastic Mysteries,** Mrs. Gnaedinger embarked on the reprinting of the series, but she did not get far before the paper shortage set in. Now, to clinch their permanence, the tales which are an essential part of every fantasy reader's apprenticeship are appearing between hard covers.

Like Mr. Burroughs with his John Carter, Mr. Farley gets his hero transplanted with a minimum of delay; an experiment with a new radio transmission apparatus is enough to set Myles down on Venus, far from his Boston gentlefolk, without recourse to space-ships. The influence of Burroughs is such that, just for a moment, he thinks he has landed on Mars, but he soon corrects himself. Whereupon, Mr. Farley has to devise his own special nomenclature for the Venusian gr-ool, or Zoo, which contains such creatures as the fierce woofus, the gentle mathlab, and the beetlish buntlote, which makes a most charming pet.

The Cupians are almost human, except for their butterfly wings, and antennae instead of ears. By constructing his own walkie-talkie, Myles contrives to pass as one and communicate with them on his travels. And the ladies, blonde or brunette, can be very beautiful in spite of six fingers and toes; especially the Princess Lillia and her maid-in-waiting, the voluptuous Bthuh, whom King Kew tries to palm off on the man from Minos as quite good enough for a commoner. As for their oppressors, the ant-men of Formia, though they have their kerkools and airships, they are no match for explosive bullets once Myles has put the Cupians through a few paraparths of rifle practice.

The peculiarly Earth-like social barriers of Poros prove more of an obstacle to his ambitions, but in the end he gains the sarkarship which permits him to marry the Princess in spite of his deformities, and, when he is not gazing into her eyes, start thinking about building a radio network on the planet where even the cloudiest day may be spoiled by a shaft of sunlight. Much as the laboured illustrations spoil this otherwise acceptable volume: we have seen better in the crudest fan magazine.

*In "The Radio Beasts" ('25), "The Radio Planet" ('26) and "The Radio Menace" ('30). Four other novels with "Radio" in the title, also published by **Argosy,** have no connection with the series.

The Werewolf in Us

DARKER THAN YOU THINK, by Jack Williamson. Fantasy Press, Reading. Pa. $3.00.

Reviewed by D. R. SMITH

One of the difficulties of a fantasy writer is to convince his readers that he is not being fantastic at all but is recording actual facts, or things which might reasonably happen; and this objective is the more difficult to attain if he has the time-honoured intention of scaring them into fits. There was a time, not very long ago, when he could count on a fair proportion of his readers believing in the reality, or at least the possibility, of witches and supernatural forces. But in these enlightened days the vast majority of us are firm believers in the infallibility of science, and if science says that witches and werewolves cannot exist, their impossibility becomes so firmly embedded in our minds that the author who tries to frighten us with such ideas is beaten before he starts.

This objection would seem, at any rate, to be accepted by most fantasy writers today, particularly among those who travel weirdward from the straight road of science fiction on which they started. Its correctness must depend, in each case, on the capabilities of the author, but as a general rule it is right enough for the run-of-the-mill writer. In this instance, Mr. Williamson has gone to considerable pains to advance an hypothesis which will account for witches, werewolves, and quite a few ancient myths, in the light of scientific research, and to develop the interesting possibilities thus presented. Like Mr. Russell's "Sinister Barrier," the story was made to measure for **Unknown** (Dec. '40), and has been considerably extended for book publication.

The suggestion is that there was once a race of supermen, called by the author "Homo lycanthropus," contemporary with pre-historic humanity. They possessed truly remarkable powers, being able to assume the shape of any animal at will, to pass through solid obstacles, and to foresee and manipulate the probable future. The fact that they dined upon human flesh made them most obnoxious to other forms of mankind, and our early ancestors finally rebelled and exterminated them; but not before they had succeeded in forcing their unwelcome attentions on the daughters of true men, to such a degree than genes of the witchly attributes are fairly evenly distributed among modern men and women. And, inevitably, by Mendelian law, chance at times brings sufficient of these genes together in one person to produce a sort of hemi-demi-semi witch-and-werewolf.

The story is concerned with the discovery of these significant facts by a scientist who also finds that the a pure Homo lycanthropus through whom to reinherit the Earth. With his assistants, he digs up the secret weapon used many ages ago to defeat the witch-folk, and they bring it back to civilisation with the idea of using witches have been studying the stud-book and working out a way of breeding it to scotch the new menace. The witches arrange to scrag the would-be saviours of humanity before they can bring the weapon to bear; and the novel is an account of the scragging as performed by a lovely young witch and a more-or-less unwilling, unwitting lycanthrope whom she ensnares by methods purely biological, and about whom there is a mystery which is not cleared up before the last chapter—though by that time it is a pretty thin mystery.

All the ingredients for a real spine-chiller are here, and Mr. Williamson is by no means less than a competent writer. Unhappily, then, do we have to report that his effort to be frightening falls flat. Instead, an inescapable monotony seems to set in as the tale proceeds to unfold, rather too slowly for its length. This dullness I ascribe to the complete lack of resistance to their enemies by the scientists who have unearthed their secrets. They sit around in rooms on top floors waiting for witch-beasts to come and throw them out of windows, or they drive along dangerous mountain roads in faulty cars so that they can be made to crash into ravines; and all the time they keep their deadly weapon nailed down inside its packing-case, so that they cannot use it either for defence or attack.

The only real opposition is offered by an elderly widow who is blind and otherwise incapable, and it ends when her guardian dog—who is only too eager to get at 'em but is mostly restrained by his leash—is lured to des-

truction. There is a valiant attempt to maintain some sort of tension in the study of the reporter-lycanthrope, with his conscience struggling futilely against his werewolf instincts, but he seems such a hopeless dimwit that it is difficult to feel any concern, much less interest, in what he is enduring. In fact, most of the characters seem short of the normal ration of common-sense, apart from the charming witch-girl, April Bell; and it is pleasant to discover in the end that, for all her unseemly conduct in riding about the countryside in the nude on the back of a sabre-toothed tiger, she is a Pure Woman when she is not a wolf.

The book is attractively produced, with a frontispiece by Cartier that is hardly as effective as his end-papers, and a dust-jacket by Donnell of which I doubt if he is very proud.

Sophisticated Woodcutter

THE CARNELIAN CUBE, by L. Sprague de Camp & Fletcher Pratt. Gnome Press, New York. $3.00.

Reviewed by KEMP McDONALD

Once upon a time there was a woodcutter who helped a good fairy and was rewarded with three wishes. We all know what happened to him. In his more fortunate incarnations his net gain, after a good deal of mental anguish and physical uncertainty, was one sausage; in others he was lucky to get away with a whole skin and no sausage at all. Messrs. de Camp and Pratt have expended a good deal of penmanship and displayed a varied stock of historical, archælogical and philological information in modernising, sophisticating and expanding the old story. In spite of all this, it cannot be said that the result is an improvement on the original.

For one thing, the authors are the possessors of a mutual sense of humour of that irresponsible kind which gives rise to the shaggy-dog story and other such engaging extrapolations from the possible to the impossible. A little of this quality is well enough as a seasoning to a well-constructed fantasy such as Mr. de Camp knows how to write, with or without the assistance of Mr. Pratt: "Lest Darkness Fall" or "The Roaring Trumpet," for example. In the present case, too much of this condiment has been used; in consequence the reader is soon satiated and left unconvinced, even of that shadow of realism which the whackiest (or most satirical) fantasy should have.

Nor is the theme, with its two complete changes of scene, character and action, really adapted to expansion. The product is not truly a novel but a fragment of an episodic narrative which is, formally speaking, primitive; in fact, of a saga, for which the only satisfactory survival factors in a highly-developed literature are a deep traditional basis or, if the teller be a modern, a unifying philosophic conviction on his part. Such stabilising influences are lacking in "The Carnelian Cube." Instead there are unassimilated and inconsequent chunks of satire, historical reconstruction and pure dream-fantasy. Characters and scenes, individually well-drawn, pass and do not return, collectively insignificant. Loose ends and unexplained anomalies abound, it having apparently been much easier to push ahead with fresh creations than to tidy up those already achieved.

The ending itself, in comparison with that of a good specimen of the original story (e.g., "The Nose") is particularly arbitrary and unsatisfactory, even if it is granted that the formal rounding-off of an episodic narrative is impossible save by the death of the hero. From a critical point of view, it is interesting to remark that Rose Macaulay, whose fantasies are characterised by a wayward humour rather similar to de Camp's, also suffers, though less markedly, from an inability to round the thing off: perhaps the two qualities are psychologically incompatible.

And the plot? Have I not yet made it clear that there is no plot? However . . . the Carnelian Cube, filched instead of bestowed, is a device for transporting one in sleep into a fancied utopia; and it is one of the two stable elements in the story, part of the very thin glue whereby the episodes are united. The transportee, a (luckily for him) imperturbable individual named Finch, is its sole stable companion. It presents to him in succession worlds completely rational, completely individualistic, and completely academic. The witty and quasi-logical way in which the structures of these worlds are worked out is the most enjoyable feature of the book, and may commend it to the more ardent devotees of whacky fantasy. For myself, I recommend the authors to

re-develop their sense of fictional form (there is every evidence that at one time they possessed such a thing) at the expense of their imaginative inventiveness, to curb their sense of humour, and incidentally to brush up their proof-reading—there are far too many typographical errors.

The Story of Claus

ROADS, by Seabury Quinn. Arkham House, Sauk City, Wis. $2.00.

Reviewed by ARTHUR F. HILLMAN

The followers of Seabury Quinn, lawyer, trade paper editor and short story writer, who has been one of the most stalwart of **Weird Tales'** contributors since its early days, have always been divided into two opposing camps. Since his first appearance with "The Phantom Farmhouse," as long ago as October '23, the exploits of Jules de Grandin, psychic investigator, and his Watsonian satellite, Dr. Trowbridge*, have been considered by one faction the best of Mr. Quinn's large output. The other contingent has condemned the little Frenchman as a psychic quack, seeking to overthrow the Powers of Darkness by such devices as "the toe-nail of a saint." In their view, those Quinn tales in which de Grandin is not present are much better value for their money.

Whatever the merits of either viewpoint, none can gainsay that "Roads" is a distinctive achievement which lends weight to the arguments of the anti-de Grandin school. Of all his stories, there have been few which made such an impression as this whimsical, tender chronicle of how the legend of Santa Claus may have arisen; for it is at once enchanting and reverent. The tale of a gladiator caught up in the momentous events of the trial of Christ and its aftermath needed careful handling, but it was not beyond the skill of the author to avoid striking a wrong note. There is nothing in it at which devout Christians could cavil; and yet, in spite of deliberately playing down the aspects of religious awe and mysticism, he managed to imbue his story with a profound respect for its subject.

Arkham House is to be commended for bringing back this memorable piece in a slightly lengthened version than appeared in **Weird Tales** eleven years ago, and for enlisting the aid of Virgil Finlay in illustrating and jacketing what is to be the first of a series of especially choice limited editions. His exquisite art adds the finishing touch to a small but neat volume which, had we received it in time, would have made an ideal Christmas present. For to enjoy Mr. Quinn's little classic to the full, it should be read when the Star of Bethlehem is in the ascendant. That may sound like sentiment, but such is very necessary if one is to discern the story's hidden message.

*The best of which will be assembled in a volume forthcoming from Mycroft & Moran.

Fantasy Forum

Readers' letters on any aspect of fantasy-fiction are welcomed for this feature. Address: The Editor, FANTASY REVIEW, 115, Wanstead Park Road, Ilford, Essex.

THE IRON CORSET

Arthur C. Clarke's defence of the "Lackeys of Wall Street" against the attacks of the two Soviet critics who presumed to categorise American science fiction as thinly-disguised capitalist propaganda tinged with Fascist tendencies is far too inadequate to justify a dismissal of this charge. He bases his case mainly on the "good" stories which, by his inference, even the Comrades should find acceptable; but he only weakens his argument, since one perforce recalls automatically the vast flow of trash which has swamped the science fiction pulps.

May I bring to the notice of Mr. Clarke a few basic facts which may have escaped his omniscience? Firstly, all written works are, to some degree, propaganda for a generalised cause which may even oppose their particular thesis. He himself admits that every writer is conditioned by his environment; and it must obviously be difficult for a writer brought up on Winchell and Al Capp, wrought upon by Metro-Goldwyn and Mae West, saturated with sex, dazzled by the almighty dollar, and bombarded with boloney from the cradle to the grave, to achieve a detachment very far outside the iron corset of American conventionality which so neatly constricts his movements. He is by nature a fall guy for the lean-featured American hero of fiction and the American way of life from Pittsburg to the Pleiades, from Manhattan to Mars and beyond. And whether he likes it or not, he has to conform. He couldn't possibly be un-American, ever. The League of Women wouldn't like it; neither would the advertisers.

Mr. Clarke's second misconception is that it would take a genius to write himself out of his environment. The scrolls which honour literary endeavour are thick with the names of those who have done so already—and few of them are writers of American science fiction. Why, after all, should it be necessary for the s-f author to ignore social set-ups based upon the Soviet experiment? If mere size is the criterion, surely it is big enough; almost old enough, too, by American standards? Not efficient enough? It was at Stalingrad. Too foreign? Too alien? The weaving of fiction which gave true objectivity to the social ideal of "one world and within it the race of mankind," with peace and plenty for every creed and colour, would not be construed as "a culture completely alien" if such ideals were in harmony with dollar imperialism.

But we need hardly pursue the crystal clear reasons why no Carvers or Booker T. Washingtons enliven the pages of science fiction; why the heroes, space captains and saviours of systems are so seldom black, red or yellow-skinned, and while white always American. Why the set-up always, if Terran, shows America as the geometric and moral centre of an effete and sadly-far-behind rest of the world; and if cosmic, shows Man expanding to other planets armed with every time-honoured trick of American monopoly-capitalist culture — including naturally, the A-bomb.

It won't do at all, Mr. Clarke. Your attitude—and this is where the true fan is entitled to complain bitterly—is quite non-scientific, way out of line with contemporary thought. Or maybe it is the Comrades who, in their alien way, hedged in by their iron curtain to their restricted territory (no more than a quarter of the globe now), and mistakenly regarding the Western way of life as incomprehensible, are in the wrong? One should give credit where it is due, especially to the heroes of Hiroshima, the pioneers of Nagasaki. This was surely Science, progressive and desirable, perhaps even necessary ?

But it was not scientific of Mr. Clarke to drag into the argument and condemn as a charlatan poor biologist Lysenko. He knows, none better, that the Lysenko controversy is still sub judice; that his theories are not yet proven, and may be no more mendacious than Mendel, horrific than Huxley or depraved than Darwin. Let us admit the very evident fact that science fiction does contain a wealth of capitalist propaganda of all kinds (which doesn't really hurt the stories), and that from the standpoint of the materialist Soviet observer, who is conditioned by an environment we don't quite understand, the result must be comprehensible only as the exudations of a bourgeois and decadant bunch of hacks well and truly whipped on by Wall Street. And I do mean you, Mr. Clarke! —Frank A. Cooper, 25 Stoke Newington Road, London, N.16.

UNHAPPY AGREEMENT

Unhappily, I find I agree with the Soviet view of American science fiction in many details. With certain exceptions the authors do lately seem to have degenerated to the level of propagandists

often going to ridiculous extremes in depicting retrogressive future systems and representing them as utopias. I hate to say it, but some of the more recent stories are so politically flavoured as to rob them completely of the fascination science fiction usually holds for me. Here's hoping you print a few more controversial articles.—L. H. Cobbett, Dunstable, Beds.

ARCHIE'S IDEA

I feel very guilty for not having written before now to thank you for the report you made on my book, "Purple Twilight," in **Fantasy Review** (Oct.-Nov. '48). May I say how helpful is constructive criticism of that kind; I entirely agree with every point you made.

It may interest you to know that the 'Archie' to whom the book is dedicated is not a member of the C.B.A.S., but is my publisher who, having a mass of material (on astronautics), handed it to me with the suggestion that I should write a fictional book about it. The material was by no means sufficient and considerable research work had to be done.

Like you, I should have liked to have written more about Mars itself, and of Atlantis; but I am told that the market for this type of work is very limited, and in consequence I had to confine myself to the experiences of Lance Gunner and omit many of the chapters which I should have liked to have written.

Please convey my thanks to Geoffrey Giles, and my promise that if ever I write another book on the Martian scene I will remember his advice.—A. J. Pelham-Groom, Chelsea, S.W.3.

[While appreciating author Groom's point, and his thanks, reviewer Giles remains of the opinion that if he had given as much attention to the Martians and Atlanteans as he did to the technical aspects of space-flight, his book would have satisfied the larger audience as much as it did astronautics students. But the theme he could not develop properly still demands a second book.—Ed.]

WEIRD BEAUTY

Most unpleasant, even hideous pictures plague science fiction and its fans. Throughout the field, this stupid vogue prevails. Do you realise that the three top panels in your front-page illustrations are crazy trash, while the lower picture of witch, bat and trees is the most beautiful, sane science fiction pic I have ever seen?

Why is everything increasing in size? The magazines, your **Review**, etc. . . . Preposterous! Who can possibly read it all? And why is the word civilization

spelt with an 's' instead of a 'z,' not only in your "Fantasy Forum" but in many other books and magazines? It is not the only word which suffers. Just where is this mis-spelling leading us? — George Andrews, Cleveland, Ohio.

[We asked artist Turner to draw us a panel illustrative of both science and weird fiction. The part you admire as typical of s-f is intended to represent the weird story element—which it does quite adequately to most people. The increase in size, as far as we are concerned, was essential to our proper coverage of the enlarging field, and has been generally approved: some avid readers now want monthly publication. The 'z' has long since been replaced by the 's' in most English dictionaries, though the older spelling is still used by some magazines outside of America.—Ed.]

THE QUERY BOX

"STORIES OF THE STARS"

Could you give me the dates of issues of **Amazing Stories** and **Fantastic Adventures** featuring, on the back covers, Frank R. Paul's series of "Stories of the Stars"? I have collected seven of them, but I believe there are more. — J. B. Coltherd, Jedburgh, Scotland.

[As far as we can check up, the complete list is as follows: **Amazing Stories:** May '43 (Procyon), Jun. '43 (Orion), Jan. '44 (Death of the Moon), Sep. '44 (Betelgeuse), Mar. '45 (Spica), Aug. '46 (Altair); **Fantastic Adventures:** Jul. '45 (Gemini), Oct. '45 (Andromeda), Dec. '45 (Aldebaran), Feb. '46 (Alphecca), May '46 (Mizar), Jul. '46 (Antares)—Ed.]

DEAD FLIES

I am trying to trace a story published since '39, presumably in **Astounding** or **Unknown**, which concerns a man with a memory fixation of the smell of dead flies and cobwebs on a window which constantly recurs for an instant. The theme is either time-travel or personality transference, and the title may be something like "The Flies on the Window." Can you help me, please?—F. V. A. Scales, Portsmouth.

[The story is "The Cure," by Lewis Padgett (**Astounding**, May '46), currently reprinted in the Derleth-edited anthology, "The Other Side of the Moon."—Ed.]

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E. WILLIAMS wishes to inform his clients that his business has been acquired by Mr. G. Ken Chapman, whose announcement appears on another page and to whom all inquiries should now be sent.

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(Continued from page 31)

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WANTED: Clark Ashton Smith's "Out of Space and Time" (Arkham House).—Box 126, **Fantasy Review.**

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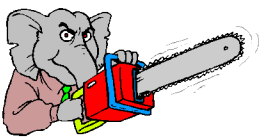

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