



SCIENCE- FANTASY REVIEW

Vol. III, No. 16

AUTUMN '49

WILLY LEY *recalls*
'Captain Future'
of Germany

A. REYNOLDS MORSE *on*
M. P. SHIEL, MASTER
OF FANTASY

GEOFFREY GILES *and*
The First Voyagers
to the Moon

THOMAS SHERIDAN *on*
THE END OF 'WONDER
STORIES'

ONE SHILLING

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WILLY LEY

recalls

GERMANY'S 'CAPTAIN FUTURE'

In the early months of World War I, when I was still quite a small boy, the German Government issued a list of some 200 titles of "dime novels" which were *verboten* for the expressly stated reason of saving paper. On that list were the **Captain Mors** stories, which, if they are not entirely forgotten by now, live only as a dim memory in the minds of a few Germans old enough to have made their acquaintance as young men. It is doubtful if a file of them exists anywhere; and since I have only my own memory to rely on, I can give no precise details concerning their publication for those who may try to seek out any copies that have survived.

But the highest issue number of an almost complete set I once saw was No. 180, which, if they were issued weekly, would account for a run from 1911 to '14. If it was a bi-monthly series, it would have started earlier, in

1908; and from what I remember of the style and printing technique of the covers on the early issues I suspect the longer run. It is even possible that the publication began as a monthly and accelerated later.

I have also to admit that I don't know the name of the author of the stories; nor, I imagine, does anybody else who remembers them. They were published anonymously by a firm which had the name of *Verlag Moderner Lektüre*, which means "Publishing house for modern reading matter," and when, round about 1930, I tried to look it up at the address given I found it did not exist any more. Whether the whole series was written by one man or whether several writers contributed to it is another matter on which I must plead ignorance. Thinking back, I am inclined, however, to attribute most of the stories to one man.

Germany's periodical literature of that time ran the gamut from quality magazines—mostly monthlies—to weekly family magazines and news-weeklies. There were also fashion magazines and popular science magazines, plus a host of professional journals. But all-fiction magazines, as far as my knowledge goes, did not exist, either in "slick" or "pulp" form. Substituting for pulp magazines, however, were two types of periodical. One was known as *Kolportage*, and usually consisted of endless love stories, in 200 or 400 weekly instalments which dealers brought up the back steps to the maidservants.

The other type had no accepted name, and compared most closely to the American dime novel of the same period. In fact, many of these publications were straight imitations, if not actual translations, of America's **Nat Pinkerton, Nick Carter, Buffalo Bill, Texas Jack**, etc. While they always had the same hero, each contained a complete story; and they were bought at stationery and candy stores. They were not handled either by the regular bookstores or the newsstands; and although the governmental *verboten* did not kill off all of them, those titles which remained did not last long. To the surprise of sociologists, all attempts to revive them after the war ended in failure: one may assume that the political street brawl substituted for **Nat Pinkerton** and **Texas Jack**.

The bulk of this periodical literature was easily classifiable as detective or Wild West stuff, but the **Captain Mors**

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QUARTERLY: ONE SHILLING

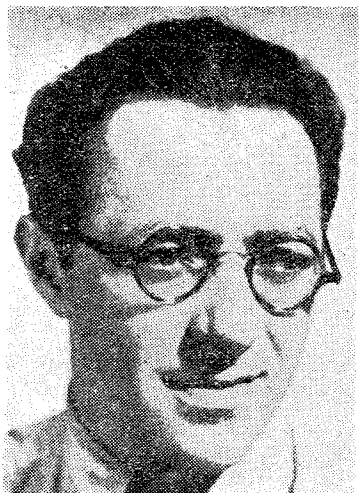
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EDITOR: WALTER GILLINGS

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AUTUMN '49



Berlin-born **WILLY LEY**, expert on astronautics, was one of the founders of the German Rocket Society in the days before it was dissolved by the Nazis. He went to America in 1935, to make his name as a writer of scientific monographs, popular science articles (especially in **Astounding Science Fiction**), and text-books such as "The Days of Creation," "The Lungfish and the Unicorn," and "Rockets and Space Travel," which tells the whole story of the theory of space-flight. Having studied astronomy and paleontology at university, he became a specialist in the history of these subjects and of science generally. Always a great reader, he discovered the germs of many inventions and scientific ideas in old specimens of science fiction which had been all but forgotten. In this article, specially written for **Fantasy Review**, he recalls the only German science fiction periodical comparable to to-day's magazines, which related the adventures of a space-travelling hero who preceded **Captain Future** by three decades.

stories were outright science fiction. Probably they were not much better in literary style than the rest, but they showed evidence of wide reading and even research on the part of their author. The influence of some popular books on astronomy by Dr. M. Wilhelm Meyer, the director of the Urania Observatory in Berlin, was unmistakable. Each issue comprised 32 pages in the usual German small magazine size of

about six by nine and a half inches. There were no illustrations inside, but coloured covers front and back. The front cover always portrayed a scene from the story, while the back cover showed plans of Captain Mors' airship and space ship, with a short explanation of the working principles. The plot of each story was as simple as possible, usually consisting of a task to be performed and the adventures inherent in the performance.

The person of Captain Mors was fashioned after Jules Verne's Captain Nemo, with some of the characteristics of Nena Sahib, the leader of a Hindu rebellion, about whom there existed a highly improbable German novel of wide circulation. Captain Mors, it was hinted, was the son of a Hindu prince and a European mother. Like Captain Nemo, he led the life of a wanderer, with a South Sea island as his base of operations. Like Nemo, too, he was a highly educated man with a passion for science. Unlike Nemo, he was not anti-English, but merely "the enemy of certain British interests," especially the "Diamond Trust." He wore a captain's uniform and a black silk mask, and preferred a thin, straight sabre to his other more potent weapons. The crews of his ships and his servants were invariably Indians from the northern mountain tribes who, after a few years in his service, returned to their native villages.

The Jules Verne influence also showed superficially in the fact that Captain Mors had two principal assistants, engineers with the improbable code names of "Star" and "Terror." But whereas in Verne's stories the three musketeers always form a team, one of whom is used for comic relief, Mors' henchmen remained shadowy if capable assistants who neither made jokes nor displayed a humorous ignorance*.

By an interesting trick, the reader was never allowed to meet Captain Mors complete with full equipment—airship, island base and spaceship. In

*His modern American counterpart, **Captain Future** (who monopolised a companion magazine to **Thrilling Wonder Stories** between 1940-45 and finished up in **Startling Stories**), went one better with three henchmen, collectively described as the Futuremen. They consisted of "a rubbery white android" or synthetic man named Otho, a seven-foot metal robot called Grag, and Simon Wright, the Brain, a former scientist whose brain had been preserved after death.

the first stories he had only his airship, built secretly in the foothills of the Himalaya range. His early experiences compelled him to seek out an island base, an ancient volcano ringed by heavy surf, its interior accessible only by air; and there he began to plan his space-vessel. The author stated specifically that much machinery and equipment was bought from British and German firms, with the explanation that it was to serve for ship repair yards. What he did not explain was how Mors and his men managed to cope with inches and centimetres sitting on a mixed pile of English and German equipment.

One story I remember dealt with a trip to Tibet to obtain the secret of a powerful high explosive. Another took Mors to Iceland to force an old and misanthropic scientist to divulge his knowledge of the neutralisation of gravity. A third involved a journey to Kimberley to steal a bag of large diamonds which were needed as bearings.

The airship which served for all these trips was an all-metal vessel of early Zeppelin design, with cabins strung out below the hull and a catwalk running all round and forward to the spur forming the nose. Six four-bladed propellers were attached to the hull above the catwalk. Probably due to the influence of Graf Zeppelin, Captain Mors had only derogatory sneers for heavier-than-air craft, with one exception. That exception was the propellerless plane piloted by Anita from New York to Chicago in two and a half hours, and designed by her father, who died during the preliminary tests. "Tiny, large-eyed Anita" joined Captain Mors, fell in love with and married his astronomer, Professor van Halen, and thereafter served as hostess and sex-interest whenever occasion arose.

The spaceship was a cylindrical steel hull with conical ends, at one of which was a large, crescent-shaped magnet on universal bearings. The working principle was that the vessel, when gravity was neutralised, rose through the atmosphere on buoyancy, was thrown into space by centrifugal force and then steered in the magnetic field of the planets by the repulsion of equal poles.† A trip to the Moon took one and a half days (it must have been hyperbolic velocity), and it required

† This ship is also pictured on the back cover of a clumsy German science fiction novel by Oskar Hoffman which appeared in 1911. I wonder who stole

"over five weeks" to Neptune.

The astronomical facts were in accord with popular science texts of the time. Both Mars and Venus were inhabited by native races, each of which knew space-travel. The ships of the Venusians were like large, silver fish and had heat-beams as weapons; they did not permit other ships to approach Venus if they could spot them, but did not attack Earth themselves. The Martians' vessels were birdlike in shape, were painted black, and always on the attack. Their weapon was the sudden release of accumulated solar energy, which manifested itself in the form of lightning bolts.

Captain Mors learned this secret early, and used it himself, but apparently the problem of the Venusian heat-beam was beyond him. At first the Martians only attacked other space-ships, while defending their own planet; but later they went to Earth and, in a heavy fog, sank three British battleships, for which the Germans got the blame—or the credit, if you wish. The reference was, of course, to the three light cruisers torpedoed in '14 by the German U-9.

As for the Moon, it was no longer inhabited, but in many places there were old fortresses, and several times Captain Mors' men suffered losses by running accidentally into abandoned defence mechanisms which still functioned. Eventually, it was the British who tried to end the Captain's career once and for all. To accomplish this they equipped several warships with anti-aircraft rockets, the excuse being that rocket-launchers could be aimed faster than guns and that rockets provided a greater volume of fire!

This was in one of the later stories. In one of the earliest, the Russians attacked Captain Mors' ship by releasing from their own airship a number of rocket-propelled flying bombs with a homing device reacting on the metal hull of the target vessel. This, I think, should be considered a superior prototype of the Hs-293 of World War II. But Captain Mors had not thought of the degaussing belt; hence he could save his ship only by fast and frantic manoeuvring. Nor did he foresee how his end would come. The British did get him, after all—by way of a paper shortage.

from whom; but while the Mors stories made reference to the mechanism of the vessel, Mr. Hoffman's novel did not.—W.L.

Publisher's Weekly "Books into Films" columnist Paul S. Nathan thought science fiction, now "enjoying such a terrific vogue," might "constitute the next film cycle . . . A leading s-f writer . . . after years of being ignored . . . had been approached by a television station with a request for a radio series . . . and besieged for manuscripts by the story editors of several big picture companies . . . There is plenty of other evidence that the interest in s-f is genuine, widespread, and intense, (with) publishing houses . . . vying for such material (and) Hollywood . . . making preliminary gestures toward the field" . . . "Destination Moon," based on Heinlein's "Rocket Ship Galileo" (see Book Reviews, Feb.-Mar. '49 issue), now being filmed in Technicolour . . . "King of the Rocket Men" and "The Disc-Men are Coming!" to be screened as 12-part serials . . . Also filming: "Morning Star," tale of cosmic catastrophe based on *Satevepost* novelette by Robert Carr . . . Now showing: "Mighty Joe Young," King Kong-ish thriller of giant ape tamed as night club star . . .

Walter Gillings' FANTASIA

Long Island Sunday Press gave s-f and Will F. Jenkins (Murray Leinster) a write-up . . . A. E. van Vogt, "one of the all-time greats in science fiction," endorsed writer's course advertised in trade press: "I am glad I took it. It was a milestone in my career" . . . Another all-time great, Robert Heinlein, addressing Colorado Springs Quill Club, advised: "You are a creative artist. Nobody should tell you what to put into a story. (But) get hold of a primer of Basic English and find out how well you can express yourself in 850 words" . . . **Writer's Digest** featured Robert Moore Williams on a "Corpse Through the Roof," title of article deriving from *Amazing Stories* Ray Palmer who "says that when a story stops moving, that is . . . where the writer should drop a corpse through the roof" . . . Same mag. carried helpful hints on **Super Science** requirements: "Stories must have strong plots, with different angles. No space operas, please! . . . This is how Editor (Damon Knight) describes it: 'Significant scientific futuristic trends with an emphasis on dramatic values, but supported by sound technology.'" . . .

Correction: **Los Cuentos Fantásticos** (see this col., last issue), far from ending with No. 13, safely reached No. 15 and promised to go on from there . . . **Les Aventures Futuristes**, French-Canadian bi-weekly series now appearing, retails exploits of two scientist heroes with "The Spherical Men," "The Talking Plants," etc. . . . Austin Hall's "People of the Comet" (reviewed **FR** Oct.-Nov. '48), translated into French and serialised . . . L. Ron Hubbard's "Slaves of Sleep" (do. Feb.-Mar. '49) to appear in Dutch edition . . . S-f novel, "The Big Eye," by Max Ehrlich, forthcoming from Doubleday; also "This My Home," tale of housewife in atom-bombing, by **Astounding's** Judith Merril . . . Ray Bradbury's "Frost and Fire," extended version of *Planet* story, "The Creatures That Time Forgot," to see book publication; his short story collection, "The Martian Chronicles," likewise . . . "Port of Peril" by the late Otis Adelbert Kline, will be added to "The Planet of Peril" (McClurg, Chicago, '29) and "The Prince of Peril" ('30) by another new fantasy publisher . . . "The Trembling World," first of twelve promised s-f pocket novels by Astron Del Martia (John Russell Fearn, or I'm a Spaniard!), appeared here at 1/6 with spaceship cover. Next title in series, with which "publishers feel they are pioneering a new type of fiction": "Dawn of Darkness" . . . "A History of the Next Hundred Years—Unless," by Hamilton Fyfe (Allen & Unwin, 3/6) predicts world revolution without universal war . . .

William Lawrence Hamling, Managing Editor **Amazing, Fantastic Adventures**, married Frances Yerxa, widow of late contributor Leroy Yerxa, also a writer of fantasy . . . **Astounding** Editor John W. Campbell discussed Jules Verne on "Invitation to Learning," U.S. radio show . . . Authors Theodore Sturgeon, L. Sprague de Camp, radio-interviewed in book review programme . . . Waldemar Kämpfert devoted his *Science Digest* column to Olaf Stapledon . . . **Coronet** featured "The Seven Future Wonders of the World" (including the Space Station), as depicted by Chesley Bonestell; also piece on "Men Against the Moon," by Norman and Madelyn Carlisle . . . **Science and Mechanics** ran "Rocketing into To-morrow" . . . And design for "super-strato-cruiser" by 14-year-old London schoolboy decorated children's page of *The Daily Mirror*, which invited Interplanetary Society's member's comments: "Ah! But even WE haven't got to this stage yet" . . .

The Magnificent Shiel

By A. REYNOLDS MORSE*

Matthew Phipps Shiel, the unsung "Lord of Our Language," has been dead less than three years. It is still too early to attempt any final appraisal of his work; nor is it possible to estimate the sphere of his influence. Many of his followers are ashamed to admit the real extent of their fascination, because they are conscious of his inconsistencies, his unlimited bravura, his almost naive addiction to the utterly superhuman coincidence. But when reading Shiel I find myself in an enchanted world of refulgent, semi-scientific fantasy.

Shiel was a master at romantic fantasy and unbounded invention from the beginning. His first published book, "Prince Zaleski" (1895), is no less energetic and amazing than his last "The Young Men are Coming!" (1937). He can unravel a murder or conjure creatures from the outer atmosphere to cause an earthly hurricane just at the crucial moment. He has no equal when it comes to accounting for extraneous objects found in a coffin, or to catching a would-be slayer in his own electric trap. Indeed, in some tales he invents so freely and so rapidly that his details almost clog the story.

There are detective stories of the most involved kind, world conquests, aerial bombings, magic philtres, an underground dwelling full of gold, plots to disparage Christianity by manipulated visions of the Crucifixion, and an S.S. society prophetically like Hitler's own. There is the jealous corpse of a rejected woman who mounts her erstwhile suitor on the night of his marriage and smothers him in a ghastly rape of death. There is the story of a vivacious woman, perpetually young, who has worn countless generations of lovers to the grave.

Critics seem to have been most stirred by "The Purple Cloud" (1901), the most widely publicised of all

Shiel's work†. Adam Jefferson, the sole character for most of the book, survives a wave of cyanide gas from the South Pacific volcanic zone which presumably kills everyone else on Earth. He returns from the North Pole (unreachable by the gas) to burn and ravage the dead cities of the world in an unaccountable orgy of fire. His fear that he will finally find someone else alive mounts page by page until at last, with curious emotions, he does discover his Eve in a Constantinople cellar.

Shiel is at once so formidable, majestic and remote a citadel that it is difficult to decide just how to approach him. After one is exposed to the musical tumult of his rhythm, the surprising cacophony, the rapid irregular beat of his creative style, the once-dull ear becomes intensely sensitive, like Haco Harfager's in "The House of Sounds."

The real problem is not only to get the uninitiated into this most ornate and romantic Gothic edifice, but to lure him on to explore it further; for there are admittedly many stumbling blocks in the pathway to Shiel's exotic kingdom.

Quite apart from his reckless disregard of sentence and paragraph structure‡, his use of an apparently

*Condensed from *The Works of M. P. Shiel*, by A. Reynolds Morse (Fantasy Publishing Co., Los Angeles. \$6.00).

†Published in several English and American editions, and in French and Italian versions, it was recently reprinted in *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* (June '49).

‡In "The Young Men are Coming!" is a sentence which runs over nearly two pages, comprising 56 lines. It is made up of 545 words, punctuated by 68 commas, eleven semi-colons, three colons and six dashes, besides containing six sets of quotation marks. Another sentence occupying 52 lines contains 513 words, 56 commas, 13 semi-colons and seven dashes.

unlimited vocabulary, and all the other stylistic and literary problems he poses, there is the disturbing fact that his mind-wrenching stories often end not with a bang but a whimper. His characters often expound an infinite wisdom, and then act as if they had none at all; and he is apt to try one's patience by having them overlook the obvious, or one's credulity with the self-immolation of his heroes. The end, the Overman concept that Shiel has in mind for his people is admirable, but the other way thither is strewn with thorns.

One is also often tempted to inquire how any character can survive Shiel's abuse. It is obvious that his people can only draw their superior vitality from the author himself. A man of many physical attributes, he was personally close to the Overman he often wrote about. He revered the human body deeply, and explored its potentialities fully. Long before J. D. Beresford wrote "The Hampdenshire Wonder," or Olaf Stapledon conceived "Odd John," this energetic soul had pointed out the untapped resources of the human body and mind, and made his heroes, like Lepsius in "The Isle of Lies" (1909), demonstrate a few of them.

Shiel early found out how to live "in heaven high health," and in the '29 version of "About Myself"* recorded: "Though no chick still, I run six miles a day—or rather a night, for I like the light of other suns better than ours, so I sleep by day, 'rise again' at eventide, am alive by night." In another version he says he "never had a pain or anything like that." Throughout, he was upheld by his unique religion of science. While he led a fascinating life, it was not one devoid of struggle. His example proves conclusively that modern man can devise a modern religion and derive therefrom an infinity of solace not found in the medieval concepts of Christianity which are so at variance with the revelations of science.

In evaluating his attitude towards facts, and towards words, it occurs to me that his point of view was very like that of Alfred Korzybski, the great Polish mathematician who founded the non-Aristotelian School of General Semantics. In a letter in '45, Shiel



M. P. SHEL, as pictured by Neil Austin for *Famous Fantastic Mysteries*. Born in the West Indies, he was the son of a Methodist preacher, and on his 15th birthday was crowned "King of Redonda," an island of which his father was unofficial governor. At 12, influenced by early reading of Rider Haggard, he wrote a novel which he called "an imbroiglio of phantasms"; at 15, a serial for the *St. Kitt's Observer*. After completing his education in London he taught mathematics in Derbyshire, started to study for the medical profession and gave it up to write "Prince Zaleski," which showed his passion for Poe's mystery tales. Before long he was writing a serial, "The Empress of the Earth," for *Short Stories*; this became the novel, "The Yellow Danger" (1898), which was followed by "The Lord of the Sea" (1901), "The Isle of Lies" ('09), and other novels, magazine stories and short story collections, until 1913. For ten years afterwards nothing came from his pen; then "The Children of the Wind" ('23) ushered in a second period of productivity. He was finally "rediscovered" in '29, and in the next eight years wrote several more novels, including "This Above All" ('33) and "The Young Men are Coming!" ('37), his last work. Besides his horror stories, which have been included in anthologies, his detective tales of Prince Zaleski and Cummings King Monk are considered classics of their kind. When he died, he was working on a life of Christ which he intended should be his masterpiece.

*An autobiographical sketch which first appeared in *The Candid Friend* (1901), and later in an advertising brochure issued by Victor Gollancz in '29.

admitted to me that he had heard of Korzybski but had never read him. I sent him a copy of Korzybski's monu-

mental treatise, "Science and Sanity," and the novelist replied that he had to cut the book in two before he could hold it. "As for the contents, the author certainly has something to say; but oh, the number of his words! He should have written a pamphlet, and has written a library."

In "About Myself" Shiel mentions the fact that he was of Irish descent, and that his father was apparently a well-to-do shipowner in the West Indies. Later he implies that he was independently wealthy, and that he wrote purely for pleasure instead of for profit in all save a couple of instances. It is one thing to write in a wild, free manner for a hobby, and quite another to have the courage to write in the unusual style Shiel did if one depends on one's writing for a living. John Gawsworth, his literary executor, has revealed that Shiel's statements about being independently wealthy were merely a brave front, and that the author actually wrote from necessity. I find in this distinction still another mark of Shiel's personal and literary greatness.

OPERATION FANTAST

Announces that, as the result of a slight variation of policy in its Library, subscribers may now avail themselves of this service at a flat monthly rate of 2/6. This entitles you to borrow as many books as you can read, one at a time, in a month. Full details are available from the Librarian: M. Tealby, 8 Burfield Avenue, Loughborough, Leics. Latest additions include S. Fowler Wright's **The World Below**, L. Ron Hubbard's **Triton** and George Orwell's **Nineteen Eighty-four**.

Available in September will be **OPERATION FANTAST** No. 2 (New Series), containing three stories, three articles and the usual departments. Subscription rates: 3/- for six issues; single copies, 7d.

MAGAZINES: In stock at present we have most '47-48 issues, but we regret delay in obtaining '49 issues. Fans with regular orders need not worry unduly; we shall secure them in time, but if you are lucky enough to get them from other sources, please advise us.

The Memorial Volume of Merritt's **Ship of Ishtar** has now been published, and we shall be pleased to take your order for a copy of this work at 19/6, including postage.

CAPT. K. F. SLATER,
13 Gp. R.P.C.,
B.A.O.R. 23.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

Things That Didn't Come by WALTER GILLINGS

Shiel's last years were full of projects. His faculties and his mind undimmed, he was loath to admit the limitations of age. He died at the age of 81, on February 17, 1947, at Chichester Hospital, and only thirteen lonely mourners gathered to hear Edward Shanks' moving oration at Golders Green Crematorium on the bleak snow-bound morning of February 24, and to pay tribute to "one of the most remarkable minds and imaginations of all time" whose best-known work was "a legend, an apocalypse, out of space, out of time."

Matthew Phipps Shiel was the last and strongest link the rather trivial present had with the greatest century of the novel. He was a brave and undaunted soul, and I firmly believe that time will prove him perhaps the greatest writer of English the world has ever known. When one realises fully his magnificent dimensions as a moral and literary landmark, it is easy to see why his going can truly be called the end of an era, which saw the novel pushed far ahead of anything produced by our contemporaries.

Though the literary evaluation and integration of his works, with the philosophical appraisal of his advanced socio-scientific concepts, must wait, I attend time's slow integration of the superlatives I feel he deserves with all the impatience of prophecy; for I have long been deeply conscious of the radiant glow of Shiel's inextinguishable genius. His profound knowledge, his immense vocabulary, his liquid, light-bubbling poetic narrative and his vast, vivid imaginings combine to lift him leagues above the other great novelists. While an unaccountable mantle of obscurity has twice seemed to descend upon him, once after 1913 and again after '37, nevertheless I think that some day the tremendous flames of his literary genius will burst forth upon this startled world. Then Shiel will be accorded the high and unique place he deserves among immortal authors.

THE END OF THE STORY

To Charles Derwin Hornig, the new 17-year-old Managing Editor of **Wonder Stories**, a "radical revolution" in science fiction was long overdue. Explaining the new editorial policy on which the magazine embarked immediately following his appointment at the end of 1933, he expressed the hope that '34 would go down as the year of the Great Change, when "premature and adolescent" s-f gave way before NEW stories with NEW ideas, NEW plots and NEW development. It was a NEW broom with a vengeance. There was no room for the "old-fashioned story . . . that would have been accepted . . . five years ago." As a consequence: "Our authors are working harder now than ever—for they are starting to realise that we attach our choicest rejection slips to stories that are not NEW!"

Among the hardest-working authors was—or were—Eando (Earl and Otto) Binder, six of whose stories were prominently featured during the year '34-'35. Two of them were serials, "Enslaved Brains" (July-Sep. '34) and "Dawn to Dusk" (Nov. '34-Jan. '35), which proved especially popular. Richard Vaughan's "Exile of the Skies" (Jan.-Mar. '34) is even more memorable to-day; and admirers of Laurence Manning recall his "Stranger Club" series—"The Call of the Mech-Men" (Nov. '33), "Voice of Atlantis" (Jul. '34), etc.—with hardly less enthusiasm than mention of his "Asteroid" classics evokes.

For the rest, it was a mixture of novelettes and short stories by such regulars as J. Harvey Haggard, John Beynon Harris, Dr. David H. Keller and Edmond Hamilton; some two-page bits and burlesque items, mostly by new writers; and some longer pieces imported from abroad—Friedrich Freksa's "Druso" (May-July, '34) from Germany, Charles de Richter's "The Fall of the Eiffel Tower" (Sep.-Nov. '34) from France, and John Edwards, "The Menace from Space" (Apr. '34) from England. Not forgetting **Wonder's** old friend Otfried von Hanstein, who made his fifth and last appearance with "The

Hidden Colony" (Jan.-Mar. '35) before the rot set in.

The real event of '34 was the discovery of Stanley G. Weinbaum with the publication of "A Martian Odyssey" (Jul.) and its sequel, "Valley of Dreams" (Nov.). Here was the freshness Editor Hornig was seeking; though he rejected Weinbaum's subsequent offering, "Flight on Titan," which led to his appearance in **Astounding** and the gaining of more plaudits from fans who revelled in his writings. More of these appeared in **Wonder** during its last year of life, however, including the van Manderpootz series, commencing with "The Worlds of If" (Aug. '35).

For too many readers of **Wonder** during this period, when it had to contend with strong competition from the up-and-coming Street and Smith product*, Weinbaum's delightful pieces were among the few bright spots in a mass of undistinguished material—but a mass which did not bulk very large as the number of stories in each issue dwindled and the contents page made the most of the fillers and departmental items which did service instead. In spite of editorial claims for the superiority of its contents over those of other magazines, both in respect of quality and quantity, three short stories and two serials running simultaneously were not enough to satisfy the customers, even with the delights of the Science Fiction League to round off each number.

So, in the summer of '35, **Wonder** took the rash step of reducing its price to 15 cents in the effort to offset the increasing attractions of **Astounding**, whose "thought variants" were a flattering imitation of Editor Hornig's "New Story" policy. Or so he assured his readers: "We are deriving great satisfaction from the belief that **Wonder Stories** started this new, glamorous era of science fiction . . ." This after two years of striving to put **Wonder** back on its feet, with the help of contributors who had been "inspired (to write) material far superior to any-

*See "The Story of **Astounding**": **FR** Jun.-Jul. '48.

thing they had ever written before," but who could not expect to reap the same rewards for it as were available from **Astounding**.

Serialisation of a mystery novel "The Waltz of Death," by P. B. Maxon (May-Jul. '35), which was palmed off as a masterpiece of science fiction on the strength of its having won an honourable mention in a **Liberty** story contest the year before, did not help to appease disgruntled readers. English author Festus Pragnell's "The Green Man of Graypec"† (Jul.-Sep.) was more to their liking; but an attempt to attract new writers with a "short-short story" cover contest, with the "world-famous" Paul providing pictorial inspiration as on earlier occasions, produced no conspicuous results. In this department, the advent of Australian Alan Connell, whose "Dream's End" (Dec.) is still treasured, promised much. But the dream of a flourishing **Wonder**, presenting "The Best in Science Fiction" (as its cover boldly proclaimed), was fated to end too soon.

"To our authors we say 'Play on!' and to our readers we urge 'Read on!' Together we will 'Forge on!' with **Wonder Stories**," ran the editorial blurb in the last-but-one issue, which flattered readers with the assurance that they formed a more appreciative audience for its contributors than those of any other magazine. The cry had a note of desperation in it; and the Mar.-Apr. '36 issue, which carried a notice of the death of Weinbaum, also carried details of a "revolutionary plan" to maintain the magazine by selling it to readers by direct mail, issue by issue, thus avoiding the "frightful waste" of newsstand distribution. This, publisher Hugo Gernsback himself admitted, was the only way to keep **Wonder** running, his faith in the integrity of science fiction readers being such that he looked forward to confounding trade sceptics who said the scheme would not work. To discover whether they would pay up after receiving their copies was, for him, a "great experiment in sociology."

The "slow but steady decline in science fiction interest" which, he inferred, had brought the magazine to this pass, but which might let up when the current craze for detective and western pulps had died, had gone too far, however—if it was that which

†Which later appeared here in book form as "The Green Man of Kilsona" (Allan: '36).

DARKER THAN YOU THINK!

From The Daily Telegraph:

Howls coming from the bushes in gardens in the centre of Rome last night brought a police patrol to what seemed to be a "werewolf."

Under the full moon they found a young man, Pasquale Rosini, covered in mud, digging in the ground with his fingernails and howling.

On being taken to hospital, Rosini said that for three years he had regularly lost consciousness at periods of the full moon and had found himself wandering the streets at night, driven by uncontrollable instincts. He is being sent to a clinic for observation.

* Our Medical Correspondent writes: According to medieval superstition a werewolf was a man who could turn himself into a wolf. In the 15th century a council of theologians decided that werewolves were a reality.

killed **Wonder**. **Astounding**, giving 160 pages for 20 cents, seemed to be doing all right, and the 25 cents **Amazing** jogged along bi-monthly for another two years before it was acquired and revamped by Ziff Davis. And within a few months of that last, desperate issue, **Wonder** reappeared with the "Thrilling" prefix it still carries after thirteen years of publication under the Standard Magazines imprint. Though as a rather different kettle of fish, just as Gernsback forewarned in Claire P. Beck's **Science Fiction Critic**, a leading fan-mag. of the time, which dedicated to him the issue in which he revealed that

Wonder Stories will be perpetuated by a fellow publisher of mine, who will continue it as a strictly juvenile magazine by leaving out the science, at least in such a manner that a boy of eight or twelve will have no trouble in understanding what it is all about. I did not consider myself capable of editing such a magazine after having published the two best-known science fiction magazines for many years, and for this reason I sold **Wonder Stories**.

At the same time he insisted that interest in s-f was on the wane and that

"it seems almost impossible to get out a magazine of a high type because readers are so few." The result of the effort to keep **Wonder** rolling had proved discouraging, the number of postage-paid blanks returned having "conclusively revealed the apathetic attitude of s-f readers." As for the fans whose activities he had encouraged through the Science Fiction League, he had only feelings of regret at their "continuous squabbling" and the fact that "most of (them) were bent upon destroying s-f rather than building it up. This was particularly apparent in . . . readers' letters . . . there was entirely too much fault-finding and too little propaganda between s-f fans and the rest of the public."

It must have been a bitter pill for the dispenser of "sugar-coated science" to swallow. But after two years Gernsback could look back and analyse the situation without bitterness or regret, except at the way science fiction had developed under the stress of competitive publishing and pandering to the taste of the majority. Writing to the British fan-mag, **Tomorrow** (Summer '38), as "the originator of scientification," he diagnosed the cause of its continued decline as "mainly because young people

have become saturated with too much (of the wrong) type.

"When I originally started my scientification magazines I had in mind only purely scientific yarns, simple enough to be read by a twelve-year-old mind . . . Unfortunately, other magazines took to printing not only pseudo-science yarns but also fairy-type stuff which had no (scientific) basis whatsoever . . . On the other hand, many authors (who) knew science . . . wrote way over the heads of the twelve-year-old mentalities. Such yarns . . . became unpalatable and difficult to digest by the average reader, and the American public which had avidly taken to scientification soon began to turn away from this conglomeration . . . That is the reason why, since my time, two of the monthly magazines have gone on a monthly basis and the quarterlies have disappeared entirely.

"The trouble with scientification, it seems to me, is that there are not enough really good writers who can write really interesting scientification stories; but it is possible that in the future there will come a reversal in the trend, and when that time comes perhaps it would be possible to put scientification on a paying basis again . . ."

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TWO NEWCOMERS: 'FANTASY' & 'OTHER WORLDS'

News of two new magazines of which I'm expecting copies to arrive from America any day now . . . Available for preview by fans at the S-F Convention in Cincinnati early this month was **Other Worlds**, the 35c., 160-page bi-monthly published in Chicago by the Clark Publishing Co., who have made such a success of **Fate**. Featuring all types of fantasy, the magazine aims at combining the best points of all other publications in the field, and at publishing monthly before long; editor is Robert N. Webster. Similarly priced, and aiming at quarterly publication for a start, the other newcomer is more modest; No. 1, which has just appeared, is only a trial issue. Title: **The Magazine of Fantasy**, further described as "a selection of the best stories of fantasy and horror, both new and old."

Publisher of **Fantasy** is Lawrence Spivak, New York, whose productions include the **American Mercury** and **Elery Queen's Mystery Mag.**, which it resembles in format—and in editorial policy, inasmuch as it will "attempt to do for fantasy what Queen's mag. has done for the detective story—create a fresh market for material of high literary standard, unformularised . . ." I quote one of the editors, Anthony Boucher, who is an expert writer and reviewer in America's detective story field as well as a contributor to **Astounding** and **Unknown**, and (under the pseudonym of H. H. Holmes) the author of that intriguing whodunit, "Rocket to the Morgue."* His fellow editor is J. Francis McComas, who had a hand in the Random House anthology, "Adventures in Time & Space."

Featuring both fantasy and s-f, in equal proportions of new and reprint material, **Fantasy** will be specially interested in digging up obscure classics and in discovering promising new

writers. There is an earnest of these aims in the first issue, which reprints rare work by Fitz-James O'Brien, Guy Endore and others, with original tales by Cleve Cartmill, Theodore Sturgeon and Boucher himself. I'm looking forward to sampling the mixture, and trust that the new mag. will have as good an influence on the field as Avon's **Fantasy Reader** has done.

TIME-SCANNER

I'm even more impatient to get the November issue of **Astounding**, concerning which there are many speculations, at least some of which look as though they may prove correct. Certainly, there's going to be something quite unusually interesting about the contents of this issue.

If you are one of those who saw the U.S. edition, you may recall a letter in the Nov. '48 issue from a reader in Buffalo who looked a year ahead and, by way of indicating what he wanted, gave an imaginary review of the Nov. '49 number. This referred to stories by Don A. Stuart, Anson MacDonald, Lester del Rey, van Vogt, Sprague de Camp and Sturgeon, to articles by Ley and Richardson, and to the announcement of a new serial inaugurating a series of E. E. Smith tales. There was comment on a Rogers cover, and a prediction that the mag. would be—had been—enlarged; also that **Unknown** had been revived.

Editor Campbell's comment was: "Hm-m-m—he must be off on another time track. 'Fraid it's not THIS Nov. '49." But he evidently played with the idea, and our information is that, by dint of some quick thinking and astute string-pulling, he has ensured that reader Richard A. Hoen's spot of time-scanning was accurate in most respects. **Unknown** is still very dead, and **AS-F** pocket-size; but the indications are that all the writers aforementioned will have their pieces in the November issue, including Stuart-Campbell himself. Which should make it a dream-come-true issue well worth reading, let alone time-scanning . . . and congratulations

*Which, dedicated to Robert Heinlein and Cleve Cartmill, had a background of science fiction and rocket experiment, with fantasy fans and writers among its characters. Published by Duell, Sloan, New York, '42, and later in a pocket-book edition.

to the Editor on a really slick trick.

I noticed that **Astounding** readers were so interested in the attempt at their own analysis that 3,000 of them sent in the questionnaire they were asked to fill in some time ago, as a result of which we learn that Mr. Reader of **AS-F** is just under thirty, has a college degree, and has been immersed in the mag. for about eight years. He may have any one of many different occupations, but he's more likely to be in engineering than anything else. And he's pretty well satisfied with the mag. as it is, according to Editor Campbell's calculations. Which is different from the usual picture of a typical s-f fan as a pimple-faced adolescent quite impossible to please.

CAPTAIN FUTURE RETURNS

"Captain Future," the creation of Edmond Hamilton who started out nine years back with a magazine devoted to him, will shortly return to **Startling Stories**, which continued his adventures at intervals when **Captain Future** was suspended but has not featured him since "The Solar Invasion" (Fall '46). Meanwhile, he has reappeared in the new British edition of **Startling**, which reprints "Outlaw World" from the Winter '46 U.S. edition, together with P. Schuyler Miller's "Hall of Fame" story, "The Forgotten Man of Space." Published in Manchester, the British **Startling** sells at 1/- and promises to appear quarterly.

November **Startling** features another Murray Leinster novel, "The Other World," which tells of a strange civilisation preying on mankind unsuspected for thousands of years. It's amazing how Leinster keeps up the flow after thirty years of fantasy writing, not to mention other types of stories (he himself puts his total output at something like 1,200 stories and 20 books), but he never seems to lack ideas. This issue also revives one of John Taine's few short stories, "The Ultimate Catalyst," originally published in **Wonder's** tenth anniversary issue (June '39).

Fantasy Book No. 5, though I had never seen it before, proved rather too familiar in parts. L. Ron Hubbard's "Battle of Wizards," Hal Moore's "Albino Canary" and Edsel Ford's "Timeless" were fair enough. But Basil Wells' tale of Venus, "Empire of Dust," and Gene Ellerman's "Crusader" I had already encountered in the book of said Mr. Wells' short stories, "Planets of Adventure" (see Book Reviews, this is-

sue); and I'd also read the second part of John Taine's "Black Goldfish," with the rest of it, in "The Cosmic Geoids and One Other" (ditto, Apr.-May '49 issue). True, Dale Hart's "Tongue of the Dragon" has not been printed anywhere previously, as far as I'm aware. But I'm not quite certain, either, why it was printed on this occasion... though I know now why they call it **Fantasy Book**.

QUARTERLY BI-MONTHLY

Though I still think three months is too long an interval between issues of a mag. which claims to be bi-monthly, the third (July) number of **Super Science Stories** showed an immense improvement. Could the presence of two British writers, William F. Temple and Arthur C. Clarke, have had anything to do with it? Anyway, the first 40 pages of the issue were well used on Temple's "The Brain Beast," which had to do with the first trip to the Moon, the creation of artificial life, a new race of intelligent creatures inhabiting Earth, and a monstrous, inimical entity which not only lives in the Moon but in your mind. All of which would seem to be the ingredients of a good helping of "hack"—but in this case they made a really fine story.

Clarke's tale of a complete universe, "The Wall of Darkness," which had not been printed anywhere before, also went down well. Latest (Sep.) issue features John D. MacDonald with "Minion of Chaos," Geo. O. Smith's "Minus Danger," and "The Metal Moon," by Neil R. Jones. After which, I am informed, **SSS** will be printed in the U.S.A. instead of in Canada—which may bring future issues up to schedule.

GUESSING GAME

One thing about **Amazing Stories** and **Fantastic Adventures** is that you never know what to expect from their covers these days. As often as not, you will never find the cover scene in the story, or you will find the incident quite different from what the scene suggests. For instance, August **Amazing's** cover depicts a debauched-looking artist at work on the picture of a woman who seems to be both beautiful and nude from what you can see of it. The story-title is "I Paint from Death," and the blurb runs: "Under the spell of his brush, the dead lived again." This leads you to anticipate a story of the occult, but what do you

get? What the artist is painting purports to be a mummy, but it turns out to be a robot—who is one of a gang of robots, equipped with flying saucers, whose intention is to take over the Earth! The author, Robert Fleming Fitzpatrick, and cover artist Arnold Kohn should get together some time.

Much more to my taste was "The Awakening," a tale of the first mutant to develop immortality. The author, Rog Phillips, seems to me the best of all the Ziff-Davis roster: his piece in the August **Fantastic**, "The Tangential Semanticist," was very neat and had a nice twist in the tail. Though "The Robot Men of Bubble City" (which the cover credited to Peter Worth, but which had the Phillips by-line), in the July issue, was not up to his usual standard. Nor was I sorry to see the ending of "The Eye of the World," by Alexander Blade, which took up some 140 pages of the June and July issues: this exceeds any previous effort on the part of any writer to reach a moronic level—a morass of badly-written, disconnected and thoroughly illogical wish-wash. But his tale of "The Man Who Laughed at Time," which got the August cover (again, quite independent of the story), is somewhat better than most variations on its trite theme. As for Lester Barclay's "The Wee Men of Weehen," quite apart from its flying saucers and little men who want to conquer Earth, who could enjoy a story with a title like that?

HOOFER

Theodore Sturgeon fans, having had their fill of "Without Sorcery" (reviewed last issue), will still enjoy his latest piece of whimsy, "One Foot and the Grave," which leads off September **Weird Tales**. When a lady of your acquaintance grows a cloven hoof, what should you do . . . ? By comparison, the rest of the stories are only mediocre, though scientfictionists will find three pieces to interest them: "The Rainbow Jade," by Gardner F. Fox, concerning the conquest of super-beings who want to destroy Earth; "The Deep Drowse," by Allison F. Harding, in which mankind is put to sleep by an atmospheric change which enables the animals to surpass him; and Malcolm Kenneth Murchie's "Thinker," in which man passes out again—and the world falls to bits and vanishes altogether.

Fantastic Novels for September reprints A. Merritt's "The Dwellers in the Mirage"—as if we didn't have enough copies of it already; but the

B.I.S. TO DEBATE PSYCHOLOGY OF SPACE-TRAVEL

A consideration of the medical aspects of space-travel, including psychological problems, is in the new lecture programme of the British Interplanetary Society, which opens with a conversazione on October 1st. Photographs of recent rocket experiments, models and drawings will be on show at this meeting, which is designed as a get-together between members. Lantern slides of early rocket experiments and recent researches will also be shown.

On November 19th, a symposium on the medical problems associated with space-travel will open with a paper by Dr. E. T. O. Slater, National Hospital specialist in psychological medicine. Mr. H. E. Ross will deal with the biological problems involved in the construction of space-suits, and Dr. A. E. Slater will consider the effects of gravity changes on the balancing mechanism of the inner ear.

MOON-ROCKET PROJECT

"The Effects of Interplanetary Flight" will be the theme for a general discussion evening in February. A film show and a lecture on the project of a man-carrying rocket to circumnavigate the Moon are also on the programme for the new session, which will wind up in April with a survey by Arthur C. Clarke of space-travel in fact and fiction.

The North-Western District Branch of the Society, which meets in Manchester, has arranged a syllabus which includes a lecture on the conditions and possibilities of life on other planets, by J. C. Farrer, President of Manchester Astronomical Society, and a talk on "Space Stations" by Eric Burgess. The session opens on October 22nd with a general discussion of the possibilities of interplanetary travel.

Finlay pics are new. Next (Nov.) issue brings "Minos of Sardanes," second in Charles B. Stilson's trilogy concerning "Polaris of the Snows." Just arrived is October **Famous Fantastic**, featuring "The Starkenden Quest," by Gilbert Collins, salvaged from '25: a new one on me. Promised for December is "Ogden's Strange Story," by Edison Marshall, whose "Dian of the Lost Land" was reprinted not long ago.

About Books

By Herbert Hughes

THE NEW CULT

If any further indication was needed of the fact, which has become increasingly evident, that the book trade of America is thoroughly sold on fantasy-fiction, there is no doubt of it now. Last month, bookshop browsers all over U.S. picking up the August issue of **Bookshop News**, a trade giveaway, learned that "a new reading cult is rapidly developing, which may become even larger (than the detective story field) in the number of its devotees. This is fantasy-science fiction."

The cover, taken from the jacket of "The Best Science Fiction Stories: 1949," showed a space-helmeted rocket-pilot against the background of a spaceport. Inside were details of nine current and forthcoming fantasy volumes, all illustrated, and an introductory piece by Will F. Jenkins, alias Murray Leinster, "dean of the science-fantasy writers" (vide **Time**). Explained Jenkins: "Science fiction is that peculiar genre of literature in which the uninitiated see only spaceships and time-travellers and multi-dimensional universes in which practically everything is quite certain to happen. We fans, though, see much more than nonsense, and none of us wants to be cured."

After telling the usual tale about the F.B.I. and the now-famous story by Cleve Cartmill*, Leinster touched upon fan clubs and conventions, and went on to mention two of his own forthcoming volumes in giving examples of more recent specimens of fantasy. "One doesn't have to be solemn, but the fans won't stand for false logic or loose thinking . . . Some people can't take it. It isn't dignified. But it definitely isn't stodgy . . . If you can take it—and realise that it's out of this world to

begin with—it's as good sport as you'll find."

THE S-F LIBRARY

"The Best Science Fiction Stories: 1949" is the revised title of the volume, just published, with which the well-known firm of Frederick Fell, Inc., of New York, has inaugurated a Science-Fiction Library, "in recognition of the coming-of-age of science fiction as a major development in modern literature." So runs the legend in their new catalogue issued to the trade, which also reproduces the handsome jacket design from the first of what will become an annual series of anthologies presenting the finest science-fantasies from the magazines.

With an Introduction by Melvin Korshak, it has been compiled by Everett F. Bleiler and T. E. Dikty (all three, if you remember, were associated with Shasta's "Checklist"), and presents picked pieces from the work of Bradbury, Padgett, Asimov, Leinster, and such successful newcomers as Erik Pennel and Wilmar H. Shiras—in which, as might be expected, there seems to be a preponderance of **Astounding** material. At \$2.95, it should sell very well; in fact, if there is anything in the publisher's expectations, it will be snapped up by an army of book buyers "soon to number millions"—s-f fans, every one of them!

So confident are they that s-f "will supplant the whodunits and detective stories within the next few years" that they have signed up four of the field's best-known writers to produce an s-f novel each year for the next three years, and are negotiating with others whose work they intend to present "in permanent, distinguished format so as to be attractive to the general fiction reader as well as to the hundreds of thousands of s-f fans and collectors." It's not a closed shop any longer!

*"Deadline" (**Astounding**: Mar. '44), which predicted the atomic bomb so accurately that "within a few days (of its publication) agents of the Military Intelligence approached the author and the office of the magazine demanding to know who, on the Manhattan Project, had been talking." See "The Best in Science Fiction" (Crown, New York: '46), and practically any article on science fiction which has been published since.

Hard on the heels of the anthology has come the first of the four novels due out before the end of this year: "The Kid from Mars," by Oscar J. Friend, former **Thrilling Wonder** editor and contributor, the story of a visitation from a dying planet which, in spite of its subject, has a welcome touch of

[Please turn to page 19

A fascinating new book traces the ancient tradition of the interplanetary story through the centuries. Reviewing it here, GEOFFREY GILES looks back at

THE FIRST SPACE-VOYAGERS

Then we upon our globe's last voyage
shall go,

And view the ocean leaning on the sky;
From thence our rolling neighbours
we shall know,

And on the lunar world securely pry.

John Dryden: *Annus Mirabilis*
(1660).

Whoever it was said there is no new thing under the sun must, I think, have learned the lesson from much reading of the literature from which has developed the interplanetary story. Since the second century, when the sailors of Lucian's "True History" were carried to the Moon by a whirlwind, numberless writers have played with the theme of the cosmic voyage, especially during the period which marks the dawning of the aviation age. Before that, philosophers who were fascinated by the problem of "other earths" and the possibility of making contact with their inhabitants were inclined to indulge their fancies in this way. The idea of space-travel is probably as ancient as the study of the stars themselves; and although the devices conceived by the chroniclers of such voyages were invariably so quaint as to seem ridiculous to us, much less to their contemporaries, at times they were surprisingly prophetic.

As all who have read any popular textbook on astronautics must know, it was that versatile fellow Cyrano de Bergerac who first considered the potentialities of rockets (or "Fire Works") as a mean of propulsion to this end, besides tinkering with such cranky notions as vials of dew and bowls of crystal and loadstone. Until his "Voyages to the Moon and Sun" (1650-62)*, all the imaginary space-

explorers had relied on wings, either natural or artificial, to sustain them, if they had not been transported by spirits like the hero of Kepler's "Somnium" (1634). But in spite of the atmosphere of superstition attaching to the great astronomer's famous fantasy, it too contains the germs of some pretty problems which have come to be associated with the science of space-flight, such as the effect of gravity changes upon the human body and the question of respiration.

As a Spanish writer had done before him, Kepler conceived of a "dozing draught" which would render the traveller unconscious and free from the shocks of his passage. As for the Moon-world itself, he visualised its lofty mountain ranges, its caverns and fissures, and its extremes of temperature, with a fine appreciation of astronomical data which were only just being discovered. He furnished the satellite with monstrous specimens of plant and animal life which became stock for science fiction in due time; while his "dream" technique was destined to become only too familiar.

The idea of colonising the Moon, as presented recently in newspaper headlines, seems comparatively new; but those who have investigated the origins of this literature will not deny me when I say, for the benefit of the sensationalists, that it was thought of three centuries ago. For the rest, who may be sceptical, I quote:

It is the opinion of Kepler, that as soon as the art of flying is found out, some of their nation will make one of the first colonies that shall transplant into that other world...

John Wilkins, the English scientist who married Oliver Cromwell's sister, wrote those lines in 1638, in his "Discovery of a New World in the Moone." Nor did he disagree with Kepler—except in so far as he had "appropriated this preheinance" to the Germans. Miss Nicolson, who has delved deeply into the subject in the first book to survey the whole of the interplanetary travel theme in Euro-

*"The Voyage to the Moon" and "The Voyage to the Sun" were written and published separately. An English edition of the combined works appeared in 1687 as "The Comical History of the States and Empires of the Worlds of the Moon and the Sun," and is available in a modern translation by Richard Aldington (Routledge, London: 1923).

pean literature†, suggests that the initial experiments in flight which took place at this time, and which were largely inspired by the accounts of imaginary voyages she has studied through the years, were actually precipitated by the growing belief that the first nation to discover the principles of aviation would be the first to plant its flag on the Moon and even on the planets. She thinks that Cromwell himself may have had a hand in Wilkins' dissemination of these lofty ideals among his contemporaries of the Royal Society, and that even after the death of the dictator the Royalists had notions of adding Luna to the British Empire. As indicated by Samuel Butler's satirical poem concerning what might well have been the first of all scientific hoaxes, "The Elephant in the Moon," in which a learned society makes a telescopic survey of the satellite

To observe her Country, how 'twas
planted;
With what sh' abounded most, or
wanted;
And make the proper'st Observations,
For settling of new Plantations . . .
Impatient who should have the
Honour
To plant an Ensing first upon her.

But Britain and Germany were not the only claimants, any more than America is now. There was quite a rivalry between the nations reflected in Moon-voyaging stories and poems as the literature boomed in the 1630's. In the same year that Wilkins' masterpiece appeared Francis Godwin's "The Man in the Moone" was published, though it was probably written much earlier. Relating the adventures of a shipwrecked mariner who trained a flight of migratory swans to carry him aloft and thence, unexpectedly, to the Moon, Godwin took the cue from Kepler to depict a lunar world of giantism, inhabited by men whose language consisted of "tunes and uncouth sounds" but whose innate decency had enabled them to achieve a blissful Utopia from which they departed painlessly at a ripe old age. The story was so popular that it was translated into four languages and ran into 25 editions, and it not only inspired other exponents of the imagin-



Cyrano's Voyage to the Sun, from the frontispiece of the English edition of 1687.

ary voyage but the writers of plays and comic operas.

Wilkins' "New World in the Moone" was, however, to exert a stronger influence in the development of the truly scientific treatment of the theme. A popular science writer rather than an author of fiction, he sought to prove that the Moon was a habitable world, and was much nearer in his estimate of the distance any traveller must cover to reach it—179,712 miles. He had definite ideas about the "sphere of magnetical virtue" of the Earth, although he confused the yet undiscovered law of gravitation with the extent of the Earth's atmosphere, which he supposed to be "about twenty miles high." He was convinced of the possibility of space-flight, once the difficulty of gravity was overcome: "So that you see the former thesis remains probable: that if a man could but fly, or by any other means get twenty miles upward, it were possible for him to reach unto the Moon." To him, neither the thinness nor coldness of the upper air was an insuperable obstacle; and he cheerfully reasoned that, as the voyagers would not be wearied by labouring against the force

†Voyages to the Moon, by Marjorie Hope Nicolson. Macmillan, New York: \$4.00 (Macmillan, London: 20/-).

of gravity, they might complete the journey without need of food or sleep.

Fallacious as his conclusions were, all these arguments he advanced from the standpoint of current scientific knowledge, and established a trend which was gradually to undermine the uncertain basis of supernaturalism which often inspired such writings. The new tradition was strengthened by Christian Huygens' "Celestial Worlds" (1698), in which this noted scientist considered in detail the question of life on other planets. And Bernard de Fontenelle's "Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds" (1686), which became an astronomical best-seller, popularised the idea of spatial exploration even among the gentlewomen of the period, by taking a Lady on imaginary voyages in company with a Philosopher guide without their leaving the security of the drawing-room.

There is at least one woman—and what a woman!—in Miss Nicolson's long list of contributors to this literature: "The Description of a New World, called The Blazing World, written by the Thrice Noble, Illustrious and Excellent Princess, the Duchess of Newcastle," which appeared in 1666, was the outcome of a visit she paid to the Royal Society, and a sensation of Pepys' London. It was full of bear-men, bird-men, fly-men and ape-men—and the voyager is a girl who marries an emperor and becomes a patron of science. She looks, in fact, very much like an earlier edition of Mr. Fearn's "Golden Amazon."

Miss Nicolson, a distinguished American scholar, whose book has grown out of a series of lectures she gave at Toronto University three years ago and her previous writings on the subject, has assembled a bibliography of 133 works on the interplanetary theme which were written and published prior to 1785, as well as a supplementary list of items which are pertinent to its study. She quotes liberally from many of her primary materials, telling us of space machines with pump handles, of one worked by a Spring, another manned by a hundred shackled apes, and of one which carried five

daring astronauts all around the Solar System as early as 1744. There is even one which, in 1775, was electrical in nature, if Mercurian in origin.

She recounts at length Samuel Brunt's tale of a Cacklogallinian project to recover gold from the Moon, and considers, as in the tradition of cosmic voyages, Swift's satire of the Flying Island, Holberg's classic "Journey to the World Underground," Swedenborg's religious fantasies, and Voltaire's "Micromegas." She even justifies "Alice in Wonderland" as coming within her purview. And, of course, there is the Moon Hoax, as perpetrated a century ago by Richard Adams Locke.

While claiming familiarity with the adventures of modern space-voyagers such as Dr. Doolittle and Buck Rogers, and the heroes of the pulps, she prefers to leave to the students who helped her to keep pace with such trends any survey embracing them. But one of the most interesting sections of her book, for those who know Heinlein and "Skylark" Smith, is the Epilogue in which she traces in more recent specimens of the literature the marks of those early exponents she has read so assiduously. Kepler, Godwin, Wilkins, Cyrano, Holberg—all these and others, she clearly shows, have exerted some influence on the theme which many of us are inclined to regard as having originated with Jules Verne.

Verne himself was one who, it would seem, would willingly have conceded his debt to his progenitors. Wells, manifestly, had read Kepler. Only Edgar Allen Poe was so foolish as to pour scorn on the pioneers as "utterly uninformed in respect of astronomy"; in endorsing his own attempt, in "Hans Pfall," at "verisimilitude in the application of scientific principles . . . to the actual passage between earth and the moon," he is the first to earn the disapproval which Miss Nicolson frowns upon all writers who have striven to make their cosmic voyages plausible. For her the essence of such tales is enchantment, a quality which they have lost in the process of becoming more scientific.

In our modern imaginary journeys to the planets men sail in great space-ships constructed upon sound technological principles. They discover worlds in which scientific warfare has gone even farther than among us, in which cosmic rays and atom bombs have become instruments of universal destruction. Their devices for flight are far more

†Which include "A World in the Moon," issued (1936) in the Smith College Studies in Modern Languages. Miss Nicolson was Dean of Smith College before she became the first woman Professor of English in the Graduate School of Columbia University, U.S.A.

plausible and realistic than any I have related . . . They have gained verisimilitude, but they have lost the excitement of breathless discovery. The poetry of true belief is mute. Most of all is gone something else that made these earlier tales . . . a rich literary heritage. Our modern pulp and movie and comics writers who deal with the theme have lost the delicacy and the subtlety of humour, conscious and unconscious . . .

Obviously, she has not read any of de Camp—nor of Fearn. But she has a great admiration for C. S. Lewis, which not all lovers of the modern interplanetary story will share, least of all those who belong to "little inter-

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planetary Societies and Rocketry Clubs" and who spend their time with "monstrous magazines"—those who, according to Mr. Lewis, subscribe to the "wild dream" which is "to open a new chapter of misery for the universe": in brief, the concept of man's conquest of space and the extension of his sphere of operations to the galaxies. And this, I think, is where we came in . . .

About Books—continued from page 15

humour in it. Also to appear this month is Murray Leinster's "The Last Space Ship" actually one which, in an era of interstellar teleportation, the hero steals from a museum in order to escape political persecution. In October "John Carstairs: Space Detective," presenting the botanical sleuth of Frank Belknap Long's **Thrilling Wonder** stories. Finally, in November, Edmond Hamilton's **Amazing** story of "The Star Kings" will be published in a new, extended version. All these books are priced at \$2.50.

FROM THE HALL OF FAME

Also on sale in the U.S. now is the anthology "From Off This World," edited by Leo Margulies and Oscar J. Friend, consisting of 18 "Hall of Fame" classics from **Startling Stories**. In addition to the "Singing Flame" tales of Clark Ashton Smith and the equally famous pair of "Tweel" stories by Weinbaum, all of which are currently available in other volumes, there are such memorable pieces as "The Man from Mars," by P. Schuyler Miller, "The Man Who Evolved," by Edmond Hamilton, and D. D. Sharp's "The Eternal Man," with others well worth preserving to re-read again and again.

The publishers are the Merlin Press of New York, who likewise intend to develop the fantasy field in earnest, and are already following up this addition to the list of anthologies with another that will be available shortly. "My Best Science Fiction Story," to which most of the big-name magazine writers have contributed what they consider to be their best piece of work, with reasons for their choice, is also edited by the Margulies-Friend team, Editors

John W. Campbell and Sam Merwin are among the authors included, with Bradbury, de Camp, Williamson, Heinlein, van Vogt and the rest—two dozen of them, making a book of 500 pages which will be really representative of the field.

LOST CLASSIC

One of the classics of science fiction which has been in great demand of recent years is S. Fowler Wright's "The World Below," which has just been reissued simultaneously on both sides of the Atlantic. Copies of this amazing tale of half a million years hence, originally published in 1925, had become so scarce that its reprinting posed quite a problem. As the author's only surviving copy was destroyed with many valuable MSS. of his during the blitz, he was reduced to advertising for one before his own company, Books for Today, could republish it, and it was some time before a copy could be secured. After the plates had been made from this, it was flown to America, where Shasta Publishers were also having difficulty in getting hold of a copy, but by the time it arrived they had managed to unearth one and production was under way.

There were further hold-ups on both sides before the new editions emerged. Now, at last, "The World Below" is obtainable without hard bargaining: the English edition, priced at 9/6, jacketed with a striking design by Lou Goldstone which appeared on the cover of the last issue of **Vorn**, Forrie Ackerman's fan-mag., two years ago; the U.S. edition (\$3.50) boldly labelled "This is a novel of Science Fiction." I'm enjoying it hugely again, after nearly twenty years.

Book Reviews

The Eternal Triangle

FOUR-SIDED TRIANGLE, by William F. Temple. John Long, London. 9/6.

Reviewed by **Thomas Sheridan**

Gunner William F. Temple, ex-fantasy writer, sat in a troopship bound for the Middle East, and thought. He tried not to think of the wife and daughter he had left behind. Instead, he tried to think of something he could bring back; something he could create—a novel, for instance. There was a short story he had had published in *Amazing Stories**. Willy Ley had commented: "That story would have needed a good novelist." The comment was sound; he'd thrown away a good idea. So, Gunner Temple began to write a novel with the same title as the original short story, "The Four-Sided Triangle."

He was still at it in the heat of Egypt, in the Libyan desert, in Tripolitania and Tunisia. By now he was a very small part of the Eighth Army, and mixed up with Rommel's tanks. Consequently, he was constantly on the move. You had to dig your own bed every night in a different place, deep enough to dodge the shell-splinters, and hope the tacticians would let you sleep. But in his waking moments off active duty, Gunner Temple wrote on. The MS. was half-finished when the satchel in which it reposed fell off a truck, unnoticed, somewhere below the heights of Takrouna where a battle was raging. For all he knows it's still there, buried in the sand.

The next move was the invasion of Sicily. But bigger news, for him, was that a son had been born, back in England. Heartened, he began the invasion of Italy—assisted—and, once more, his novel. After disputing the ownership of a couple of hundred mountains with the Nazis, he landed on the Anzio beachhead for a stay of three months. His programme was two days with the forward infantry, observing for the artillery, then two days back at the guns. The missiles arrived with the same density in both places, but at the guns you did get a chance to stand up now and again. Somehow, for the

second time, the novel reached the half-way mark.

Then, one dark, wet night, his jeep was bogged in the mud. He went to get help to tow it out, and in his absence the infantry, passing up to the line, took a fancy to his small pack. He had wanted to keep that MS. close by him . . . Soon afterwards, he learned by cable of a greater loss, that of the little son he had never seen. It was some time before he could persuade himself it was worthwhile making another effort; and while he was writing the opening paragraph in his slit-trench, screams of unbearable agony assailed his ears. He scrambled out, just in time to see four of his comrades burned to death—and there was nothing he could do about it.

There was much more battle, murder and sudden death before a second paragraph was added to the third MS. of "Four-Sided Triangle," in the quietude of a leave in Rome. The story was well advanced when, in August of '45, something happened to Hiroshima. It was unfortunate that he had made his fictional heroes the first to release atomic energy—for quite a different purpose: he had some rewriting to do. But he finished the story, with numb fingers, one snowy day in a fireless, stone-floored barrack-room in the Alps.

He took it with him when at length he went home to his wife and to his typewriter. He typed the final MS. and sent it to a publisher. It came back within three days, unwanted, unread. Then began the battle to sell it, despite the acute paper shortage—and, the battle being won, the long wait for publication, which proved almost as exhausting. At last, now, it appears: Temple's first novel, endorsed by Eileen Bigland as "outstanding . . . A book that should bring deserved recognition to a new author because of its originality."

Science fiction readers, to whom he is no new writer, may not find the story so blindingly original. Even if they have not read the *Amazing* version, to which it faithfully adheres as to plot while being vastly improved in the ex-

* In the Nov. '39 issue.

tended development (and, as one would expect, in the writing), they will probably have encountered the basic idea before: that of the duplication, atom by atom, of any object, inanimate or otherwise. But this book version, labelled "A Romance," is designed for a reading audience which might well gasp at the idea of actually duplicating a human being after exhausting the possibilities of the Tate Gallery or the British Museum. Especially such a perfectly-formed, desirable creature as Lena . . .

It would be bound to lead to trouble—and it does. Though the secret of the "twins" is closely kept, there are enough complications within the little circle of The Reproducer Co. to persuade one of the participating geniuses to blow himself up and the other to

take to drink after a lifetime of well-mannered slavery to the best public school traditions. The four-sided triangle eventually loses two of its sides, so that all ends happily, but it was a nice problem in romantic geometry while it lasted. Which twin has the Tony? There's the rub of the ending, which is cleverly devised to give an added piquancy to the whole quite ingenious, if ingenuously told, story. In his treatment of an idea which might have been developed along a dozen different lines, Gunner Temple has obviously aimed at the biggest target; and although there is evidence of a tendency to wobble in the direction of the smaller contingent of fantasy followers, he has earned a medal for his shooting.

The Memory of Weinbaum

A MARTIAN ODYSSEY and Others, by Stanley G. Weinbaum. Fantasy Press, Reading, Pa. \$3.00.

Reviewed by **Arthur F. Hillman**

I well remember the occasion, in 1934, when I first read "A Martian Odyssey." At that time the great depression in America was in full swing and, in a sort of unhappy kinship, science fiction had sunk to the bottom. **Wonder Stories** seemed on the point of expiring, and had turned in desperation to heavy Continental imports; **Amazing** had fallen back on Poe and Verne. Only **Astounding** was struggling to break the monotony with its "thought variant" stories. Then, in the July **Wonder**, came the first of Weinbaum's stories, which was sufficient in itself to catapult him into the front rank of fantasy writers*.

This tale of the first adventurers on Mars and their encounter with the pyramid monsters and the ostrich-like Martian, Tweel, fascinated me so much that I cut it out to keep it by for re-reading—the first time I had ever done such a thing. For, as John Beynon Harris duly observed in **Scientifiction** (Aug. '37), in reviewing the Memorial Volume with which his fellow writers honoured Weinbaum after his all too early death†: "It had that extra little something the others hadn't got. Here

among a lot of science fiction painfully ground out to pattern was a story which seemed to breathe fresh life into the whole business . . ." Its utter freshness of approach caused Arthur C. Clarke (**Scientifiction**, Jan. '38) to select it as the best story to put before beginners in order to convert them to the field, and time was to prove his point. In a poll of s-f fandom conducted in '45, it was chosen as the most popular short story, heading a list of some 160 tales in which were at least ten other Weinbaum pieces.

It was hardly surprising that, after writing a sequel to his first success ("Valley of Dreams": **Wonder**, Nov. '34), Weinbaum broke into **Astounding** with "Flight on Titan" (Jan. '35) and "Parasite Planet" (Feb. '35), which testified further to his facility for depicting the probable conditions of other worlds with something very like authenticity. The battling plant life of the Venusian twilight zone; the pathetically stupid Loonies; the Lotus Eaters with their magnificent abandon; the tiny, ratlike Slinkers—his creations poured forth in a steady stream, and each non-human entity, so deftly sketched, was something you could believe in. So it was, too, with his human characters: the acid-tongued van Manderpootz, the unpunctual Dixon Wells, the beautiful Princess of Urbs, all vied with Ham Hammond of the Venus stories for the attention of readers grown weary of hoary plots, hack story-

*See "The Admirable Weinbaum": **Fantasy Review**, Apr. May '48.

†"Dawn of Flame & Other Stories" (Milwaukee Fictioners: '36).

telling and lifeless marionettes.

So rapid was Weinbaum's rise to fame, so meteoric his brief career, that his admirers had hardly visualised the far-reaching effects of his humanised science fiction when they were shocked by the news of his tragic passing, in December '35, at the age of thirty-three. It was not until some years later that the significance of his novel stories was fully recognised and considered; and as his last pieces became exhausted, the debate on the merits and lost possibilities of his work became more and more intense. There were some who, to add fuel to the argument, dared to question his greatness, maintaining that it was only the dullness of his contemporaries that emphasised his comparative brilliance. To-day such controversies seem beside the point; but the observation of Gerry de la Ree in his "Tribute to Weinbaum" (45) seems particularly apt: "When, after a thousand debates, readers still seek out and read his work in preference to currently available material, fully realising Weinbaum's faults as they did his vir-

tues, then he will be great." Can any deny that such a time has arrived?

Having presented in book form, only last year, his novelette "Dawn of Flame" and its sequel, "The Black Flame,"[†] Fantasy Press have now assembled twelve of Weinbaum's best short stories including the Ham Hammond and van Manderpootz series, with such memorable additions as "The Circle of Zero," "Pygmalion's Spectacles" and "The Adaptive Ultimate." With this volume, representing only half of his short story work*, the veteran reader may recollect the pleasures he derived from the Weinbaum episode, while the novice may discover for himself the fascinations of his peculiar imagery, bearing in mind that these are stories which effected a complete change of outlook in magazine science fiction. For Weinbaum set the pace for many imitators. But his copyists have come and gone, while he alone remains in that niche he created for himself.

[†] Reviewed **FR** Jun.-Jul. '48.

*The rest will be presented in another volume in preparation by Fantasy Press.

Slave New World

NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR, by George Orwell. Secker & Warburg, London, 10/-; Harcourt, Brace, New York, \$3.00.

Reviewed by **Forrest J. Ackerman**

Although Mr. Orwell's previous excursion into the imaginative, "Animal Farm,"* passed almost unnoticed in the United States, his new novel of the future has taken America by storm. Every review I have seen has praised it to the skies; it is a Book of the Month Club selection; **Life** has devoted eight pages to it, and the **Reader's Digest** intends to condense it in its September issue. I should not be surprised to see it filmed.

Orwell's world of 1984 is one of transcendental horror to anyone nurtured on null-A philosophy or in accord with Wells' ideals of dignity for the human being. From birth to death, from defecation to copulation, the individual is spied upon by the Thought Police; and people vanish from the face of the earth and the memory of their kind every day for an unconscious look when awake or an uncontrollable utterance while asleep. In the *Slave New World*

of thirty-five years hence, truth has been crushed to the ground, never to rise again. Commonsense, that tells you two and two are four, has become a crime; you must "doublethink" yourself into believing black is white and day is night—or else! Else consists of vaporisation—being reduced to gaseous molecules, after an eternity of ghastly torture, and shot off into the stratosphere.

In the Ministry of Truth, many persons are employed to alter the past, which is no longer a stable thing but in a state of constant flux to correspond with later developments. When a child denounces a parent to the Thought Police or a man convicts himself by "thoughtcrime," every evidence of that doomed person's existence is systematically eradicated—including any mention in the Master Files of newspapers. And, of course, every prediction of Big Brother must come true. Big Brother has replaced God. He is omnipotent and omnipresent. His eyes pierce you from coins, cards, matchboxes, magazine covers, books, and the ubiquitous telescreens.

All this takes place in *Airstrip One* (formerly Britain), in the Union of

*Secker, London: '46.

Oceania, one-third of the world-power: Eurasia and Eastasia make up the other two-thirds. It is a No Man's Land, a land fit for no man, where war is unending, sanity undone, hope unimaginable; where one must say no to sex, no to beauty, no to science, no to pleasure, no to progress—no, no, no! This is the nauseating nadir of nonsense to which a perverted Socialism (called Ingsoc) has dragged down society. Eighty-five per cent of the people are brainless "proles," victims of the Inner Party's thought-controls, dumb brutes without dreams. It is the occasional Outer Party member with an atavistic streak of sensitivity (and sensibility) that suffers most acutely in this totalitarian tyranny. Such a pair are Winston and Julia.

Winston works in the Ministry of Truth, fabricating lies. Julia, having graduated from producing pornofic for the proles, is now a full-fledged worker in the Fiction Department, devoting her spare time to activities in the Anti-Sex League. Secretly, she is a nymphomaniac; Winston's crime is that he treasures verboten memories of things past. How they manage to meet, mate, and mock their masters is a

masterpiece of cunning and caution—which makes the reader's consternation all the greater when the rebels are caught.

Julia's fate we are left to guess at, but Winston experiences the inquisitorial ultimate. In Room 101 he comes face to face with the most horrifying torture in the world. Search your mind and you will know it, for it is precisely that—the materialisation of each individual's most unendurable fear. At last Winston's horror-racked brain is hollowed out and refilled with the demented doctrine demanded by the Party; he is cortically reconditioned. He loves Big Brother . . .

A whole article could be written on Newspeak, the revision of the English language designed to make it—by 2050—virtually impossible to think any subversive thoughts; there simply won't be the words or connotations for such! In fact, there is a supplemental twelve pages in the book on the subject. And by the time I had reached them, I felt pulverised. In the terminology of Newspeak, I found "1984" doubleplus-good; and at the risk of becoming an "unperson," I recommend it to you most strongly.

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Weasel-Men and Furry Women

PLANETS OF ADVENTURE, by Basil Wells. Fantasy Publishing Co., Los Angeles. \$3.00.

Reviewed by **John K. Aiken**

It is difficult to know where to begin with Mr. Wells, save perhaps to express a mild wonder that his publishers could not have found some better use for their paper and ink; for there is not one story in this collection worth a literate reader's most casual attention. Clearly, the majority of Mr. Wells' tales must have been written—and very hastily—with a certain market in view: a market which does not demand plot, character, style, scientific background or any other stimulus to thought, but only a kind of papier-maché novelty of detail and unlimited quantities of action*. Perhaps the intended audience was juvenile; but if a twelve-year-old boy will swallow this stuff, then twelve-year-old boys are not what they were,

*Mr. Wells has contributed mostly to **Planet Stories**, from which three of the items in this collection have been reprinted.

for the naivete of most of Mr. Wells' work is inconceivable. How his great namesake must have turned in his grave!

Here are all the time-dishonoured ingredients of the most witless, slapdash, pseudo-scientific type of fantasy. Here are fish-men, beast-men, bird-men, lizard-men, even weasel-men, in droves. Here are heroes called Orth and Orn and Kern and Rolf; while names such as Altha, Alda, Ayna, Erda and Uva grace the heroines, many of whom are hairy or even furry—but this does not detract from their "lushness" (Mr. Wells' word). Here, too, are rocket-rifles, solar-ray pistols, decomposition blasters and semi-atomic blasters: as a humble chemist, I find the latter especially difficult to visualise.

Mr. Wells, like Mr. Shaver, has a great partiality for caves, and much of his action takes place in caves, or in caves within caves. The action itself largely consists of captures and escapes. In "Caverns of Ith," which features an extraordinary multiplicity of caves, the persistent but unobservant hero and

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heroine escape from the mad dictator no less than four times; but, aided by recreant golons, lizard-men, an oxy-mixer, parablats and dynatom, he always recaptures them. The poor fellow has, of course, to obey the rules and refrain from killing them, demented though he is, so inevitably he goes down for the count at last. If Mr. Wells' villains did not conform to this merciful regulation, his stories would never exceed 500 words in length.

In "Gateways," another of the longer and more pretentious pieces, as well as plenty of caves there are bird-men, beast-men, lizard-men, Red Indians, gangsters, New Britons, and inter-dimensional passages pointing every which-way. It is not surprising, therefore, that some of the various battling factions betray occasional uncertainty as to which side they are on or even

where they are. And this story contains a passage of facial description of such record-breaking calibre that I cannot refrain from quoting it:

But Nelson's eyes were not on Marta's pouting, slowly believing features.

Just occasionally Mr. Wells shows traces of a personal way of looking at things which, if left to himself, he might possibly develop into a talent. But having in mind the care and hard work involved, the colossal mass of cliché and shoddy to be jettisoned, and the uncertainty of the outcome, it is doubtful if it would be worth trying. Meanwhile, by conferring comparative permanence on the kind of material which derisive outsiders will be only too ready to take as typical of the whole field, the publishers of this volume have only done science fiction a disservice.

A Stringer of Beads

THE PORCELAIN MAGICIAN, by Frank Owen, Gnome Press, New York. \$3.00

Reviewed by **Arthur F. Hillman**

One of the benefits of time's passage is that it throws a merciful veil over authors whose work deserves to be forgotten. More rarely, it brings to light those who merit a new and greater audience. In this category is Frank Owen, whose delicate Chinese prose-pastels have been a feature of **Weird Tales** for many years*. The story that brought him instant popularity, "The Wind That Tramps the World" (Apr. '25), captivated its readers with its charming theme and soft lyrical language. "Its ethereal sweetness still thrills me as I recall it to mind," wrote one of them. "It should be bound in a dainty cover and placed . . . with the world's classics."

Four years later, the Lantern Press of New York made the wish come true by publishing the tale, with others, in a beautiful little book bearing its title. Next year they followed it up with another collection of Mr. Owen's work entitled "The Purple Sea." Both these slim volumes were decorated with gay, entrancing covers which matched their contents; to-day they are collector's

items. Although other Owen books have been published since†, none are so eagerly sought after as those "splashes of Chinese colour."

This latest volume presents twelve of his old stories and two new ones. The old tales are still enjoyable, but the title-story and "Monk's Blood" are not so pleasing; they are predominantly weird and not so well finished as the reprinted pieces. But in compensation there are among these some of his finest work—tales with the craftsmanship of a delicate Ming vase, yet which have plots that are novel, powerful and swift-moving.

Frank Owen is one of those rare writers who strive for beauty and he does not conceal the fact. His aim is clear-cut and simply defined: he threads his words like beads on a necklace and places them before you to fascinate and charm. His obsession with colour and the timbre of words is reflected in the titles of his stories: "The Yellow Pool," "Pale Pink Porcelain," "The Tinkle of a Camel's Bell," "The Month the Almonds Bloom."

To me, he is the finest example of a white man writing with an Oriental mind, surpassing even Lafcadio Hearn and putting to shame such puerile

*His work also appeared in the short-lived **Oriental Stories** and **Magic Carpet** magazines, companions of **Weird Tales**, during '31-34.

† Notably, "Della-Wu, Chinese Courtesan" (Lantern, New York: '31); "A Husband for Kutani" (Furman, New York: '38); "The Scarlet Hill" (Carlyle House, New York: '41).

imitations as those of Ernest Bramah and Sax Rohmer. Not only does he make full use of colour in the genuine Chinese tradition, but the whole of his outlook and philosophy are typically Oriental. His scorn of education, his contempt for Western worship of materialism, the unhurried tranquility of his thoughts: all are the true essence of the East.

Yet, to add to the paradox, the China of Frank Owen never existed. It never could exist, save in the minds of sensitive souls. It belongs to those places of enchantment that abide in books: the Camelot of Arthurian legendry, the Pegana of Dunsany's imagination. Although many of its aspects are faithful reproductions from the vast Land of the Dragon, the total effect adds up to a mirage. But it is one delightful to contemplate, and he is a clod who would not attempt to pursue its fragile, beckoning beauty.

Fish Story

TRITON, by L. Ron Hubbard. Fantasy Publishing Co., Los Angeles. \$3.00.

Reviewed by **Terence Overton**

In the early days of the war, the bitter irony and desolation of "Final Blackout"* stamped Mr. Hubbard's name into the memory of **Astounding's** readers. It is only lately that we have come to realise that "The Indigestible Triton," which appeared in **Unknown** at about the same time (Apr. '40), and for which he first used his pseudonym of Rene Lafayette, was the work of the same author in quite a different mood. Both stories tend towards hero worship, but they have little else in common.

Under close analysis, "Triton," as it now appears, seems to have not much substance: a dual personality theme, some rather commonplace magic, and a plot that will hardly bear investigation. A competent psychiatrist might well decide to lock up, not only the leading character, but also the author and any readers who found it funny. Still, Mr. Hubbard contrives a smooth development of his theme, with an outburst of hilarity every now and again, which makes this one of the very few really humorous books of fantasy.

The hero, Bill Greyson, is cursed with a fortune and a family. While he is a nice, easy-going young man he has

*Reviewed **FR** Aug.-Sep. '48.

"The outstanding science fiction novel of our time."

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S. Fowler Wright's THE WORLD BELOW

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—Saturday Review of Literature.

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some quite ordinary human desires, but once he is married to Priscilla, who is all the name conveys, the family will have him under their thumbs for life. Just before the fatal day he meets an enticing piece of femininity named Ginger, who urges him to revolt. To avoid open warfare he feigns insanity, and so gets locked up. But, obtaining his release for a few hours, he goes deep-sea fishing and catches Triton, nephew of Neptune, Lord of the Ocean. Being wanted under the water for certain misdeeds, Triton uses his magical powers to invade Bill's body, and from that point we are treated to a whole series of crazy episodes that wind up in Neptune's court.

The jacket design is rather poor, but to make up for this there is an entire absence of those interior illustrations that so often spoil a good story. A short piece, "Battle of Wizards," helps to fill out the volume and is well worth reading, if only to discover how to beat a magician at his own game. It turns out to be a very simple matter, too.

Enchanted Typewriter

THE THIRTY-FIRST OF FEBRUARY,
by Nelson Bond, Gnome Press, New
York. \$3.00.

Reviewed by **John Starrett**

Although a true definition of fantasy-fiction has defied even the experts, nowadays we recognise its broader meaning. The term, most of its adherents will agree, embraces three main tributaries—science fiction, the weird tale, and pure fantasy (we will not attempt the explication of these terms, for fear of further argument). Of the last of the three categories we find all too few exponents; for to write in a zany style without descending to burlesque one must walk on a literary tightrope.

Luckily, though, there are some whose tread is delicate enough to pursue such a path; and one of the nimblest-footed is Mr. Bond. This had long been evident to readers of his contributions to **Weird Tales** and **Unknown**, particularly, when the first

collection of his most successful pieces appeared two years ago*. Now another "thirteen flights of fantasy" from the files of his published stories have been assembled, very handsomely, by the Gnome Press. If it is not quite as good as his earlier volume, it is still a further indication of his rare skill as a writer of weird whimsies and a storyteller of the first water.

Here we meet such assorted types as a man who can walk through mirrors, a ghost who is afraid of mortals, a captured creature from the Fourth Dimension, and an author with a pencil as enchanted as Mr. Bond's typewriter. Such figments of his imagination are novel enough to attract readers who normally shy at anything outside the mundane pattern; while most if not all of these stories will probably be entirely new to his regular admirers, since they have been culled from **Scribner's**,

*"Mr. Mergenthwyrker's Lobbies": reviewed **FR** Apr.-May '47.

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EXILES OF TIME

By Nelson Bond

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Esquire and **Blue Book**, as well as from **Unknown** and **Fantastic Adventures**. But there is none that has the human appeal of the famed "Mr. Mergenthwirker's Lobbies," and at least two which show signs of hurried writing. To offset which, we have in "The Five Lives of Robert Jordan" a hero whose Danny Kaye-ish transitions of personality set the seal on all time-travel epics.

One thing I did find irritating, however, was the fuss made over the title of the book, for whose "conveyance in

fee simple" the author makes a fulsome thankoffering to Mr. James Branch Cabell? Why such a palaver? It is not all that brilliant, and not exactly original. As far back as '35, I remember, Paul Ernst had a story in **Astounding** entitled "The 32nd of May"!

† Who was going to use it as a chapter-heading in one of his own fantasies, which remains unfinished. Fellow Virginian Cabell also returns the author's compliments by declaring: "To my judgment, Mr. Bond has genius."

FANTASY CONVENTION ON TELEVISION



John Carnell, Editor of **New Worlds**, who has returned from the U.S. after attending the Seventh World Science Fiction Convention as the first representative of British fandom to make contact with its Transatlantic fellows.

It was the biggest Convention since the first was held in New York ten years ago. More than 200 authors, publishers and fans from all over America gathered in Cincinnati, Ohio, on Sept. 3-5, prior to which it was heralded in local papers with headlines such as "D-d-don't Look Now! Ogres Due in City." All three carried reports of the proceedings, the **Cincinnati Post** making the event front page news, with many pictures in which "Miss S-F 1949"

—personified by New York fashion model Lois Miles, in typical magazine cover undress uniform—was conspicuous.

Highspot of the three-day programme was a 30-minute broadcast by local television station WLWT, in which Convention celebrities were introduced. Interviewer was David A. Kyle, of Gnome Press, who discussed all aspects of the field with authors E. E. Smith, Jack Williamson, Fritz Leiber Jnr., Judith Merril and E. Everett Evans.

After a cross-talk on fantastic art between Hannes Bok and fan-artist John Grossman, examples of magazine covers were televised—the original of **New Worlds** No. 5 cover giving the cue for a talk between Editor Carnell, authors' agent Forrest J. Ackerman, and writer Bob (Wilson) Tucker on contemporary magazine s-f. Finally, book publishers Lloyd Arthur Eshbach (Fantasy Press), James A. Williams (Prime Press) and Erle Korshak (Shasta Publishers) discussed the developing fantasy book field.

Great interest was manifested in **New Worlds** following a talk by guest-of-honour Carnell in which he explained the adverse factors British s-f had had to contend with in the course of its development. The wish that more British delegates would attend future Conventions was endorsed by the warm welcome given to Carnell, who subsequently visited publishers and writers in Chicago, Philadelphia and New York.

Delegates "looked in" on the broadcast as it was received in the main meeting hall. Another important item on the programme was an auction of rare books and hundreds of original illustrations, which lasted five hours.

Fantasy Forum

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

Buck Szczebrzeszinski

May I get into the Clarke-Cooper argument about the Bolkhovitinov-Zakharchenko diatribe against science fiction?* Mr. Cooper seems to have swallowed the Communist clichés about life in the U.S. as truly descriptive thereof, which they are not. His phrase "saturated with sex, dazzled by the almighty dollar . . ." is pure rhetoric, signifying nothing. How do you measure sex-saturation, and how does he know Americans have more sex per cubic-inch than, say, Hungarians or Japanese? His use of the term "American monopoly-capitalist culture" shows lack of knowledge of the American economic system. American capitalism is actually less monopolistic than that of Britain and other Western European countries. For instance: cartels, which are common in Europe, are forbidden by laws rigorously enforced in America.

As for Lysenko, his theory is as much sub judice as the Ptolemaic theory of the Solar System. Lysenko is apparently—as nearly as one can tell from his emphoric fulminations—trying to revive Lamarckism, a long since discredited hypothesis. (See the article "Lamarckism," in the current edition of the "Encyclopedia Britannica," by T. H. Morgan—one of Lysenko's favourite targets of abuse.)

In objecting to the undue preponderance of Anglo-Saxon heroes and capitalist interstellar cultures, Mr. Cooper has a legitimate point. However, American writers tend to make their heroes Americans for the same reason that British writers make their British, and Norwegian writers Norse: it makes it easier for their readers to identify themselves with these heroes and therefore to enjoy the stories. Moreover, any writer can more convincingly portray a milieu with which he is personally familiar.

But it is not true that such is the case with all the stories in the magazines. Going through my recent *Astoundings*, I note that in Asimov's "Mother Earth" the chief characters have German, Dutch, Spanish, Italian and Chinese names, while in Anderson and Gergen's "Entity" they include Swedish, East Indian, German, German-Jewish, Russian, Chinese, Bantu and Greek names. On a statistical basis, I suppose

two-thirds of the characters in stories of future world civilisations should be of Asiatic origin. Finally, if the Poles want to start an s-f magazine wherein the heroes are all named Wisnjewski and Szczebrzeszinski, I'm sure we Americans could bear it with equanimity.

As for social schemes of the future, stories have exhibited republican democracy, monarchy, dictatorship, technocracy, anarchy capitalism, socialism, communism, co-operativism, primitivism, etc., in all combinations. After thirty years, the "Soviet experiment" can hardly be called such; its faults would appear to be inherent rather than mere growing-pains. And haven't there been plenty of stories based on the idea of a cruel, treacherous and oppressive dictatorship claiming a monopoly of all politics, commerce, culture and thought, and seeking world conquest by deceit, terror and violence? What do you mean, stories have ignored "social set-ups based upon the Soviet experiment"? Only your countryman George Orwell, in his "Nineteen Eighty-Four," seems to have done the job up so brown just recently that we Americans will have to go some to equal him.—L. Sprague de Camp, Lansdowne, Penn., U.S.A.

P.S.: I think Mr. Aiken is mistaken in saying (*FR* April-May '49) that in revising "The Wheels of If" for book publication I changed some of the Saxon-root words of my characters' dialect to Latin-root words. I did make a few opposite changes (Latin to Saxon), but no others; and if he checks the magazine version against the book I think he'll find the dialect actually more consistent in the latter. Possibly his own critical sense has become sharper since the magazine story was published.

ASTONISHED 'LACKEY'

A friend of mine loaned me a copy of *Fantasy Review* (Dec. '48-Jan. '49) containing the article, translated from the Russian, which "analyses" Anglo-American science fiction. Needless to say, I was astonished to find Eando Binder a lackey of Wall Street, under direct orders from his fascist government to write subversive stories with the purpose of spreading the poisonous capitalistic system throughout the universe. Should I worry? Presumably I am on the Black (Red?) List of the Kremlin.

As you probably know, I haven't been writing much s-f for some years, having switched to producing scripts for the

*See "The World's Nightmare," *FR* Dec. '49; "The Lackeys of Wall Street," Feb.-Mar. '49; "The Iron Corset," Apr.-May '49.

"comic" magazines—**Captain Marvel, Robotman**, et al. It's surprising how many of these stories are fantasy, written for the juvenile group. I fondly believe that the comics are building up an interest among the small fry for future graduation into prose fantasy. **Captain Marvel**, for instance, has had adventures on many other worlds, and often takes Time trips or duels with mad scientists and their super-science machines. All strictly juvenile; but the seed, so to speak, is being sown.

I suppose, in the last analysis, the comics are the modern fairy tale.—Otto Binder, Englewood, New Jersey, U.S.A.

NO SUPERMAN HE

From his letter in your Summer '49 issue it would appear that Mr. Frank Williams has entirely missed the point of E. E. Smith's "Grey Lensman" stories. The Grey Lensman is not a "superman" saving civilisation; he is merely the apex of a pyramid, without which he not only falls to the ground but cannot even attain existence. He is a "superman" at the time merely because at that time he is the latest and greatest product of evolution, but he will be followed by others equal to him and later still by superiors.

Not even the Soviet Union can prevent there being always a "best" at any given time. The true saviours of civilisation were the Arisians, who displayed the

proper functions of government by protecting and helping the humans just sufficiently to enable them to develop until, as a whole, they themselves could triumph. Even Russia has its Stalin.—L. F. Cureton, Thackley, Bradford.

UNWANTED ORE

Mr. Harry Moore's disagreement with my contention that **Fantasy Review** makes the old **Fantasy Magazine** look callow by comparison seems to be based on the fact that **FR** does not feature fiction, as **FM** did. My only basis for comparison between the two is, of course, in the articles and reviews; and I still maintain that yours are much superior to those of any other journal which has graced the field before. This is not to detract from **FM** which, taken as a separate entity, was a splendid magazine indeed.

But I cannot agree with Mr. Moore in his request for fiction in **FR**, which would defeat the very purpose for which your **Review** was founded. There are so many magazines which provide this already that, as was proved long ago, the experienced writers of worth-while stories would find little advantage in printing them in a fan publication. Though I will grant that an occasional gem is presented by the fan press, such material as would generally be forthcoming would be low-grade ore, mined from the bottom of the author's trunk.

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I'm sorry to see **FR** go quarterly. Though I don't object to the increased size—and you were giving a good-sized magazine for the money under your bi-monthly schedule—I prefer a bi-monthly with fewer pages to a quarterly the size of a telephone book. Your interviews with authors, your column "Fantasia," histories of the magazines, and special features like the Soviet attack, are all top-notch stuff, and I hope you will add to it; but your reviews of books published on both sides of the Pond are the best feature of all, hands down!—Erle Korshak, Chicago, Ill., U.S.A.

[We have no intention of publishing fiction, unless it were peculiarly suited to this **Review**, which will never become a convenient receptacle for rejected MSS. of any sort. All our articles and features are specially prepared with a view to informing, guiding and assisting the reader for whom the fantasy field and its concomitant activities have a special and continuous interest.—Ed.]

COULD BE!

An increase in the size of **Fantasy Review** is very welcome even at the expense of frequency of publication. Unlike many other fan magazines, you aim—successfully—to cover the entire field impartially. I hope the word 'Science' appears in the new title—perhaps it could be **Science-Fantasy Review**?

Since you ask, I give my opinion that fiction might perhaps increase your circulation; and it would be a desirable goal for amateur writers. On the other hand, there are plenty of other fan magazines which feature fiction, and I think **FR** would do well to remain the supreme journal for fantasy news and reviews; though you do not seem to cover sufficiently the British Science-Fantasy Society and you do not mention other fanzines very much.

John K. Aiken's "Search for Superman" was very good—I was inspired to buy the book—and very important. The Fantasy Awards scheme seems like an attempt to emulate what goes on in other fields; I think it entirely unnecessary. But could "Fantasy Forum" be lengthened, and could you start a special department dealing with time-travel?—John A. Wiseman, Sidcup, Kent.

[Your wishful thinking upon our new title seems more like intelligent anticipation, coupled with an appreciation of **S-FR**'s particular aims—which should enable you to see just as readily why we have left the publication of fiction and coverage of the fan press to magazines like **Startling Stories**. We mention the activities of fan clubs only when they are likely to be of sufficient interest to the majority of readers as a possible influence on the fantasy field; hence our concern with the Awards proposal. We could publish many more letters, but use only those which have something interesting to say.—Ed.]

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THE DEAR DEPARTED

I have a copy of **Tales of Wonder** which is minus the cover and the date. The first story is "Superhuman," by Geoffrey Armstrong. Could you tell me the date of publication? Also, what happened to **Marvel Science Stories** and **Dynamic Science Stories**, first published in '38, and **Science Fiction**, which appeared in '39?—F. A. Coulter, Palmerston North, N.Z.

[The issue of **Tales of Wonder** is the first, which appeared, undated, in June '37. **Marvel Science Stories** started in Aug. '38; with the sixth (Dec. '39) issue it became **Marvel Tales**, and with the Nov. '40 (Vol. 2, No. 2) number changed its title again to **Marvel Stories**. After one more issue (April '41), it was suspended. **Dynamic Science Stories** saw only two issues: Feb.-Mar. and Apr.-May '39. **Science Fiction** was published irregularly, commencing in Mar. '39, until the Sep. '41 (Vol. 2, No. 6) issue, after which it merged with **Future Fiction**, six issues of which had appeared between Nov. '39 and Aug. '41. After nine issues of the combined magazine (Oct. '41 to Feb. '43), the title reverted to **Science Fiction**, which saw only two more issues (Apr. and July '43) before it was discontinued. A companion magazine, **Science Fiction Quarterly**, appeared for ten issues between Summer '40 and Spring '43. All are now rare collectors' pieces.—Ed.]

ASTOUNDING'S FORMAT

I would be greatly obliged if you would answer these queries:

(1) When did **Astounding Science-Fiction** change from ordinary-size to pocket-book format? (2) When did **Weird Tales** decide to discontinue reprints and make its policy "All new stories—no reprints"?—Roger N. Dard, Perth, W. Australia.

[(1) With the Nov. '43 (Vol. 32, No. 3) issue. (2) The change of policy which took place following the resignation of Farnsworth Wright as Editor of **Weird Tales** came into effect with the July '40 issue, after which the magazine carried the legend: "All stories new and complete—no reprints." Previously it had made a feature of reprinting in each issue a story which had appeared in one of the magazine's earlier volumes.]

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WANTED: Astounding Dec. '42; Unknown Feb., Sep., Dec. '40; Famous Fantastic Jun. '43.—Box 130 Science-Fantasy Review.

WANTED: "The Invasion from Mars" (Hadley Cantril: pub. Princeton Univ., '40).—Box 131 Science-Fantasy Review.

WANTED: "The Days of Creation," by Willy Ley.—Box 132, Science-Fantasy Review.

WANTED: Collection Wonder Stories '29-39 and **Wonder Quarterly**; early Startlings; AS-F '40-46. Condition must be good.—Box 133, Science-Fantasy Review.

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

EXCHANGE Bradbury's "Dark Carnival" for del Rey's "And Some Were Human." — Box 123, Science-Fantasy Review.

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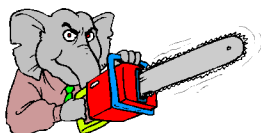
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