FANTASY REVIEW

Vol. II, No. 10 SIXPENCE AUG.-SEP. '48

DEVELOPMENT

The plan to invite fantasy fans to assist in financing a new publishing company to take over 'New Worlds' is now being referred to writers and others who may participate in the venture.

The story of fantasy-fiction's development in this country is one of magazines that have failed eventually if not soon after their launching, or that have not materialised at all. Always such projects have been stalled by hesitant publishers, adverse conditions or, now, the frustrations of the paper shortage. Yet those who refuse to accept these repeated setbacks as any more than temporary have found a widespread interest among Britain's fantasy followers in the proposal for continuing **New Worlds** through an organisation which they would set up and control themselves. It is suggested that not only those who would produce and distribute the magazine, but the authors whose stories it would present, should share the financial brunt of re-launching it on a sound commercial basis, and that those readers interested enough should be invited to give further backing to the project.

Whether any profit would accrue to all these sponsors, apart from the satisfaction of rescuing the magazine from its suspension, is a matter of some doubt. But the prime movers of the proposal feel confident that on such a mutually co-operative basis the venture would have every chance of succeeding and, equally important, of making possible more ambitious enterprises which would ensure the continued development of British fantasy by those who are most concerned with its sensible presentation. While other publishers, obviously with mistaken ideas of the real potentialities of the field, are content with producing cheap imitations of its less attractive elements, how can we expect it to flourish as we would wish?

Such a project as is now being considered cannot be embarked upon without careful thought of the complications involved; for its success must depend largely on the goodwill of those readers who will be most interested in the progress of the magazine and who may have divergent opinions as to how it can be secured. Still, we hope these plans, once formulated, will not be kept in cold storage as long as some which have been prepared in the past by established publishers. The current interest in science fiction among the larger audience which has been attracted to it must not be allowed to flag before **New Worlds** is once more appearing on the bookstalls.

ERIC FRANK RUSSELL on CHARLES FORT—
THE BRONX JEER

In spite of his debunking of science—and practically everything else—most science-fantasy readers have a soft spot for the late Charles ("I believe nothing") Fort, whose peculiar philosophy has inspired many stories, notably Eric Frank Russell's "Sinister Barrier." Here the British writer, who is also a prominent supporter of the Fortean attitude, claims that the man who packed four books with marvels science cannot adequately explain deserves to rank as a giant of fantasy.

During the last twenty years we have seen the passing of some doughty figures in pulp magazine fantasy. Some, like Ernst, packed up and left for lusher fields. Some, like Hilliard, faded out mysteriously and effectively. Some, like Weinbaum, were taken before their time, scintillating all too briefly and leaving us a memory full of vain regrets.

The names of many no longer with us to-day are the names of giants. Merritt, Lovecraft, Kline—the list now seems appallingly long—were of calibre big enough to get by without benefit of pulps. That they did pour their talents into magazines, and that magazines eagerly featured them, was lucky for those who, like myself, thirsted for fantasy when too young to afford expensive books.

Those departed great ones shaped fantasy, each according to his own especial virtues, to such an extent that much of what we read to-day might be termed an end-product. Much, but not all. There are other forces operating, such as those of young and uninhibited publishers, unusually competent editors, new, brash and individualistic writers. But the formative forces of the giants can still be felt.

Which of the bygone names exerted the most potent effect upon modern fantasy is a question any band of old-time fans could debate until the crack of doom; for the respective statures of great penmen are measured not in inches of lineal marking but in years of reader-esteem. To each reader his own measure, to each his own colossus. It would ill-become any of us to deny another his personal yardstick with which to estimate the worth of this, that or the other author, living or dead. If this appears to contradict lurid comments of mine made many years ago, accept that I am now cured, or half-cured, or on the way to recovery.

By my yardstick—which I have no reason to suppose is more or less accurate that anyone else's—the late Charles Fort was enough of a titan to influence pulp fantasy as much as any other writer, and possibly more than most. Perhaps the most amazing feature of his influence is the way in which it has been put across. He was no welcome Lovecraftian visitor, given the best chair, entertaining wonderfully night after night; no Weinbaumian stranger-in-town dazzling spectacularly before leaving for keeps. He walked in the front door and walked out the back, quietly, craftily, and it was some time before it was noticed that the household silver had vanished. There has been much counting of spoons ever since.

I have a hazy recollection of when, in a moment of something-or-other which has never been explained, **Astounding Stories** serialised Fort's

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"Lo!"* At that time my wits must been located in my tail end, for I read it with little interest, and to the present day my sharpest memory concerning it is of a letter to **Astounding** from a reader yclept "Zero" who sensed Fort as a foul smell made manifest at Holy Communion. I don't recall that I resented Zero's yardstick. My indifference was not Fort's fault; he sought me out when I was spending too little time in study. But, a couple of years later, Fort hit home in what I used for a mind. "Lo!" reappeared in book form. I read it again, decided that **Astounding** had cast an unnoticed pearl before me. How many others reached a similar conclusion is something I'll never know. That some did is evident by the fact that in the world of pulp fantasy Fort is more alive to-day than when "Lo!" first came out.

Here I am disregarding Fort's philosophy of determined scepticism and his ethic of temporary acceptance, looking at him only as one of the fantasy-forces discernible to-day. Fort was the writer who never turned out a pulp story in any accepted sense. His sole performance, "Lo!" was a masterfully written piece of scientific heresy which caused many fans—and yet causes many—to view him as The Bronx Jeer. Since then no writer has copied his stark literary style, or at least imitated it successfully. No writer has become his stooge in the sense that other giants have been offered the sincerest form of flattery. Indeed, the bias he has given to fantasy seems due to one aptitude which, by my yardstick, towers hugely above the parallel aptitudes of contemporaries; he had a mind of such astounding imaginative scope and fertility that he could think up plots faster than the average author can spit.

John W. Campbell, reviewing that fat omnibus "The Books of Charles Fort," commented that it contained probably not less than one good plot per page. He was pretty well right, at that! The great pity is that Fort himself never exploited them pulpishly, thus regaling us with a stream of yarns that should have hit the heights every time. With what awful power could his literary style have put them over. Consider the following sample from "Lo!"—a picture of Naples after an eruption of Vesuvius:

"The people of Naples groped in the streets, each in a hellish geometry of his own, each seeing in a circle, a few

*Astounding Stories, Apr.-Nov. '34. Editor Tremaine presented it as "the natural inheritance for a thoughtful audience," considering his readers "the one group in America which can digest it."

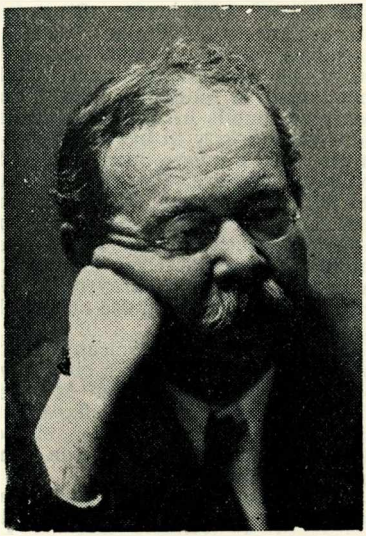

Photo : Pincus Horn

CHARLES HOY FORT, called by his followers "the man who liberated minds," lived and died (aged 57), in The Bronx, New York. Starting out as a naturalist, he took to writing novels and ended up (in his own words) "an ultra-scientific realist." For 26 years he kept notes and cuttings—40,000 of them—on earthquakes, tidal waves, comets, meteorites; falls of frogs, stones and red rain; strange footprints, poltergeists, and all things spooky and fantastic for which, according to him, there was no explanation that could be relied upon. He had his own theories for such phenomena, which he presented in "The Book of the Damned" (1919), "New Lands" ('23), "Lo!" ('31) and "Wild Talents" ('32); these have been assembled in an omnibus, "The Books of Charles Fort" (Holt, New York: '41). In '31, Tiffany Thayer, Ben Hecht, Booth Tarkington and others founded the Fortean Society to preserve his notes, widen the scope of Fortean inquiry and foster its viewpoint of "enlightened scepticism"; also, as defined later, "to remove the halo from the head of Science." Members include science fiction writers R. De Witt Miller, Nelson Bond; its magazine, **Doubt,** has been parading "pallid data" and printing Fort's notes (dating back to 1800), since 1937—rather, by the Forteans' own calendar, the year 7 F.S.

yards in diameter, and hearing, in one dominant roar, no minor sounds more than a few yards away. Streams of refugees were stumbling into the streets of Naples. People groped in circles, into which were thrust hands, holding up images, or clutching loot. Fragments of sounds in the one dominant roar—geometricity in bewilderment—or circles in a fog, and something dominant, and everything else crippled. The flitting of feet, shoulders, bandaged heads—cries to the saints—profanity of somebody who didn't give a damn for Vesuvius—legs of a corpse, carried by invisibles—prayers to God, and jokers screeching false alarms that lava was coming.

"A blast from the volcano cleared away smoke and fog. High on Vesuvius—a zigzag streak of fire. It was a stream of lava that looked fixed in the sky. With ceaseless thunder, it shone like lightning—a bolt that was pinned to a mountain.

"Glares that were followed by darkness—in an avalanche of bounding rocks and stumbling people, no fugitive knew one passing bulk from another, crashing rocks and screaming women going by in silence, in the one dominant roar of the volcano. When it was dark, there were showers of fire, and then in the glares, down came dark falls of burning cinders. In brilliant illuminations, black rains burned the running peasants. Give me the sting of such an ink and there'd be running . . ."

It is some consolation, though not a complete one, that others have striven to use the plots which Fort gave away like a drunk on the spree. The satisfaction is qualified by the fact that some attempts have been far from competent and some downright undesirable even to the point of literary lunacy. On the other hand, enough of Fort has been done, by those who know how, to have put some very fine yarns into the pulps. I am thinking especially of Gold and de Camp's scary "None But Lucifer," Williamson's able "Darker Than You Think," Kuttner's well-done "The Fairy Chessmen" and O'Donnell's masterly "Children's Hour." Truly, I wish I had written all of those, had I been able.

Fort marches on, the giant behind half a hundred narratives, with plenty more to come. These days I get leery of his plots and am more and more inclined to leave them alone, fearing duplication of ideas—but sooner or later someone will do them. One has only to glance at any part of his books to see further, as yet unwritten stories practically staring one in the face. For example, looking at random: "Wild Talents"—"With the advantages of practical witchcraft would come criminal enormities." Someone will turn that into "The Sorcery Shop" in, say, 1950 **Weird Tales.** Or this from "Lo!"—"Emissions of arms, the bubbling of faces, at crevices—fire and smoke and a lava of naked beings. Out from a crater, discharges of bare bodies boiled into fantastic formations." The seed of an atomic disaster story, or one about the sudden birth of silicoids.

"New Lands"—". . . that some kinds of beings from outer space can adapt to our conditions, which may be like the bottom of a sea, and have been seen, but have been supposed to be psychic phenomena." That one covers about three weirds, three fantastics and maybe a couple of science fiction stories, including a long cosmically-we're-marine-creatures yarn. "The Book of the Damned"—"My own impression is that some external force has marked, with symbols, rocks of this earth, from far away." When, from where, how and why we are so marked, is a story.

How long the shadow a giant casts! See what I mean?

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Walter Gillings' FANTASIA

Fantasy philosopher Olaf Stapledon to open British Interplanetary Society's new lecture programme in October, discussing ethical and religious problems of space-exploration, possibilities of other-world life, colonisation of planets, telepathic communication . . . First-night hubbub at Aldwych Theatre for Hon. William Douglas Home's "Ambassador Extraordinary," in which Tarzan-like Martian visits Earth, averts atomic war by threatening annihilation of this mad planet, returns to Mars by rocket . . . **Satevepost** featured novelette by Michael Fessier, "The Fascinating Stranger," all about X-ray-eyed visitor from planet Philistia whose terrestrial misadventures cause interplanetary complications . . . New **Astounding** contributor Erik Fennel in **Blue Book Magazine** with "Doughnut Jockey," tale of flight to Mars to prevent pneumonia epidemic . . . **Clue,** new U.S. mystery mag., ran special supplement on science fiction, Anthony Boucher editing, August Derleth book reviewing . . . British author Peter Phillips' second **Astounding** piece, "Manna," accepted . . . Prof. A. M. Low, discussing "Questions of the Future" in **Practical Mechanics** series, forecast dawn of space-flight era twenty years hence . . .

Forrest J (no full-stop) Ackerman, "scientifan No. 1, 31-year-old Hollywood writer & author's agent," interviewed by **Writer's Markets & Methods** on his invention of telescopic language, "Ackermanese": "Here's a Weinbaumanuscript, a Merrittale, a Bradburyarn and a Burroughstory. Great imaginarratives, all of 'em . . . Just got an airmailetter by transAtlanticlipper. An Australifan wants me to contact a Canadifan about an interplanetaryarn for a prozine" . . . Los Angeles fans gave A. E. van Vogt a birthday party, presented him with set of s-f mags. containing his own stories . . . Shasta Publishers held open house at new Chicago offices, entertained authors E. E. Smith, Fritz Leiber Jr., Oliver Saari, Norman L. Knight, over 100 fans; also staged first fantasy publishing exhibit at American Booksellers' Convention in Chicago . . . Tales by 30-odd star writers, including Weinbaum, Merritt, Campbell, failed to appear as scheduled in "A Treasury of Science Fiction" (reviewed last issue), according to Sam Moskowitz in **Fanscient.** Says Sam: "Groff Conklin has betrayed the cause of science fiction and lost faith with himself" . . .

News Review ran page on "The Philosophy of Fort," reproducing cover of **Doubt,** Magazine of the Fortean Society—"a haven for lost causes which . . . might become extinct." Topical peg for write-up was "conflict" between London & Liverpool members over Social Credit; "but there is little chance of a Fortean schism. Members in general are far too busy investigating supernormal . . . phenomena to devote much time to internal politics" . . . Australian Erle Cox's "Out of the Silence" classic available in new edition (Robertson, Melbourne: 10/6). "The Missing Angel," by same author, is new humorous fantasy in almost—but not quite—**Unknown** style . . . Extracts from Verne, Conan Doyle, Prof. Low & Harry Harper in "Flights into the Future" (Thames: 7/6) . . . Manly (Wade) Wellman's mystery novel, "Find My Killer," published here by Sampson Low . . . "Atlantis," fantasy film starring Maria Montez, released: German museum-piece, "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari," televised . . . William F. Temple's "A Date to Remember" coming up in **Thrilling Wonder** . . . Laurence Manning's "The Man Who Awoke" series from pre-Thrilling **Wonder** to see book publication . . .

"Fantasy is Here to Stay," by Shasta's T. E. Dikty, in **Antiquarian Bookman,** explained to U.S. booksellers why Lovecraft's "The Outsider & Others," published by Arkham House at $5.00 in '39, now fetches ten times that; first edition Smith's "The Skylark of Space" (Hadley: '46), de Camp's "Lest Darkness Fall" (Holt: '41), $10.00 in each case. Book scout Dikty cautioned dealers to brush up on the field before "fans, armed with bibliographies, begin raiding their stocks" . . . National Fantasy Fan Federation ran referendum on change of name. Suggested alternatives: American Fantasy Society, National Fantasy Association . . . Sixth World S-F Convention—the "Torcon"—held in Toronto July 3-5. Canadian Science Fiction Association now being organised . . . **Fanomena** devoted whole issue to David H. Keller, M.D., who drew on 50 years' experience to advise tyro authors: "The disease (with me) has become chronic. Again and again I have promised myself I will write no more; always I have returned to the typewriter as an addict to his cocaine . . . . Realising the incurability of the disease, there is only one word of advice I can give: Don't start writing!"

THOMAS SHERIDAN continues

THE STORY OF 'ASTOUNDING'

Implementing his policy of steering the eight-years-old **Astounding Stories** into more thoughtful channels, new editor John W. Campbell Jr., ten years ago, boldly challenged the assumption that science fiction's appeal was primarily juvenile. Announcing his intentions in the British fantasy review, **Scientifiction** (Jan., '38), he asserted that "even the youngest readers of our magazine are mentally older than has been believed." By the end of the fifth year of Street and Smith proprietorship, through such features as "The Analytical Laboratory" and "Brass Tacks and Science Discussions," he had established that over 30 per cent. of them were practising technicians—chemists, physicists, astronomers, mechanical and electrical engineers, radio men—and that all were "technically inclined." The drastic change of title to **Astounding Science-Fiction** ("**Stories,**" argued Campbell, "carried no message that was intelligible; the new title explains to the unfamiliar . . . what our material is") seemed perfectly justified.

In the evolutionary plan he had conceived for the magazine, important factors were the use of "astronomical" covers showing accurate-as-possible close-ups of other planets, an increase in science articles, and the presentation of "mutant" stories, so-called by virtue of a radically new basic concept—really an extension of ex-editor Tremaine's "thought variant" idea. The same term, as indicating a new line of development, was applied to changes in cover design, even in the layout of the contents page. But such mutant tales as Williamson's "The Legion of Time" (May-July, '38) were all too rare, and a "nova" designation was invented to label those which, while outstanding were not entirely original in plot. First of these "novæ" was Horace L. Gold's "A Matter of Form" (Dec., '38), in which the identities of dog and man were exchanged by brain surgery.

The trend which led to the launching of **Unknown Worlds** also showed itself in L. Ron Hubbard's story of the Evil Eye, "The Tramp" (Sep.-Nov.), Sprague de Camp's "The Merman" (Dec.) and his series concerning Johnny Black, the superbear. Lester del Rey, Frederick Arnold Kummer, Harry Walton and the late Malcolm Jameson were among other newcomers who began to exert an increasing influence in the moulding of the new **Astounding,** whose aspect inside and out became more maturely attractive in spite of the crudities of artist Jack Binder (brother of the Eando writing team) contrasting with the work of Wesso, Brown, Schneeman, Orban and the rest. Yet the "thoughtful" material did not outweigh the gusty space-opera of Gallun, Wellman, Burks, Cummings and others of the old, vigorous school; and though Fearn suffered eclipse under all three names (the third: Polton Cross), the super-science of Schachner persisted, as in his "Past, Present and Future" series. So did the naiveties of Van Lorne, until the "Bluemen of Yrano" (Jan., '39) received such an "outstanding shellacking" that Campbell had to apologise to his outraged readers.

Taking stock after his first year, he decided, however, that the improvement they readily recognised was "cyclic and self-perpetuating." By '39, with 160pp., "book-jacket" illustrations and a truncated British Reprint Edition, the magazine was maintaining a reader-interest unparalleled in science fiction history; and as much for its intelligent articles (by Willy Ley, de Camp and R. S. Richardson, particularly) as for its well-written, soundly-constructed stories. The arrival of A. E. van Vogt, Isaac Asimov, Robert A. Heinlein and Theodore Sturgeon, in quick succession, heralded another phase in which these and other new writers attained equal status with stalwarts like Williamson and "Skylark" Smith, whose "One Against the Legion" (April-June, '39) and "Grey Lensman" (Oct., '39-Jan., '40), respectively, were typical of a style of material soon to be outmoded; though Smith's infrequent epics were still to be given great play much later, and Williamson had by no means exhausted himself. Nor, at that time, had Harl Vincent, whose come-back revealed a surprising versatility for one so steeped in earlier traditions.

But a new race of giants had mutated, and proceeded to make their mark on the medium as represented by **Astounding.** Until then, as in its competitor magazines, the main appeal of

ASTOUNDING in Heinlein's heyday: the May '41 issue, featuring his "Universe" and "Solution Unsatisfactory," by Anson MacDonald—also Heinlein.

the stories had been the scientific widgetry; its effect on the characters and the general background of the story had been treated, for the most part, superficially. Now, there was more concern for psychological and sociological implications, and the realisation that human nature and society are themselves fascinatingly complex produced a far superior type of story.

Like Hubbard, whose "Final Blackout" (April-June, '40) attempted to predict the course of the European war, Heinlein especially brought to science fiction a refreshing touch of realism—which, in respect of atomic research, was to prove prophetic indeed. His unique flair for developing the sociological angle, without diminishing imaginative or genuine scientific interest, made him acknowledged leader of the new school of writers effecting this revolution. With such stories as "If This Goes On" (Feb.-Mar., '40) and "The Roads Must Roll!" (June, '40), he began to build a whole structure of "future history," extending over two centuries, against whose technical-cum-sociological background these and later tales were laid.* Assisted by his wife, with a degree in psychology, in the preparation of his plots, he used the pen-name Anson MacDonald for many other pieces which did not fit into this scheme but were equally well-executed, e.g., "Solution Unsatisfactory" (May, '41) and "By His Bootstraps" (Oct., '41), each of which was featured in the same issue as a Heinlein story and joined it in leading the popularity poll. As fellow-contributor P. Schuyler Miller, no mean hand himself, expressed it in "Brass Tacks," Heinlein was "clearly an unbeatable."

Hardly less popular and even more prolific, later, was Canadian-born van Vogt, whose capacity for plot-complication coupled with unrestricted imaginative conception enabled him to enlarge on the sensational success of "Slan!" (Sep.-Dec., '40) with a series of shorts, novelettes and serials which lasted throughout the war years and are still appearing.† One reader's reaction, after revelling in the first **Astounding** serial to win "nova" status, was that "the fellow (has) a mind of a brilliance that has not been directed at the field of science fiction since the halcyon era of Weinbaum-Smith-Campbell-Williamson and the zenith of imaginative writing." Yet perhaps a better writer than either van Vogt or Heinlein was little-publicised del Rey, whose "The Stars Look Down" (Aug., '40) was to prove one of the most memorable stories of a year which brought from Editor Campbell the cry that science was outpacing science fiction—"we aren't fantastic enough." His '38 assertion that the discoverer of atomic power was alive on earth right then had turned out, thanks to U-235, quite accurate extrapolation.

The year 1941 was, however, Heinlein-MacDonald's year, productive of two serials and seven more of his stories including nova-ed "Universe" (May). Only Asimov's "Nightfall" (Sep.) distinguished itself comparably amid the run-of-the-mill material of de Camp, Sturgeon, Bond, Miller, Schachner and other old faithfuls. In the middle of Smith's "Second Stage Lensman" (Nov.-Feb.), the next year brought a change in the format of the magazine, which adopted the larger page-size of **Unknown Worlds,** with bigger print and more white space—in spite of America's entry into the war which by that time had put paid to Britain's **Tales of Wonder.** The Feb., '42 **Astounding** was the hundredth con-

*See "Brass Tacks," **Astounding** May '41.

†See "Creator of the Slan," **Fantasy Review** Oct.-Nov. '47.

secutive monthly issue: "a record," remarked the editor, "in the somewhat fluid field of science fiction." With covers by Hubert Rogers, who had long since replaced Brown and shared the interiors with Cartier, Kramer, Kolliker and Orban, its get-up supported fandom's view that the idea was to edge both **Astounding** and **Unknown** out of the pulp class into the semi-slicks.

A more pressing problem for Campbell was to develop new writers to take the place of those mainstays called to active duty. By the end of '42, in which both were still well to the fore, Heinlein and Hubbard dropped out, claimed by the Navy; de Camp's lengthy articles dwindled, and Asimov's "Foundation" series came to a sudden stop. Of the top-liners, only van Vogt increased his output. But there was no lack of fresh blood. While Williamson doubled as Will Stewart, Hal Clement, Cleve Cartmill and Raymond F. Jones all helped to fill the gap. Detective story writer Anthony Boucher and talented Fritz Leiber Jr., already established in **Unknown,** needed no urging. George O. Smith entered the lists with his "Venus Equilateral" series, while old-timer Murray Leinster came back; and Henry Kuttner and wife C. L. Moore combined as Lewis Padgett and Lawrence O'Donnell to form the nucleus of the small but productive roster of contributors who kept **Astounding** evolving along lines of increasing technician-appeal through the years which ushered in the Atomic Age.

Come Nov., '43, paper shortage had whittled the magazine down through its original size to pocket format, which nevertheless enhanced its virtues among those whose sensibilities had hitherto prevented them poring over it on their travels. New cover artist William Timmins functioned, while inside illustrations shrank and became more stylised in a way that irked many readers; they had little of the atmosphere to which dyed-in-the-wool fans were accustomed. But the small size permitted the inclusion of a rotogravure section devoted to the photo-illustrated articles of Ley and Richardson, which to its enlarged audience were one of **Astounding's** best features. Meanwhile, with a few exceptions — Lieber's "Gather, Darkness!" (May-July) and Moore's "Judgment Night" (Aug.-Sep., '43), notably—the literary standard deteriorated; yet the ideas it presented and the "slant" of its stories, whatever their intrinsic merits, kept it always esoterically appealing and intellectually amusing.

Nor were literary considerations entirely abandoned. The next two or three years brought forth such little masterpieces as O'Donnell's "The Children's Hour" (Mar., '44), Moore's "No Woman Born" (Dec., '44), and Sturgeon's "The Chromium Helmet" (June, '46), beside the peculiar ingenuities of Sturgeon's "Killdozer" (Nov., '44), A. Bertram Chandler's "Giantkiller" (Oct., '45) and Jones' "The Toymaker" (Sep., '46), the thought-compelling complexities of Leiber's "Destiny Times Three" (March-April, '45), van Vogt's "World of Null-A" (Aug.-Oct., '45), and Padgett's "The Fairy Chessmen" (Jan.-Feb., '46). The same period produced Clifford D. Simak's popular "City" series, Padgett's "Baldies," and the renewed "Foundation" tales of Asimov. Even the new style heavy-science of George O. Smith and his other-self, Wesley Long, and the equally hard-to-digest pieces of E. Mayne Hull, otherwise Mrs. van Vogt, had their attractions for a readership which preferred to ignore the blatant hackwork and Shaverian imbecilities of other magazines. Though the resurrection of Arthur Leo Zagat with "Slaves of the Lamp" (Aug.-Sept., '46) could not be allowed to pass without a murmur of disapproval.

Now, with the magazine approaching its twentieth year of publication, there is much speculation as to how Editor Campbell may contrive to lift it out of the rut into which, in the last year or so, it has indubitably drifted. The atomic-war-mutants cycle has, apparently, ended; the return of Hubbard, Williamson and Russell, unlike that of "Lensman" Smith, has been heartily applauded. But the feeling is that another mutation, productive of an entirely fresh approach by a new group of writers who may regenerate the old, is long overdue.

Book Reviews

From Wells to Bradbury

STRANGE PORTS OF CALL: 20 Masterpieces of Science Fiction, selected by August Derleth. Pellegrini, New York, $3.75.

Reviewed by **J. M. Walsh**

When I opened "Strange Ports of Call" and found "The Crystal Egg" among its contents, I feared that on re-reading its old enchantment would vanish. For that reason alone, I dealt with the stories seriatim, playing no favourites. But when I came in due course to the Wells story, most of the old magic was still there; more, it seemed to fit naturally into its place. Subconsciously, perhaps, I used it as a yardstick by which to measure the merits of the rest of Mr. Derleth's selections, and in the result neither Wells' nor any of the other masterpieces suffered by comparison with one another. To me, therefore, this seems the best anthology he has edited to date.

How much of the arrangement is schematic I could not be sure, but it is significant that the book opens with an allegory of creation and ends with two stories on the destruction of Earth. The allegory is Nelson Bond's "The Cunning of the Beast," one of his **Blue Book** tales which are in very different style from those of his noted "Lobblies." Philip Wylie's "Blunder," from **Collier's,** and Ray Bradbury's **Planet** piece, "The Million-Year Picnic," together sound the death-knell of this ball. In between these are stories, all newly anthologised and coming from seven different magazines, which give what the editor describes as "a miniature history of mankind and a glimpse of his future in terms of science fiction." He also intends them to supplement earlier collections to present "a well-rounded picture of the science fiction of our own time."

In such a gathering, one must inevitably meet a few old friends, but the majority should be as new to you as they were to me. Though some stories are better than others, there is none which falls below a high general standard, and a few are outstanding. Certainly, there is not one that will not bear re-reading. The names of such authors as David H. Keller, Donald and Howard Wandrei, Dunsany, Fritz Leiber Jr., Henry Kuttner, Clark Ashton Smith, Frank Belknap Long and Theodore Sturgeon are sufficient guarantee of that. Next to Wells', the oldest selection is George Allan England's "The Thing from Outside" (**Science and Invention,** April, '23), with which I made my first acquaintance, and which left something in my mind that projected itself far beyond the ending the author had contrived.

That is another test of value I like to apply. There are stories which end with the last word; which are final, complete and altogether satisfactory in this respect. But there are others which do something more, which make you feel that the story has not so much ended as come to a stop—temporarily. This is no reflection on the author; on the contrary, one feels that what he has set down is merely an episode in the lives of the characters, that somewhere beyond those printed pages their lives go on, and that there are more chapters of their adventures which should be recorded. Three stories which excited in me this Twist-like yearning for more are P. Schuyler Miller's "Forgotten," A. E. van Vogt's "Far Centaurus," and Bradbury's "Picnic." There may be others, but these left an impression on my mind perhaps as strong as Wells' story did in my youth.

"The Green Hills of Earth," one of Robert A. Heinlein's **Satevepost** tales, has a freshness of approach which captivated me, leaving me wondering if science fiction had at last found someone to do for the spaceways what Kipling did in prose and verse for steam. At least, America's **Publisher's Weekly** is of the opinion that these stories in the **Post** have added a new group of readers to the ranks of science fiction's fans. For the benefit of those who, like myself, missed the omnibus volume in which it appeared some years ago,* I should also mention that this collection includes H. P. Lovecraft's "At the Mountains of Madness"; over 100 pages of it, a complete novel in itself.

Possibly it is symptomatic of the

*"The Outsider & Others," by H. P. Lovecraft: Arkham House, '39.

state of the world to-day, but I fancy I detect in most of the stories of the future we have here an underlying suggestion that man is inclined to play with forces which threaten to get out of hand, and that both statesman and scientist lack the imaginative vision to see beyond a certain point the possible consequences of their uncontrolled actions and inventions. Mr. Derleth, however, has been primarily concerned with presenting stories of literary value, in which there are no stock supermen or alien monsters and the reader-interest is in genuine human behaviour rather than the scientific gimmick. In putting "man first and foremost—man in his reaction to other dimensions, other laws, other science, other worlds," he may therefore, if unintentionally, have emphasised his weakness as well as his curiosity and intentionally, have emphasised man's has added a very fine volume to the now quite extensive shelf of collected science fiction.

The End is Not Yet

FINAL BLACKOUT, by L. Ron Hubbard. Hadley, Providence, R.I. $3.00.

Reviewed by **John K. Aiken**

The opportunity to describe a science fiction novel as moving or sincere occurs but rarely; not because there is anything basically insincere about science fiction, but because its basis is usually so purely intellectual that the question of sincerity does not arise. This grim and not yet falsified prophecy of the outcome of World War II, which caused something of a furore when it appeared in **Astounding Science-Fiction** early in '40, is in many respects untraditional: it is both sincere in its philosophical analysis of the crisis of civilisation and, in its climax, deeply moving. It is written, too, at a level of craftsmanship which Mr. Hubbard has not since approached, except perhaps in "Fear" (**Unknown,** July, '40); and this is not particularly to decry his later work. Though he is himself inclined to doubt the verdict of those enthusiastic **Astounding** readers who voted it "one of the ten greatest stories ever published." It is, he insists, "just a story."

It is the story, told with touches of sardonic humour against a background of devastation, of the far-sighted, enigmatic Lieutenant, a strange mixture of ruthlessness and altruism, leading his pathetic but ferocious band against the last of the reactionaries and incompetents; the story of the Odyssey and martyrdom at American hands of an Englishman—which was not only extravagantly praised but attacked as political propaganda, as alarmist and despondent, and as almost libellous towards big business and the big battalions.

Now, in dedicating his story "to the men and officers with whom I served in World War II, First Phase, 1941-45," the author defends his work as the product of a young man's idealism. But it does not need his defence. That he appears in his Preface to retreat from his idealism, to abandon his extremer opinions and assert calmingly that, anyway, it can't happen now, is perhaps regrettable. The idealism that inspired the story was good, the opinions sound—and who says it can't possibly happen? But the extent to which, in his recantation, Mr. Hubbard keeps his tongue within his cheek, we leave to the reader.

For this is a book that must be read, especially by those who were not reading **Astounding** in '40. It is a book that one should be glad to own, and one ought to be anxious to lend. That the last, at least, is not true, is the fault of the publishers. They, with their brethren, are doing a considerable service to fantasy literature by presenting in more permanent form the cream of the magazine fiction of the last decade, but it is high time they realised that their public is composed largely of adults with some pretensions to taste; people to whom an illustration—even a good one—in a novel is a surprise, a superfluity. And the illustrations in this book are not good; they are incredibly, appallingly bad.

Even granting the suggestion that the majority of fantasy readers have not passed the age at which pictures add appeal to fiction, there is no excuse for the kind of "artwork" with which this volume is all too liberally bedecked. In all the recent spate of hard-cover reprints, we have yet to see an illustration which would not have been better omitted; and here, we trust, we have reached rock-bottom. For pity's—and fantasy's—sake, let us have no more of them.

The Mantle of Merritt

THE BLACK WHEEL, by A. Merritt and Hannes Bok. New Collectors' Group, New York. $3.00.

Reviewed by **Geoffrey Giles**

For a writer to attempt the task of completing the unfinished work of one who, even before his death, had earned a reputation as a "master" of fantasy, requires a courageous spirit as well as a familiarity with his methods. August Derleth was the first to make such a bold venture, when he worked on the unfinished manuscript of the late H. P. Lovecraft to produce the novel, "The Lurker at the Threshold," which appeared under both their names in '45 and proved fairly successful in its adherence to the Lovecraft tradition. But he had already a considerable experience of the now-famous Cthulhu mythos, in the development of which he, like other writers of the intimate Lovecraft circle, had made his contribution; nor was it the first unpublished material of their master which he had handled.

Hannes Bok, always as fervid a disciple of the late Abraham Merritt as Mr. Derleth was—and still is—of H.P.L., was hardly less successful in his recent attempt to supplement the unfinished story of "The Fox Woman" with "The Blue Pagoda," in which he sought to emulate the style of the author of "The Moon Pool" and other well-known fantasies acknowledged as masterpieces of their kind.* Yet his task was complicated by the fact that Merritt had left nothing to indicate how he intended to complete a work he had little more than started, and (in Mr. Bok's own words): "I had to do some sleuthing to discover the plot." He least of all was satisfied that he had done justice to the originator of the story when it finally appeared; for he is by far the severest critic of his own work, and very reluctant to wear the mantle of Merritt which some readers wish to thrust upon him—if not upon Henry Kuttner—on the strength of his original tale, "The Blue Flamingo" in **Startling Stories** (Jan., '48).

Now, however, he need have no fear of dishonouring the tradition he has followed. For "The Black Wheel," on which Merritt was working right up to his death, and left more extensive notes, is a thoroughly satisfactory piece of work with which none of this master's admirers could find fault, even if Mr. Bok himself could do so. It has the smooth, mellifluous style of Merritt at his best, trimmed of the lush adjectives, the blinding flashes and deafening reports. It resembles "The Ship of Ishtar" rather than any other of his stories, with a possible deviation towards "Burn, Witch, Burn!" and its sequel; but clearly Bok has interpreted the weird aspect of events in terms of popular modern psychiatry which had not become fashionable in Merritt's time.

The story centres around James Benson, a millionaire obsessed by the personality of his great-grandfather, an old-time sea captain. In a yacht which is an exact replica of the old captain's ship, Susan Ann, he takes an oddly assorted party on a Caribbean cruise. In an out-of-the-way lagoon they discover a stranded ship half-buried in the mud; a wooden ship, black with age, whose steering wheel is beautifully carved with a pattern of interlocking hands. The wheel exerts a strange influence on the party, which begins to have uncanny dreams. In particular, an Englishwoman, Lady Fitzmanton, has a long, involved dream in which she identifies herself as the black priestess of a primeval African empire, older than the Egyptian civilisations. The priestess lives through many incarnations before she is taken with a cargo of slaves to the Americas, the slave-ship being sunk en route by old Cap'n Benson, who was reputed to have died peacefully in his bed, though some said he died insane. And he left a strange treasure. . . .

So the narrative develops to a climax of horror, with no pretensions to a happy ending. Of the 27 chapters, the eighth is in two parts: presumably, that is where Merritt left the actual writing of the novel and Bok took over, equipped with his notes and guided by his widow, who spared no pains to assure herself that it would be finished as the master had planned. The book is produced in similar style to the earlier volume, with double-columned pages in large magazine size and six beautiful full-page illustrations. The only blot on an otherwise first-class production is the surprising number of typographical errors which have slipped through.

*Reviewed, Oct.-Nov. '47 issue.

Cosmic Shenanigans

TRIPLANETARY, by Edward E. Smith, Ph.D. Fantasy Press, Reading, Pa. $3.00.

Reviewed by **D. R. Smith**

The third of Dr. Smith's cosmical epics to see book publication is the story which, following its serialisation in **Amazing** in '34, encouraged him to write the famous series which culminated recently with "Children of the Lens" (**Astounding,** Nov. '47 - Feb. '48). It is actually the first of the "Lensmen" tales, of which the second, confusingly titled "First Lensman," has never appeared in any magazine and has still to be published by Fantasy Press.* To bring it into line with the subsequent stories, some 30,000 words of narrative preliminary to the original "Triplanetary" have been added, and interjections made to tie it up with the underlying theme of the series.

That theme, of course, is the familiar struggle between good and evil as represented by the Arisian and Eddorian super-beings, respectively. The basic Eddorian sin is pride, manifested as a lust for absolute power over all other beings, and all manner of means except those that are virtuous are employed to satisfy that lust. Their own internal affairs resolve into a dictatorship—which is eternal, since they themselves are immortal—but their search for new worlds to conquer is restricted by their natal continuum. Finding, after a few million years of searching, another (ours) in which two galaxies are passing through each other and creating numberless planets, they migrate to this happy hunting ground. Fortunately, the Arisians, as full of virtue as the Eddorians are of vice, are here already; and they, recognising that the enemy is too strong to be exterminated by ordinary Arisian powers, prepare a few million years' underground movement to build up their resources. The story of the growth of civilisation is depicted, as a result, as a series of Arisian-sponsored appreciations punctuated by contrary movements on the part of the Eddorian responsible for making an Earth fit for Eddorians to rule.

Dr. Smith presents us with glimpses of crucial moments in the cycles of human history which tend to follow a somewhat regular pattern. The first is the end of Atlantis in an atomic war. The second dates from the fall of Rome, where the Eddorian takes the form of Nero; Ole Mass of Muscle (as a correspondent of **Astounding** felicitously nicknames the Smith hero) is a gladiator, and an Arisian is present, too, heavily disguised as Petronius Arbiter. Next comes a 1918 episode, with the same Kinnison a chemical engineer in an ordnance plant; and for the first time in all his writings Dr. Smith can here, we suppose, claim to be drawing on first-hand experience and is perhaps grinding a private axe. Finally, another Kinnison meets his end in the atomic Armageddon the author forecasts as due some time this century, and we are up to "Triplanetary."

This is the tale of a three-cornered free-for-all between the Americans, representing the three-world union from which the title derives; the formidable pirate Roger, who is the Eddorian in disguise once more (the Arisians having built civilisation up again while he was looking the other way), and the Nevians, invaders from another solar system in search of iron and not very particular how they get it. The hero's name is Costigan this time; and he succeeds in being captured, first by Roger and then by the Nevians, together with The Girl and a rather necessary chaperone. There is much struggling on a cosmic scale, terminating in the elimination of Roger and a truce between Nevians and Triplanetarians. The background plot of the series is advanced considerably in the process, since the Arisians have to keep interfering to restrain the Eddorian powers and thereby betray the carefully preserved secret of their existence to their foes.

But it is not the most successful of Smith's epics. The vast battles with super-weapons are here for sure; so is the profusion of interesting forms of extra-terrestrial life, and Omom's tooth-and-claw brawling. So, too, we must admit, is Dr. Smith's vexing foible of verbally underlining and re-emphasising the obvious nobility of Omom's soul. What is really lacking is a plot to tie all the shenanigans together; it is merely a slice of history, if very tur-

*See "Galactic Roamer": **Fantasy Review,** Apr.-May '48.

bulent history, without any apparent unity of purpose. The Arisian interventions detract considerably from the tension of the tight spots; one feels that these perfect planners have everything under control, and the absence of any possibility of failure leaves us undelighted at their success. It is even difficult to feel any admiration for the Earthly inventors, knowing that disguised Arisians are among the backroom boys putting ideas into their heads.

Then, there is room for more detailed criticism of the gadgets used by the warriors, particularly since they seem little if at all inferior to the much later widgets of the Galactic Patrol. Still, better written than "The Skylark of Space," wider in scope than "Spacehounds of I.P.C.", it is an essential prelude to the rest of the "Lensmen" series presenting much inside information on the Arisian-Eddorian conflict, and no Smith fan can afford to be without it. As a production, it is a perfect match with the previous Smith volume Mr. Eshbach has given us.†

†"Spacehounds of I.P.C.," reviewed Jun.-Jul. '47 issue.

Down Among the Dead Men

DEATH OF A WORLD, by J. Jefferson Farjeon. Collins, London, 8/6.

Reviewed by **Thomas Sheridan**

Since Mr. Farjeon's previous work has been mostly in the mysterious tradition (does anyone know if his "Mystery on the Moon" is anything like it sounds?), it is natural that this essay into science fiction should be labelled a mystery by the publishers, who also make use of such adjectives as "amazing," "astounding" and "thought-provoking" in connection with it, as though to intrigue such as we. But the element of mystery makes it hardly satisfactory, particularly for us, since it is only when the author gets down to the science-fantasy that he leaves us mystified, and he fails either to astound or provoke much thought except as to what he really intends.

The story opens promisingly with an account of expeditions made by interplanetary explorers to Earth, which has been denuded of life by some universal catastrophe. It is, in fact, "a stupend-

ous waste-heap, viewed in a succession of scenes of hideous and inexplicable chaos," and "enclosed in a chaotic circumference of indeterminate and changing boundaries." We suspect there were blurb-writers aboard.

In spite of the smell, a fourth expedition lands, and so discovers the diary of one John Smith which forms the substance of the book. Mr. Smith is a Very Ordinary Man who sets off for a hike in the Welsh mountains and gives us an account of it in detail which becomes painful in spite of the otherworldly footnotes and commentaries. We are scarcely more interested when he is forced to descend into the underground colony where many chosen specimens of the race have repaired in expectation of World War III. The instigator of the project to preserve these privileged but apparently quite undeserving souls who are to re-populate the planet is a big financier turned idealist, who has been dead to the world for some time but has contrived to establish 30 subterranean sanctuaries without the Devil or his journalistic henchmen suspecting a thing.

So the story settles down to something like an underground "Grand Hotel," with a film actress, a ballerina, a murderer, a scientist, and several other characters who hardly matter parading in the lounge. The war comes, there is the sound of bombs above, and below, some philosophical argy-bargy and much scribbling by Mr. Smith. Then, since it all must end somehow, whatever has been going on upstairs (and we remain in ignorance despite television screens) results in the "dematerialisation" of certain people who have served their questionable purpose below and, finally, of everything and everybody. Though what produces this very convenient effect is the major mystery of the piece: Mr. Farjeon contents himself by making his scientist speculate on the inevitable ray, but he does not tell us how it works except in the haziest of terms. Even the Visitors can't be sure about it.

So we leave Mr. Smith, bereft of his ballet dancer, his mind getting muzzy, but still scribbling frantically in his diary between his black-outs, awaiting his dissolution into dust. Need we add that he took care to save his diary for the Visitors, and for us, by depositing it in a box of indestructible metal? And do we detect the hint of a sequel? Perhaps Mr. Farjeon isn't too sure about that.

Do You Remember Atlantis?

ALAS, THAT GREAT CITY, by Francis Ashton. Dakers, London, 9/6.

Reviewed by **Alan Devereux**

It was nice to be back in Atlantis again. All the old, familiar landmarks were there; the temple roofs still glittered with orichalcum, and the white marble stairways still reflected the glorious sunlight with which the gorgeously costumed inhabitants seem always to be favoured. Black magic was, perhaps, not quite so prevalent among them as before; but there were plenty of weird rites and red-blooded orgies as they awaited the cataclysm caused by the imminent arrival on the scene of our present Moon—the two earlier satellites were destroyed, of course, 50,000 years before in Mr. Ashton's previous novel, "The Breaking of the Seals."*

The present book is, however, in no sense a sequel to the other; and it is a much more competent work. The modern characters are more convincing and there is less of the phony Time-theory stuff we felt bound to criticise before; in fact, this time, Mr. Ashton doesn't worry much about the way his hero and heroine go back in time—they just go. The Hoerbiger hypothesis, which holds that the Moon was a small planet whose capture by the Earth caused the submergence of Atlantis, is brought in again, but it is not given as much attention as in the first book, leaving us with ample adventure in the good old Rider Haggard tradition.

The story opens in the present with a naval ex-officer type going off in a small yacht with the professor's pretty —and psychic—daughter to keep a rendezvous with the Atlanteans via "universal memory." Arrived in Atlantis, our hero becomes involved in a plot to murder the beautiful Queen, but, seeing her in her nightgown, falls from grace. His disconsolate girl friend thereupon takes the veil, until he escapes the toils of the lustful Queen and they are able to take a front-seat view of the final catastrophe, after which they wake up in mid-Atlantic and return to receive a parental blessing and a rather inadequate explanation of what has happened to them.

*Reviewed April-May, '47 issue.

Something Old, Something New

THE TRAVELLING GRAVE and Other Stories, by L. P. Hartley. Arkham House, Sauk City, Wis. $3.00.

Reviewed by **Peter Phillips**

For this seventh of the series of Arkham House books featuring the work of British exponents of the outre and macabre, Mr. Derleth has drawn on two published volumes, "Night Fears" and "The Killing Bottle & Other Stories," and on some of Mr. Hartley's manuscripts which now see print for the first time. Though he is also known as a novelist, he is not a prolific writer in this genre; yet among these dozen tales are at least three which are assured of the attention of anthologists beyond this generation.

Most of the others are good reading, but from a standard mould. One feels that the Living Dead are becoming a little passé and might be given a rest in Limbo, where, for my money, the literary necrophile may chase them. Admittedly, the already much-anthologised "A Visitor from Down Under" brings in a very cold specimen of the tribe, and the plot has seen much wear; but it is done so well that all is forgiven, and the ambiguous title is delightful. So I put it among the first three.

"Podolo" deals with an ineffable Thing on an island in Venetian waters. What it does to a woman whose humanity has demanded that she kill a cat to prevent it from starving is so indescribable that—well, it isn't described. So she, too, is put out of her misery by a humanely-wielded oar before the Thing returns to finish its—er—task. Don't read this one in bed.

"A Change of Ownership" is the most original and possibly the best of the pieces; a brilliant study of the mental vicissitudes of a man who scares himself to death. One tale, "Conrad and the Dragon," is curiously out-of-place: a rather laboured attempt at the humorously gruesome fairy story which fails to be either gruesome, faery or funny. The remaining pieces are, as stated, from a mould; but they are well-cast and should well satisfy the addict.

Fred C. Brown writes

ABOUT BOOKS

By now my copy of "The Checklist of Fantastic Literature," the first bibliography of fantasy which Shasta Publishers have provided for us, has been well-thumbed and ear-marked, and found very adequate to replace the painfully compiled lists with which we used to sally forth on our book-hunting expeditions. The need for a comprehensive reference work covering the weird and science fiction fields has been obvious for too long; and to me the completion of this seven years' project to index over 5,000 titles within the scope of a handy, portable volume represents the greatest advance yet made in the interests of fantasy and its devotees. Certainly, its appearance is just as important as that of any of the superb collections of stories which now repose in our libraries, if not in our pockets.

In his Preface to the "Checklist," which was compiled with the help of fantasy collectors on both sides of the Atlantic, Mr. Melvin Korshak, the Chicago bookseller and publisher, describes some of the difficulties and setbacks they encountered in their task. Beginning in '40 with discussions between those three enthusiasts Frederick B. Shroyer, T. E. Dikty and Erle Korshak, the project was near completion when war service became a more urgent matter for them—and on their return they found that all their lists and notes had been thrown away as rubbish! But out of this catastrophe grew a new and more ambitious plan for the present volume, for the editing of which the services of expert researcher Everett F. Bleiler were recruited. Among other well-known collectors who took part in the protracted preparations were Thyril Ladd and John C. Nitka, of New York; the Canadian fans Douglas Harding and Norman V. Lamb, and our own English bibliophiles J. Michael Rosenblum and R. George Medhurst, whose listing of their "enormous" private collections, supplemented by much grubbing among the rareties of the British Museum by Mr. Medhurst, contributed largely to the usefulness of the volume to fans on this side.

This truly international effort has finally resulted in a well-bound book of over 450 pages, with a handsome jacket by Hannes Bok, which at its price of $6.00 is well worth the investment to all who wish to enlarge their collections and their knowledge of the fantasy medium. As well as providing a double index of titles and authors, it supplies other necessary information concerning each item such as publisher, year of publication, number of pages, and whether the book has been reprinted under a different title. There are also some useful notes on various matters calculated to mislead the most diligent searcher, such as mythical titles (e.g., Erle Cox's "Out of the Darkness"), and a list of critical and historical reference works associated with the field.

There are some who may quarrel with Mr. Bleiler's definition of certain titles as fantasy, in spite of his careful consideration of this aspect of his task and his realisation that "fantasy may be almost all things to all men." But there are likely to be more complaints of titles having been left out than of any which should not be present; and a surprising number of omissions have already brought criticisms from collectors who have found the volume wanting in this respect. For myself, I have discovered quite a list of items I had considered well known which have been unaccountably overlooked; such, for instance, as Bramah's "The Secret of the League," Fowler Wright's "Adventure in the Blue Room," Goodchild's "Message from Mars." Hargrave's "Imitation Man," and others by Shiel, T. H. White, and F. A. M. Webster. But the editor has also anticipated the shortcomings of this first concerted attempt to systematise a literature whose highways and by-ways are practically endless, and with the additions now being made to it every month, the supplementary volumes he hints at will probably become imperative in due time.

ANOTHER KELLER VOLUME

Old readers of **Weird Tales** will doubtless remember Dr. David H. Keller's serial, "The Solitary Hunters," which was voted one of the best stories of the period when it appeared in '34. It has now been presented in book form together with his novel, "The Abyss," which has never been printed before; the volume is available at $3.00 from the New Era Publishing Co., Philadelphia, autographed by Dr. Keller.

NIGEL LINDSAY & KENNETH SLATER

giving reviews of current issues and news of stories to come

AMONG THE MAGAZINES

British magazines may die for lack of paper or enforced price-cutting, but the Americans succeed in adding to bulk and price at the same time. **Thrilling Wonder** for October has 32 more pages than heretofore; **Startling Stories** for November will also run to 180pp., and both mags. go up to 25c. On the whole, too, they're worth it, though you wouldn't think so to look at the covers we've been having lately.

TWS brings back Leigh Brackett with the lead novelette, "The Moon That Vanished," an exotic piece of mystery and high adventure on Venus; the sort of thing of which she is a past master. Arthur J. Burks is also to the fore with an unusual tale of time and hereditary memory, "Yesterday's Doors"; while our own William F. Temple comes up with "Miracle Town," a story of a strange invasion with humorous instead of calamitous results. (We congratulate the "extremely gifted young author whose work is just beginning to make itself felt"—vide "The Reader Speaks"—after a whole decade.)

We found "World-wrecker" Hamilton's "The Valley of Creation," featured in July **Startling,** a readable fantasy packed full of action. But we preferred "Realities Unlimited," a piece concerning an expedition to Mars, by Emmett McDowell, and L. Ron Hubbard's "When Shadows Fall," a tale of the last days of Earth, was impressive. We liked Jack Vance's "Hard Luck Diggings," too—may we see more of Magnus Ridolph! Henry Kuttner's "When the Earth Lived" was well worth reading again; as for Margaret St. Clair's "Quis Custodiet?" its novel idea perked up our interest in her work just when we were getting tired of Oona. Thanks, Mr. Editor, for that nice estimate of s-f fandom in "The Ether Vibrates"—we've never been summed up better. Next issue: Fredric Brown's "What Mad Universe," another Jack Vance tale, and a reprint of P. Schuyler Miller's "Tetrahedra of Space."

Editor Donald A. Wollheim gives us advance information on the seventh **Avon Fantasy Reader,** which will present C. L. Moore's classic "Shambleau," Fritz Leiber's "The Dreams of Albert Moreland," Clark Ashton Smith's "The Empire of the Necromancers," and other pieces by Sax Rohmer, Robert E. Howard, Frank B. Long and Lord Dunsany. Of special interest is the first presentation of the only existing fragment of A. Merritt's novel, "When Old Gods Wake," which was to be a sequel to "The Snake Mother," but never got beyond the first chapter. This is to be published exactly as is under the title, "Altar of Kukulkan," without any attempt to work it up into a complete story.

Latest (No. 6) issue of the **Reader** features Lovecraft's "Beyond the Wall of Sleep," Merritt's equally famous "The Drone," and one of Hamilton's "Interstellar Patrol" stories from **Weird Tales** of 20 years ago, "The Star Stealers." There are other pieces by Thorp McClusky, Henry S. Whitehead and Dr. Keller culled from **Weird** and **Strange Tales;** "The Metal Man," with which Jack Williamson made his bow in **Amazing** in '27, is also reprinted, and Joseph E. Kelleam makes one of his rare appearances with a new story, "From the Dark Waters."

Almost the whole of **Fantastic Adventures** for August is taken up by a full-length novel by Lee Francis, "The Man from Yesterday," which gets a good deal of fun out of the idea of a Stone Ager mixed up with the present-day. But there's just room for three shorts: "Unfinished Business," by Enoch Sharp, "To-morrow I Die," by Richard Casey, and a neat little piece by new writer Russell E. Nihlean, "Tanya's Night to Howl." Promised for September is a Don Wilcox novel, "The Lavender Vine of Death."

"The Purple Sapphire," first of the John Taine fantasies, which appears again in August **Famous Fantastic Mysteries,** still makes good science fiction reading in spite of having been written almost a quarter of a century ago. Also in this issue is a short piece by Murray Leinster, "The Night Before the End of the World"; in the next will come C. T. Stoneham's jungle fantasy, "The Lion's Way." September **Fantastic Novels** brings back Merritt's "The Conquest of the Moon Pool."

Second (Summer '48) issue of **Fate,** the new factual-fantasy magazine,

offers another illustrated article on the question, "Are Space Visitors Here?" and one which looks forward "Five Years to A-Day" with diagrams showing the probable effects of atom bombs on city areas—very edifying indeed. Prof. R. N. Sweeney discusses the old subject of life on Mars in the light of recent observations, and Vincent H. Gaddis touches on parapsychology in an interesting article on people who can still think in spite of severe injury to the brain. Other pieces on scientific prediction of the future, the human aura, children's uncanny experiences and various ghostly happenings, combined with a digest of the book, "The Secret Science Behind Miracles," by Max Freedom Long, make reading of compelling interest to all fantasy fans.

An excellent Bonestell cover, showing a space-ship on the Moon, distinguished the July **Astounding,** in which Eric Frank Russell's "Dreadful Sanctuary" continued to intrigue us with the problem of why none could get there—and gave us the answers. Fancy us being descended from Martian lunatics! Almost deserving "nova" designation, H. Beam Piper's novelette, "Police Operation," was a neat variation on the idea of "paratime"; the two shorts by new writers Neal B. Wilkinson and John S. Browning made fair reading, and Willy Ley's article on the German experiments which led to V2 must have been of particular interest to those who were right at "The Other End of the Trajectory." Coming in October, from what we can make of it, is van Vogt's sequel to "The World of Null-A."

Fall '48 **Planet Stories** presents another original interplanetary piece by Ray Bradbury entitled "Mars is Heaven"—but is it? We might have enjoyed it better, though, if it hadn't been so similar in theme to "The Earth Men," his tale of Mars in the August **Wonder** which we'd only recently read. Emmett McDowell's "Citadel of the Green Death" is fast-action space opera of the sort beloved by **Planet** fans; "Valkyrie from the Void," a Basil Wells "novelet of stellar savagery," is more in the Tarzan tradition, and James Blish's "Against the Stone Beasts" is a time-travel tale of war between a winged race and creatures of negative matter—you might call it time-opera. Among the shorts are A. Bertram Chandler's "Preview of Peril," a soliloquy by the lover of the girl who went off in the first interstellar ship; Erik Fennel's "Synthetic Hero," which would have done quite well in **ASF** two years back; and an amusing piece by William Tenn, "Brooklyn Project."

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